



Design a space for children in public library in developing country: a case study in Indonesia public library

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Abstract:

The paper purposes to give an overview about the children space design in some public libraries in Indonesia, especially Surabaya through case studies. There are three children spaces from different library. Those children spaces design usually use the bright colour painting, science or cartoon poster hanging on the wall, and low benches. Those are standard requirement for most children space in Surabaya public libraries. Even though there are some considerations when designing children space such as involving children during development process but this is hardly implemented because of lack of time, and ideally children space should be separated from other library area and this one is implemented very well. Some public libraries in Indonesia—Surabaya have implemented and build children space with simple design but very children oriented.

Keywords: Children Space, Children Space Design, Children Library

Library for most countries has become a cultural icon and civilisation symbol. For along time ago library has a role to deliver its society into knowledgeable people. The role of public library is very important when they should provide the society that resides around them with valuable information and place to transform the information. Since library not only acquired by developed and rich countries but developing countries, rural and big city also build their own library their responsibility to the society is increasing. However, in fact that not all libraries are able to fulfil their roles because of the limitation such as lack of good collections, facilities, and human resources.

To know how important the role of the library for children development, it is time to study more deeply about the library design for children in developing country--Indonesia. How the important of libraries existence to support children in order to fulfil their information needs. Even though libraries have a hard job to attract children to come to the library and use their services, read their collections, use the computer, and utilize the library space for discussion and many other activities, but it still worth to try to use any method to caught children attention. Of course, one of the attraction methods is through the library design. It is not a secret that appropriate library design can attract children attention and drive them to visit the library.

The paper describes the design of library space for children in Indonesia, through some case studies that been taken from several children spaces in Surabaya, East Java based on the writer observation and experience. This case study will be presented in order to gain understanding about the situation and the design of library for children. The case studies are delivered in narrative story telling approach. There are two categories in this case studies, first children space in public libraries and children space in community libraries. There will be three libraries that been used in this case studies with their own unique characteristics. The focus of these case studies are to examining and describing the real situation of the children space design that widely adopted in Indonesia and uses Surabaya as place in where the case studies have been conducted.

Children Space

Children space is a place for children either it special building for children or part of building that has children place. These children space are intended to support some children activity especially their intelligent activities. These space should accommodate children needs, hence all of the equipment and facilities should appropriate for children. That is why, a child space is uniquely designed to meet the children requirement, especially the interior design and furniture.

There are some important parts that should be available on the children space, which are, the interior design that involving combination of many bright colour, pictures, comfortable chair and desk, reachable bookshelf. Designing children space should consider the comfortable and ease of use, therefore children space should gives choices for children to use chair or floor read their favourite books. Some libraries did not provides chair but put some low desk where children can sit on the floor, this is simply to avoid accident such as fall from the chair, it is also good when there are not many librarian available in children space to supervise their activities.

In Indonesia almost all public library build special place for children, this is because children need special treatment that different to adult. There also community library that exist in many city and suburb in Indonesia that usually built for children , hence it is also have children taste design. Even though those children space are built with very low budget, but it still tries to add some children taste like painting, bright and contrast colours, toys, and special bookshelves.

It is also important to involve children during designing process, Yin Leng Theng et.al. (2009), describe on their research about children as design partner and tester, in order to fulfil the user—children needs. Involving children during design process is good idea

to gain information about what they need, however, children that has no experience on interior design may cause inconsistency.

Case studies:

1. Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Timur (State Library of Jawa Timur)

Jawa Timur State Library arrives to fulfill the society information needs, according to Indonesia government rules no. 25/2000, state library is a public service organization that support cultural, research, and learning within communities. Furthermore, UNESCO Manifesto 1994, states that public libraries are democratic institution that support the right to knowledge access for community without exception, such as race, age, sex, religion, nationality, and language. Public library should fully support by government especially financial support because the library services should be free for all user. State library also acts as a collection deposit, in which all of literature that published in Jawa Timur should deposit their works in Jawa Timur State Library.

Jawa Timur Public library open daily except the public holiday. It open from 8.00 am to 17.30 pm from Monday to Friday, and from 8.00 am to 13 pm for Saturday and Sunday. Like any other public library there are some services that available in this library such as circulation, reference, deposit, user education and training, online searching, web searching, mobile library services, school library services, and rural library services. This library did not states clearly about children library services, even though they have children space in the library.

Physical description:

Children space in Jawa Timur Public library is located in the first floor, it size 8 x 16 m². It is clear that the room is divided in three different areas, the door is in the middle of the room, and in the right hand side there is a collection in the wooden shelves, opposite the collection room there is reading area, and in the middle is circulation desk where the librarian is available for any kind of help. The children space looks so wide because there is no actual wall that divides those three areas.

The ventilation is very good because there are many big walls in the front and right side of the room, and in the clear weather sunshine that comes in through the window is enough to bright the room. The wall decoration is typical for children by using many bright colors, orange, light green, yellow, and pink in the collection area. In the reading area also applying the same theme with the collection room but instead of using painting on the wall, they hang many big cartoon characters on the wall. There is no chair available both in the collection and reading area, children can read any book that they pick from the shelves on the floor.

To attract children and make them comfortable the book arrangement uses display system for some collection like magazine and pictured books, so children can read the title easily and see the cover clearly. When they like to borrow the book, they can just go to the circulation desk in the middle of the room.

Even though the room design is quite simple but still show the children aspect such as, use the bright colorful painting for the wall, cartoon characters, displaying the collection, and carpet for reading room. The arrangement of the shelves also very user friendly, where is the shelves height is reachable by the children.

The children space not only for reading, but also there are some regular events that

available in the library, such as movie time that held every Saturday or Monday.



Figure 1. Jawa Timur State Library, collection area (children area)



Figure 2. Jawa Timur State Library, reading area (children space)

2. Perpustakaan Umum Kota Surabaya (Surabaya City Public Library)

The children space in Surabaya City Public Library is separated from main area. The room size is 8 x 15 m². This is only single room that has multifunction, collection, reading, and circulation area. Children space design in this library is quite similar to other children space in Surabaya or Indonesia. The shelves is arranging all around the wall and reading room is located in the middle or center room. There is only one gate, to enter and exit the library where the circulation desk stands. Actually this is very simple design for children space.

All reading area is covered by blue carpet, so user should took off their shoes when entering carpet area. The wall is more colorful, with blue, yellow, and red. The shelves also have the same color theme with the wall that is blue and yellow. The shelves still have adult height size in which approximately 175 cm, and this is a bit difficult to reach by children, especially collection on the top shelf.

About the reading room, even though there is carpet that covering reading area, but there are still many benches available. There are two type of benches in the reading area, for children and for adult, and of course they have different size and model. For adult, there are two circular desks with approximately 50 cm height that has 10 adults capacity each desk. Those desks function is for parent who accompanying their children, so they can read and watch their children.

Second type of bench is for children that is attached under the pillars, the size is smaller than the circular one, with 40 cm height. Those small benches have attractive bright color.

The room decoration is very simple; there are some cartoon character poster on every side of wall, and science poster that hang on the left side of the windows. To make room comfortable there are two air conditioners in the room, they're also some big windows in the left and right side allowing the sunshine to enter the room.



Figure 3. Surabaya City Public Library, reading area with small benches



Figure 4. Surabaya City Public Library, collection in the shelves



Figure 5. Surabaya City Public Library, science posters

3. Perpustakaan Pusdakota Ubaya (Pusdakota Community Library)

Pusdakota library is a community library that been developed by University of Surabaya (ubaya) to support community creativity around the library area. The community is people who live near the library including children. Pusdakota library is not similar to children space in public library, because children space in Pusdakota library also has function as a place where children can learn how to be a child librarian. So, children will gain two benefits when they come to Pusdakota library, first they can use the library facility such as reading, borrowing, and playing, second they also learn about library management with the child librarian program.

What are the child librarian activities in Pusdakota library? First of all, the child librarians are trained how to run a library, after that they should gather and organize some fellows to become their member. The number of library member has been targeted by Pusdakota library. Following that, after organizing a few friends, then the child librarian able to open small library in their home, called 'teras baca', of course the equipment comes from Pusdakota library. Those child librarians will manage their own small library in their home and supervised by Pusdakota librray. The child librarian has responsibility to record the visitor, loan, and doing simple statistic to report all of the activities in 'teras baca'. 'Teras baca' changes their collection every month that supported by Pusdakota library. Another program in 'teras baca' is movie playing that is irregularly conducted. Since the library is located in the home of child librarian, so there is no specific design and equipment that been applied. There is only a shelf with the collection that is placed in front of the main house or terrace or 'teras' in Indonesian word. People who like to read the collection can come to the 'teras baca' and read it on the floor.



Figure 6. Pusdakota Library Headquarter



Figure 7. 'teras baca' in one of child librarian's terrace corner

Discussion

In Indonesia children space is well developed, it is shown that every public library always build children library for their young user. The case studies above are small example of the existence of library design for children. The design is very children, the clear example is applying bright and contrast colour and the furniture. Those children library also very simple, but children is attracting to visit children library not just because of the design, but the collection. The collections are not only in children fiction, pictured book, legend and folklore, but also there are many education books that support their study.

Design is very important especially design that support the user need, in this case is children. Library should offers learning, playing, and educating facilities, it is obvious that the children design in both public library already fulfil those requirements. The room in both public libraries are designed with less furniture such as table and chair, this is to accommodate children to move around the room without hitting or falling from chair or desk. If the library uses chair and table, ensure that those chairs cannot be rock or swing (Graham and Demmers, 2001). The free space in children library also help librarian to watch the children when they use the library facilities.

The shelves choosing should be easy to reach by the children until the highest row. This teaches children to become independent and take their favourite books. The collection should be accessible by the children and low bookshelves are highly recommended for children space.

Those children space caters manual use only, so there is no computer or television for children, electronic gadget such as cassette player or DVD player for children. The audio visual collection only available for special occasion and not for loan.

The second type of library is different to those two public libraries. When public libraries put different design for their children space, the community library (pusdakota) train children to run their own small library at their terrace called 'teras baca'. This is very unique experience when children is asked to gathers some friends to become the member of their library, manage the collection, and provide library regulation, and made simple statistic for their library.

In conclusion, there are many considerations when designing children space, therefore children space ideally should be separated from other library area. Children space should cater their young visitor such as decoration, furniture, and function. Some public libraries in Indonesia have implemented and build children space with simple design but very children oriented. Hopefully in the future, there are many improvements in designing the children space, especially children space that is supported by children friendly furniture's.

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