

Chapter 11

Local Studies Centers in the Philippines: An Introductory Text

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ABSTRACT

Local studies centers are specialized information centers combining a library, an archives and a museum in terms of the range of the collections, and serving one purpose of preservation of knowledge about a certain locality defined in all facets. In the Philippines, these local studies centers were established as early as 1975 and from there, different local studies centers were established. This chapter aims to present an introductory text to the local studies centers in the Philippines. It describes and identifies what a local studies center is based on the structure and characteristics of existing local studies centers in the Philippines, specifically: organization and administration; collection; and services and programs. Further, this chapter intends to present select established local studies centers in the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Various communities have emerged and were created as a result of people's interaction to another, ranging from small group to sovereign state. One of the principal interests of an informed community is the study of local history (Hobbs, 1962). The field of local history is subsumed with importance, as active interest rises for it. Definitely, one of the contributory factors to the rise of this active interest, according to Hoskins in 1959 (cited by Hobbs, 1962), is people's inclination to study

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something which they can reach, easily grasp of, and can find a personal and individual meaning. One of the evidences we can cite on this is the growing number of local history writings, associations and institutions, making local history a popular intellectual pursuit. In various locality, this trend is eminent, particularly in places or communities with strong shared experiences and deep roots.

Putting into context, Boncan (1998) defined local history as a written narrative integrating a systematized record presented in order of time or chronology of the social, economic, religious, cultural, artistic and intellectual activities of the people of a particular locality set against a background of important public events. Another important aspect to be noted on it, according to Mibolos (1998), is that local history is attributed to the collective experiences of a certain group of people. In this view, local history is an integral part of the collective memory of a certain locality.

Through time, people expanded their interests to study beyond this. People wants to study and explore something of which they can easily understand and relate with. This led the field of local history to expansion to a new approach of attempting to study the growth and development of the locality beyond the mere history – including its institutions, and all its manifold aspects. People and communities expanded their interest and horizon to study and explore what has happened, is happening and will happen in their surroundings, rather than what just happened in the past. This “expanded scope” of study led those interested to use various methodologies leading to achieve a wide horizon of goals, such field work, cooperative study, and examination of original records, as well as reexamining and rewriting the social and economic history of the locality. In this manner, the study of local sources adds to the knowledge of various subjects within the locality (Hobbs, 1962). It can be seen that the expanded interest in local history is transformed into a wider and deeper perspective of viewing a locality – introducing the birth of “local studies.” The term, local studies, “covers the local environment in all its physical aspects, including geology, palaeontology, climatology and natural history, and in terms of all human activity within that environment, past, present and future” (Martin et al., 2002, p.1). It can be said that ‘local studies’ do not only cover the local history and the past, but rather includes the present and future information about a locality.

WHAT IS A LOCAL STUDIES CENTER?

An institution dedicated to the study of local studies (including local history) is coined as a “local studies center.” It is important to trace back the history and development of such concept in order to understand how it was conceived and how it operates. It can be noted that various terminologies were identified but are referring to the same concept of local studies center.

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