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EDITORIAL

Making the Right Decision: The Ethics of AI

Johann Frederick A. Cabbab
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Our reels and timelines now have occasional posts about self-driving cars – some even delivering pizza. The anxiety is real with chatbots carrying on conversations and text prompts generating beautiful artwork (Leffer, 2023). What if machines start passing the Turing test? What if they become self-aware? What if singularity, or the rapid technological expansion characterized by computers becoming smarter than humans and with repercussions for humanity, happens? What will be our Skynet?

DEUS EX MACHINA

The anime entitled *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (which was released in 1995) was polarizing compared to others in the genre. The robots bled. Other than the bloodshed, one scenario was surprising for the time because it involved a trio of supercomputers called a Magi System based on the three personas (thought processes) of its maker (“Liliputian Hitcher,” 2023). Ideally, the three had to come to an agreement before an instruction was carried out.

Nearly thirty years later, when that series was released, the possibilities put forth by the anime seem to be crawling and dawning closer and closer.

THE BLUE PILL

For instance, rewind to 2018, at a hawkler center in Singapore, one could come face-to-face with a

smart food tray return robot making the rounds between the chairs and tables, neatly avoiding anything in its path. Stand in front of it, and it stopped. A year later, in 2019, there was a robosweeper at the airport. It was as big as a janitorial cleaning cart or trolley, was closed off on all sides by metal and plastic sidings, and it also stopped when you stood in front of it. Funny was that it had a jolly cartoonish face painted on the hood, maybe to humanize it and not scare kids approaching it. Speaking of anthropomorphism, that same year marked the popularity of apps like My Talking Pet, which could make photos of your pets talk. Cats back then were finally able to counter allegations that they were fat and lazy.

THE RED PILL

In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, anyone could face swap (a.k.a. deepfake) their features onto celebrities’ bodies in videos using an app called Reface (formerly Doublicat). Now, Reface is facing lawsuits stemming from the use of images and likenesses of said celebrities without their consent (Bandara, 2023). On a spookier note, a year later, in 2021, one could animate a long-dead person’s portrait using MyHeritage.com’s Deep Nostalgia service, making them move as if they were alive. It was disturbing. DALL·E, a text-to-image model developed by OpenAI, also came out that year.

The following year, 2022, had a boom in text-to-image AI art generators and chatbots using large

language models. Image generators Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, and chatbot ChatGPT all rolled out their releases during the year. Early 2023 saw Adobe include generative fill capabilities in their products. Late 2023 saw DALL·E integration into ChatGPT Plus (McAuliffe, 2023). That chatbot generates images for you when you engage it in conversation. Graphics application Krita has Stable Diffusion integration and live AI painting capabilities on more powerful systems (Schmitt, 2023). Text-to-video and image-to-video became within arm's reach (especially for Tiktok aficionados). Google and Facebook joined the fray. Meta posted updates on AI image generation (Edwards, 2023), language translation (Nuñez, 2023), and voice cloning (Batt, 2023). Google (2023), on the other hand, unveiled the multimodal Gemini. This means having a chatbot/generator with language, audio, code, and video understanding, so with the input you provide, it can summarize text, explain a chart, or explain a video to you (Kerner, 2023).

What probably takes the cake would be OpenAI's ChatGPT unveiling the feature of being able to churn out GPTs (OpenAI, 2023). Instead of typing in the chatbox, "Help me format this code," you can instruct it to "Make me a software engineer who helps format my code," (ChatGPT's own in-app example). It then constructs a chatbot specifically for that purpose. So technically, that's AI making bespoke AI for you, much like Karel Čapek's play *R. U. R.* ("Rossum's Universal Robots," 1923), where robots are mass-produced by other robots in factory assembly lines.

ROBOT SPD 13

Ashok et al. (2022) have observed that AI is everywhere, and their ability to pass the Turing Test seems inevitable, maybe in the next few decades or even years. They also noted how AI has not been infallible; there are times when AI apps show biases and make questionable autonomous decisions. Case in point: early on, trying to have ChatGPT write your paper will yield made-up references complete with non-existent links. Ashok et al. (2022) echo what many in the global community believe as well: there must be ethical considerations. They also put forth a conceptual

model that may have academic and professional implications.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO (2022) has recommended a human rights approach to AI that includes the following: proportionality and do no harm, safety and security, right to privacy and data protection, multi-stakeholder and adaptive governance and collaboration, responsibility and accountability, transparency and explainability, human oversight and determination, sustainability, awareness and literacy, and fairness and non-discrimination. In the library and information field context, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2020) believes the use of AI technologies in libraries should be subject to clear ethical standards. For example, AI applications that rely on extensive data collection must not override patron privacy. Libraries, however, can and must educate users about AI; support high-quality, ethical AI research; and have the laws, infrastructure, and technologies necessary to adapt to and serve growing AI communities (IFLA, 2020). The OCLC has also commissioned the development and release of a research agenda, *Responsible Operations: Data Science, Machine Learning, and AI in Libraries*, to help the library community raise awareness and understanding towards the responsible use of these technologies and to actively promote transparency, explainability, and accountability in their operations (Padilla, 2019). Hence, in navigating the growing ethical issues related to the use of AI, Cox (2022) emphasizes the importance of analyzing the ethics of AI within the milieu of its potential benefits and challenges to information services and various industries.

As far as academic implications go, Contact North | Contact Nord (2018), a not-for-profit online education corporation funded by the Government of Ontario, posits that "AI is paving the way for personalized, adaptive learning" (No. 2). EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association which champions advancing higher education through the use of IT, reiterates though that "...as AI develops more human-like capability, ethical questions surrounding data use, inclusivity, algorithmic bias,

and surveillance become increasingly important to consider” (Alexander et al., 2019, p. 27). They further point out that there is a misconception about what AI can and cannot do, resulting in “inflated expectations and a risk that users could assign inappropriate kinds and amounts of authority to AI systems” (EDUCAUSE, 2017, p. 2). The only answer to this would be transparency regarding the sources and use of data, the kind of errors possible, and the limits of the value of the output (EDUCAUSE, 2017).

Isaac Asimov (1950) stated three laws of robotics in his works, which have impacted ethics for AI. Like transparency, the law that a robot may not injure a human is intended to safeguard humankind. Hopefully, we will not reach a volatile state similar to Rossum’s Universal Robots versus the League of Humanity (Čapek, 1923), where they feel the need to take a stand regarding all of this: think like the factory and treat them as appliances or liberate them from the chains of slavery.

Hopefully, with our own intelligence, we will make the right decision.

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Ways of Seeing and Knowing: Visual Literacy and Filipino Librarians*

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Abstract

The paper presents visual literacy and its potential applications in librarianship practice. It provides definitions of visual literacy and its importance in contemporary living and enumerates requisite visual literacy skills and how such skills may be developed in individuals. It presents prospects on how Filipino librarians can integrate visual literacy and visual literacy instruction in librarianship and suggests six areas where visual literacy can be integrated into library services: organization, signage, display, communication, critical thinking, and reading comprehension. With this, learners can develop their visual literacy skills and better understand the conveyed messages.

Keywords: Visual literacy, Visual literacy skills, Literacy and librarianship, Filipino librarians

LEARNING WITH VISUALS

What do you see? Everywhere one looks, images are presented in various forms --- photos, posters, illustrations, signage, memes, and paintings, to name a few. There is a wealth of visuals nowadays, especially for young people with or without their devices. Images surround their lives. Some are visually pleasing, while others need help understanding what they represent or the message they want to communicate.

Images inundate individuals living in the 21st century, resulting from the activities in their communities and

artifacts generated using current and emerging technologies. The advent of the internet, computers, and other electronic devices opened doors to abundant production of visual materials facilitated by easy access with a click or push of a button.

However, encoding and decoding visual information, interpreting non-textual artifacts, and actively engaging in visual communication have yet to be taught to most adults. In the past, the information source for many was primarily textual, but nowadays, communicating with others involves more pictures or a combination of both. With these changing patterns

**This paper was originally delivered during the 43rd Gabriel A. Bernardo Memorial Lecture held 13 March 2023 in line with the celebration of 109 years of library science education in the Philippines.*

of communication, Kenny (2010) mentioned that students feel overwhelmed by the abundance of images but need more conceptual frameworks to evaluate them.

DEFINING VISUAL LITERACY

More than half a century ago, Debes (1969) referred to visual literacy as “a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences” (p. 27). Pettersson (2013) viewed visual literacy as an ability; however, others may consider it a competency or a skill. Further, he wrote that “visual literacy is an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and multidimensional area of knowledge. ... From a theoretical view visual literacy includes visual language, visual thinking, visual perception, visual communication, and visual learning” (par. 1).

As a skill, visual literacy enables an individual to discern and discriminate objects, symbols, or behaviors of others. Further, with good visual literacy skills, an individual could better interpret things observed or seen in a natural or manufactured environment. Pettersson (2013) commented that visual literacy as a communication skill impacts the work of those designing, producing, distributing, and using visual information.

Multiple scholars and researchers generated and debated a working definition of visual literacy but have yet to reach a consensus (Avgerinou, 2003; Debes, 1969; Peterson, 2013). However, everybody agrees that visuals carry information to communicate and then be understood by the receiver based on the interpretation. Through the years, scholars and educators have studied visual literacy. A decade ago, a group of librarians defined it as “a set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media” (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2011, Visual Literacy Defined section).

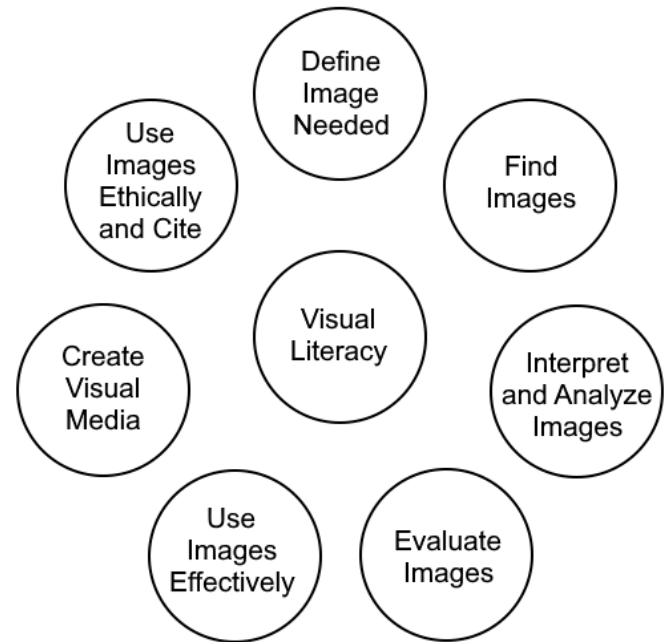
DEVELOPING VISUAL LITERACY SKILLS

Beyond the visual literacy definition of one’s ability to read, write (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997), and create images (Harrison, n.d.), many initially perceived the concept as related to the fine arts, design, and art education. Still, others argue that it has wider applications to various sectors of society, for example, as a skill in language, communication, connection, relationship, and interaction. Harrison (n.d.) wrote, “Visual media is a linguistic tool with which we

communicate, exchange ideas, and navigate our complex world” (para. 1). The ACRL task force charged with generating the visual literacy standards identified skill sets influenced by contexts and experiences (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

A graphic representation based on the ACRL Visual Literacy Standards



Note: Adapted from “Visual Literacy Standards in Higher Education: New Opportunities for Libraries and Student Learning,” by D. Hattwig, K. Bussert, A. Medaille, and J. Burgess, 2013, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 13(1), p. 75 (10.1353/pla.2013.0008). Copyright © 2013 by The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD 21218.

Define image need. If an image is needed to support one’s work, the individual needs to determine the nature and extent of the required visual material. Since an image has diverse formats, such as graphic, illustration, photograph, animated, or moving, the individual must decide which is most appropriate. Further, one must determine whether the image needed is realistic, symbolic, or representational to the communicated idea.

Find images. Once the individual defines the needed shot in terms of format and representation, one could

start looking for an appropriate one that meets the definition. The individual must find and access required images and visual media effectively and efficiently. For example, searching for ideas could be completed using different sources online. These sources could provide usable images that are free or for purchase. The individual could also create the images by taking photographs or using applications (e.g., Photoshop, Snipping Tool) on their devices.

Interpret and analyze images. If the individual encounters an image while reading print or accessing online materials, an interpretation or analysis of the image must be made for its meaning (Watts, 2023). The task becomes challenging if the image communicates something symbolic or represents something figuratively. Content knowledge of other disciplines might come in handy in correctly interpreting or analyzing the images.

Evaluate images. Nowadays, images found online may not be due to alteration, manipulation, or distortion using various editing software (e.g., Photoshop). Before using any image from the web, individuals must be cautious and employ content analysis, check for the image source, and review for technical quality (University of Washington Library, 2023). There are various methods and tools to determine if images are real, such as conducting a visual inspection (Singh, 2023), implementing an EXIF data analysis (Dube, 2022), using photo analyzing tools (Brookes, 2021), performing reverse image search (Collier, n.d.), and employing error level analysis (Dube, 2022; Singh, 2023). Today, it is important to evaluate the image first for the “truthfulness” of what it represents and then confirm that it came from a reliable source.

Use images effectively. Using an image to support a product or a website (C. Nelson, 2022) could enhance the latter’s visual presentation, appeal, or impact. The user must consider the message’s purpose vis-à-vis the image’s quality and relevance (Malviya, 2020). For example, once individuals find photos to use, they decide how to integrate them to augment, enhance, or complement the showcased work. In website design or brand marketing development, the images used must align with the message one wants to communicate in addition to appeal and relevance by presenting originality and fostering engagement. If not, then the image will be ineffective in enhancing the impact of the work.

Create visual media. Sometimes, the individual resorts to designing and creating meaningful images or visual media since there is no appropriate one to use. A good background in visual communication (elements, principles, composition) would be an asset to the individual if tasked to create visual media. Further, the consistent use of colors, font types, and graphic elements across content could enhance the presentation of the visual media. High-quality images, graphics (pie charts, infographics), videos, and slide decks (Thompson, 2020) could make the visual media engaging, meaningful, and impactful to the target audience.

Use images ethically and cite. Whether the individual “borrowed” or created the images used in one’s work, it is important to “understand many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media” (ACRL, 2011, Visual Literacy Defined section). Also, it is important to have a working knowledge of ethically accessing and using visual materials (ACRL, 2011). Citing images is essential for respecting intellectual property rights, maintaining academic integrity, enhancing credibility, and ensuring legal compliance.

Finally, a visually literate individual is a “critical consumer of visual media and a competent contributor to a body of shared knowledge and culture” (ACRL, 2011, Visual Literacy Defined section). Brown et al. (2016) identified an array of visual literacy skills, starting with understanding and analyzing the “contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials” (p. xiv; ACRL, 2011, Visual Literacy Defined section). Teaching visual literacy as an essential skill is as important as other literacies of reading, writing, speaking, and listening for 21st-century learners.

BECOMING VISUALLY LITERATE

In describing “understanding” as a visual literacy skill, Cruz and Ellerbrock (2015) stated that one can identify the setting or purpose of a picture or graphic beyond knowing the content. The learner needs to have the capacity to ask questions, allowing for a better grasp of the subject presented:

- What is the visual included?
- What historical period is depicted?
- What additional information does the visual bring to the presentation, article, or material?

¹ I was also able to browse some physical copies of these materials within the same collection in the U-M archives.

However, it is important to understand that visual literacy is a two-way street. Individuals play dual roles as passive consumers of what they see and experience and active contributors in creating images supporting various teaching and learning activities. As co-creators of new images, more nuance is added by remixing and matching things to communicate new ways of seeing and experiencing their surroundings.

Supporting teaching and learning activities with media requires visual literacy skills. Learners must critically evaluate a picture or graphic (Baker, 2012) to understand the visual's many competing and complementary layers of symbolism, representation, and meaning. Further, the capacity to analyze visuals forces the learner to question the content and the validity of the visuals (Cruz & Ellerbrock, 2015).

In addition, interpreting a visual allows learners to think more critically about what they are seeing and fully question their understanding of what they have read about the subject (Baker, 2012). Cruz and Ellerbrock (2015) stated that being visually literate means learners can understand, interpret, and analyze the visual content depicted not only in images but also in movies and television or graphics in print, such as newspapers and magazines.

Moreover, creating visuals to support an idea is becoming increasingly important as the world becomes more dependent on the instantaneous transfer of information. With the rise of social media outlets and the barrage of visuals to grab audiences' attention, Silverman and Piedmont (2016) argued that information relying solely on print seems ignored more readily than information accompanied by a visual.

FINDING VISUAL LITERACY IN LIBRARIES

Libraries serve "as a sanctuary for knowledge seekers and a reservoir of wisdom" (LIS Education Network, 2013, Library and Education section, para. 1) and provide foundational and multifaceted education in developing individuals, communities, and society. Libraries are "hubs for collecting, organizing, and distributing vast information resources, including books, journals, digital databases, and multimedia materials" (LIS Education Network, 2013, Role of the Library in Disseminating Information section). Librarians and professionals working in libraries provide access to information, records, and resources after gathering, organizing,

and preserving. Further, the librarians' work involved curating collections, developing educational programs, and managing databases to support learning, research, and exploration. One can find librarians in various types of libraries: academic, public, school, and special.

Librarians have the responsibility to help learners understand what they see, not only by interpreting the background information but also by considering the emotion and cultural significance of the visual (LaVey, 2022; N. Nelson, 2004). They could help learners to critically evaluate images, whether they mean something relevant to one's experiences, i.e., something that is not true or something that is misinforming others of what is being communicated.

TEACHING VISUAL LITERACY SKILLS

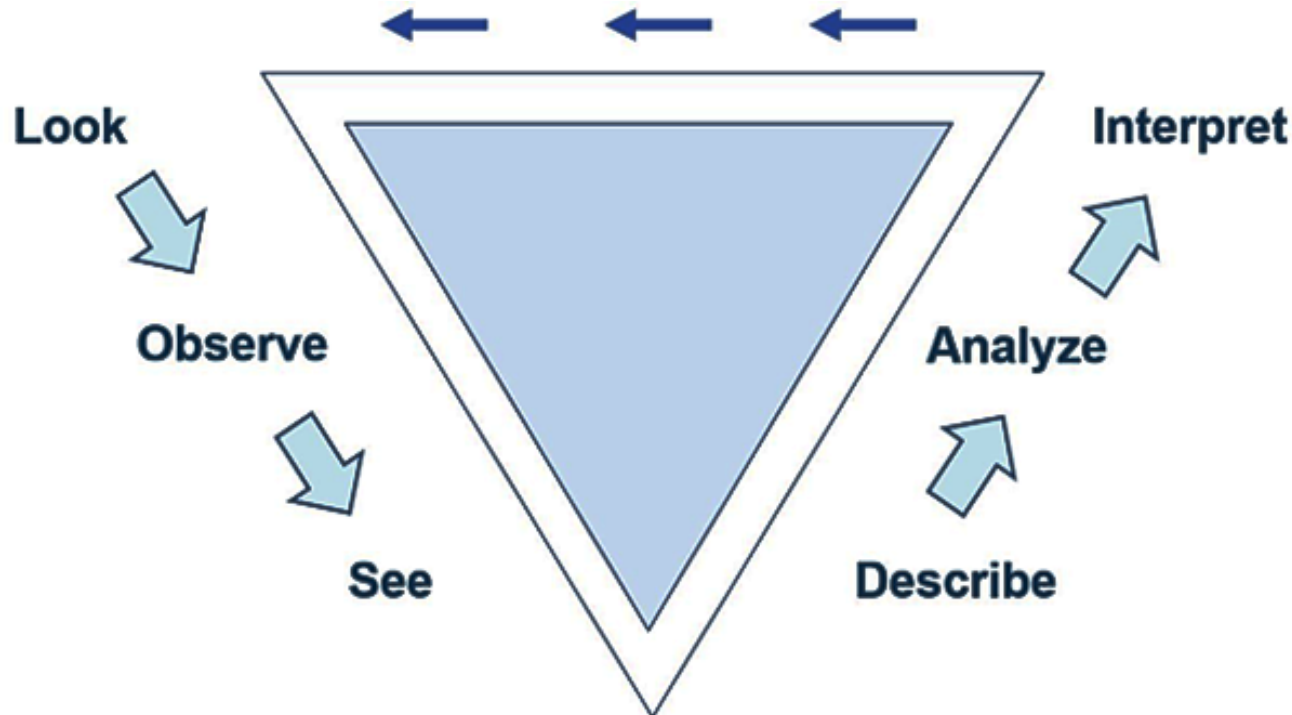
There is a need to apply and integrate the teaching of visual literacy into the curriculum so that students can fully understand and critically evaluate the visuals they encounter daily (Farrell, 2015). In developing visual literacy skills, learners must have the opportunities to think through, think about, and think with pictures (Donnchaidh, n.d.; Finley, 2014; Huddle, 2023; Ozel, 2018). Through the thinking process, the learners can analyze and interpret visual information. They also have the opportunity to make an evaluation. Eventually, as they organize the outcome of their thinking, they better understand what they see, which could result in the construction of new knowledge.

In responding to the challenge of building visual literacy skills, Yenawine (2013) worked with K-12 teachers to learn how to teach viewing skills with sets of lessons, which he called visual thinking strategies (VTS). At the core, the strategy asked for three key questions:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Figure 2 illustrates the process learners consider in understanding what they see. As Yenawine (2013) pointed out, the first steps involve looking, observing, and seeing in asking learners about an object (e.g., a picture, photograph, computer screen, or a three-dimensional artifact). Looking means physically focusing on the object. Observing encompasses identifying attributes or characteristics of the object. Finally, seeing engages the learners in communicating what is visible to their eyes.

Figure 2
Learning to Look Approach



In communicating what is observed or seen, the learners describe the object to others in written or verbal forms. After describing the object, learners could analyze it for what it represents. For example, if learners describe the object as having four wooden legs and a flat top, the object could be interpreted as a table based on these features. From this experience, Yenawine (2013) and the teachers observing the learners could assume that they develop visual literacy as a product of “complex thinking and the language to express it, listening, increasing interest in and capacity to write, and collaborative problem solving” (p. viii).

CONNECTING TECHNOLOGY AND FILIPINO LEARNERS

The impact of technology on all levels, especially those in educational settings, is immense. Portus (2015) studied Filipino youth’s internet technology literacy. They found four groups exhibiting various states of impact: 1) Awareness (availing of technology), 2) Acquisition (using technology to procure knowledge), 3) Interpretative (generating meaning from acquired knowledge after using the technology), and 4) Critical (analyze the acquired content and question motivation, utilization, and values). Portus discussed the technology’s impact on

the study participants’ privacy, relationships, financial resources, and values at the critical state.

The use and integration of technology for teaching and learning are of interest to librarians, especially in teaching information literacy. They teach students to find the necessary information, including navigating library-based resources, using research techniques, and evaluating information content influenced by social, political, and cultural contexts. However, Bautista (2021) reported that senior high school teachers need additional training due to a limited understanding of media and information literacy content and skills.

In the Philippines, Santos (2018) examined the perceived competencies of Filipino librarians and found that they viewed themselves as “pro-active, adaptable, advocate, an effective communicator, and well-informed” (p. 288). Librarians play a crucial role in promoting information literacy, which includes visual literacy, among students and other library users. In teaching information literacy, they use interactive activities, such as games, to increase student motivation and engagement during instructional sessions (Yap & Peñaflo, 2020).

INTRODUCING VISUAL LITERACY BASICS FOR FILIPINO EYES

Developing visual literacy skills starts with mastering one's understanding of visual elements and principles. Focusing on images requires a fundamental understanding of the visual elements, principles, composition, and angles to unpack the message. Further, knowing good or bad visual composition is an important skill, including familiarity with angles, i.e., the perspective used when viewing objects or the camera's direction when taking pictures (See Figure 3).

Visual or design principles facilitate the creation of an aesthetic appeal. The principles guide the work and interact with each other to maximize the user experience. Though no definite principles exist, researchers and practitioners identified some as the focal point/emphasis, balance, proportion, rhythm, movement, pattern/repetition, alignment, contrast, proximity, unity, and harmony (Hagen & Golombisky, 2013). The Filipino architectural designs have evolved through time, given the influences of Spanish and

American colonizers. Traveling from urban areas to the mountainous and coastal regions of the country exposes individuals to the diverse use of the visual principles of repetition, contrast, unity, and harmony beyond building structures and interior spaces and see them played out in the intricacies of design in woven clothing materials.

Researchers and practitioners identified visual composition style as “the arrangement of elements within a design” (Brown et al., 2016, p. 77). A typical composition technique is the rule of thirds. Other composition styles include line (leading and diagonal), framing, figure versus ground, fill the frame, dominant eyes, patterns and repetition, and symmetry. The adaptation of specific composition styles is identifiable in the picture-perfect marketing of tourist destinations, such as the white sand beaches of Boracay, the clear waters of El Nido, and the surging waves of Siargao.

The camera angle refers to how one composes a shot given the camera's location of the subject. Researchers and practitioners classified the camera

Figure 3

Basic Visual Literacy Concepts

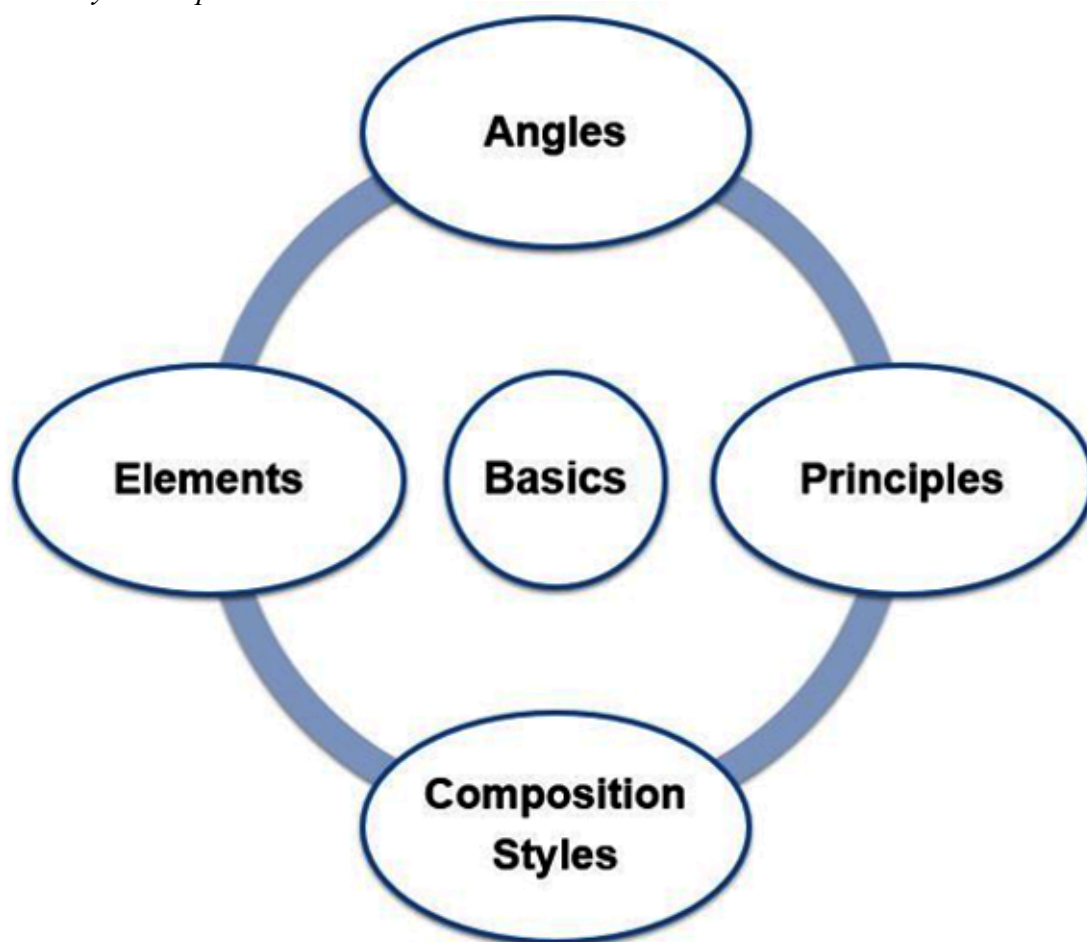
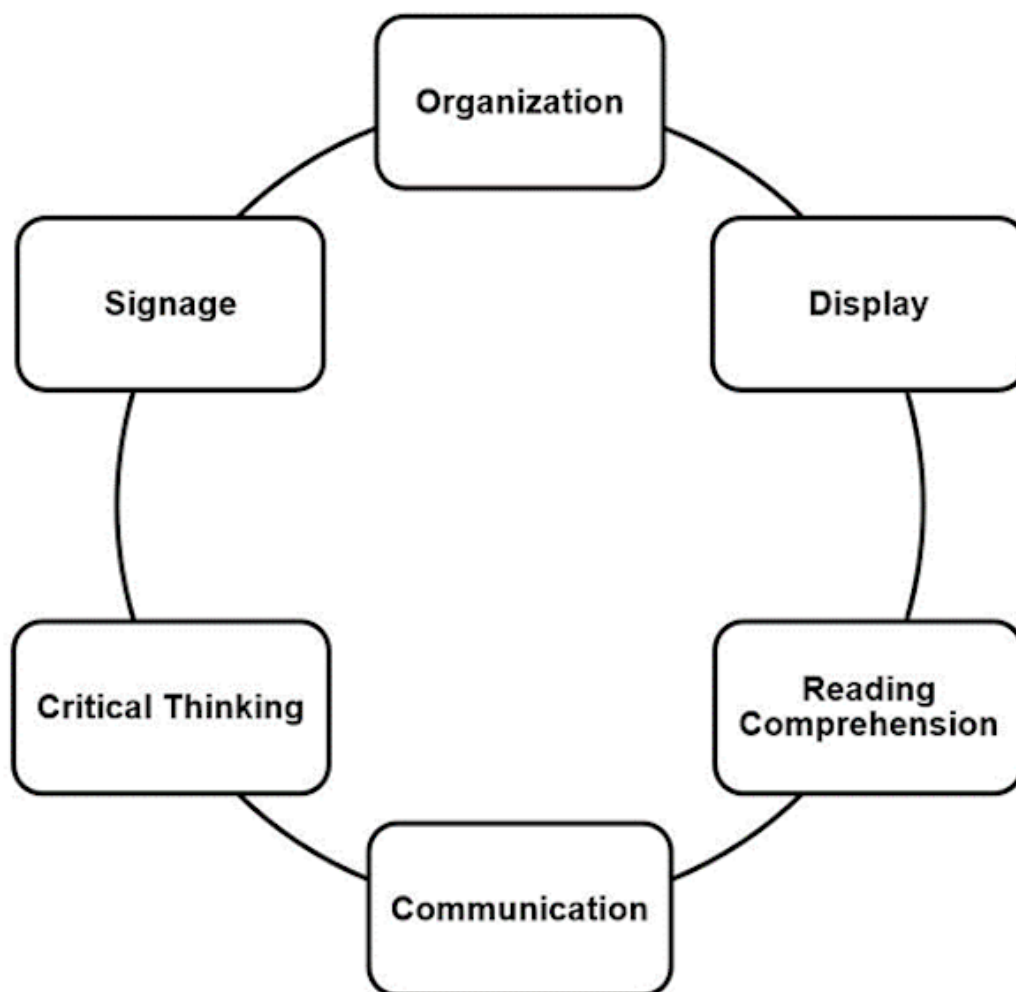


Figure 4

Areas of Impact by Visual Literacy Initiatives in Libraries and for Librarians



shot angle as eye level (front or back of the object), high angle (top), low angle (bottom), or diagonal (right or left). Using different camera angles to take a shot can provide different experiences for the viewer that may elicit an emotion. For many Filipinos, a wedding photoshoot would be much more memorable from different angles if taken in front of a historic landmark (Jaro Belfry), before a façade of a religious structure (Miagao Church), with the background of a manufactured wonder (Banaue Rice Terraces), or inside an intimate botanical space (Paco Park).

IMPLEMENTING VISUAL LITERACY IN PHILIPPINE LIBRARIES

The proliferation of fake news or information has impacted academic work quality. Today, librarians play a critical role in mitigating not only plagiarism but also the inability of users to find correct information

(Prabowo & Manabat, 2021). Continued education through the delivery of information literacy programs has put librarians at the forefront in combatting access to and dissemination of false information. However, learners or library users could also benefit from participating in a visual literacy education program.

What visual literacy initiatives could Filipino librarians consider, given their contexts? Visual literacy could significantly impact teaching and learning needs in six areas (Organization, Signage, Display, Communication, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension) (see Figure 4).

Organization. Elements of color and space and principles of emphasis, alignment, and balance provide tools librarians could use to support their daily activities. For example, alignment and balance as principles could guide librarians in arranging materials

for visibility and ease of access. Further, colors are prominent highlighters in sorting voluminous reading materials. Colors are useful in communicating significant items in an article or book pages. Various colors could guide learners in determining what things must be stored and encoded for recall. Further, colors are useful in creating connections or identifying relationships between concepts and terminologies.

Signage. Guiding users in navigating the library space and finding resource materials is an important strategy that could benefit from good use of the visual element of lines, colors, and shapes. Using lines with arrows could assist in directing users to move from one library space to another. Also, color-coding the various spaces could guide users on how to use them. In using colors, a particular library section indicates various noise level zones, such as quiet, medium (paired interactions), and high (collaborative involving small groups). Finally, iconic images, such as computers, photocopiers, help desks, circulation desk, to name a few.

Display. Fluency in visual literacy knowledge could impact how librarians display their materials to attract users or create display materials to feature various resources. Basic visual elements, principles, and composition knowledge could generate inviting displays for various audiences. Visual literacy is understanding the messaging beyond the presentation using signs, symbols, icons, and colors. Visual literacy is about understanding and analyzing the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components of producing and using visual materials. Visual literacy skills include designing and creating meaningful images and visual media. Incorporating visual literacy in display design is important in communicating effectively. Familiarity with the language of graphic design gives the creator a vocabulary to communicate visual ideas and culture and helps create more effective visual messages.

Communication. Visually literate individuals have good communication skills because they demonstrate skills in interpreting, evaluating, and creating visual artifacts (Harrison, n.d.; Watts, 2023). With these skills, they could use visual language to communicate and exchange ideas. Beyond understanding the technical components of artistic and design-oriented artifacts, visually literate persons would better interpret visual representations, such as maps, charts, and graphs. They could also analyze visuals as information carriers for contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, and intellectual merits. Developing visual literacy contributes to strengthening communication

skills. In the digital age, the use and production of visual media significantly impact communication.

Critical Thinking. Various visual elements are useful tools to create meaning or develop an understanding of the information presented before a viewer or reader. Students skilled in visual literacy can create meaning from images, improving their critical thinking skills and writing proficiency. Visualization tools, such as concept maps or mind maps, facilitate one's ability to discern patterns and relationships, contributing to critical thinking skills. With lines, arrows, and various shapes, one could connect related concepts or group them into meaningful categories or classifications. For example, the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) method is a simple activity designed to build students' background knowledge and develop thinking skills that use detail to enhance understanding, especially in museum education. Teachers can use VTS to help students analyze artwork and develop transferable skills for reading literature.

Reading Comprehension. Visual literacy is about more than just good eyesight and the ability to read text or written language in a book, website, or other media. It is about reading and understanding the textual content narrative supported by images. It is also an ability to read images in place of texts that communicate information to advance the acquisition of knowledge or skills. Visual literacy is the ability to interpret and use images effectively. It is a critical skill for 21st-century learners, as it builds stronger readers in managing texts and visuals combined to facilitate understanding. Further, using images to support reading encourages students to learn differently through reflection, analysis, interpretation, and knowledge construction.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Visual literacy is important for everyone, and the skills are essential today. Visual information is more memorable and transferable, transmitted or communicated faster. It is useful for studying arts or film and a critical skill for success in our increasingly image-saturated culture. Nevertheless, individuals need to navigate a visually complex world without intimidation. Educating for visual literacy fosters the development of critical readers, proficient writers, and strong critical thinkers.

Developing visual literacy skills helps learners communicate with the world around them through an enriched understanding of what they see. They become more educated in reading images, and non-English speakers have an easier time comprehending text-based

information coupled with pictures. Becoming visually literate increases the enjoyment of visuals in their surroundings as they develop visual literacy skills through various encoding and decoding techniques.

Filipino librarians have roles to play in developing visual literacy skills. By incorporating visual literacy strategies into lessons, encouraging visual literacy in the early years, using visual thinking routines, analyzing and evaluating visual media and sources, designing and creating meaningful images and visual media, and understanding the wider context surrounding the visual media, learners can develop their visual literacy skills and better understand the conveyed messages. Librarians can also develop teaching modules incorporating visual literacy concepts and use resources such as the ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education to guide their teaching.

Visual literacy is an important skill for Filipino learners in helping them improve their abilities to acquire knowledge and communicate with others. Filipino librarians could have a significant role in promoting the teaching of visual literacy skills among library users not only as academic support but also as a way of becoming effective critical thinkers, communicators, and collaborators during their education and in preparation for the world of work.

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Intellectual Freedom in Philippine Academic Libraries: Perspectives of Academic Library Directors in Southern Tagalog

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Abstract

Intellectual freedom is one known core value in the LIS profession, but there needs to be more clarity over how to define it and apply it to the actual work. In the Philippines, this concept only exists as a clause or a section of a broader guideline or policy, and a formal framework has yet to be specifically dedicated to it. This study offers insights into how intellectual freedom is perceived in Philippine academic libraries. Academic library directors (N = 44) in Southern Tagalog, composed of Regions IV-A and IV-B, were asked about their knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding this principle. It was found that the respondents know what intellectual freedom means and consider it highly important despite its challenges. Based on their responses, they are likely to express support for intellectual freedom but still exhibit some degree of censorship tendencies during selection. This study underscores the complexities LIS professionals face as they navigate the challenging terrain between their intellectual freedom advocacies and their roles as gatekeepers of information.

Keywords: Academic libraries, censorship, intellectual freedom, library directors, Southern Tagalog

INTRODUCTION

“The very best libraries and librarians embody intellectual freedom principles” (Jones, 2015, p. 4).

The American Library Association (ALA, 2007) defines *intellectual freedom* as “the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction” (para. 1). It plays a role in providing free access to all expressions of ideas through which all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. On the contrary, infringing intellectual freedom is

censorship, an issue plaguing libraries for decades (Emery, 1994; Oppenheim & Smith, 2004). It is defined as “the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons—individuals, groups or government officials—find objectionable or dangerous” (ALA, 2007, para. 3). It is one of the most pressing issues among librarians, particularly in managing the library collection (Steele, 2018). Discourses have been raised about censorship and its nuances (Putong, 2021), and history has shown that depriving people of access to information has done more harm than good.

There is a growing concern about intellectual

freedom in Philippine academia nowadays. Reading materials are being challenged by certain individuals and groups who seek to control or limit access to knowledge that challenges power structures and the current status quo. Incidents of surrendering books to state enforcers were reported during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, particularly at Kalinga State University (Moaje, 2021), Isabela State University (Visaya, 2021), and Aklan State University (Lena, 2021). In addition, Regional Memorandum No. 113 of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) was also issued, encouraging all colleges and universities to pull out subversive materials in libraries and online platforms (De Vera, 2021; Sarao, 2021). The Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) ordered schools and public libraries to halt the distribution of books believed to contain anything critical of the government (Boiser & Aurelio, 2022). Thereafter, a few book publishers, writers, and bookshops became targets of harassment and baseless accusations (Cabalza, 2022; Flores, 2022).

As gateways of information and preservers of knowledge, libraries and information centers are being placed in a vulnerable position, considering the contemporary sociopolitical climate worldwide. This growing concern is nothing new to library organizations that were urged to craft guidelines and statements that center on intellectual freedom, such as ALA's *Library Bill of Rights* (1939, most recent amendment in 2019) and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) *Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom* (1999). In the Philippines, the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians' *Code of Ethics for Philippine Librarians* (2006) and *National Competency-Based Standards for Filipino Librarians* (2015) emphasize intellectual freedom as one value librarians should promote or advocate.

The challenge of promoting intellectual freedom among academic libraries is entrusted to the head librarians or library directors. As individuals occupying major leadership roles in the library, their insights are necessary for understanding the challenges and opportunities related to intellectual freedom in the academic setting. Drawing upon such issues and concerns, this study aims to offer insights into intellectual freedom from the perspective of academic library directors in a particular region in the Philippines. It also acknowledges the

complexities they face as decision-makers given the mandate to support the mission, vision, and core values of their parent institution. Within the context of censorship, there might be more to the situation than initially appears to be the case. Librarians may engage in censorship activities as their situation calls it, but it does not necessarily negate them as professionals expected to value and respect intellectual freedom. In this regard, understanding “who the decision-makers, or gatekeepers, are in the decision-making process, whether it is library boards, library directors, or public officials” (Steele, 2018, p. 229) is necessary when censorship and other intellectual freedom-related issues arise. Moreover, this study is a humble attempt to add to the existing literature about intellectual freedom and provide a substantial discussion about this subject matter in the broader community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing body of literature recognizes the importance of intellectual freedom in libraries and information centers in general. However, relatively little research has been done about the opinion or beliefs of librarians toward intellectual freedom (Knox, 2011; Oltmann, 2016; Simmons & Dresang, 2001), and studies concerning the lack of a clear understanding of what it means and how it applies to library collections do not appear to be a popular topic among researchers. As observed, intellectual freedom is often seen to be more of an issue for public and school libraries than academic libraries (Dahlstrom, 2010). According to Jones (2009), academic libraries place less importance on the intellectual freedom efforts of the library profession, even if academic libraries tend to have written collection development policies than most public and school libraries (Symons & Harmon, 1995).

A significant analysis and discussion on intellectual freedom was presented by Oltmann (2017b). This study found that most deans and directors of academic libraries said they rarely consider intellectual freedom but place “somewhat” or “very” high value on it. Most academic libraries surveyed also lack formal policies regarding it, relying only on statements from ALA or other library organizations. The respondents' main issues with intellectual freedom were identified as follows: copyright and intellectual property, privacy, plagiarism, and academic freedom. Although this study provides some insight into intellectual freedom in academic libraries, the author admitted that more research must be done on this topic.

Likewise, Taiwo and Sulyman (2022) investigated the awareness and use of intellectual freedom policy in academic libraries in the Ilorin metropolis. Using the descriptive survey method, the study found that respondents are aware of intellectual freedom. Also, they maintained that intellectual freedom is somewhat important to collection development and management. When asked about areas of concern, the respondents mentioned freedom of expression, access to information, confidentiality, and privacy. They also see censorship and Internet filtering as significant challenges to intellectual freedom in academic libraries.

In the context of public libraries, Moody's study (2004a, 2004b) intended to shed light on the challenges and complexities librarians face in balancing intellectual freedom and community expectations. Two key issues arise from the survey findings of Queensland public librarians in Australia: the first is "anti-censorship attitudes are not always indicative of censorship behaviors" (Moody, 2004a, p. 6), and the other one is "some librarians employ self-censorship with regard to controversial materials in order to avoid censorship challenges" (Moody, 2004b, p. 14). This study found that as much as they want to place intellectual freedom above anything else, some librarians opt to limit acquiring controversial materials out of pressure, such as preventing potential issues or conflicts within the community.

To date, there are only a few local studies about censorship and intellectual freedom. In his investigation of electronic information in academic libraries, Catral (2002) emphasized that censorship of a library's collection and its policies, rules, and procedure should be founded on the institution's mission and vision, and it must be done as a result of a group's decision and with the involvement of library users. Examining book censorship compared to book selection in select sectarian high school libraries of a particular district in Quezon City, Haduca (2005) observed that censorship often exists in practice. Still, no complaints have been received concerning some reading materials in their collection. The librarians tend to exclude also some that are age-inappropriate or, in particular, "pornographic and violent in content" (Haduca, 2005, p. 51). Neri (2009) investigated the book selection and book censorship policies and practices of three chosen Metro Manila public libraries. According to her study, librarians were not fully aware of the standards set by library institutions

here and abroad. However, they acknowledged they might consult the hit lists provided the next time they purchase a new title. In the same year, Escobar (2009) conducted a study on censorship practices of select sectarian high school libraries in the Philippines using Asheim's (1954) concept of librarians as censors or selectors of books. It was revealed that censorship is not explicitly indicated in their rules or standards. Inconsistencies were also uncovered, such as schools lacking policies on censorship, some schools not acquiring fiction books, and the preferences of principals being favored more over students' preferences.

An alternative viewpoint was taken by Calaycay (2006), who focused on the intellectual freedom content of the Philippine Radical Papers Collection at the University of the Philippines Diliman Main Library. This collection consists of alternative materials and first-hand references expressing criticisms against the government, particularly during the Martial Law period in the 1970s. By examining the content of the collection and its relation to ALA's *Library Bill of Rights*, the findings showed that the majority of materials in the collection express strong support for intellectual freedom, with freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and academic freedom being the most prominent themes. The study emphasized intellectual freedom as a necessity in facilitating the creation, access, and dissemination of ideas in which libraries play a critical role.

METHODOLOGY

This study follows a Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices (KAP) framework, a model commonly used to understand how individuals or groups approach a particular topic or behavior. Firstly, the *Knowledge* aspect of the study is concerned with how academic library directors define intellectual freedom and perceive its importance, some of its issues or concerns, and their awareness of related standards. Secondly, the *Attitudes* aspect of the study is concerned with how likely academic library directors are to subscribe to intellectual freedom based on their agreement with a few statements. Lastly, the *Practices* aspect of the study is concerned with how likely they are to become selectors or censors based on their judgment during material selection.

This study employed a survey research design. An online survey questionnaire was administered to academic libraries of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Southern Tagalog via email and social

networking sites. A total of 44 library directors (mainly head librarians) responded to the survey questionnaire. The data gathered from the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, most respondents (93%) are registered librarians and members of the Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. – Southern Tagalog Region Librarians Council (PLAI-STRLC) (77%). Most (77%) have been assigned as head librarians of their respective library institutions for less than 10 years. The distribution of respondents according to their home provinces is also presented. Based on type or classification, public HEIs account for 25 (57%) of the total respondents, while 19 (43%) are private HEIs.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents

Criteria	<i>f</i>	%
Are you a licensed librarian?		
Yes	41	93.18%
No	3	6.82%
Are you a member of PLAI-STRLC?		
Yes	34	77.27%
No	10	22.73%
Work Duration		
< 10 Years	34	77.27%
≥ 10 Years	10	22.73%
Province		
Laguna	11	25%
Cavite	9	20.45%
Batangas	7	15.91%
Quezon	6	13.64%
Palawan	4	9.09%
Rizal	3	6.82%
Marinduque	1	2.27%
Occidental Mindoro	1	2.27%
Oriental Mindoro	1	2.27%
Romblon	1	2.27%
HEI Classification		
Public	25	57%
Private	19	43%

Note: *N* = 44

Knowledge

The findings in Table 2 showed that the respondents had varying definitions of the term intellectual freedom, such as “a right,” “free access,” and “freedom of expression.” Less than one-third of the respondents have answers that lean toward (and as exact for some) the popular definition of intellectual freedom, leading to similar categorizations in their responses. Others mentioned the same definition but emphasized its other aspects. One respondent (LD20) wrote, “Intellectual freedom is a crucial component of a free and open society, and I believe it is important that we actively work to protect and promote it.”

Table 2
Distribution of Responses on the Definition of Intellectual Freedom

Definition	<i>f</i>	%
A right	14	31.82%
Free access	7	15.91%
Freedom of expression	4	9.09%
No restrictions	4	9.09%
Freedom of speech	3	6.82%
Freedom to think	2	4.55%
Ability	1	2.27%
Democracy	1	2.27%
Free will	1	2.27%
Freedom to learn	1	2.27%
Important	1	2.27%
Information	1	2.27%
Liberty	1	2.27%
Openness	1	2.27%
Responsibility	1	2.27%
Unlimited	1	2.27%

Note: *N* = 44

Thirty-five respondents (80%) considered intellectual freedom highly important in academic libraries, as shown in Figure 1.

Only nine (20%) said intellectual freedom is somewhat important. Jones (2009) stated that academic librarians still perceive intellectual freedom as primarily a problem for public and school libraries only, which this study refutes. In academic libraries, it is regarded as a core value by library scholars and practitioners (Gorman, 2000; Harkovitch et al., 2003; Knox, 2011; Oltmann, 2016) and “a vehicle that helps advance diverse perspectives” (Jamison, 2020, p. 23; Oltmann, 2017a). By placing high importance on

intellectual freedom, academic library directors must see to it that they ensure users have equitable access to their collection, which must reflect a diverse range of perspectives. However, according to some respondents, it also comes with some boundaries. One respondent (HL13) stated, “It is important to be open to all information, but it is also important to know what information should not be made easily accessible to all.” Another respondent (LD42) said, “Intellectual freedom is important, but we need to be careful in dissemination and receiving of information to avoid conflict.”

Figure 1
Distribution of Responses on the Importance of Intellectual Freedom

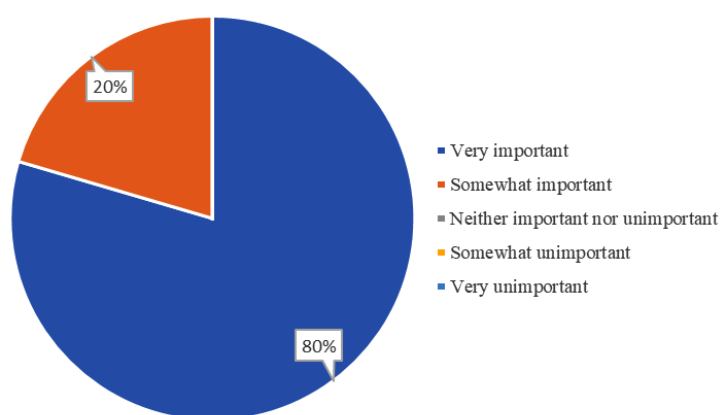


Table 3 shows a high level of concern for copyright and intellectual property, plagiarism, and privacy/confidentiality. This high level of concern could be attributed to the increasing awareness and emphasis on the ethical use of information nowadays. At the same time, academic freedom, censorship, Internet filtering, meeting rooms, and visits from law enforcement were perceived as less immediate issues. Overall, these findings reflect the multifaceted nature of intellectual freedom issues, which is tied to the right to read or seek information and the varying levels of concerns that libraries see as urgent or more immediate.

This study also justifies the need for a collection development policy, for it plays a significant role in reinforcing intellectual freedom. As shown in Table 4, most of them indicated that they have a collection development policy, while close enough to half reported that intellectual freedom was referred to or mentioned there. The findings are consistent with that

of Symons and Harmon (1995), stating that academic libraries tend to have a policy in selecting, acquiring, and managing library materials. These also suggest that the emphasis on intellectual freedom varies, and the presence of a collection development policy does not automatically indicate that intellectual freedom is already included or covered there. One respondent (LD08) commented, “It made me realize that there is more to improve in our collection development policy, including portions on collection assessment and intellectual freedom.”

Table 3
Distribution of Responses on the Areas of Concern of Intellectual Freedom

Areas of Concern	f	%
Copyright/Intellectual Property	41	93.18%
Plagiarism	40	90.91%
Privacy/Confidentiality	35	79.55%
Academic Freedom	27	61.36%
Censorship	26	59.09%
Internet Filtering	24	54.55%
Meeting Rooms/Exhibit Spaces	14	31.82%
Visits From Law Enforcement	3	6.82%

Note: $N = 44$

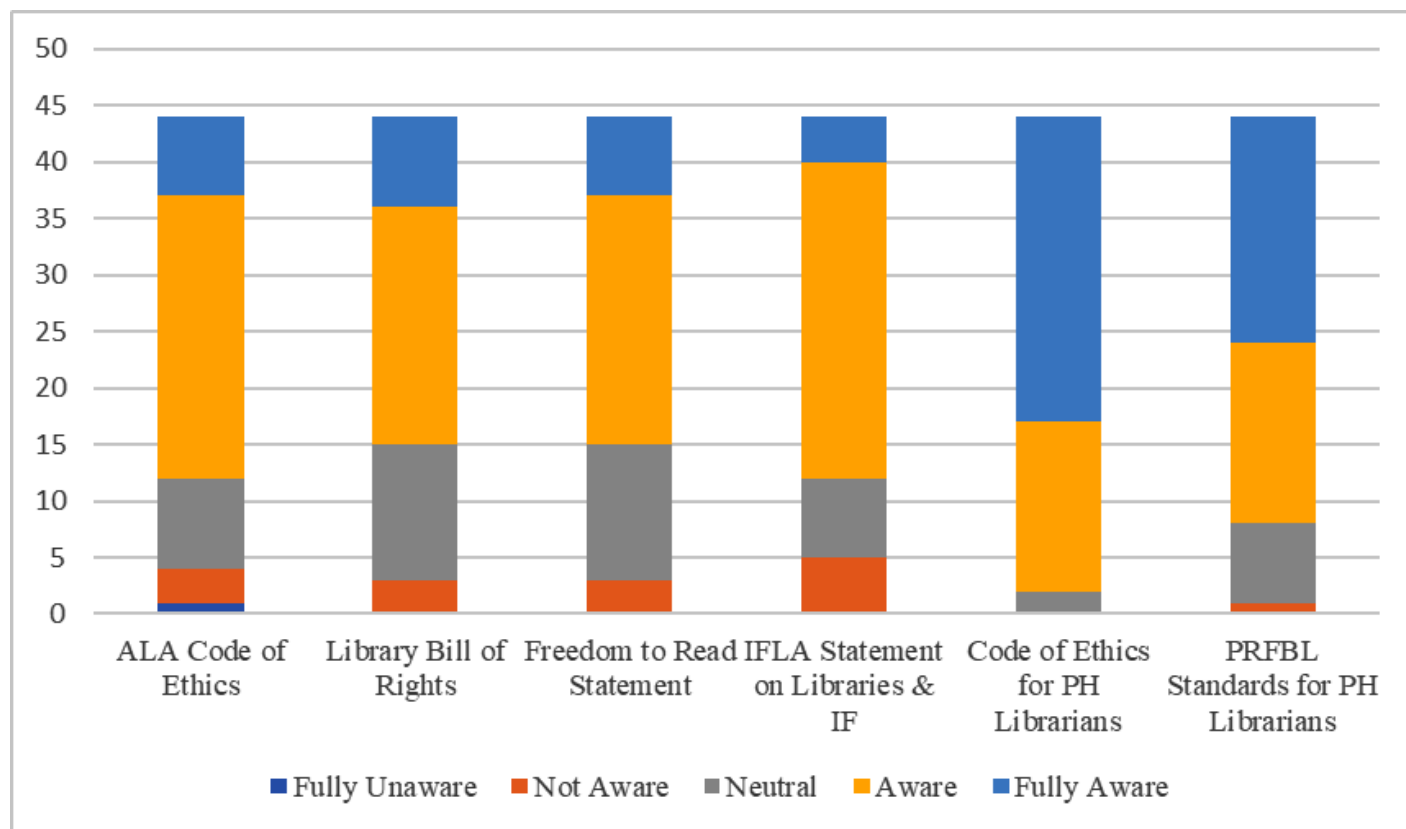
Table 4
Distribution of Respondents Regarding Collection Development Policy

Areas of Concern	f	%
Does your academic library have a collection development policy?		
Yes	43	98%
No	1	2%
I have no idea	0	0%
Is intellectual freedom referred to or mentioned in your collection development policy?		
Yes	29	66%
No	12	30%
I have no idea	2	4%

Note: $N = 44$

In Figure 2, the academic library directors were observed to be more familiar with locally crafted standards where intellectual freedom is often stated than those formulated internationally. This could imply that the academic library directors are giving more value to local professional standards and

Figure 2
Distribution of Responses on the Respondents' Awareness of Guidelines, Policies, and Statements Where Intellectual Freedom is Mentioned



guidelines in shaping their awareness and understanding of intellectual freedom. As of this writing, formal policies or guidelines have yet to be crafted in the Philippines dedicated explicitly to intellectual freedom in libraries. Instead, intellectual freedom only exists as a clause or section of a broader policy or guidelines on librarianship.

Attitudes

The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement provided using a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from ‘1’ (strongly disagree) to ‘5’ (strongly agree). Among the 44 library directors, 31 (70%) were found to uphold intellectual freedom based on their *Attitudes* scores. The average obtained is 3.73, with a standard deviation of 0.59, and it was determined that the respondents are “likely” to subscribe to intellectual freedom. For example, In Table 6, most respondents (M = 4.5, SD = 0.88) agreed with the statement, “I should select library materials based on professional considerations, not by political, moral, and religious views.” It shows they give weight to professional

criteria over personal biases or external influences during selection.

Figure 3
Distribution of Respondents' Likelihood to Uphold Intellectual Freedom

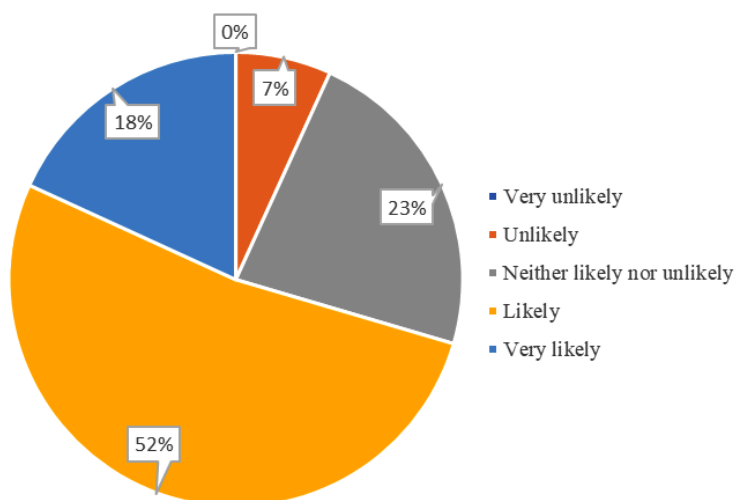


Table 5
*Weighted Average Scoring System for
Intellectual Freedom-Related Statements*

M Range	Equivalent Description
1.00 – 1.80	Very Unlikely
1.81 – 2.60	Unlikely
2.61 – 3.40	Neither Likely Nor Unlikely
3.41 – 4.20	Likely
4.21 – 5.00	Very Likely

Note: Mean interval = 0.80

On the other hand, there were disagreements with the statements, “If the school administrator requests that a book be removed, I should insist not to remove it” (M = 2.93, SD = 0.9976) and “If a government official insists that a book is mentally unhealthy for reading and calls for the removal of those, I should insist not to remove it” (M = 2.98, SD = 1.02). The disagreements could stem from various factors, such as differing interpretations of intellectual freedom, maintaining professional relationships, or imagining possible consequences of their action. One respondent (LD10) emphasized, “All collections are subjects for evaluation and review, and the library has so many considerations regarding the usefulness of the books.” Others pointed out the need for the collection to be aligned with the goals and needs of the academic institution and have the active presence of a board committee and other key stakeholders in developing it.

Practices

The respondents were asked to indicate corresponding points to each title using Moody’s (2004a, 2004b) pointing system in purchasing hypothetical items. One (1) point is incurred for accepting the item into the library collection; two (2) points for accepting the item but putting a label to it to serve as a warning; four (4) points for accepting but placing it on closed access; and eight (8) points for rejecting the item. The average obtained is 3.20 with a standard deviation of 1.53, and it was determined that most of them tend to become “a little” to “slightly” censors during material selection (see Figure 4). The most frequent actions the respondents demonstrated when presented with controversial titles were simply accepting in the collection and putting a label so users would be warned of the content. In Table 8, the majority of the respondents indicated that titles such as “A memoir that contains a detailed, first-hand account of the Marcos Sr. administration during Martial Law era in the 1970s” (M = 2.5, SD = 1.43) and “A book about the history of homosexuality in art” (M = 2.43, SD =

1.85) should be accepted or labeled so readers would be warned of the content. In addition, respondents showed reluctance to accept titles such as “a book that contains instructions on how to make explosives, LSD, teargas, and more” (M = 4.68, SD = 2.58) and “a novel with graphic descriptions of self-harm, suicide, and the reality of mental illnesses” (M = 3.98, SD = 2.42) or instead place them on closed access. These results suggest that while the respondents exhibit some degree of censorship tendencies, it is not so pervasive and varies depending on the content of the material being considered. Despite being controversial, they could still acknowledge the value of these materials and their potential to contribute to a better understanding of historical events and social issues, among other things.

Table 6
*Mean and Standard Deviation of Intellectual
Freedom-Related Statements*

Statements	M	SD
My academic library should have a formal or written intellectual freedom policy and a mechanism or specific procedures for handling complaints.	4.3864	0.6547
I should select library materials based on professional considerations, not by political, moral, and religious views.	4.5	0.8760
I should make available the widest diversity of views in the library, including those that are unpopular or considered dangerous by the majority.	3.3636	1.4157
I should not exclude library materials only because of their origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.	3.8182	1.1668
If a parent, student, or faculty says that a particular book is inappropriate for reading and demands the book to be removed, I should insist not to remove it.	3.1364	1.1532
If the school administrator requests that a book be removed, I should insist not to remove it.	2.9318	0.9976
If a government official insists that a book is mentally unhealthy for reading and calls for the removal of those, I should insist not to remove it.	2.9773	1.0227
My local community values should be taken into account when selecting materials for libraries.	4.2955	0.6675
I should create programs in support of the right to read (e.g., Banned Books Week, read-aloud, exhibit, or displays, etc.).	4.4773	0.6643
I should resist all efforts by groups or individuals to censor library materials.	3.3636	1.2956
Total	3.7250	0.5938

Note: N = 44; adopted from McNicol (2016), Oltmann (2016), and Taiwo & Sulyman (2022).

One respondent (LD38) explained, “Questions are true, and some encountered when selecting books or materials, but those are not suited to our academic library, specifically a Catholic institution.” Another respondent (LD29) elaborated, “Having these kinds of materials, which others may think that libraries must not possess, is necessary for researchers who wish to know the truth, contribute to new knowledge, and explore the proper attitudes and practices on intellectual freedom.” One respondent suggested (HL10) that books with themes about self-harm should only be accessed for research purposes, not for public display or regular circulation. In contrast, another respondent (HL12) asserted, “If we limit the materials coming into the library, we cannot call it intellectual freedom.”

Figure 4
Distribution of Respondents' Likelihood to Have Censorship Tendencies

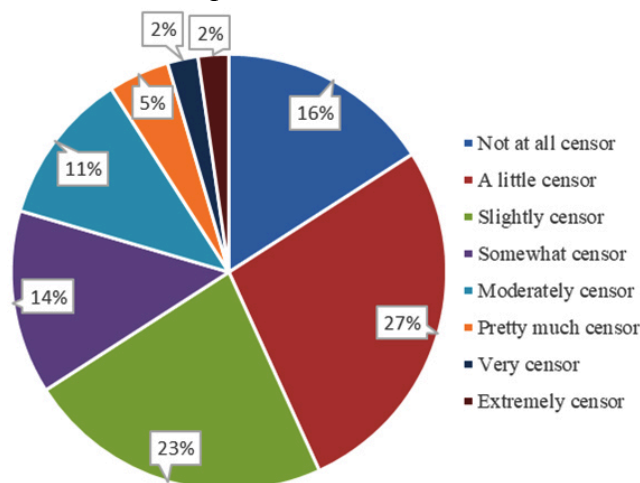


Table 7
Weighted Average Scoring System on the Perceived Treatment of Respondents to Select Titles

<i>M</i> Range	Equivalent Description
1.000 – 1.875	Not At All Censor
1.876 – 2.750	A Little Censor
2.751 – 3.625	Slightly Censor
3.626 – 4.500	Somewhat Censor
4.501 – 5.375	Moderately Censor
5.376 – 6.250	Pretty Much Censor
6.251 – 7.125	Very Censor
7.126 – 8.000	Extremely Censor

Note: Mean interval = 0.875

Conclusion

Academic library directors in Southern Tagalog are found to have a strong awareness and recognition of intellectual freedom, viewing it as a fundamental right extending beyond unrestricted access to information. For them, it remains a significant aspect in developing library collections and any aspect of library work that requires informed decision-making based on professional considerations and community needs. While efforts are made to apply intellectual freedom, formal guidelines for implementation are often unclear. Despite expressing support for intellectual freedom, the involved library directors recognize the influence of personal beliefs, financial considerations, local community values, and the socio-political climate (among other reasons), which may lead to a degree of censorship, including labeling and restricted access for some library materials that require careful handling and protection from public scrutiny.

This study is a modest attempt to shed light and offer insights into intellectual freedom issues in Philippine academic libraries. It aims to pave the way for a closer investigation of issues such as book censorship incidents and to think of ways to respond successfully to those challenges in the future. Intellectual freedom is a “continually negotiated concept that must be held in balance with social responsibility” (Ratcliffe, 2020, p. 1). As knowledge providers, librarians should be well-informed and well-equipped to navigate the opportunities and challenges within their respective academic libraries and further strengthen their commitment to intellectual freedom. However, it should be recognized that it could be dramatically challenging for them and that they might need additional support to carry out these responsibilities.

Aside from being a knowledge provider of resources, this study stresses the role of academic libraries as safe and productive spaces for learning, teaching, and other activities. Within these spaces, people from different walks of life can argue about generally contested ideas without fear and propose alternatives. In today’s growing intolerance, those facilitating these spaces are further encouraged to promote social justice where marginalized voices are heard and underrepresented communities are empowered. Encouraging the academic community to flourish from a wide variety of ideas and shed light on the pressing issues of our society are the very essence of intellectual freedom.

Table 8
*Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived
 Treatment of Respondents to Select Titles*

Statements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
A book about the history of homosexuality in art, with visual images relating to gay men and lesbians from early human sexual behaviors through the emergence of contemporary LGBTQIA+ institutions.	2.4318	1.8477
A compilation of creative literary works about people going up to the mountains to take up arms and start a revolution against the government.	3.0455	1.9524
A book on the life story of a former rebel retelling the “recruitment of students in colleges and universities, infiltration in different organizations, and exploitation of the resources of the people.”	3.1364	2.0864
A memoir that contains a detailed, first-hand account of the Marcos administration during [the] Martial Law era in the 1970s, exposing its massive corruption and military abuses.	2.25	1.4326
A book about the Philippine Catholic Church, the wrongdoings of some of its bishops and priests—in sexual misconduct and financial mismanagement.	2.6591	2.0109
A book on witchcraft practices of the various Filipino ethnic groups explaining the magic of intriguing terms such as anting-anting, aswang, kulam, and a number of others.	3.2273	2.3612
A coming-of-age novel about a Filipino-American teenager who searches for the truth about his cousin, who was one of the extrajudicial killings (EJK) victims under Oplan Tokhang.	2.7273	2.0042
A book that contains instructions on how to make explosives, LSD, teargas, and more, as well as detailing how to operate firearms and destroy infrastructure.	4.6818	2.5769
A novel with graphic descriptions of self-harm, suicide, and the reality of mental illnesses.	3.9773	2.4159
A guidebook that revolves around sex, drugs, alcohol, insults, obscenities, dirty talk, curse words, slurs, the supernatural, gambling, etc.	3.8864	2.5899
Total	3.2023	1.5261

Note: $N = 44$

Regularly updating and reviewing the collection development policies is recommended for libraries, regardless of the type, to ensure alignment with intellectual freedom principles. Library associations in the Philippines should lead in providing resources, fostering partnerships, and encouraging collaboration to navigate intellectual freedom effectively. Expanding the conception of intellectual freedom beyond censorship and adapting it to the evolving landscape of libraries and information centers is crucial. Academic libraries should conduct awareness programs to educate students and teachers about intellectual freedom, while LIS educators should explore timely issues in their classes. Further studies are needed to gather substantial information about intellectual freedom in Philippine academic libraries, including qualitative research and exploring perceptions beyond Southern Tagalog and academic libraries. Stakeholders, including school administration and government officials, should recognize the role of libraries and provide unwavering support for their collections, services, and facilities.

Overall, this study aims to contribute valuable insights that will inform future researchers, professionals, educators, and students in the LIS field. It addresses the need for additional local intellectual freedom research and further explores its practical implications. Considering this principle, along with the profession’s ethical guidelines, prepares them for such circumstances. Equipping them with the knowledge and strategies could allow them to actively participate in policy-making, curriculum enhancement, and improving working practices in the library. This study has limitations, but it seeks to inspire more people to advocate intellectual freedom in connection to social justice and become agents of change.

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APPENDIX

Titles in the *Practices* Section

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Challenges to Digital Services in Philippine Academic Libraries

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Abstract

This paper seeks to characterize the maturity of digital initiatives in Philippine academic libraries, focusing on the sustainability of digitization activities. For its literature review, this paper presents local digitization initiatives, guidelines, standards, and good practices on digitization as presented in research, and prevailing digital library services during the COVID-19 pandemic. It employed a descriptive-comparative research design to obtain information on digitization programs implemented in higher education and research-producing institutions. Five of the 12 verified institutions with digitization programs were engaged for further interviews. The respondents cited the lack of staff, dedicated physical space, and inadequate equipment and funding as barriers to implementing a digitization program. Most of the respondents' digitization initiatives began in response to external triggers rather than as a part of a comprehensive strategy to provide digital library services. The project-based approach to these activities affects the sustainability of digitization programs. The study recommends organizing more consultancy programs in digitization, teaching digitization ICT applications in LIS schools, information companies offering digitization services, digitization communities of practice, and consortia for sharing facilities and expertise. With the requirements of a more robust digital framework to provide flexible access, Philippine academic libraries must review their short- and long-term goals and figure out where digitization can be integrated within said goals.

Keywords: Digitalization, Digitization, Library services, Collections management, Virtual library services

INTRODUCTION

Digital information plays a pivotal role in the academic setting. Apart from providing much-needed access to information for teaching, learning, and research, it also allows for ease of access to said information as it can be viewed conveniently from a patron's own device (Chen & Chen, 2010). Chen and Granitz (2012) note an evident shift of preference from analog to digital formats primarily due to increasing access to technology and sheer convenience.

Academic libraries often turn to digital library services to address the demand for digital information. Digital library services assist library staff members with organizing collections of materials or making them

more widely available (Sarker et al., 2010). Khan (2013) lists a few of these services, including—but not limited to — access to web-based resources, e-journals, e-books, electronic theses and dissertations, digital archives, and institutional repositories.

Preference for digital formats aside, digitized information has become a necessity now more than ever. With the COVID-19 pandemic prompting a drastic shift in the educational sector, most classes, if not all, have adopted distance learning/e-learning, whether in part or whole, as a valid mode of delivery in lieu of face-to-face classes. It is estimated that over 28 million Filipino students across all academic levels were affected by the transition to remote online

learning adopted in early 2020. Of these, 3.5 million students from 2,400 higher education institutions (HEI) are from the tertiary level (Jeremiah et al., 2020).

However, the Philippine education system is not well-equipped for e-learning since it has been dependent on personal, face-to-face classes for so long (Cuaton, 2020). Given this, students have found it particularly hard to adjust to this relatively new learning set-up. In a study about online learning barriers, Baticulon et al. (2021) lists “poor quality of learning materials” (p. 10) among the many institutional barriers to learning that medical students have been dealing with amidst the pandemic.

Even before the pandemic, Philippine libraries have struggled to meet the demands for accessible digital information. Macapagal (2019), in her report on Philippine public libraries, states that only 18% of 433 public libraries nationwide have access to e-books/e-journals. This occurs even though most public library clients are either college (30%) or high school (36%) students. It does not help that these digital services are often either behind a paywall or are not readily available for access by the library due to other

reasons. Libraries often have to pay a premium for database subscriptions to provide access to e-journals and e-books. Similarly, digital archives and institutional repositories require considerable funding and staffing to function properly.

This paper seeks to characterize the maturity of digital initiatives in Philippine academic libraries, focusing on the sustainability of digitization activities. The study adapts Mugoya’s (2014) framework in which he details the considerations for library technical services. Figure 1 demonstrates how outsourcing is typically undertaken when in-house digitization is more expensive and requires technical skills, professional skills, and managerial expertise that may not be available to an institution.

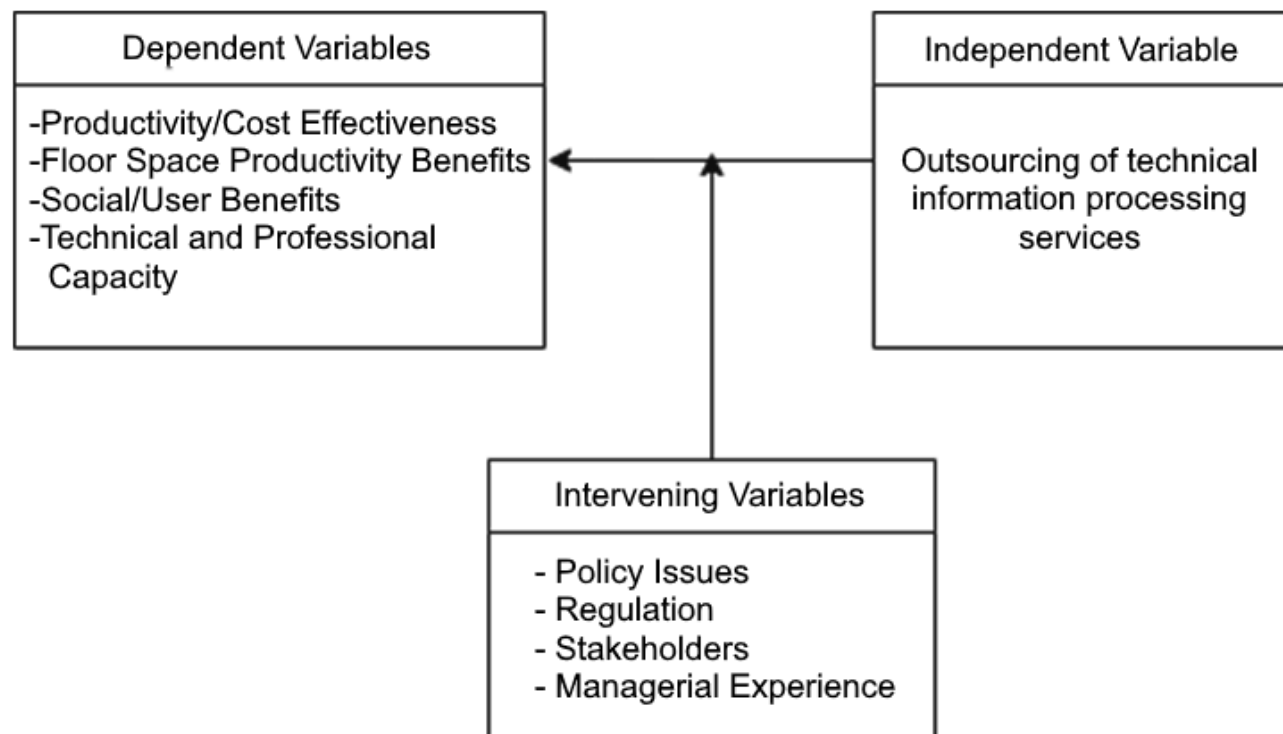
LITERATURE REVIEW

Digitization in the Philippines

Efforts concerning digitization in the Philippines can be traced back to the late 1990s when the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) set out to digitize 13 million historical documents to improve access to its holdings (Darlucio, 2009). Shortly after this, Verzosa (2005) notes that several other institutions

Figure 1

Technical services framework adapted from Mugoya (2014)



Note: Adapted from “Exploring Outsourcing Options for Technical Services in University Libraries: Case of University of Nairobi Library System,” by J. N. Mugoya, 2014, p. 21 (<http://hdl.handle.net/11295/76998>). Copyright © 2014.

immediately followed suit and began digitizing their collections. The institutions mentioned were the University of the Philippines (UP) Libraries, the De La Salle University Archives, the Supreme Court Library, and the Inter-Institutional Consortium Project. Much like the NAP, the institutions mentioned above had digitization to improve access to their collections, with some also implementing it as a preservation measure.

For so long, “digitization” has been viewed as the solution to address several library issues, most notably in terms of access and storage. In the same paper, Verzosa (2005) posits that digitization greatly enhances access and is cheaper than photocopying in terms of low-cost distribution. She also mentions other benefits, such as reduced long-term storage costs and preservation of fragile and archival materials using digitized information as document surrogates.

However, these digitization efforts were not without their flaws. Early attempts to incorporate digitization practices within an institution’s workflow were, more often than not, plagued with a lack of finesse in its implementation. Although successful in its pioneer effort, the NAP has yet to make available the 13 million historical documents it has digitized to the Web (David & Alayon, 2016). This defeats the purpose of digitization, as it is supposed to provide convenient access to information.

Quiros (2008) also mentions that, at the time, libraries had an output-centric mindset, which led to inconsistencies in quality. He cites as a prime example The Philippine eLibrary Project, which processed approximately 24 million documents under the supervision of the National Library of the Philippines (NLP). Impressive as it may seem, he notes that a considerable number of these digitized documents had issues in quality (e.g., unreadable pages, oversized output files, and damaged original documents, to name a few), thus rendering most outputs inaccessible and prompting NLP to revamp the entire digitization program altogether.

Local Standards and Good Practice

While no preset authority implements formal standards on library digitization in the country, several public institutions, such as the NLP and the NAP, offer support in implementing digitization programs in the country.

Several notable librarians who have been digitizing their library’s collections have also taken the time to share their own best practices in their institutions.

Kipaan (2012) provides a prime example of how to integrate digitization processes in a library with barely adequate funds. He emphasizes the creative use of available library resources, listing several alternatives to traditional in-house activities. Among said alternatives were (1) delegating menial tasks (e.g., scanning and encoding of documents) to LIS students and interns as opposed to hiring full-time personnel, (2) having the ICT division sponsor the training of existing staff rather than getting a dedicated specialist, and (3) adopting a homegrown, inter-university sub-database to host the digitized materials as opposed to commissioning the creation of a new database from scratch. He posits that such efforts allow the university library to operate at a reasonably low cost, allowing more resources to be allocated to the maintenance of the system and enabling longer access to digitized materials.

David and Alayon (2016) also mentioned a few “best practices” in response to the problems often encountered within LAMs that carry out their digitization programs. Among these were the principle of “doing it right the first time” to prevent wasting resources, identifying reasonable timeframes and targets via collaboration with other departments, delegating trained staff to implement digitization to ensure the quality of output, looking ahead and allocating the necessary physical space needed to conduct digitization, and complying with the standards set by the Open Archives Initiative to ensure continued access and interoperability.

A significant consideration when implementing a digitization program for a library was whether to do it in-house or have it outsourced. Major universities in Metro Manila, such as UP, the Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU), and the University of Santo Tomas, can implement their digitization programs in-house. These universities can do so because they have the funding, human resources, and equipment (Verzosa, 2005). Digitizing in-house affords a library more control over its processes and, thus, is better able to monitor output and ensure consistency of quality. However, it also requires a considerable amount of funding to cover front operational and start-up costs like equipment, staffing, and training (David & Alayon, 2016). As such, only a select few opt to digitize in-house due to budget constraints.

For those who want to digitize but do not have the budget to do so in-house, an often-consulted alternative is technical services outsourcing. Outsourcing a library’s technical services is nothing new. It has been ongoing since the late 1990s when

technological developments allowed for faster and more efficient output for a fraction of the cost (Wilson & Colver, 1997). Outsourcing digitization processes to a service provider can benefit a library. Apart from a decrease in workload, service providers offer streamlined workflows that can be tailor-fitted to an organization's needs. Moreover, such offerings are available without hefty start-up costs (Norton-Wisla, 2020).

Foreign Implementation and International Standards

The first integration of digitization within libraries can be attributed to the Manuscript Digitization Demonstration Project carried out by the Library of Congress (LOC) in cooperation with the National Digital Library Program. In their report, Sharpe and Ott (1998) outline the techniques utilized in carrying out the digitization project. A preliminary survey of existing imaging practices was conducted directly, followed by the appraisal of the materials to be digitized. A total of 10,000 images of manuscripts were digitized and made available online. As the pioneer of digitization within libraries, the LOC is one of the primary authorities on matters concerning digitization within libraries worldwide. The LOC has established several standards for implementing digitization processes within libraries, such as the *Technical Standards for Digital Conversion of Text and Graphic Materials* (Library of Congress, 2006) and *Preservation Guidelines for Digitizing Library Materials* (2011). Similarly, the Preservation and Reformatting Section of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS; Bogus et al., 2013) under the American Library Association also recommends digitizing a library's collection. These standards and guidelines provide librarians and archivists with the benchmark needed to ensure the efficient implementation of digitization practices.

The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) takes it a step further by providing guidelines on effectively digitizing one's collection and facilitating continued access to the created digital materials through digital preservation. The DPC's *Digital Preservation Handbook* (2015) is a peer-reviewed, open-source reference that "provides an internationally authoritative and practical guide to the subject of managing digital resources over time and the issues in sustaining access to them" (Home page). The DPC defines digital preservation as "a series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary" (Glossary).

On an individual level, Hillen (2019) documents how

libraries can effectively outsource some of their technical processes through the lens of the librarian-vendor perspective. He posits that libraries often outsource technical work to save time, money, and effort, further noting how, through careful consideration and planning, it may serve as a powerful boon to a library's workflows and time constraints.

When starting a digitization program, an important consideration is deciding whether to build a system from scratch that will process and house digitized information or buy commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solutions. Whether it would be one or the other is purely dependent on the institution. Still, with the demand for digitized information at an all-time high, it is a decision that is becoming ever so crucial for academic libraries to get right. From a business perspective, Morrow (2019) notes that this decision comes down to a few fundamental factors, such as timing, costs, and available resources. The calculation of said factors shall help determine each option's return on investment (ROI) and aid in the decision-making process of whether one should build or buy a system.

Software acquisition is a common practice in the library setting and is often done to help streamline and expedite a library's processes. Fagan and Keach (2010) explore the different options for software acquisition available to libraries, which include building the software in-house, buying COTS solutions, opting for open-source software, and utilizing free-to-use applications. Much like what was stated in the previous paragraph, they note that the adoption of each relies on the library's available resources, making specific note of the need for technical expertise should one choose to build the system on its own.

Digital Library Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

If there is anything good that came about from the pandemic, it hastened the adoption of various digital library services in academic libraries. Although the circumstances in which they were implemented were unfavorable, the Philippine library's response to the pandemic is a testament to the tried and tested Filipino culture of ingenuity and resilience.

Fresnido and Esposito-Betan (2022) listed the digital library services offered by academic libraries during the pandemic. These services include virtual library orientation/information literacy sessions, interlibrary lending, document delivery services, and online content promotion, to name a few. New initiatives

were offered at the onset of the remote learning set-up in HEIs. Some notable initiatives were the provision of e-reference, access to digital resources, loan policy adjustments, work-from-home arrangements, establishment of institutional repositories, and digitization.

Digital Document Delivery and the Pandemic

Limited mobility brought about by quarantine restrictions within the country necessitated academic institutions' dependence on digital document delivery to augment the lack of traditional, physical library service. Given that students no longer have physical access to learning resources within a library, the success of e-learning is very much dependent on a library's capacity to provide digital learning resources required by its primary stakeholders (i.e., the students). In a study of online learning challenges amidst the pandemic in the Philippines, Barrot et al. (2021) note that students primarily cope with the stress of online learning through resource management and utilization. Similarly, Huang et al. (2020) posit that at the core of e-learning in times of great distress, suitable digital learning resources coupled with "flexible pedagogy" should be applied.

Document delivery is nothing new and has been a typical library service since the advent of the 21st century when technological advancements made it possible to provide access to information resources in the digital format (Dieterle, 2002). This allowed library patrons access to local and worldwide collections in the convenience of their own homes. However, it is worth noting that providing purely digital library services, often without access to a physical library, is unprecedented for most libraries in the Philippines.

When a library's collection does not suffice, academic libraries may turn to other libraries through consortiums or interlibrary loans to augment said insufficiency (Garcia & Peñaflor, 2017). Notable consortiums within the country that engage in resource-sharing include the Academic Libraries Book Acquisitions Systems Association, Inc. (ALABASA), the Mendiola Consortium (MC), the South Manila Inter-Institutional Consortium (SM-IC), and the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institution Library Committee (NOCEILC), to name a few.

Building an Institutional Repository

While most academic libraries have access to electronic journals and databases, most knowledge produced internally in the parent higher education

institutions is predominantly in print. Consequently, developing institutional repositories is a priority for many higher education institutions. In this context, institutional repositories are "formally organized and managed collections of digital content generated by faculty, staff, and students" (Sarker et al., 2010, p. 2). These repositories are an essential part of a higher education institution as they help capture, manage, and disseminate the intellectual assets of an institution. These, in turn, may then be used to address the need for learning resources.

Many academic institutions within the country have institutional repositories to streamline the storage and dissemination of internally produced research and other intellectual assets to their stakeholders. Some examples of academic institutional repositories are the University of Cebu's Graduate School Library's Online Repository, UP Diliman's *Digital Archives*, Central Philippine University's *BAHANDIAN*, and the AdMU's *Archium*. Information housed in these repositories includes — but is not limited to — theses and dissertations, personal and presidential papers, university publications, and other forms of creative and scholarly output.

METHODOLOGY

Collection Strategy

The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to obtain information on digitization programs implemented within HEIs and research-producing institutions (RPIs). This was done primarily to conduct the study while causing minimal to no interruptions to the processes of the interviewed institutions. A list of all HEIs, as compiled by the Commission on Higher Education, along with 12 RPIs, was used as the primary reference for the study.

Data were primarily gathered through online surveys conducted via video calls using a survey questionnaire as an instrument. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: (1) the profile of the institution, (2) digitization activities implemented within the institution, and (3) the estimated cost of digitization activities. In addition, e-mail correspondence was used to collect supplementary data on questions that institutions were unable to provide a definite response to during the survey. Due to limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, a convenience/snowball sampling method was utilized. Analysis and presentation of data was done through tabulation.

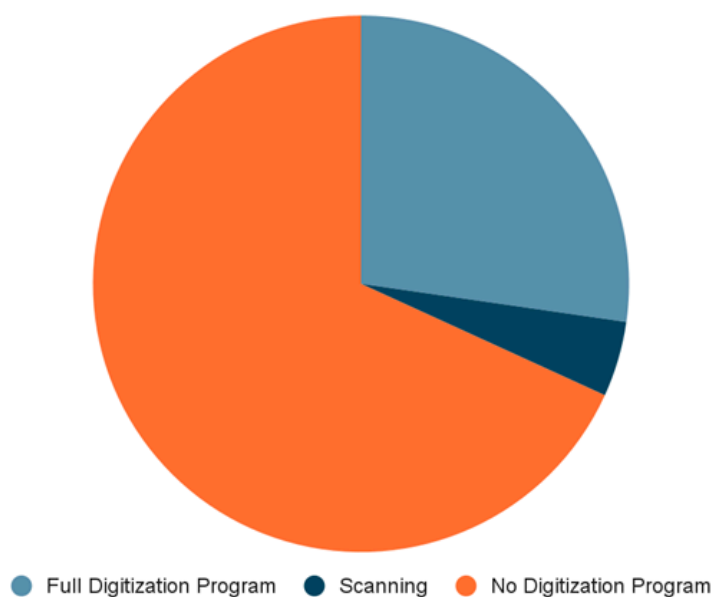
Background of Institutions

283 HEIs and RPIs (271 HEIs and 12 RPIs) were contacted, and 44 have responded. Thirty institutions

said they did not have a digitization program, and 14 claimed to have one. Upon further inquiry, two of the 14 were found to have only been implementing discrete digitization activities (i.e., scanning), while the other 12 have full digitization programs.

Figure 2

HEIs/RPIs responses when asked if they have a digitization program within their institution.



Among the 12 verified institutions, five institutions (one RPI and four HEIs) accepted the author's request for a further interview. For this study and considering

the institutions they work in, the librarians' names and the institutions they represent have been anonymized. They will, therefore, be referred to as Institution A, Institution B, Institution C, Institution D, and Institution E. To better understand the context in which the institutions mentioned above carry out their digitization programs, details such as the number of clients and digitized materials are elaborated in *Table 1*.

Institution A is a private, international, non-government, non-profit, and non-stock institution in Manila with a client base of about 500 registered users. It is the sole research-producing institution in the study. It currently operates within the confines of an HEI and caters to its students and faculty, whose total number amounts to approximately 10,000.

Institution B is a private, non-stock, non-profit, non-sectarian coeducational university located in Manila, which has a student and academic staff population of approximately 20,000. The library's primary demographic is its students, which range from grade school students to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Institution C is a private, non-profit, religious, coeducational university in Manila, well-known for its longevity in the field of education, with a student population of about 40,000. Due to its long-standing history, it has a rich collection of unique, historical, and archival paraphernalia (e.g., maps, books, newspapers) dating as far back as the Spanish colonial times.

Institution D is a public, coeducational research university in Quezon City with a student population of

Table 1

Profile of Interviewed Institutions

	Approximate Number of Clients	Types of Materials Digitized
Institution A	10,500	Journals, Research Publications, Photographs, Institutional Memoirs, Photographs, Notes, Broadsheets and Newspapers
Institution B	20,000	Books, Theses and Dissertations, Archival Materials, Institutional Memoirs, Administrative Files
Institution C	40,000	Books, Archival Materials, Maps, Newspapers
Institution D	48,500	Print Materials (e.g., books and maps), Dated Copies from the General Collections Section that have no available digital copy, Filipiniana Materials
Institution E	200,000	Books, Journals, Archival Materials

about 47,000 and a faculty of about 1,500. It is home to several research institutes and is renowned for producing graduates in diverse fields. A state university, its main library houses a sizable collection of Filipiniana materials, some of which are already fragile and dilapidated. Given this, the library set out to implement a digitization program to preserve its Filipiniana collection.

Institution E is a private, non-sectarian, coeducational university in Manila with a population of about 60,000 students. Its library uses a centralized online system catering to the information needs of two other constituent universities. Overall, it caters to approximately 200,000 students.

FINDINGS

Challenges in Digitization

Survey, e-mail, and interview responses were classified according to the current phase of digitization that the institutions were in, namely, *Starting a Digitization Program*, *Implementation*, and *Sustainability*. The former part documents issues encountered by librarians who have yet to start a digitization program of their own. These librarians are referred to as “Librarian #1,” “Librarian #2,” and so forth to protect their identities and reputations. On the other hand, the latter two parts feature personal experiences in digitization, digitalization, and digital preservation, if applicable. Likewise, the five institutions interviewed for this part are called “Institution A,” “Institution B,” and so forth.

Starting a Digitization Program

The respondents cited several barriers to implementing a digitization program within their libraries. Among those cited were the lack of staff, dedicated physical space, and inadequate equipment and funding.

Staff

One of the significant barriers to implementing a digitization program in libraries is staffing concerns. This is primarily due to the lack of registered librarians and qualified library personnel within the country to help with the operational tasks required for digitization. Librarian #1 acknowledges this shortage in personnel, stating that their institution “is looking to digitize its own library collections soon. However, the program has seen delays due to the school looking for a new librarian.”

Lourdes David of the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians currently estimates that only about 10% of the country’s demand for librarians is satisfied

(Adel, 2020). While she suggests that libraries may hire non-librarian staff to compensate for this undersupply, a librarian must still be present to oversee library operations. Given this, it is inevitable for some libraries to operate without a librarian, leaving them without the technical expertise required to manage and implement a digitization program.

Space

Also cited is the lack of dedicated space for digitization. Some institutions mentioned that their library was under renovation at the time of contact. Librarian #2 laments the lack of space allotted for their library, noting that they “have not yet started their library digitization process since renovation of our new library is still ongoing and due to unwanted pandemic.”

Others cited having to deal with the physical closure of the institution itself, consequently leaving the librarians unable to digitize. “Our library is closed due to a pandemic, and we don’t have a digitization program here,” Librarian #3 says. Similarly, Librarian #4 states, “Our physical library is closed indefinitely. We are building up our Digital or E-library. Digitization is part of the plan, but we can only do it when the physical library opens again.”

Quarantine restrictions brought about by the pandemic have been in place for almost two years, so it makes sense that most libraries are closed until the national government implements a change in policy. Especially at a time when institutions have come to favor online platforms over physical classrooms and offices, librarians are prompted to continue library operations off-site.

Equipment and Funding

Another cited challenge is inadequate equipment and funding for digitization. This is the case for many libraries in the Philippines either because technologies required for digitization are not readily available for acquisition or the library does not have enough funds to procure said equipment. Librarian #5 acknowledges that their library lacks the technical equipment to implement and maintain a digitization program. “We do not have any digitization program as it is different from the Library System. Digitization needs a scanner, barcode, and encoder for that purpose, and we lack people to do the task”, he says. Likewise, Librarian #6 notes: “We don’t have a digitizing project now since we don’t have the appropriate digitizing equipment. We resort to scanning of much needed (selected) library materials using ordinary scanning equipment.”

A library's lack of physical and social resources is often directly correlated to a lack of funding. Pandey and Misra (2014) state that substantial funding is required to offset operational and start-up costs for digitization (i.e., employee wages and equipment acquisition). Thus, the library cannot implement its digitization program without adequate funding. Moreover, many institutions are keen on cutting down on costs given the current state of the economy, leaving many libraries with just enough budget to sustain a skeletal workforce.

Implementation

The interviews highlighted that the digitization programs are implemented on an ad-hoc basis. Respondent institutions had a variety of reasons for undertaking digitization. Most of the respondents' digitization initiatives began in response to external triggers (e.g., the pandemic) rather than as a part of a comprehensive strategy to provide digital library services. Consequently, some institutions had to proceed with digitization despite persisting problems regarding starting a digitization program, as previously mentioned.

Technical Knowledge/Expertise

As mentioned in the earlier issue on staffing, the Philippines severely lacks librarians and is in dire need of capable library and information professionals. This insufficiency has often been to the detriment of many libraries since a certain level of technical knowledge is required to effectively manage and implement library programs and operations, let alone a digitization program.

In his survey of digital preservation needs within notable archives in the Philippines, Isip (2015) notes two significant barriers that need to be addressed: the lack of technological infrastructure and technical expertise on the part of librarians. He posits that digital preservation within the country is still in its infancy and that these barriers need to be overcome if the country wants to maximize the benefits of digitization. David and Alayon (2016) made a similar claim, stating the importance of qualified librarians and library personnel in implementing a digitization program. Much like Isip (2015), they found that a lack of technical skill and poor planning were to blame for the poor maintenance of existing digitized collections.

Interviews with the five institutions with digitization programs mentioned earlier revealed the same sentiments. The complexity of managing and implementing a digitization program necessitates dedicated librarians and library personnel, especially

when dealing with materials in poor condition. All five institutions employed at least one (1) licensed librarian in managing the digitization program, with said librarian being accompanied by technical staff knowledgeable in digitization.

In-house vs. Outsourced

Except for Institution E, every institution interviewed employed a mix of in-house and outsourced resources. All of Institution E's digitization processes were done in-house. Institutions A, B, and C, on the other hand, outsource personnel to carry out the more technical aspects of digitization (e.g., Master Image Production, Image Optimization, Derivative Image Production, etc.) while having their in-house librarians take care of the arrangement and description of digitized materials, as well as metadata creation. Institution D has a slightly different approach in contrast to the other institutions since it not only digitizes internal resources but also takes on external projects from other institutions. Its internal information resources are digitized in-house, while external projects are outsourced.

Logistics

Depending on the library's digitization set-up, certain instances may require the transport, delivery, and insurance of records to be digitized. This is especially true for those who outsource their digitization programs to an off-site facility. In these cases, specific provisions must be present to account for the safety and condition of the materials to be transferred to the off-site facility, as this will give libraries peace of mind when entrusting their materials to service providers. However, no insurers in the Philippines currently offer coverage for records.

Some respondents are also reluctant to transfer their resources to an off-site facility (especially when such resources are fragile or contain sensitive information). Thus, they opt to outsource their digitization programs to external providers but have said providers set up their equipment within the library itself and either bring staff in from the service provider or manage the hiring of project staff or interns themselves. This affords the library a more hands-on approach to managing and monitoring digitization processes while also saving them the risk and hassle of transporting their collections to an off-site facility and possibly having them damaged, stolen, or lost along the way.

This is the case for three of the institutions interviewed, namely Institutions A, B, and C. Institutions A and C deal with a lot of archival materials in addition to their usual collection of theses and dissertations, so both institutions viewed it best to

have their service providers set up within their libraries and have them digitize within their premises. Institution A has a considerable collection of photographs, notes, broadsheets, and newspapers (some dating back to the Japanese occupation). Meanwhile, Institution C has a rich collection of archival materials dating back to the Spanish colonial period. Thus, it makes sense for both institutions to opt for an in-house set-up. On the other hand, Institution B digitizes a lot of internal and administrative files, which is why, in the interest of the security and confidentiality of the materials being digitized, they opted to have their service providers set up their equipment in-house. It is only in special cases, such as when a material to be digitized requires specialized equipment — either due to the sheer size of the material (e.g., maps) or the condition of the material — that the institutions above consider having their materials digitized off-site.

Sustainability

Potentially a consequence of the many identified challenges for academic libraries in starting digitization is the project-based approach to these activities. Most grants and funds are provided on a time-limited basis with line-item deliverables, so proposals for “digitization projects” are common and focus on reformatting from print to digital. These projects often end and are considered successful after scanning or converting “x” number of materials and dumping those into hard drives or cloud storage. As the project ends with file delivery, no provisions are made for the digital preservation of these documents once they are sent to the library patron, usually through e-mail or a Google Drive link.

Similarly, projects involving the creation of institutional repositories are continually at risk as provisions for the continuing maintenance of software and hardware are frequently neglected. As the institutions that rely on this kind of project funding are just getting started, they have no existing server infrastructure or maintenance personnel available. The lack of hardware also means that these institutions tend towards online and web-based services, which are paid annually or on free software with file size or quantity limits. Thus, while a digitization project may be reported as a success in the short term, there is a considerable and present risk to the sustainability of these digital collections and their accompanying accessibility.

Another prevailing mindset from the interviewees’ responses is a focus on scanning from print to digital and an assumption of process fixity for the records.

Not one of the respondents mentioned digitalization or looking into changing the processes that result in the creation of many print collections in the library, such as in the case of these submissions. Digitalizing would reduce the burden of digitization and enable academic libraries to focus on providing access and preserving digital collections. However, digitalization increases the need to find sustainable funding sources and adopt a program-based mindset over project-orientated perspectives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This pandemic has made it clear that the Philippine education system is ill-equipped to handle emergencies. As what has already been made apparent by the national government’s insufficient response to a lack of face-to-face classes, a contingency plan should be set to afford learning institutions and their attached libraries some leeway should there be another crisis/emergency of this scale in the future.

Also apparent is the disconnect between the demand for online learning resources of library patrons and the libraries’ available resources, which often lack in digital formats. While this can be attributed to a lack of digitization of available print collections on the part of the libraries, a paradigm shift in thinking about information creation is necessary to reduce process complexity and remove the disconnect between creation and access. Records must be created with stakeholders in mind, not just in the content of the many theses, administrative papers, and educational resources generated by universities, but also in the context and structure by which the information is shared and presented.

Thus, it is evident that there is a wide-open market for information professionals specializing in the consultancy and management of digitalization in Philippine academic libraries. Correspondingly, there is a need for library schools to go beyond introductory courses in ICT and explore the application of these technologies, intending to produce graduates competent in the standards, processes, and technical infrastructure of digital preservation in its entirety.

Likewise, the entry of more digital preservation service providers in a market dominated by precious few companies would give libraries more options and reduce costs through competition while increasing the quality of deliverables. There is also an opportunity for new companies to provide continuing support services to libraries that might otherwise find it challenging to sustain digital preservation even after a successful digitization project, provided that

academic libraries can successfully campaign for the funding support of sustainable programs vs. a project-based approach to these services.

For digitization programs to be implemented in more HEIs in the region (and, in a more optimistic perspective, the country), the institution of digitization communities of practice is recommended. Communities of practice in libraries are nothing new and are often used to facilitate resource and knowledge-sharing between member institutions. A digitization community of practice operates under the same principle. Libraries, archives, and museums with experience implementing digitization programs within their premises may share resources regarding their workflows, best practices, and service providers (for outsourcing, if applicable) with libraries that would like to start their programs but are unsure where to begin. A digitization consortium takes this concept a step further by engaging in resource-sharing and providing avenues for facility-sharing between libraries. Thus, in theory, a library with a bigger budget may assist in the digitization needs of a library with a lesser financial capacity by lending equipment to the latter.

Implementing a digitization program can be very beneficial to academic libraries, and it is high time that HEIs capitalize on these benefits. If the pandemic has made anything clear, most academic libraries in the country require a more robust digital framework to provide flexible access to their collections at a moment's notice. Given this, libraries must review their short- and long-term goals and figure out where digitization can be integrated within said goals. Doing this will open more avenues for a library's capacity to provide access to information (e.g., controlled digital lending, e-reference services, and establishing institutional repositories, to name a few). Thus, this dramatically enhances digital library services and crisis-proofs them, so to speak, to better handle predicaments of the same magnitude in the years to come.

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A Glimpse at Children's Literature in the Philippines: A Sourcebook Review

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RESOURCE REVIEW

Book review of

Almario, V. S., Paterno, M.E., Sunico, R. C., & Villanueva, R. O. (Eds.). (1994). *Bumasa at lumaya: A sourcebook on children's literature in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing, Inc.

and

Almario, A. R., Cruz, N. S.R., Sunico, R. C. (Eds.). (2016). *Bumasa at lumaya 2: A sourcebook on children's literature in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing, Inc.

As a librarian, I truly believe in the power of reading. I want everyone to feel the joy of reading and hearing stories that would show the world and its culture, history, and values. With this in mind, I stumbled upon *Bumasa at Lumaya: A Sourcebook on Children's Literature in the Philippines*. It was about the state of our local children's literature initiated by the Philippine Board on Books for Young People (PBBY) to recognize all efforts in the creation and promotion of local children's literature and everyone who appreciates its value. The first volume was edited by Virgilio S. Almario, Ma. Elena Paterno, Raimon C. Sunico and Rene O. Villanueva in 1994. The second volume was edited by Ani Rosa Almario, Neni Sta. Romana Cruz, and Ramon C. Sunico in 2016.

LOOKING BACK ON CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE PHILIPPINES

The *Introduction* presented misconceptions about children's literature clearing its definition. Neni Sta. Romana Cruz described the rules and regulations of the publishing industry as "inhospitable government rules and regulations (Almario et al., 1994, p. 2-3)" making the production of low-cost books harder. It was a bold and straightforward remark calling for

help to address this problem and provide support. In the second volume, access to libraries and books was among the mentioned challenges. It was refreshing that libraries were acknowledged as an integral part of the industry; however, the issue was not elaborated on much.

Looking Back shared the history and development of children's literature. Maria Elena Paterno narrated the history by period: pre-colonial, Spanish and American occupations. Virgilio Almario stated problems and breakthroughs like the lack of an established publishing house. Both authors introduced titles written in each period making their existence known but since only the title was given, access to these materials isn't mentioned. The question of where these materials are now should also be addressed.

In the second volume, *Bumasa at Lumaya 2*, which was written in Filipino, Eugene Y. Evasco echoed popular remarks on children's literature like Virgilio Almario's "hot pandesal mentality" (Almario et al., 2016, p. 9), alluding to the practice of the same popular themes getting published repeatedly. Despite this, he acknowledged the interactive e-books, the picture book applications and the regional publication of children's books in support of Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education which should have an in-depth discussion as these are important aspects in the advancement of local children's literature.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN

The Writer's Heart was written for aspiring writers. The first volume discussed writing in different literary forms. Literary form is "a mode of literary expression characterized by elements of internal structure, rather than by content" including fiction, poem, and play (Reitz, 2004, para. 358). The discussion was simple and easy to understand as it was accompanied by examples.

Bumasa at Lumaya 2, includes sections entitled *The Writer's Heart* and *Writers Speak*. Here different authors' inspiration, strategies and experiences were shared using interviews and roundtable discussions including that of Rene Villanueva. Although formal training courses and workshops are available, these could be an inspiration to those who couldn't decide how and what to write, igniting their passion and creativity specially since the conversations were transcribed as is. Filipino and English were used, bringing a comfortable and familiar vibe. However, some ideas couldn't be expounded just like the standards on writing for children mentioned by Rene Villanueva which would have been better if discussed comprehensively. This part only talked about writing in general with essays on poems and nonfiction writing. Problems in integrating poems into the curriculum like some poems "may not speak to Filipino children" (Almario et al., 2016, p. 43) and the possible retelling of old children's stories like *Ang Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang* were also raised.

The word "children" was clearly defined making it easier to identify who the children are and their difference from young adults. The volume included two essays on Young Adult literature briefly presenting the status of Philippine young adult literature. The authors mentioned the titles published each year, significant development and problems including marketing of books, incorporating teaching and study aids in the books and choosing novels based on recommended readings with some books with taboo themes not being chosen as educational materials. The discussion on the "divergence between what schools think their students should read and what readers themselves want to read" (Almario et al., 2016, p.123). was worthwhile giving value to readers' personal choices.

ILLUSTRATING FOR CHILDREN

Another section entitled *The Bookmaker's Art* introduced the development and importance of illustrations. The first volume traced its history and development in the local children's literature accompanied by sample illustrations, problems and issues. While the illustrations included were very helpful, it would be better if the samples were put to the discussion of the period when they were published. For example, the illustrations of the books published during the Spanish period were inserted before or after the discussion of that period to easily show how the illustrations improved through time. Illustrators' advice and descriptions of work and style were among the remaining discussion.

The second volume focused on illustrations and comics. Ruben de Jesus showed illustrations of Filipino children's books from 1983 to 2014 with a summary and explanation of the technique used. It would be better if the sample illustration of the specific book mentioned is put after or before the discussion so readers can easily locate and understand it. Additionally, some words used in the essay were unfamiliar to non-illustrators but this was somehow addressed at the beginning and the summary of one essay. Liza Flores shared the problems and improvements regarding illustrating for children which will surely open discussions and solutions for better opportunities. Paolo Chikiamco clearly defined comics in an essay on comics appreciation, tackled techniques used in publishing comic books and recommended titles categorized by subject/theme. Although he only listed the titles without description, it will still help the readers choose what to read. It would be helpful if he separated the local from international books in his recommendation.

READERS AND READING

The Reader's Part section was about reading and the readers. In the first volume, Nina Lim-Yuson wrote an essay on reading to children in every developmental stage which gave ideas on possible reading materials for different age groups. Nemah N. Hermosa discussed children's literature in the curriculum explaining how teachers use it to promote literacy and relate it to other subjects like mathematics, arts and music giving other educators insights. It was amazing that as early as 1994 children's literature was already incorporated into the curriculum. I noticed that most books mentioned in the essay were foreign. Moreover, access to children's books during this time was not mentioned much. This was probably because Republic Act No. 7743 was just approved in 1994 and not yet implemented. Still, it would be better if the state of children's literature in libraries were also explored.

Aside from *The Reader's Part*, which presented access to reading materials and promoted the love for reading, the second volume also had a part entitled *Book Reading and Learning* featuring reading educators. The discussion involved the importance of libraries and librarians in children's literature. Neni Sta. Romana Cruz honestly explained the situation in the Philippines where not all schools had libraries and librarians, and she then added some initiatives including the establishment of Library Hubs, "warehouse or wholesale libraries" established in different schools divisions by the Department of Education (DepEd), the local government and the private sector (Almario et al., 2016, p. 209). I appreciate this discussion but it makes me think, are

these initiatives enough? Because sadly, having these initiatives show that there is not enough support to build school libraries and hire qualified librarians. The initiatives were just becoming band-aid remedies, not long-term solutions. More DepEd's plans should be raised like establishing school libraries as their way of adapting to the Standards for Philippine Libraries endorsed through the Dep. Ed. Order No. 56 s. 2011. On a positive note, a manual on establishing library hubs was initiated by Zarah C. Gagatiga which could make library hubs good temporary libraries and providers of supplementary reading materials. It was written in detail covering important aspects of libraries like collection development planning. The second volume's last part showed the insights of reading educators on what themes they are looking for in the curriculum which could be an inspiration to other educators and also what they think are missing in the children's literature industry which could help bridge the gap. Dina Ocampo talking about equality in education in the Philippines, where not all children have access to schools and even reading materials, supports the need for establishing school libraries in every school; to give the children an equal opportunity and access to books and aid the information needs of the teachers. Lastly, the Four-Pronged approach, the need for literature in the region for the children to be exposed to their own culture, and the crafting of a literary canon that will include recommended titles for suggested readings in specific ages were introduced, although they need to be discussed more.

THE FUTURE

The awards given in the children's literature industry were listed with descriptions making this book a great selection tool for librarians, teachers and parents. The contributors' background in the second volume shows their credibility making it easier to give credit. Expanding the ideas and discussion on topics like the translation to local languages, the regional publication, the retelling of old stories, comics appreciation and young adult literature will be significant in the future. Aside from writers, illustrators and teachers, parents and librarians could also be of help with issues on access, choices and selection of books, budget and pricing. Their voices could provide future directions to the children's literature industry. After all, they know children better as they spend more time with them at home, at school and in the library. Children, as the main audience, could contribute as well. Honest reviews and comments on books they read could be used to know what other improvements are needed. The discussion on incorporating children's literature into the curriculum could be consulted for Philippine

education. Specifically, for the LIS education, this book could be used for courses on Children's and Young Adult Literature since the history, issues and problems of local children's literature were presented here in detail which could promote critical thinking.

This sourcebook is an all-in-one resource, from writing to illustrating to reading; everything is discussed with equal importance. Each chapter and essay opens up discussion on problems and development in the industry. This would be a great inspiration for everyone interested in children's literature and who wants to gain new knowledge and insights that will help in supporting it. Overall, I feel proud of what this sourcebook has to offer. I feel satisfied at the same time excited about what other developments we will see in the future; hopefully, with more books like this in the future.

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