

Bukan Rumpi Tapi Diskusi – A Means of Promoting Library Collection

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Bukan Rumpi Tapi Diskusi (BRTD) is a discussion series that uses the Indonesian Studies collections at the Asian Studies Research Collection (ASRC) of Monash University library as points of reference. I initiated the discussion series because I believe that it would be able to maintain and expand the library's connection with its existing users, potential users, as well as public in general. So far, the discussion series has been going relatively well and fulfilled its role as a connection builder with the "outer world". It has also become an effective means of promoting the library collections. In this article, I am going to share my experience in initiating and running the series.

In line with Crawford's idea, the discussion series is designed as an activity where a library "tells its story". The conduct of this series fulfils five elements of promotion or story telling of the library, namely telling public about the library's "ongoing story", "in new ways", about available "changes and new services", aimed at "new groups" and "attracting participation" (Crawford, 2007, pp. 165-166). Regardless of the terms used – promoting, telling story, informing, and so on, the aim is to promote the library collection.


I deliberately named the series "*Bukan Rumpi Tapi Diskusi*". It is an Indonesian phrase that I freely created, which can literally be translated as "Not Gossiping But Discussing". Upon disseminating the ideas and invitations for the sessions, I kept on introducing an abbreviation of BRTD with the expectation that people would easily remember the series. Surprisingly people DO remember the series very well, yet they have been calling it "the *Rumpi*" discussion. In a way, it is sad because "*rumpi*" literally means "gossiping". To me, however, the fact that existing and potential users of the library remember the event as a discussion series instead of gossiping series outstrips the misunderstood phrase. Moreover, the fact that they keep attending the sessions is indeed the most important.

The basis for conducting this discussion series is totally different from that of seminars and discussions carried out at by academic departments and faculties. While faculties commonly conduct discussions or seminars based on interests or topics, BRTD uses the library's Indonesian Studies collections as points of reference. Also, instead of inviting a speaker, a discussant from a relevant area of specialty is invited for every session to give a talk for approximately twenty-minutes, followed by a discussion session guided by

the subject librarian. This creates a distinct atmosphere of discussion, since the focus is on one or some library materials and the discussant does not become the sole source of information.

In Preparation

In preparation for the session, a process of resources selection is conducted. As the subject librarian for Indonesian Studies, I make decisions on one or more resources that are of significant importance and potentially attract audience. This is then followed by displaying the relevant material(s) in an accessible area for public view. Different flyers were also produced for each discussion session to promote the event.



Bukan rumpi tapi diskusi
 Monthly discussions on the Indonesian collection
 Last Thursdays of the month, 2-3 pm

 **MONASH University**
 Library

www.lib.monash.edu


Join a series of monthly discussions on topics highlighting unique items in the Indonesian collection. See you at the next *Bukan rumpi tapi diskusi* session.

Illustrations in global commodity advertisements for Sundanese (West Javanese) in early 20th century

Thursday 29 November 2012, 2pm-3pm

ISB Meeting Room 2, Matheson Library, Building 67, Clayton campus

Contact Anita Dewi by telephone 03 99052658 or email: Anita.Dewi@monash.edu

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Page 1 and 2 of the 4th session flyer
 (design and photo by the author)

Two weeks prior to the conduct, email invitations are circulated to different e-mailing lists – community, student, academic, social organisation, and others. Personalised email invitations are also sent to individuals who are potentially interested in the area of discussion. This is proven to a better approach potential audience than global email invitations. Following the email invitations, email reminders for the event are sent two to three days prior to the session. This turns out to be a successful means of persuading people to attend the session. In both the email invitations and reminders, I also put down a note that the session is an “all welcome” event, and advise the people invited to feel free in disseminating information about the event. This is done according to the Indonesian cultural background in general, where RSVP would tend to make them hesitant to register as it tends to bring about obliged feelings.



“**Digital Atlas of Indonesian History**” is an interactive and electronic work which is a follow-up to the “Historical Atlas of Indonesia” that so many have been looking for in the past decade. Based on traditional research and scholarship, and available both digitally and online, its nearly 500 specially drawn full-colour maps are augmented with a detailed companion text. This is a pioneering work that brings fresh life to the fascinating and tangled history of Indonesia’s immense archipelago.

On display: Digital Atlas of Indonesian History (book and CD-rom), Historical Atlas of Indonesia, and *Atlas Fisik dan Lingkungan Alam* as the background.



Description of materials on display for promoting the event
(design and photo by the author)

Each BRTD session is run every last Thursday of the month from 2pm to 3pm. There are specific reasons for running the session at this specific time and for this specific duration. Prior to making decisions on a particular day and time of the month for the session to be conducted, observations on the habitual attendance of students and staff on campus were carried out. The observations indicate that Thursdays are the days when it is least likely for meetings and supervisions for research students to occur at the university. It is even less likely that meetings occur in the last week of the month. Meanwhile, 2 to 3pm is chosen because it is after lunchtime for the potential attendees, yet it is before home time for students and staff that is commonly 4 pm onwards.

In Action

The first session of the discussion series was on a book entitled “Watching Si Doel: Television, Language, and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Indonesia” (Loven, 2008). The book talks about a television series broadcast on Indonesian national television as a means of local ethnic identity actualisation at a national level. The invited discussant was an Indonesian PhD Candidate in Film and Television. His expertise was certainly relevant to the library collection that was used in the discussion.



The first session - discussing “Si Doel”
(photo by the author)

Forty people made up the audience for the first session. These people came from diverse backgrounds – Indonesians, non-Indonesians, Indonesian learners, outstanding Indonesianists within the university, academics from several faculties, and also general public. At the end of the session, some people in the audience expressed their interests in the Indonesian Studies collections at Monash University library and stated that they did not realise how comprehensive the collection was. Several of them joined a tour of the Asian Studies Research Collections (ASRC) at Monash University library after the session. Some others followed up by emailing further inquiries about Indonesian Studies collections. A phone interview was also offered by SBS Radio – Indonesian program to elaborate information on the collection after this series was commenced. Since then, publication of this series has been supported by broadcasts of SBS Radio – Indonesian program and ZZZ radio.

Applying a similar approach in preparation, the second session of BRTD was conducted on “Di Bawah Lindungan Ka’bah” (Hamka, 1938, 1956; Hamka & Fardiand, 2011; Punjabi, Punjabi, Saputra, & Amantono, 2011), an Indonesian classic novel contesting romance in Islamic teaching and local culture. Discussion on both the multiple copies of the novel and its film version was attended by 30 people. The materials that were used as points of reference turned out to be significant in attracting potential audience to come to the event. The choice of materials to be discussed was clearly important in persuading audience

to come and join the discussion session. Meanwhile, having a female Muslim Indonesian educator who has lived more than half of her life in countries where Islam is a minority religion also provided a different “flavour” to the discussion. Through her perspective, the materials showing the contesting romance in Islamic teaching and local culture led through a more lively discussion.



Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah – discussion materials
(photo by the author)

The second session was followed by the third session in the following month, which was slightly different in approach. The third session was conducted on the “Digital Atlas of Indonesian History” (Cribb, 2010). In this particular session, the discussant invited is a non-Indonesian professor who has published a review on the digital atlas. Not only did he inform the audience of the plus and minuses of the resources, but he also invited the audience to join an interactive workshop using the atlas. Twenty-five people of attended this session, where almost every one of them had an opportunity to experience searching information in this digital atlas.

Finally, the last session of the year was conducted on illustrations in global commodity advertisements for Sundanese (West Javanese) in early 20th century which were found in “Volksalmanak Soenda” (“Volksalmanak Soenda,” 1919 - 1940). This session, which was attended by 29 people, hosted an Indonesian researcher whose expertise was on Sundanese book illustrations.

A specific lesson learned from this session is that even seemingly less used materials can actually trigger interests of existing and potential users of the library to the collections. After the conduct of this session, several discussion attendees indicated their further interests by looking through special collections held at the library. As a matter of fact, the last discussion session has encouraged new ideas on potential future research.

Final Remarks

At the end of the year, I conducted a simple evaluation of the series. In terms of attendance, it has not been easy to predict the success of this series prior to each session. Even though informal chats were done prior to the conduct of each series session, there has never been any guarantee of how the turn ups would be. To make it even more unpredictable is the fact that this series is not something compulsory, both for students and staff members. As Cronau stated, “if a program is not compulsory (and even if it is), attendance cannot be guaranteed unless those involved agree that it is congruent with their current and perceived future life needs and goals” (2001, p. 344). Indeed, I have been relying so much on the needs and goals of the prospective audience in deciding the resources to be used as discussion materials.

In addition to extra attention on the potential attendees’ needs and goals, intense approach also needs to be done. In sending invitations for the sessions, for instance, personal emails are preferred than global anonymous emails. This may seem to be a very hard work to do. However, I realise that it is worth doing, since the people invited feel the more personal approach rather than receiving global emails.

Upon analysing its benefits and efforts, I came to a conclusion that the discussion series does not only play the role of outreaching users and potential users of the library, but it has also played the role of reviving the relevant area of studies which in this case is Indonesian Studies. Even though the impact may not be as strong as other endeavours that are more direct in nature, the effort has revealed to be sufficiently successful in doing so. Interests in resources on Indonesian Studies collections have increased, as indicated by the increasing number of inquiries via email, phone, as well as users being physically present at the library. It is thus my intention to continue running this series in 2013.

As Stover stated, there are five ways to promote the library, namely “get out of the library”, “foster and measure word of mouth”, “identify underserved target markets”, “open up to patron involvement”, and “be your library’s trend-spotter”(2012). The conduct of *Bukan Rumpi Tapi Diskusi* sessions is in fact a realisation of at least three of the aspects above. The discussion series is a way of reaching out to those outside the library who were recognised as not fully served. The series has also opened up opportunities for existing and prospective users of the library to be involved both as discussants and audience.

Moreover, the fact that the sessions have triggered ideas for research based on the collections held at the library is certainly beyond the initial expectation. Further queries related to possibilities and potentials of future research have been asked to me as the subject librarian. For me personally, this is a very rewarding result.

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