Developing data skills in Malaysian and Singaporean librarians via online Library Carpentry

The Carpentries is a global community teaching data science and computational skills to librarians, researchers in academia, industry and government. The various initiatives include Library Carpentry, Data Carpentry and Software Carpentry. Organisations interested in upskilling their staff may conduct Carpentries workshops based on openly available lesson materials and customise the content according to their needs and audiences.

The first Library Carpentry workshop was jointly organised by LAS and Nanyang Technological University Libraries in June 2019 in Singapore. Inspired by the success of the workshop in cultivating data skills in librarians, Monash Malaysia Library planned to organise a similar set of in-person workshops in October 2020 as a collaborative project with international instructors and helpers from Australia, Malaysia and Singapore.

However, due to the COVID-19 crisis shortly after, Monash University Malaysia Library decided to shift to online mode to deliver the workshops. Although the team was inexperienced in conducting Carpentry workshops online, they managed to accomplish two rounds of successful and well received online Library Carpentry Workshops in 2020, covering data skills on regular expression, tidy data, OpenRefine and SQL. Participants mainly consist of Singapore and Malaysian librarians, and a few others with international origin.

In this presentation, we will discuss some of the challenges faced by the team, e.g. maintaining the hands-on and interactive Carpentry approach with the online mode of delivery. We will also share the feedback from the participants as well as the learnings and take-aways. The collaboration benefitted the newly certified instructors from Singapore and Malaysia who gained confidence and experience through working side by side with the highly experienced Carpentries instructors from Australia and New Zealand. This collaboration proved that joint events can be effectively carried out in an online environment and demonstrates the flexibility of international collaborations without crossing the borders.

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Namita Santra is a Senior Manager at Monash University Malaysia Library. She leads a team of instructors who design and deliver research skills development programmes. From information search skills to academic skills to data fluency skills, she sets the tone and direction of the programmes to help students build contemporary skills for lifelong learning. She has a background in Literature, Education and Library Science.

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Belinda Sta Maria has taken the role of Data Fluency Librarian at Monash University Malaysia Library. She provides data-skills workshops and consultations to students and staff at Monash University Malaysia. She is the Liaison Librarian for the School of Information Technology. Some of the workshops she facilitates include EndNote, Citavi, LaTeX, SQL, OpenRefine. She provides research consultations to both undergraduate and postgraduate students and plays a key role in developing online library instructional modules. She is a qualified Librarian (MLIS) and holds a MSc in Information Technology.

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Danping currently serves as the Research Services Librarian at Singapore Management University. She provides training, consultation and supporting services to faculty and students on Research Data Management and other scholarly communication matters including citation metrics, institutional repository, data repository and open access.