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# Redefining library learning Facilities in Malaysia: Lesson from Frank Lloyd Wright sustainable approach in spatial and landscape design

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## Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to initiate and open a wider discussion on library design and learning facilities in Malaysia. It tries to take some lesson from one of the greatest modern American Architect which is Frank Lloyd Wright. The discussion itself will consist of four (4) parts. First part will discuss on the current problem and situation in reading and library issues in Malaysia while the second part will try to explore and review on the definition of outdoor learning with its importance and character in learning environment. The third part will focused on the Frank Lloyd Wright's sustainable approaches in spatial and landscape arrangement while the last part will do some analysis and comparison which result on the suggestion and recommendation for outdoor learning facilities design in Malaysia. With some understanding from the established environmental approaches of Frank Lloyd Wright's above it is expected that we can reconstruct and redefine some framework and guideline for future outdoor facilities design in Malaysia.

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*Keywords:* Outdoor Library Learning Facilities Design, Frank Lloyd Wright, spatial and Landscape arrangement;

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## 1. Introduction

In 1982, the National Literacy Survey carried out by the National Library reported that Malaysians only read an average of one to two *pages* a year. Fortunately, the reading habit among Malaysians improved to two books per year when the National Literacy Survey was repeated in 1996. Nonetheless, the last National Literacy Survey carried out in 2005 reported that Malaysians still read an average of two books a year. In short, there had been no improvement.

The last survey also reported that Malaysians read increasingly less as they grew older. By the age of 50, for example, only 20% of Malaysians would still continue to read books, a drop from 40% (a figure which is already

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pathetic) from those in the mid-twenties to thirties age group but survey also stated that the children in Malaysia read less book than the adult.

## 2. Reading and Library Issue in Malaysia

Although Malaysia has among the highest literacy rates in South-East Asia, Malaysians prefer light reading material like newspapers and magazines to books. Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said at the launch of the Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair 2009 at the Putra World Trade Centre. According to literacy statistics, out of 85% of Malaysians who read regularly, 77% of them prefer newspapers, 3% read magazines, 3% read books and 1.6% read comics.

*“If we were to compare with American citizens, 53% of them read fiction and 43% of them read non-fiction books.” Malaysians are more inclined to read light material while citizens from developed countries read books, The UN Development Programme’s 2007/2008 report said the literacy rate of Malaysians, at 93.2%, was behind developed countries like Japan, Britain, the United States, Australia and Germany, which have literacy rates of 99%. We still have room for improvement in terms of increasing the literacy rate to 99% by 2020 and the quality of material that we read. Parents play an important role in nurturing the reading habit among their children. Students should read more books, not just revision books or textbooks for examinations.”*

Prof. Ambigapathy Pandian from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) has perhaps studied the most on the reading habits of Malaysians. In an interesting paper by him in 2000, he surveyed that 80.1% of university students are “reluctant” readers in English-language materials. In other words, 80.1% university students read because they have to. Interestingly, Malay and Indian students have a higher tendency to seek English-language reading materials than the Chinese. Based on his survey, Prof. Pandian also outlined a profile of a habitual reader in English.

The Malaysian education system is in dire straits. With the education system reverting back to Malay language as the medium of instruction in schools and the government desperately plugging all holes in a sinking boat, I strongly believe the key to improving our education is the inculcation of a strong reading habit among all Malaysians. Although the government has launched several reading campaigns (the recent one is the *Mari Membaca 1Malaysia*, launched in March 2010) to increase the reading habit among Malaysians throughout the years, obviously these campaigns aren’t quite working as desired.

A reading habit is an essential life skill. Reading not only increases our knowledge, but it also builds maturity and character, sharpens our thinking, and widens our awareness in social, economic, political, and environmental issues. What most of us don’t know that, unlike speech, reading is a learned skill; our brains aren’t hard-wired to read. Although a baby can pick up speech from listening to others talking, reading requires learning. In other words, reading takes effort. It is hard work. But it builds our brain muscles. The effort to inculcate a reading habit pays off handsomely, either directly or indirectly, in our lives.

## 3. Children Learning Development and The Importance of Outdoor Learning

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has articulated a position statement on principles of child development and learning that inform developmentally appropriate practice (NAEYC, 1997). Child development encompasses several domains: cognitive, social, physical, and emotional. While developmental stages occur in an ordered progression and new skills are dependent on old skills, the rate at which each child develops differs. In addition, an individual child can progress through different domains at different rates (NAEYC, 1997). That is, not only do different children develop at different rates, but an individual child may progress unevenly within different domains. For example, a child may have a highly developed sense of kinetics, spatial

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