Abstract
Primary responsibility of a university library is to support the teaching, learning and research activities in the University by providing information resources proactively. The technology enables the libraries to provide the services to the remote users as well and they need not be regular users of the library. The changes that are taking place in the education system are focusing on creating the learning environment in the Universities rather than the teaching. The students need more support from the libraries to support their learning and also sustaining that learning as a lifelong process. Local information is unique information that reflects the culture and traditions of the region and it is useful to the learners and researchers. Every academic library should setup their local information centers and share this information with others to understand different cultures. This paper details importance of local information and its management and the efforts that are made in creating a unique ‘Sirindhorn ISAN Information Center’ at the University Library, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

Keywords: Local Information, knowledge sharing, Sirindhorn Isan information center, Thai local knowledge.

Introduction
Local information is a key resource in today’s knowledge-based society, linking the past, present, and future. A comprehensive collection of local information and knowledge management on local wisdom is the foundation for creating formal knowledge and brings about a learning society. Local information in this paper can be defined as one of experimental knowledge which may be traditional or modern and frequently specific to a local content. It is acquired through individual and collective learning. Local knowledge has often been systematically validated or tested but is nevertheless dynamic and used by all of us in daily life. Public institutions such as libraries, archives, museums, universities and schools can contribute greatly to the preservation, utilization, and sharing of local information and /or cultural heritages. No library collection or information center can be said to be providing complete coverage of all local information for their users or customers. There is no one way to be effective and sustainable alone in this global society. Networking and collaborating with others is important since it would be beneficial for information sharing, creating mutual appreciation and respect in the learning society.

Local Information Collections in Libraries
The purpose of the libraries in general is to provide education, information, research, inspiration, and recreation to users. In the 21st Century, libraries are inevitably become learning centers and being knowledge-centers. The academic library’s mission is to contribute to the university’s academic excellence by identifying sources of information and knowledge recording them and developing organized collections relevant to the university’s mission and creating intellectual tools to utilize these collections easily regardless of medium.

However, local information collections and/or special collections are now unique and distinctive parts of good library services and their worth is recognized by users and professionals. They are established, developed and maintained for students and teachers, scholars and researchers, and other interested learners in the community. The collection itself also reflects the social, economic, local culture, and achievement of local community.

Academic Libraries should provide links to local information like: community groups around the university, Businesses, Culture, Events, Directories of Information, Houses of Worship, Links to local communities, Recreation & Parks, Restaurant Guide, Schools, Transportation and Directions, Weather, and historical aspects reflecting that the University is integral part of the community. The library should also maintain an extensive website with links to local newsletters etc.
Educational institutions or library schools in general offer courses which create awareness of social responsibilities of libraries, librarians, local studies, and local wisdom. Many organizations, libraries, and information centers now start to safeguard and promote their local information for education and developing an appreciation for the nation’s cultural and intellectual heritage. To play effective roles in managing local information collections requires solid infrastructure, administrative, human resources, materials, money, time, and good effort.

**Policy on Thai Local Wisdom and Information**

In case of Thailand, local traditional information or indigenous knowledge is substituted by the term, 'local wisdom' or 'Thai wisdom'. The term means the body of knowledge, abilities, and skills of Thai people accumulated through many years of experience, learning, development, and transmission. It has helped solve the problems and contributed to the development of our people's way of life in accordance with changing times and environment (Rung Kaewdang, 2004). Thailand has taken local wisdom and information into the legal framework of education such as the policy on Thai indigenous, the 1999 National Education Act and in the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. The 1997 Constitution introduced the enactment of the first National Education Act of 1999 toward the new century of learning.

**Policy on Thai Indigenous Knowledge**

The Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), as Thailand's national education policy organization, has conducted research on Thai knowledge in order to revitalize and return it to our educational system. The research-based policy was accepted by the cabinet, allowing the implementation of the policy through the six main strategies as follows:

1. Establishment of Thai Knowledge Council, which consists of Thai knowledge specialists, who will decide over the matters relating to a curriculum, instruction, and promotion of Thai knowledge.
2. Establishment of the National Research Institute for Thai Knowledge and Education which will promote the research on Thai knowledge.
3. Establishment of Thai Knowledge Fund to provide support for the research, education, and teachers of Thai knowledge.
4. Promotion of teaching and learning of Thai knowledge in the three systems of education: formal, non-formal, and informal.
5. Honoring and Rewarding Thai knowledge teachers, who have developed their experiences through informal education or self–learning, so that they will be recognized at the same level as certified school teachers. They will be encouraged to set up their own learning centers to transmit their Thai knowledge to the young generation in the community.
6. Formation of the Thai Knowledge Information Network System to collect and disseminate information on Thai knowledge. The network will also be a channel that Thai knowledge learning center can communicate and exchange information through the internet system.

**National Education Act 1999**

To comply with the Constitution, the National Education Act was enacted on research basis, it expands further the roles of Thai knowledge, referred to as ‘Thai Wisdom’ in the education system.

The Education Act Section 15 stated that educational institutions are authorized to provide any one or all the three types of education: formal, non-formal, and informal. One of the five educational approaches gives emphasis to knowledge about religion, art, culture, sports, Thai wisdom, and the application of wisdom.

Section 23 stated that Education through formal, non-formal, and informal approaches shall give emphasis to knowledge, morality, learning process, and integration of the knowledge about mathematics, science languages, vocational skills, conservation and utilization of natural resources and the environment. Most of all, knowledge about religion, art, culture, sports, Thai wisdom, and the application of wisdom is also emphasized.

Section 25 stipulates that the state shall promote the running and establishment, in sufficient number and with efficient functioning, of all types of lifelong learning sources, namely, public libraries, museums, art galleries, zoological gardens, public parks, types of lifelong learning sources and technology parks, sport and recreation centers, databases, and other source of learning.

**Policy on Promotion of Thai Wisdom into Education Management**

Selection of Thai Wisdom substances and learning procedures situate for integration into education systems: formal, non-formal and informal. Due recognition and acknowledgement to be conferred to ‘Master of Thai Local Wisdom’; financial and morale support be given to facilitate education management at all levels; enable them to set examples, guidance to right thinking, learning processes and life skills along the live of their experience.

It prescribes financial and logistic support for conducting research on integration of Thai wisdom into sustainable Education Management to fulfill needs and interests of the communities. The policy provides for building up database on Thai wisdom substances, a network of organizations and institutions concerned, at local and national level.

After Thailand’s National Education Act of 1999 came into effect, local wisdom and lifelong learning have been given even higher attention or priority in public policy. Educational institutions in Thailand have
integrated local studies related to history, local wisdom, local development, local beliefs, local culture, local arts, local dialects, local economy, local literature, and several others into the school curriculum for students and interested learners. The government promotes integration of education, religion, culture, and information. Now there are twenty provincial universities as PULINET members. The universities that belong to PULINET are as follows:

1. Mahasarakham University
2. Burapha University
3. Maejo University
4. Khon Kaen University
5. Chiangmai University
6. Taksin University
7. Suranaree University of Technology
8. Naresuan University
9. Walailak University
10. Silpakorn University Sanam Chandra Campus
11. Prince of Songkhla University Had Yai Campus
12. Prince of Songkhla University Pattani Campus
13. Ubon Ratchathani University
14. Sukhothai Thamathirat Open University, Nonthaburi
15. Nakhon Phanom University
16. Mae Fa Luang University
17. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University
18. Narathiwat Ratnakharin University
19. Kasetsart University Sriracha
20. Naresuan University, Phayao

Knowledge Sharing on Local Wisdom and Information Resources

In the past decades, there was serious concern in Thailand that much of traditional wisdom and important local information rapidly disappeared or become extinct. People in general had taken it for granted and neglected to collect and maintain the information and knowledge of their community in a way that can be accessible timely and be shared. Local information in a variety of formats was scattered in different places. Administrators did not invest and pay attention to improve the information system of their own communities. Local information runs the risk to become extinct or unavailable unless it is promoted, collected, developed, organized, and made available to users via links to local information network. Much of them are extinct as society develops through its new technology, social and economy. This bring the need to preserve, revitalizes, promote, and access to local information for education and the development of the society in sharp focus.

Networking and collaboration with external organizations is important since it would be beneficial for information or knowledge sharing, creating mutual appreciation and respect in the knowledge society.

Provincial University Library Network in Thailand
(PULINET: http://pulinet.thailis.or.th)

Many information centers including libraries of higher education institutions are increasingly strengthening the collection of their local information in their libraries. For example, university libraries of the Provincial University Library Network (PULINET) have formed a cooperative working group to build up strong local information collections and collaborative sharing of expertise and information resources for users. The first year PULINET project started in 1986 which comprised only six university libraries. These university libraries have good cooperation and collaboration in collection development, bibliographic databases, improving and developing information services, resource sharing promotion, developing effective delivery system, develop and apply new technologies to the library network. Each university library is responsible for management of local information in each region on three aspects – services, technology, and information. Now there are twenty provincial

The Case study of Mahasarakham University
(The Sirindhorn Isan Information Center)

Mahasarakham University is situated in the Northeast of Thailand. The Northeast of Thailand or ISAN was once a prosperous land with long history of civilization and cultural heritage. It is still one of the few places in Thailand where the local cultures are very much alive. The majority of the population still continues to live in the agrarian society where growing rice and tending to farm animals like cattle and buffaloes are the realities of everyday life in rural areas. The charm and beauty of the local traditions may become a thing of the past if steps are not taken to preserve them. The Sirindhorn Isan Information Center has been set up in the Academic Resource Center of MSU with the love and pride of the local culture and Isan heritages in order to provide access, share, and link to the needs of users as well as preserving them for the education, research and learning for the present and future generations.

Today the Sirindhorn Isan Information Center, Academic Resource Center, Mahasarakham University is one of the active PULINET members in Thailand. However, Isan Information Center has been collecting, organizing, and providing services of the Isan (Northeastern Thailand) information since 1970. It is
now a rich resource center of local information related to the Northeastern Thai communities or Isan culture. The collection and ways of bringing about interest and appreciation of local information in this Center are unique. Various forms of handwork, products of local wisdom have been replicated in the design of the bookshelves, display cases, reading and working facilities which by the features and appreciation of culture to users or passers-by. The Academic Resource Center and the Sirindhorn Isan Information Center continue to seek innovative and interesting ways to preserve indigenous wisdom and local culture through the library. Moreover, the Sirindhorn Isan Information Center has set up an International Cooperation of Local Information Project as a division in the Center to coordinate and develop a local information management network in Indo-China and Southeast Asia countries.

**Brief History and Initiatives of Mahasarakham University Library**

- Started collecting data and information about Isan or Northeastern Thailand (1970)
- Created a Corner of Isan document service (1977)
- Became Isan Document Center (1980)
- Got Folk Media Price awarded by the Office of the Prime Minister (1981)
- Became Isan Information Center and member of TSINET, Thammasat University (1991)
- HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously bestowed the name “Sirindhorn Isan Information Center” (1993)
- Mr. Kamjorn Chaowanarat donated 2 million Baht through the Princess for the center (1994)
- HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the grand opening (1995)
- Short-term and long-term training of 117 Laos library staff (1994-1998)
- Organizing meetings, seminars, exchange visits, training on cultural information with Laos, Vietnam, Japan and Cambodia (1997)
- Established co-operation through visiting, training, seminar, both national and international (2000-2003)
- Organizing international meetings on “Local Information Management Network in Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Thailand” from 2004
- Organizing international meetings on “Local Information Management Network in Southeast Asia” from 2005
- Developed a Portal that contains links to each member institution and their local information among network member 2006
- Training the Trainers through “Regional Workshops for Content Builders: Preserving and Sharing Local Information Resources Among Southeast Asian Network Members” 2006
- Convened an international meeting on “Assessment of the Initial Efforts toward Greater Resource Sharing Among Local Information Network Members in Southeast Asia” 2006
- Exchange visits and Training on Thai Collection Cremation Books at Kyoto University, Japan 2007
- Convened an international meeting on “Local Wisdom as Power to Social and Economic Development” 2008
- Offering a course on “Local Wisdom and Local Information for Educational Development” for doctoral students in Educational Administration and Development, Mahasarakham University from 2006 till date.

**Changes and Progress**

The Sirindhorn Isan Information Center has continuous collection of data, materials and documents in a variety of formats (sample artifacts, printed, and electronic resources). Isan information is entered in the Library automation database using MARC21 and Doblin Core metadata. All library furniture in the Center has been designed to depict Isan local culture and wisdom. Many users or customers are attracted by the beauty of the local arts and crafts and the way we created an interesting self-learning environment from local products. Once a user goes to get the book from each bookshelf or furniture in the SIIC, he/she will learn and get more information about Isan way of life and culture. Many people enjoy coming to access the collection and are curious to learn more about local culture.

Every year the Sirindhorn Isan Information Center (SIIC) has been compiling and publishing the abstracts of research studies on Isan housed in the Academic Resource Center, Mahasarakham University and have a great opportunity to give the publication to Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn at the graduation ceremony. A publication Project among Network Members on Local Information Management is now in progress.

The SIIC has made some progress on using ICT as a tool for production and sharing of local information. Most important one is the creation of e-content database of Isan information that can be stored, searched, and retrieved through the Internet using Doblin Core Metadata. E-Isan clippings are one of the e-contents that are made for user learning and education. The articles or news on Isan will be selected from the newspapers everyday, scanned, processed in a way that can be retrieved through the OPAC and databases.
The project of knowledge packaging on specific topics of Isan is the other initiative to facilitate the access to more information resources related to Isan region quickly and efficiently. Exchange visit to Indonesia, Philippines, Laos, Vietnam, Japan, India are part of this center.

Conclusion
The world is changing rapidly and at the same time trying to bring people closer through understanding and appreciation of different culture that would eventually lead to the concept of global village. Many people all over the world are now aware of the need to collect and preserve their local information for learning, developing their nation’s culture and sharing with others. Each society has its unique cultural heritage and information to be preserved, appreciated and promoted to sustain their identity.

Creating a learning community and networking with other local information centers in Thailand and inviting more countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia to join in creating and sharing the local information to spread knowledge should become an activity of the Academic Libraries.

The academic libraries are called upon to organize meetings, seminars and workshop for training and providing a forum to interact, exchange knowledge, views, and go together for better management of local information and knowledge

The participating libraries need to package the local knowledge to integrate resources for sharing and collaboration in the same standards. The libraries are also required to undertake Joint research project among network members apart from opening to new ideas for effective network management

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