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Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA) : The Library

By

Nor Esah Mohd Said
Country Report: Malaysia

Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA): The Library

Background

BERNAMA, the Malaysian National News Agency, was set up in 1967 by an Act of Parliament to provide a channel of communication between the government and the people of the country on the one hand, and between Malaysia and its neighbours on the other.

UNESCO assisted in the establishment of BERNAMA. Among other things, BERNAMA was advised on the setting up of a library, which was to serve as the repository for all news items supplied by BERNAMA to its subscribers. Clippings from other newspapers and magazines were also collected and stored in the library, to supplement our own items.

The library had thus, from the very start, played an integral part in BERNAMA's operations, providing its editorial staff the back-up they require in their daily tasks, in the form of information on the various events as well as the background on other items.

And from such humble beginnings, the BERNAMA Library has grown into one of the largest press libraries in the country, in terms of newspaper and magazine clippings, as well as BERNAMA's own stencils.

BERNAMA LIBRARY SERVICES

Since its establishment in 1967, as an Information Centre, the library provides access to full text information from BERNAMA's own news bulletins and other local newspapers in diverse topics tailored to the needs of the editorial staffs.

In the beginning, it acts as an in-house library, but over the years, the library had spread its services to outsiders as well to those who wish to carry out research work in their respective fields.
The services include:-

1. A comprehensive and easily available in broad range of news of information of:-
   a) Up to date cuttings of newspapers reports and articles on domestic news and in various subjects.
   b) Up to date cuttings of newspapers reports and articles on all companies listed at the BSE.
   c) Up to date cuttings of newspapers reports and articles on prominent Malaysian personalities.
   d) Up to date cuttings of newspapers reports and articles on different countries relevant to Malaysia.

2. BLIS - BERNAMA Library and Information Service by which information is made available to members on a fee basis, by subscription or by membership. Members have access to the information through phone, facs or come to the library personally.

3. Quick reference service

   The library maintain a quick up-to-date reference enquiry service to complement the news clippings files.

   This is to provide simple pieces of information as those regarding spelling, names and titles of persons, addresses, organisations etc.

4. Maintain and update the Personality Date Base.

   Apart from the files, the library has started a data base on prominent Malaysian personalities.

   The need to have such a data base arises from the need to have a write-ups on such personalities especially with the new appointments.

   The compilation is based on questionnaires sent out to the various persons.
5. **Research and compilation of data service by subject.**
   
   The research and compilation is based on the anticipation of events so that before a particular event can take place, the background information to it is made available to the reporting staffs. Should the need arises for such information, the details is ready to be disseminated.

6. Preparing a reading lists or bibliographies on specific subjects, covering recent additions to the collection and guides to the library's resources and services.

7. Displaying current acquisitions on bulletin boards as well as various kinds of information.

8. Circulating lists of new acquisition to the library.

9. Monitoring the usage of BERNAMA news by the various local newspapers.

10. Acquiring library materials selectively for reading/reference.

**Holdings:**

The bulk of its stock is comprised of the following materials:

1. **Files:**

   These files may contain up to 100 pages of clippings from various local newspapers/magazines pertaining to Malaysia. They are available in broad range of subjects as well as sub-titles. The subject list is created according to the need of the organisation. Normally, as far as possible they have direct titles to make retrieval easier.

   To date the library has 8,000 titles of files amounting to 30,000 files.
There are 4 different categories of files. They are:

i. **Subject files** which contain clippings on various fields from general to specific.

ii. **Personality files** which consists of 2 sections.

iii. **Company files** which contains clippings as well as the company’s annual reports.

iv. **Country files** which consists of newspapers/magazines reports of happenings in the various countries.

v. **BERNAMA Correspondence files**.

b. **BERNAMA Stencils**

These are actually BERNAMA’s daily news releases which are comprised of the following:

- General News Services/Berita Am Malaysia.
- Economic News Service/Berita Ekonomi.

These stencils are kept in the form of bound volumes and dated from January 1968.

3. **Reference files**

These consist of 2 types:

They are the Quick-Reference cards which normally carry brief information on various subjects. Brief information such as clubs/addresses/instituencies/members of Parliament and so forth.

These informations are typed on a 6" x 4" cards and kept in cabinets drawers.

They are updated daily and are important source of information.
For a more detailed information, the library also provides research work on various fields. Due to lack of personnel, this activity is rather slow, but for important events such as elections, efforts had been concentrated on it to make such information readily available for reference.

4. Books

Acquisition is by purchase and donations. Subject ranges are mass communications, management, social science, history, general books as well as reference materials.

There are about 2,000 titles in the library.

5. Magazines, journals, periodicals, bulletins and reports

Certain items under this category are purchased while some are obtained free.

From time to time the library receives these materials either directly from the publisher or through our editorial staffs.

The library only keeps certain titles which we feel important. The rest are discarded after a certain period.

6. Acts and gazettes/government publications

Our collection in this section is quite exhaustive.