

School Library Association: Do We Really Need One? Eleven Years of APISI in Indonesia

By Hanna Chaterina George

When I started working as a school librarian in 1994, I did not know any specific associations for school libraries. At that time, there was a library association in Indonesia, namely the Indonesian Association of Librarians (IPI), but I did not inquire as to whether there were activities relating to school libraries.

In fact, I did not even realise that I needed a library association until 2005, when an idea appeared to gather several school librarians who worked around the school where I worked in South Tangerang. It was at this meeting that the original idea appeared to establish APISI (Association of Indonesian School Information Professionals), an association for professionals who called themselves school information professionals, instead of school librarians. The reason behind this idea - to rebrand our profession - was the view that the school librarian is now dealing with information. Closely related to the core focus of APISI: information literacy.

Why did We Gather?

The first meeting of school librarians held at British School Jakarta (at that time British International School) in 2006 provided a forum for the school librarians' curiosity about the development of, and current trends in, school librarianship in Indonesia. It identified that there was a need to have good networking among school librarians, as it was believed that this would help in addressing issues of school library management, as well as giving support. At this gathering, there were 30 school librarians from nearby schools. It should be noted that most of the people who worked in school libraries did not have library science qualifications. They had been teachers and administration employees who did not understand how to manage a library. That is why the need to meet, share, and exchange opinions was essential.

The meeting invited speakers who were considered competent, namely Diao Ai Lien, Ph.D., and Dra. Titi Chandrawati, M.Ed., who presented their research results, work financed by UNESCO, titled Current State of Information Literacy Awareness and Practices in Indonesia Primary and Secondary Public Schools: Jakarta. This information literacy focus encouraged the participants to see that the school library's role has changed. This theme then became the core focus promoted by APISI after it was formed in 2006.



First Meeting of School Librarians, 2005.

The participants decided to hold a subsequent meeting, and as interest grew the APISI was established on August 26.

The Establishment of APISI

In the first meeting the participants filled out a questionnaire from the committee. The results of this questionnaire indicated strong support for an association, all participants stating that they needed a library association (Hasil kuesioner, 2005).

Dengan Rahmat Tuhan YME , kami
mendeklarasikan berdirinya Asosiasi Pekerja
Informasi Sekolah Indonesia (APISI) Pada Hari
Sabtu, Tanggal 26 Agustus 2006 di Butik Hotel
Sahira Bogor Pukul : 14.20 WIB

Declaration of the Establishment of APISI: With the Mercy of God, we declare the establishment of Indonesian Association of School Information Professional on Saturday, 26th of August at Butik Hotel Sahira, Bogor on 14:20WIB.

There was strong support for maintaining the network already established and for creating a formal association in Bogor. In the third meeting, the name of the organisation and its management structure were determined. The arrangement for the legal basis of APISI was duly performed; this was necessary to enable the organisation to work and cooperate effectively with the Government agencies, institutions, and companies. APISI needed to be recorded at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia. The description of the APISI program emphasised activities that encouraged the importance of school libraries and librarians, especially in applying information literacy to education as performed by the school library. Then, in 2014, after three years of torpidity, APISI added a literacy program to its core program. APISI realised that literacy is an important element of education that enables all students to learn effectively and that students need to be literate before they can embrace the skills offered by information literacy instruction.

What programs does APISI do?

APISI has three main programs, namely the Short Course, the Seminar in October, and Consultancy. These programs are held simultaneously alongside a range of other initiatives for members.

The School Librarians Informal Meeting is a meeting held to gather the recorded members together to share or discuss the latest issues in the field of school librarianship, in both Indonesia and the wider world. This is usually a paid event to cover meal or transport expenses for the persons involved.

A social program held since 2014 is APISI Baca Cerita (story reading), namely an activity of telling stories by using books for kindergarten and elementary students. This activity is performed by APISI volunteers freely, at book events and at schools.



ABC Activity – Story Book Time.



Short Course Class – 2016.

In addition, the management and members of APISI are also expected to be active in seminar or workshop events at regional and international levels. APISI has become the source organisation for IASL (International Association of School Librarianship) conferences and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) workshops for school librarians several times. APISI members have also received several awards to enable them to attend IASL conferences in Taiwan in 2007 and in the Netherlands in 2015.

APISI tries to produce a bulletin communication for members, which is called AKURASI. However, this has encountered human resource constraints that have resulted in it not being issued continuously.

How do we survive?

A professional organisation that is independent and non-profit will certainly face financial constraints. One method that can be performed to source funds is to file a proposal to run particular activities to donor institutions. APISI was supported by IFLA - ALP (International Federation of Library Association - Action for Development through Library Programme/) to organise an Indonesian Workshop on Information Literacy in Bogor in 2008. Moreover, IFLA also has the BSLA (Building Strong Library Association) program that can donate a budget to support activities that can strengthen the organisation. APISI received this support in 2015, which was used to form prospective management of APISI in eight provinces (out of 34 provinces in Indonesia). In this event, partners from library and librarian organisations in Indonesia were invited, as one of the requirements, and this event formed a new community that supported library organisations existing in Indonesia, called AOPPII/ Indonesian Alliance of Library and Information Professional Organizations.



IFLA BSLA 2015.

What is the impact of APISI on its members?

The important thing in an organisation like APISI is the impact or influence of its existence on its members. Several activities – the book grant, for example, in cooperation with the Asia Foundation – have been performed, not only in the central APISI, but also for regional APISI. In addition, APISI have often received donations of books that have been distributed to our members who needed books for their collection. The information and links received through the personal network of the chairman and the management of the organisation can become a source of information and support for the members. Social media is also used to spread information or to get information to the management and members.

At the same time as APISI's 11th birthday, at a seminar event in Samosir Island, North Sumatra, I asked about APISI's influence on the representative management of APISI of North Sumatra. Mister Hadi Akmal Lubis, the new assistant manager of APISI of Asahan District, one of the districts in North Sumatra Province that had just joined APISI in 2016, gave testimony. In 2017, he became the second winner of an award for the Exemplary Librarian of North Sumatra Province, which was organised by the Library and Archive Service of North Sumatra Province. Hadi who has teacher qualifications, admitted that he had learned much from APISI, and had intentions to study library science programs from APISI in the autodidactic method. According to Hadi, APISI programs are quite good: programs such as ABC (APISI Baca Cerita (story reading), and the education and training programs that provide library processing training. (Personal communication with Hadi Akmal Lubis, August 26, 2016).

The next person who gave testimony was Syafrizal Nazaruddin, the coordinator of APISI of North Sumatra Province. Syafrizal Nazaruddin has a bachelor degree in library science so he is a qualified librarian. Rizal (as he is usually called), joined APISI in 2007, when he still worked as a school librarian in one of the international schools in Medan. Rizal was also a participant in IFLA-ALP in 2008. In 2015, he was chosen to become the coordinator of APISI for North Sumatra Province, and re-joined with the other members of the management in 2016. Rizal's reason to stay in the organisation of APISI stems from his interest in continuing to promote information literacy.

He is currently a library staff member at the Library and Archives Service of North Sumatra, and continues to focus on helping school library development. According to him, APISI's strength is its learning process for APISI training activities, which are different from usual training techniques. He gained a lot of materials, and the activity involved the participants, so the understanding of the process became easier. Rizal admitted that he still has much to learn about managing the organisation. He also added that most of the schools involved in APISI's activities were established schools with school library facilities and book collection development in process. There is a need to apply Information Literacy skills in state-run schools where facilities and fund support were still lacking.



APISI 11th Anniversary in North Sumatra, 2017.

Conclusion

The establishment of an independent organisation usually results from the need of its members. Independence of an organisation makes it capable of moving freely to develop itself without the intervention of other institutions that have their own interests. Sustainability of an organisation originates from the commitment of its management, and extra effort to find sources of funding, both from donor institutions and via corporate social responsibility programs. The success of an organisation of professionals can be assessed in a variety of ways and most important it is how it influences its members' growth.

Reference

APISI (2005) Hasil Koding Questionnaire. Tangerang Selatan: BIS.ppt

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