

LIS Curriculum Design: Collaborative Partnerships of Various Stakeholders in Social Media

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Abstract:

Social media has been widely used as a platform in education particularly in teaching and learning. This is enthused by the available features in social media platform that enable close connections between students to students and students to teachers through online discussion, feedbacks, comments and sharing information. This is supported by a unique characteristic of millennial learners who value interactivity through immediate two-way communication and anticipate a prompt information retrieval since they were grown up with information on their fingertips mainly being able to Google anything. This paper however is not going to address how social media is being used in teaching and learning process but to report and share our experiences in using social media as a tool when designing our curriculum for Master of Library and Information Science particularly in University of Malaya. Therefore this paper presents how social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) is being used as a platform to support collaboration among various stakeholders involves in the curriculum design as we conducted our market survey; getting feedback from industries, current students and alumni; tracer study and later marketing our program. This paper would be useful to other LIS schools to learn from our experiences in developing curriculum taking advantages of social media platform to gather information from geographically disperse stakeholders.

Keywords: curriculum design, social media, library and information science..

Introduction

In Malaysian's landscape, Library and Information Science education is being offered by five schools namely Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), University of Malaya (UM), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) and University of Selangor (UNISEL). This programme involves LIS education in various levels such as Diploma, Bachelor, Master and PhD degree. Generally, the focus of these degrees is on producing practitioners who are in demand in information related industries, especially the education sector. Most graduates from the LIS programmes find employment in university libraries, either public or private. The Bachelor of Sunnah Studies with Information Management is the latest academic programme to be offered. This is to fulfil the demand by stakeholders for skilled workforce to manage records and information relating to Islamic studies.

LIS Education in University of Malaya

Efforts towards LIS education in UM began as early as 1987, when the Master of Library and Information Science program was introduced at University of Malaya under the Institute of Postgraduate Studies (Saad, Sharif, Mohamad, & Nadzar, 2012). The programme however was differed due to lack of teaching staff. Efforts to revive the programme succeeded in re-introducing the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) in 1995 with its first batch of students (Edzan & Abdullah, 2003). The programme was then conducted in both Coursework and Mix-mode. In 1993 University of Malaya offered three modes of the Masters level LIS education. Candidates who have work experience in library and information related fields and would like to pursue their career in research had the option to enrol in the Masters of Information Science (by Research). This programme is designed to be completed within a minimum of 2 semesters. The product would be a dissertation and a minimum of one published WoS (Web of Science) indexed journal paper. The full coursework mode however was not offered once UM was conferred the Research University status in 2010. In line with the university's vision and mission, the program's educational objectives were designed to fulfil the need to produce graduates who were also researchers. The Mix-mode programme consisted of core courses, elective courses and candidates were required to fulfil the requirements of a 36-credit dissertation. During this time, the volume of research within the MLIS programme increased significantly. Students under the supervision of experienced faculty were guided to conduct quality research and produce research articles worthy of publication in peer-reviewed journals. However, over time there was a decrease in the number of students for the mix-mode programme. A market survey was carried out and feedback informed us that a full coursework programme is necessary for candidates with no prior library science qualifications who would like to pursue a career in library and information services. In 2017 the Department obtained the approval to offer a full coursework mode programme. Currently there are 3 modes of the programme:

- i. Master in Library & Information Science – Coursework mode
- ii. Master in Information Science (Library Science) – Mix-mode
- iii. Master of Information Science – Research Mode

Table 2 depicts the programme learning outcomes for all three modes of the LIS education. Each learning outcome is aligned to the vision and mission of the university and faculty. Both generic skills and subject specific knowledge and skills relating to the LIS discipline have been carefully formulated with valuable input from students, alumni and potential employers.

These details are made available to all students via the faculty website (<http://www2.fsktm.um.edu.my/handbook/PG>).

Table 2: Learning Outcomes of All Three Programmes

Master of Information Science – Research Mode	Master in Library & Information Science – Coursework Mode	Master in Information Science (Library Science) – Mixed Mode
Demonstrate a systematic understanding of knowledge by identifying research problems or insights in a particular field	Synthesize theories, principles and advanced knowledge in the field of LIS	Synthesize essential concepts and theories in the field of library and information science, in the processes associated with knowledge creation, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis and dissemination of information
Apply appropriate research methodologies and techniques	Apply advanced skills in managing preserving and disseminating information effectively in the current environment	Apply the techniques and skills to generate, evaluate, organize, disseminate, preserve and use information effectively in the information-based organization environment to support clients' needs
Relate leadership qualities through communicating and working effectively with peers and stakeholders	Apply advanced knowledge and skills in demonstrating social responsibility to support information society needs.	Use knowledge and skills in the field of LIS for the benefit of society, and is conscious of the role and responsibility of supporting the needs of the information society
Conduct research with minimal supervision and adhere to legal, ethical and professional codes of practice	Practice the principles, policies and high ethical values in the provision of information in diverse professional practice.	Adopt high ethical values and intellectual freedom in professional practice and social interaction
Publish in peer reviewed academic journals in his/her field of study	Communicate effectively and able to work in a team and exhibit leadership skills	Communicate effectively, orally and in writing, and be able to work in a team and exhibit leadership skills
Appraise research findings using scientific and critical thinking skills	Apply effective problem solving and decision-making in management, services and research.	Conduct research and use problem solving tools and techniques in information services environment
	Engage in professional development and social activities in information management and lifelong learning.	Engage in professional development activities in information management and lifelong learning.

University of Malaya's educational objectives guides the teaching and learning methods applied in the delivery and assessment of the programmes. The extensive use of the e-learning platform, SPeCTRUM, which is based on Moodle, supports independent learning among the adult learners. The system allows for timely feedback of student assessment and this helps in improving their learning experiences. The LIS curriculum is reviewed every three years to ensure its content is up-to-date and fulfils market needs. Annually the program and the teaching staff are evaluated by the students for continual quality improvements to the teaching learning methods, facilities and assessment methods.

In anticipation of the students' research needs, the Department of Library & Information Science also conducts a series of research methods seminars and workshops to assist students in conducting research so that they may produce quality work and graduate on time. To further support this, the department conducts an international conference once in every two years – *International Conference of Libraries, Information & Society (ICoLIS)*. To date the ICoLIS has been held six times since 2007. This conference gives the students an opportunity to not only enhance their soft skills in organizing and managing an event, but also to present and publish their work as a conference proceeding paper. Another effort to enhance the students' research skills are by training them in technical writing for journal papers. The Department's WoS indexed journal – the *Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science* (<http://www.myjournal.my>), is another avenue to encourages students to conduct good research and publish their research findings.

The programmes are aware of the need to keep the graduates in touch with society needs and actively involve themselves in activities that contribute to society. Guest lectures by international LIS academic have helped to instil a positive attitude towards appreciating the contribution of LIS to society.

Figure 1: Guest Lectures by International LIS Academics



Professor Mike Thelwall, Almetrics Measuring Impact in Scholarly Communication, 18 Jan 2018



Prof Kathleen, Information Domains and Information Ethics, 3 Mei 2017

To date 322 students have graduated from the Masters programme since 1997, while about 35 students have graduated since 2000 from the PhD programme relating to LIS. University of Malaya is proud to have not only sustained the LIS programmes but produce graduates who are knowledgeable, skilled and have the ability to apply these skills in advancing library and information services. The programme must continually engage with the stakeholders to keep abreast with the current market and improve the programme in line with these demands, while maintaining the core content of the discipline of library and information science.

Curriculum Design and Development at University of Malaya

Curriculum design process should follow the guideline by Malaysia Qualification Framework (MQF) that develops and classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria that are approved nationally and benchmarked against international best practices. The University of Malaya Quality Manual (QM) clearly states that the University of Malaya Quality Management System (QMS) covers all processes related to teaching and learning on the undergraduate and postgraduate level and govern the way the curriculum is established, reviewed and evaluated.

As a general principle, curriculum design and development originates at the Deputy Dean of Higher Degree's at a faculty level based on needs assessment. The Programme Curriculum Committee, which is appointed by the Dean with the advice of the Head of Department, is granted authority under UM QMS document to review and design new programmes and courses. This committee reviews existing programmes at the end of every cycle. The programme is discussed at the Postgraduate Programme Committee Meeting, which is then tabled at the Faculty Meeting. Once approved, the proposed/reviewed programme is vetted by the University Committee for Curriculum Review and forwarded to Senate and University Board of Directors for final approval.

The various roles of the faculty, the administration and the governing board are required towards the establishment of the programme approval; monitoring and review processes often involve stakeholders, industrial liaison panels and external examiners. Such involvement may be made through the consultation pertaining to the curriculum and a market survey prior to development is carried out. Needs assessment exercises are conducted before the establishment of any programme. Consultations are also made with employers, staff, students, peers, professionals, industry and informed community members to ensure that the teaching–learning method of all programmes are appropriate and current in terms of content; and consistent with the attainment of outlined programme outcomes. The Curriculum Committee examines all course proposals to ensure that they contribute to the mission, aims and objectives of the University.

Work Process in Curriculum Development

Curriculum development for a master programme takes effect when there arises a need to meet current demand for that programme or human resource demand in the public and private sector. For MLIS in Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, the curriculum development and review process carries out on a regular basis to ensure the curriculum is current and in line with the progress in scientific, technological and knowledge development of the various disciplines.

The review takes into consideration the following developments:

- a) Human resources needs for the country particularly new programme for emerging fields.
- b) Five-Year Malaysia Plan.
- c) Current market demands from the industry.
- d) Feedback from external examiner and stakeholders.
- e) Sustainability of existing programme.
- f) Data from surveys conducted.

In the curriculum review process, continuous and ongoing curricular discussions are conducted within and across departments about appropriate content, objectives and pedagogical strategies for presenting general education courses. Programmes are reviewed at least once every three years. The department at the faculty initiates the programme review. A committee for Curriculum Review is set up at the faculty level to review the programme. The documents are then tabled to the Postgraduate Committee and later to the faculty meeting. The faculty then tables the documents to the university. The existing postgraduate programmes are tabled directly to Senate and the Board of Directors' meeting for recommendation. Finally, the documents are submitted to Minister of Education (MOE) for approval. The terms of reference of the University Curriculum Review Committee are also applicable to the postgraduate programmes. This committee vets through the documents to ensure that all professional requirements (where necessary), as well as the requirements from MOE and MQA are adhered to for both postgraduate and undergraduate programmes.

The University Curriculum Review Committee examines the curriculum to ensure that the programme contributes to the mission, aims and objective of the university. Vetting is also done to ensure the Programme Outcomes are written in accordance to the seven domains set by the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). Programme monitoring and review process in the University of Malaya involves stakeholders, industrial liaison panels and external examiners. Such involvement may be through consultation on the programme structure and curriculum and through market surveys. Consultations are carried out with employers, staff, students, peers, professionals, alumni, industry and informed community members to ensure that the student academic load and teaching-learning method of all programmes are appropriate and current in terms of content, and consistent with the attainment of outlined programme outcomes.

Benchmarking study was conducted with other IPTAs and universities abroad. For the case of Master of Library and Information Science, apart from University Malaya there are only two other IPTAs offering MLIS program. They are:

- Universiti Teknologi MARA who offers Master of Library and Information Science
- Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (IIUM) who offers Master of Library and Information Science

While a benchmarking study with other universities abroad involves two universities from the UK and one from the US:

- University of Sheffield (UK) who offers MA/MSc in Information & Library Management
- Loughborough University (UK) who offers MA Librarianship
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA) who offers Master of Science in Library Science

Collaborative Partnership of Various Stakeholders in Social Media

Efficient and effective LIS education can be realized through working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders such as employer, prospectus students, industries, current students and alumni. This is done mainly for the purpose of: i) curriculum design as we conducted our market survey to gather feedback from industries, and current students; ii) tracer study and getting feedback from alumni; and iii) marketing our program.

Social media was used to disseminate and reach the target audiences particularly in conducting the market survey aimed at prospectus students and also industry and other stakeholder. For MLIS our programme, our presence in social media platform was evident from department of LIS FB Page and Twitter account. For LIS field in Malaysia, there are at least two active FB groups used as communication platform for LIS practitioners and scholars namely as *Sembang Pustakawan* and Malaysian Librarian Association (PPM).

Market Survey

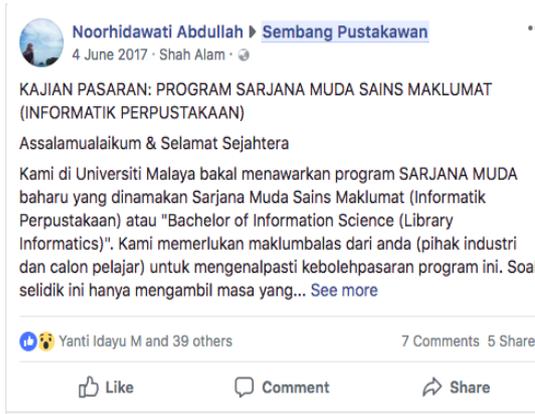
In curriculum development, a market survey was conducted to gain input from stakeholders and prospectus students. The employer is the one of the main stakeholders, and the feedback from stakeholders play an essential and enriching role in the curriculum development of this programme. Verbal feedback from employers such as National Library of Malaysia (PNM) and Library of Malaysian News Agency (BERNAMA) were taking into consideration to improve the courses and programme as whole during annual curriculum review and development.

Besides the meetings with industry, important feedback comes from surveys. These reports which are given at the end of students' year and surveys conducted will help Programme Coordinator to look at the programme's strengths and weaknesses, and thus will help in determining their niche areas.

Social media platform was used as a platform to disseminate market surveys of LIS related programme. Figure 2 shows FB post on market survey conducted to gather feedback on the programme marketability from industry and potential students:

Figure 2: Conducting Market Surveys via Facebook

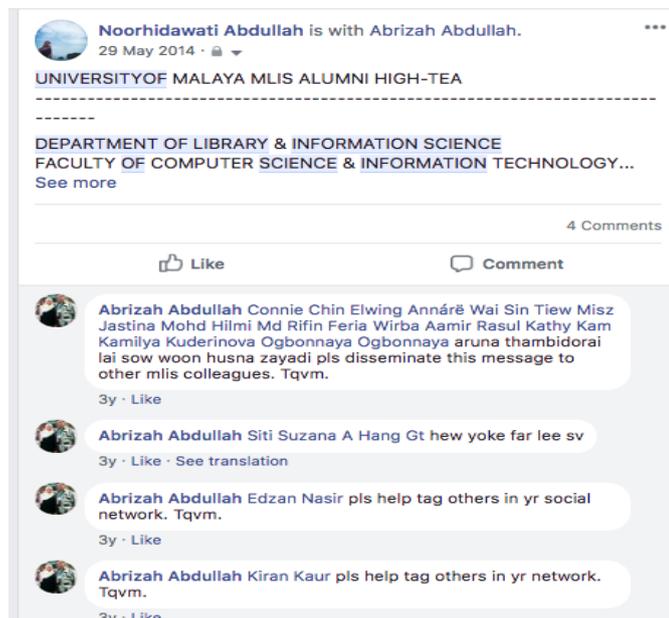




Tracer study

Tracer study or alumni survey was conducted to trace graduates to improve education programme that better suit the employment requirements. For the purpose of curriculum review and development, FB was used as a platform to broadcast an ALUMNI HIGH-TEA event and gather information on MLIS programme in a tracer study. An example of such activity is shown in Figure 4.

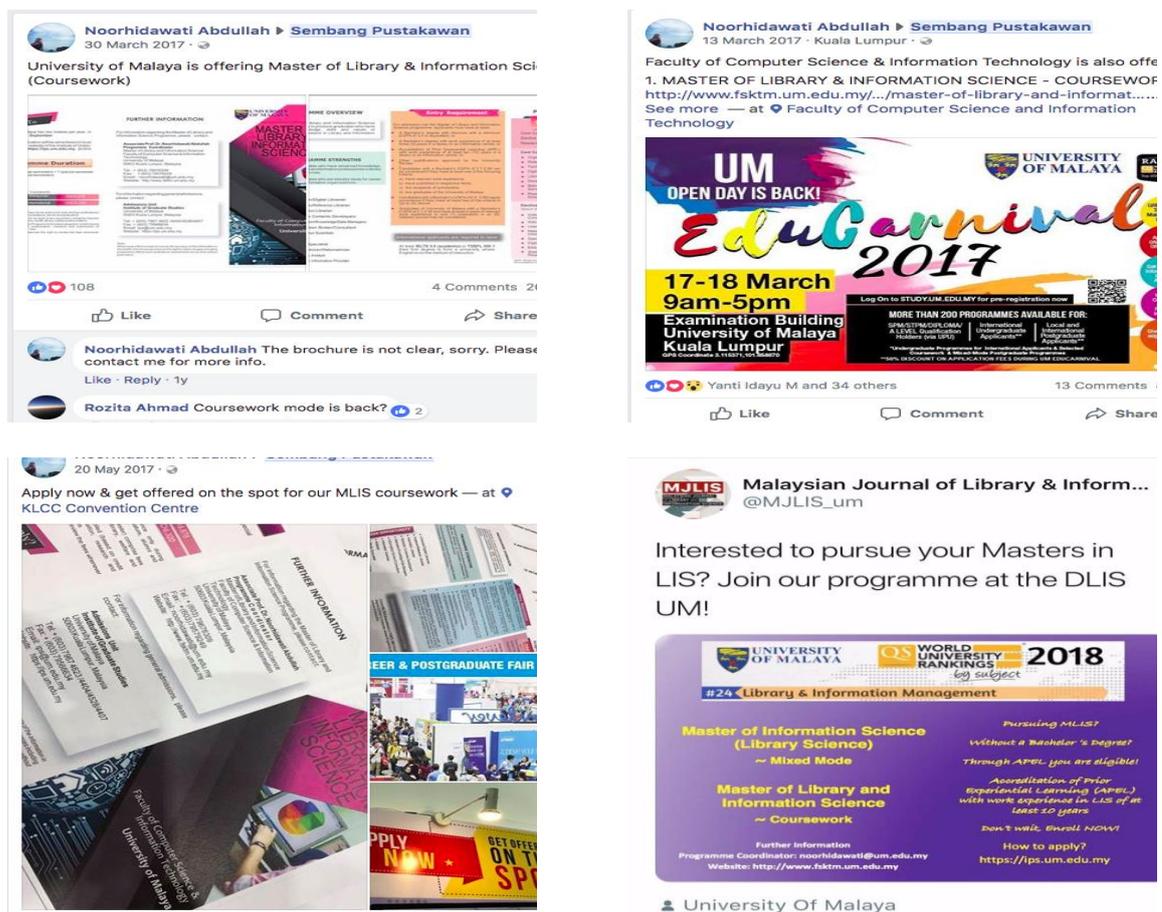
Figure 4: FB Post for Alumni Hight-Tea Event



Marketing Our Program

Social media platform such as FB and Twitter are being used to reach potential students in marketing of our MLIS programme. Some examples of the social media posts for marketing purpose are depicted in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: FB and Twitter Post for MLIS Programme Marketing



Discussion and Conclusion

This paper reports our experience and practices utilizing social media in LIS curriculum design, development and review. Through Facebook page and twitter account we have managed to gather information from various stakeholders involves in our curriculum design as we conducted our market survey; getting feedback from industries, current students and alumni; tracer study and also marketing our program. The available features in social media platform have enable two-way communications and close connections between friends and followers who are mainly our programme stakeholders to gather rapid responses and information regardless geographical location.

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