

## Public Libraries and Open Government: a case study in Republic of Indonesia

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### Abstract:

*The issues raised by the open government movement have spread around the globe. Open government movement also demands the Indonesian government adopt open government into Indonesian government system. In 2007 the Indonesian government established a Library Act and in 2008 it established the Public Information Freedom act, those two acts should create a good connection and collaboration between public libraries and government agencies to publish public information in libraries. Indonesia is the largest nation in democracy with very diverse ethnicities, religions and communities. The Indonesian government is dealing with the challenges of working, and experimenting with new ways to continue serving the people of these diverse communities, in densely populated cities, remote rural communities, or in scattered island communities. This paper examines connection and collaboration between public libraries and open government implementation in Indonesia; but the paper also looks at barriers and problems experienced by public libraries in serving open government in Indonesia. The methodology of this paper was to survey 33 public libraries in Indonesia. A questionnaire and deep interview were used to evaluate open government components such as transparency and creating public participation. The paper finds the involvement of public libraries in implementing open government is still low, most public libraries have low quantity and quality of government publications on their region. This paper finds that public libraries are not involved in open government in Indonesia. Many libraries are not providing assistance with government programs, such as applying for unemployment benefits or filing taxes, or providing traditional information sources, such as statutes and government information publications. Community participation in the open government program is low due to inadequate functioning of public libraries as a public space. The paper finds that there are some barriers to connecting public libraries and open government in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Public Libraries, Open Government, Open Data in Libraries, Government Information, Government Publications in Indonesia.

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

The term “open government” is becoming increasingly commonplace. President Obama (December 8, 2009) signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, stating that information maintained by the Federal Government is a national asset. The Obama administration has taken appropriate action, consistent with law and policy, to disclose information rapidly in forms that the public can readily find and use. President Obama’s Open Government Directive re-framed the worldwide movement. This was so, in part, because it presented a definition of “open government” which many found appealing: the three principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration form the cornerstone of an open government. Since Obama’s speech about his policy on accessing government data, the term “Open Government” spread to the rest of the world including the developing countries like Indonesia.

The issues about open government movement sprang up around the globe. The open government movement also demands the Indonesian government adopt open government into Indonesia government system (Indonesia, 2015). Conceptually, the appeal of open government data (OGD) is undeniable given its underlying motivations to improve democratic governance and political participation, and to foster service improvements and business and civic innovation (Huijboom & Van den Broek, 2011; Robinson, Yu, Zeller, & Felten, 2009). The Indonesian Government through the President has consistently expressed its commitment to Open Government (OG). In his official speech in August 2012, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono launched a movement and expansion of the role of public participation in the construction of open access. Through the Open Government movement, the government is committed to running programs and action plans to strengthen the three pillars of government openness: transparency, public participation and innovation (Indonesia, 2015). Presently there is very little information about research about government publications in libraries and their role and functions in open government implementation.

In 2007 the Indonesian government established a Library Act and in 2008 it established the Public Information Freedom Act. These two acts should create a good connection and collaboration between public libraries and government agencies to publish public information in libraries. Libraries, as institutions created by the community to gather, process and distribute information, have a strategic role in the implementation of open government. The National Library is a special institution created by the State, and has a duty to accommodate and deploy the entire collection owned by the State. Libraries should be capable of providing complete information to access such information. In the open government era a library should act as an intermediary between the people and the government in the implementation of open government in a country. This paper discusses connection and collaboration between public libraries and open government implementation in Indonesia, and also discusses barriers and problems preventing public libraries from serving open government in Indonesia.

## **METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN**

The methodology for this paper was to use a survey of 33 public libraries in Indonesia and a literature study. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Several questions were asked in 33 Public Libraries in Indonesia. Two elements of open government were observed in this research: those are transparency and public participation. The transparency element was related to the element of open government data principles, which are: Completeness, Primacy, Timeliness, Ease of access, Machine-readability, Non-discrimination, Use of common data standards, License-free. The participatory element follows the principle of

participation in open government as defined by the OECD for Open government measurement in public libraries. This covers: comment on government policies, signing petitions, holding peaceful demonstrations, and voicing concerns about public policies. It also measures sufficiency of information and notice about decisions affecting the community, including the opportunity for citizen feedback. To complete the research, a deep interview was used to evaluate open government components such as transparency and creating public participation. A literature study was used to confirm the situation and condition of open government implementation in Indonesia. Data was analysed using the Likert Scale from 1-4, to represent the situation and condition about transparency element and the transparency element in public libraries. The scale was 1. Very poor, 2. Poor, 3. good 4. Excellent.

## **FINDINGS**

This section begins by briefly describing connections and collaboration between public libraries and open government on paper, according to the legislation in Indonesia. The final part of the finding section is to analyse the connections and collaboration between public libraries and open government implementation in the field.

### **Public libraries and open government on paper.**

On paper, the relationship and collaboration between the public library and open government in Indonesia is very complete. Some legislation has supported the alignment of the public library's role in the implementation of open government in Indonesia. Some sets of rules that define the role of public libraries in the implementation of open government are:

\* The Deposit Act. This was established in 1990, and gave the public library a mandate similar to a national library in a local area. The act also required the public libraries in provinces and districts to gather all of the publications in their local area, with the deposit collection being stored and displayed, not to be borrowed and taken home by library users. Users are only allowed to see and read the collection in a special deposit reading room. The data relating to the borrowing is recorded so that it can be seen which books or records are the most widely borrowed by the user (Indonesia, 1990).

\*The second act is the Library Act, established in 2007. The act provided that the library should be a place for education, research, conservation, and recreation - information to improve intelligence and empowerment of the nation. The library should aim to provide services to encourage people to read, as well as broaden their intellectual horizons and knowledge, and provide services to library users who need information about everything that is in the library. The public library has an important role in open government implementations, as some information about government can be provided by libraries according to the Library Act.

\* The third is the Freedom of Information Act, established in 2008. The Act regulates the disclosure of information and transparency of state administration as one manifestation of the life of the democratic nation. This Act guaranteed people the right to obtain public information directly from a public agency, by filing a request for information to the Public Agency or receiving information that must be published by the Public Agency. People have the right to see and know the public information, the right to attend a public meeting open to the public, the right to obtain copies of public information via petition, the right to disseminate public information in accordance with legislation, the right to request information (written or unwritten), the right to file a lawsuit to the court if they encounter barriers or failure in obtaining public information.

## Public libraries and open government in the field.

### Transparency

Public libraries are trusted by their communities as places that community members can turn to for unfettered information access and as places to go for information in times of need. Both of the combination of this trust with the power of Internet access and support makes public libraries even more critical within their local communities. The trust placed in libraries is also important in balancing the lack of confidence that many citizens place in other government institutions as well as in the Internet.

The paper finds the involvement of public libraries in implementing open government is still low, and most public libraries have low quantity and quality of government publications on their region. There are components of open government that need to be seen, there are transparency and public participation (Gavelin, K., Burall, S., & Wilson, R. 2009). The UN issued guidelines for open data programs for member states particularly for purposes of transparency and citizen engagement (United Nations Division for Public Administration and Development Management, 2013).

This part describes how public libraries reveal their inventories of high value information and make them available to download, to respond to needs and demands from the public. In this part the library Webpac was explored by searching for government policies (such as budgets, government annual reports, etc). Government data shall be considered open if it is made public in a way that complies with the principles, and the results are:

Table 1. The Open data principle implementation table in public libraries in Indonesia

Principles	Score	Descriptions
Completeness	2	Not all libraries provide complete data and some of them have a privilege limitation
Primacy	2	The data sources are not at the highest possible level of granularity
Timeliness	2	Most of the data at the library are old and not up to date
Ease of access	1	Not all data published, most of them are published locally
Machine readability	4	Yes , the data uses MARC and Dublin Core
Non-discrimination	2	Not just anyone can access the data: several terms and conditions are applied
Use common data standards	3	Most libraries use uniform, unique identifiers and data standards to ease the flow of data and reduce system complexity.
License-free	3	Not all data are free

This condition happened because information dissemination policy was dominated by government, public relations was placed directly under local authorities. According to the Freedom of Information Act, all central or local government agencies should have an Information and Documentation Helpdesk Centre (IDHC). The provisions for IDHC were set out in Article 13 of the Public Information Act. IDHCs were obliged to serve the people in fulfilling their right to information for public scrutiny of state administration, to hold the state administration more accountable. The IDHC guarantees that every person can obtain relevant information also to improve the quality of community involvement in the public policy

creation process. Participation or community involvement does not mean much without a guarantee of openness of Public Information.

The Public Information Act is very important as the legal basis relating to (1) the right of every person to obtain information; (2) Public Bodies' obligation to provide and request information in a rapid, timely, low-cost / proportional and simple way; (3) is tight and limited exceptions; (4) Public Agency obligation to fix the system documentation and service information. Each public agency has the obligation to open access to public information relating to the Public Agency for the wider community. The scope of public bodies in this Act includes the executive, judicial, legislative, and other state apparatus that receive funding from National Budget or Local Budget and also includes non-governmental organizations, both legal and other entities such as non-governmental organizations, associations, and other organizations that manage or use the funds partly or wholly sourced from National Budget or Local Budget, community contributions, and/or abroad.

The state libraries, serve as distribution centres of the depository program were passive recipients of government publications. But in the Web environment, as we will describe, the libraries are becoming active selectors for the inclusion of a Web publication in the digital depository. Further, in the two modes of selection practices we identify active selection versus passive selection, the relationships between state libraries and state agencies are different. While the limited data precludes any conclusions about the superiority of one model over another, analysis highlights advantages and disadvantages of each approach. The policy of information dissemination were dominated by government public relations which was placed directly under local authorities,

## Participation

This part discusses the role of public library involvement in people's participation in government policy. The measurement was taken from the responses to the questionnaire covering: people's ability to gather with others, comment on government policies, sign petitions, hold peaceful demonstrations, and voice concerns about public policies. It also measures sufficiency of information and notice about decisions affecting the community, including the opportunity for citizen feedback. The overall survey results are shown in table 2.

Table 2. People's participation in libraries

Principles	Score	Descriptions
People gathering	2	People can gather but only when invited by the library
Comment on government policies	1	No
Sign petitions	1	No.
Hold peaceful demonstrations	1	No.
Voice concerns about public policies	1	No.

Using libraries for public participation is very uncommon in Indonesia. Most public libraries only held few events and most of them were just a gathering for special purposes

like a seminar, workshop. Public libraries are not intended as a space for people to gather discussing about government policy or gaining petition for government feedback. The library management is fully funded by the government and Indonesia is a “democratic” country that allows all of the local leaders like governor or mayor to have access to control public libraries and their content. The head of the library was chosen by the authority of governor or mayor, this is one of the problems that Indonesia has in managing libraries. Libraries are controlled by political performance by local authorities and libraries cannot stand up for people’s choice.

During Soeharto's presidency which lasted from 1967 to 1998, the government launched a strong centralized and sometimes repressive policy in all fields, including public librarianship. During that period, the National Library of Indonesia (NLI) acted as a central government agency supervising all 27 provincial branches, which in turn supervised the municipality and regency public libraries. After Suharto’s downfall in 1998, Indonesia entered a new era called the era of reformation. This era was marked by the turning of centralized policy toward decentralization except in certain affairs such as financial, foreign policy, military, police, religion and financial matters. In 1999, the government introduced the Regional Act implemented in 2000. This act transferred power to provincial, regencies and municipalities in many fields. The act also transfers library-related matters to provincial governments (right now there are 34 provinces). Buildings, collections, other properties and human resources were transferred to provincial governments, which in turn remodeled the former NLI’s provincial libraries according to their will.

The transfer of library-related matters to provincial governments has had a big impact such as:

- (1) the appointment of the head of the Provincial Libraries (formerly known as NLI Provincial Libraries) is up to the governors, hence the current provincial library heads originated from various services; mostly are the success team for the incumbent governors; or more precisely they are political appointees;
- (2) being political appointees, then the office term varies , once again, it depends on the governors’ whip;
- (3) the name varies, from ‘provincial libraries’ to ‘provincial archives and libraries’ or ‘library and archives office’ and to “exotic” names such as ‘documentation, library and archives offices’;
- (4) the difficult relationship between the NLI with the provincial libraries – (on one hand the provincial libraries are autonomous agencies directly under the province governor, but on the other hand they still get financial aids and technical assistance from the NLI albeit in the name of autonomy);
- (5) as the majority of provincial libraries are run by non-LIS-educated officials, there are tendencies to minimize the role of professional librarians;
- (6) the various differences in terms of development among the provinces .

Last but not least the culture of Indonesia: people are very ignorant of their roles and functions as a control and a partner in the Government. This is also exacerbated by the public library’s image as a dumpster for the bureaucrats.

These are problematic issues. Conclusions from this paper are that public libraries connections and collaboration with the open government program are still far below expectations.

## DISCUSSION

The data description above led to discussion to enhance connection and collaboration in Indonesia. The first point for discussion relates to government data publications. Data publication is a mixture of operational requirements, resources, and activities to prepare and publish data for public use. The requirements for data publication may include data standards and formats, privacy and confidentiality protections, metadata requirements, update mechanisms, and the design, features, and functionality of the OGD portal.

The initial portal, Indonesia One Search, was developed and hosted by National Library of Indonesia (<http://onesearch.id/>). The current portal host only datasets from universities but only few public libraries were ready to publish their government publications on Indonesia one Search. Statistic member shows only 2 of 33 public libraries in Indonesia joins with Indonesia one search. Indonesia is far behind other countries: the Indonesian government needs to issue regulations that support industry in Internet infrastructure to grow the Internet network infrastructure to spread throughout Indonesia (Irhamni, Ali; Hakim, Aristianto, 2015). The lack of qualified infrastructure also hampered local data publication also because most of the public libraries do not publish their data to support the application government repositories.

The realization of a solid management organization to manage digital library national scope supported by the availability of human resources professionals and adequate working infrastructure is still not evenly distributed in each region. However, the presence of this program has had an impact on improving the speed of public services at the library partners, with the National Library providing incentives in the form of IT infrastructure support. Access to technology for publishing data still low in Indonesia, look in 2014 of only 4 provincial government provide systems to access law and legal information in Indonesia and from 587 government institution in Indonesia, there are only 42 are have a good grade, and only 34 that have law and legal repository (Irhamni, Ali, Nurhadryani, Yani & Santoso, Joko, 2015).

The second point for discussion is about enhancing open government participation in Indonesia. This should involve public participation; it brings institutions, communities and citizens together to accelerate innovation, understanding, discussion and change. Involvement makes a practical difference by delivering high quality public participation processes as well as undertaking research and policy analysis into what works in public and stakeholder involvement. Responsiveness mechanisms, such as policy consultations or deliberative public participation initiatives, are also susceptible to weaknesses. Despite the growing focus on improving the quality of these types of activities, many consultation exercises remain tokenistic and ineffectual. Many are carried out on a tight budget, by inexperienced staff, and without sufficient consideration of how the findings will feed into policy making or whether the methods used are the most appropriate for the objectives.

Agencies at this stage focus on improving open participation of the public in government work and decision making through various methods and tools. Open participation enhances policy decisions and government services by welcoming and utilizing the input of the public. In Stage Two, agencies use social media and Web 2.0 tools, including Web dialogues, blogs, micro blogging, social networking, photo/video sharing, social bookmarking/tagging, and ideation tools, to create online public forums for engaging in anecdotes, stories, conversations, ideas, and comments.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the findings and discussions, there are some conclusions we can derive. The connection and collaboration are still poor in some areas of open government component. The element of transparency is still a long way from being achieved. Some component needing to be enhanced are (1) policy of information dissemination were dominated by government public relations which was placed directly under local authorities, (2) access to technology for publishing data is still low in Indonesia: for example, in 2014 only 4 provincial government provide systems to access law and legal information in Indonesia,

The second element that needs to be enhanced was people participation. The Indonesian government needs to rebrand the public libraries as places to give support and give an evaluation for government policies, and change the culture of Indonesian people from being ignorant people to their roles and functions as a control and a partner in the Government. These factors are also exacerbated by the public image of the library as a dumpster for the bureaucrats. The final conclusions from this paper are that public libraries' connections and collaboration with open government program are still far from expectations.

## Acknowledgments

- Law and strategic planning bureau National Library of Indonesia
- Centre of Library Development and Reading Habit Enhancement
- Indonesia Public Library Forum

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