



# Bridging the Gap for Malay Literature Content on Built Environment Through Wiki as A Collaborative Writing Tool

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## Abstract

This paper describes the procedure of engaging students in producing collaborative writing and utilizing online platform to build up a database of written content on specific discipline using the student generated writings. The aim is to add up to the content on built environment in Malay language as professional and academicians reports a scarcity in this field. The process involves thirty three third year students of architecture as the primary participants to produce writings based on a given template and three post graduate students to review and comment on the writings for maintaining a standard quality. 24 articles were selected after the screening process and uploaded to a wiki platform named Wikia under the title of WARIS ARKIEDIA. Continuation of this process with additional batches of student can add up more articles in the existing database. It is expected that, once available online, users participation can effectively improve the content quality as well as add on more related wikis and contribute to build up a national architecture literature database in Malay language.

**Keywords:** Collaborative writing, Arkipedia, Wiki, Malay literature, Built environment

## 1. Introduction

Student generated contents in the form of academic writings is a potential primary source for developing a database on any given discipline. Engaging suitable professionals in review process for the writings can improve the content quality to an acceptable level. This process of writing can broadly be termed as collaborative writing. (Hadjerrouit, 2011; Wheeler et al., 2008)

There are indications from various scholars that, written contents on the discipline of built environment in Malay language are very limited in number compared to that of English content. Among the few writers who attempted to fill up this gap there are Besim Selim al Hakim, Abdul Halim Nasir, Mohd Tajuddin Mohd Rasdi, Spahic Omer, Nangkula Utaberta and few more.

Another aspect to be considered is the platform on which the written contents can be showcased. Web 2.0 technology, particularly the wiki technology proves to be a great leap towards collaborative writing and knowledge distribution.

This study describes a preliminary procedure of how the student generated contents can contribute to develop a database on the discipline of architecture in Malay language. In other words, the study is a step by step attempt to encourage academic writings in undergraduate students, upgrade the content quality by a review process and finally develop a database of the writings for public use.

## 2. Lack of written content on built environment in malay language

As one of the oldest profession in the world, the development of architecture in Malaysia is relatively slow in terms of innovation as well as thoughts and ideas. Architect Saari Omar and academician Mohamad Tajuddin Rasdi called it a profession that is in serious crisis. One of the main cause for this situation as specified by Tajuddin Rasdi is the lack of popular and academic writing in the field of architecture in Malaysian context. (Mohd Rasdi, 2005)

Detailed study conducted by (Kosman et al., 2008) on publications related to architecture in Malaysia shows that only 66 books, 400 sections and 162 articles are found in academic and popular written sources. Among the sources there are archive of Institute of Architects Malaysia, architectural magazines, Utusan Malaysia, Harian Metro, New Straits times, Berita Harian, The Star, Malay Mail, KOSMO, Community hall and Culture Council. The amount of content is insufficient given that architecture is being practiced in Malaysia for such a long period of time. This is increasingly exacerbated by the fact that of 400 popular article sections just 57 or 14. 25% are contributed by members of the professional and academic architecture of which 26 articles or nearly half of which was contributed by Mohamad Tajuddin. More than 300 different articles contributed by figures that are not directly related to the profession of architect as Abdul Halim Nasir and Nik Azmi Nik Daud. Writing in the Community hall and Culture Council was 53% of which Abdul Halim Nasir contributed 88 articles. (Kosman et al., 2008)

Another crucial issue is that, most of the writings on architecture in Malaysia are written in English. Academicians as well as institution like Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) consider this as a great loss not to enrich and empower the national language of Malaysia in contributing to the field of architectural writings. (Mohd Rasdi, 2001) To tackle this DBP has initiated project to publish encyclopedia in architecture written in Malay language.

DBP project is a good initiative in this regard though more similar attempt is required to bridge the gap. This study is conducted to test if student generated content in architecture can accelerate the process through collaborative writing on an online platform.

### 3. Potential of student collaboration in building up content

Each year, a good amount of writings have been produced by the students of built environment as per their course requirement. They usually produce writings in the form of assignment, project paper, dissertation for final year projects, posters and so on. Unfortunately this huge quantity of writing remains unpublished and only utilized for grading purpose.

Using student generated contents for academic publication of any type poses the challenge of assuring writing quality. However, study shows if a particular writing strategy guided by a writing template is followed, the written outputs tend to maintain a base quality for most of the students which can then be improved by further review and revisions. (Torrance et al., 1999)

This particular study engages undergraduate students of suitable courses to generate writing in the field of architecture. The writing process is guided in several stages and includes plagiarism test and reviews. Details of the procedure will be discussed in the methodology section.

### 4. Wiki as a public platform

Publishing written content for public benefit has become convenient than ever with the utilization of online platforms. Traditional methods for learning such as lecture notes, power point presentations, other printed materials in the class are now on the verge of a paradigm shift to welcome new learning technique using Web 2.0 technologies. This term Web 2.0 is generally associated with You Tube, Podcasting, Blog, Wiki and so on. Among these, Wiki is a web communication tool that enables student to write in a collaborative online environment. (Duffy, 2008; Parker & Chao, 2007)

Wiki technology comes up with some advantages like it allows users to add, edit and comment from all over the world. This provides flexibility in adding and improving the content with voluntary participation. (Leuf & Cunningham, 2001). The quality of writing and reliability of the information within the contents are in constant observation through a virtual community based environment where dedicated members monitor the information continuously. (Long, 2006)

The key to its success is the voluntary participation of a larger group of user who are willing to share knowledge in written account and also reaching instantly to the group of people who are seeking the knowledge. (O'Leary, 2008). This study aims to utilize this platform for increasing the participation of students in academic writing and at the same time contribute to the literature gap of written content in the field of architecture in Malay language.

### 5. Methodology

This study is conducted with active participation of third year undergraduate students at department of architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia. The aim was to involve students in suitable course to do writing exercise on given topic. Course chosen for this exercise was Topical Studies. In this course the students are encouraged to read on various topics related to built environment. The assignments are designed in a way that the writing task will generate contents on diversified topics while following a structured template. The template is advised by the course instructor and it helps to maintain a particular pattern for all written contents. Assignment was instructed to be done in Malay language.

After the initial submission, the writings went through plagiarism checking and the students revised their writings accordingly. The second stage submission was review by post graduate students in related discipline and comment was given to each submission. After a second revision, papers with acceptable quality of writing are selected and uploaded to a wiki platform named Wikia. This particular platform is easy to use for common users compared to that of other wiki platforms which requires some coding background. Initially 24 papers are selected, all belonging to the discipline of built environment and were written in Malay language. Once uploaded, the papers are open for public usage where anyone can get benefited from the contents and also modify the papers for further improvement. Overall process is shown in the diagram below:

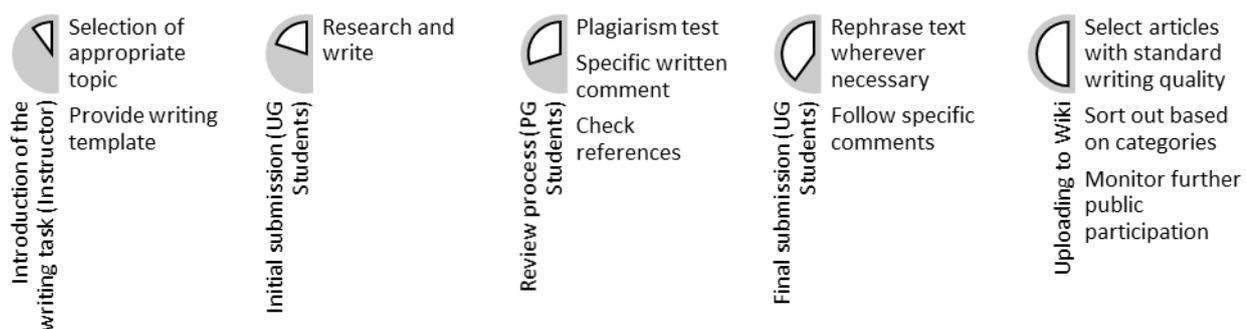


Fig 1: Stages for building up content for wiki

## 6. Discussion

Engaging under graduate students in collaborative writing to produce quality contents is quite a challenging task. Studies from around the globe have presented different strategies to overcome this obstacle. However, the main focus for this study was not only producing quality writings from undergraduate students but also to look for a way to utilize student writings in bridging literature gap in Malay language. Therefore there are two major phases in this study, engage students to participate in collaborative writing along with reviews and revisions to improve the quality of the content and utilize the wiki platform to make the contents available for public use.

The research team consisted of one lecturer as the course instructor and three post graduate students as reviewer for the writings. 33 students from third year architecture voluntary registered for the elective course "Topical Studies". After the initial briefing, the students produced 33 papers on given topic related to built environment. For the benefit of the students, a writing template with specific sections were given. The template followed the basic structure of an academic paper which is shown below:

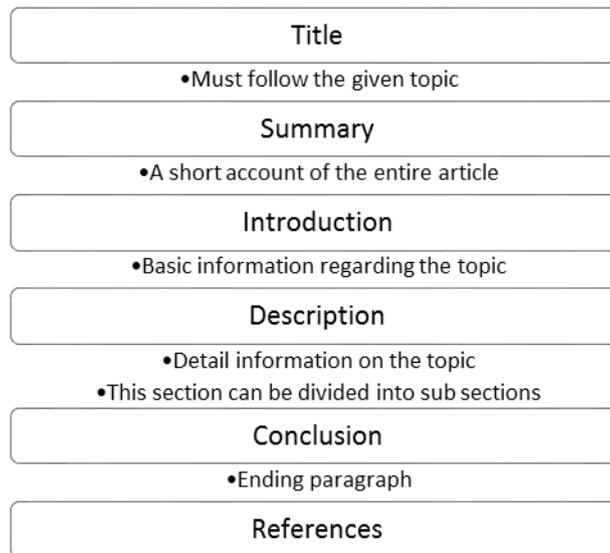


Fig: 2 Writing template provided by the instructor

All submissions had undergone plagiarism checking as well as written comment from the post graduate student reviewers. After the second revisions by the student, 24 papers were selected for publication on wiki platform. Which means, out of 33 papers initially submitted, 72.72 % papers were accepted as standard quality for online publication.

On the second phase, initially Media wiki was chosen to upload the selected articles. However, considering the expertise of the researcher in on built environment discipline with no coding background, Media wiki poses some obstacles because of its technicality. On a second attempt to find the suitable platform, Wikia was selected to upload the articles. Wikia is a free of charge hosting service with an easy to use interface and it has a database of several hundred thousand wikis on copyleft licenses. As this is a for-profit service, it shows ads on its pages, however, for an initial attempt to build a database of architecture related contents in Malay language, Wikia proves to be the best wiki platform available during the period of research. 24 articles is uploaded to this platform for public usage under the title of WARIS ARKIPEDIA. Screenshots from the wiki is shown below:

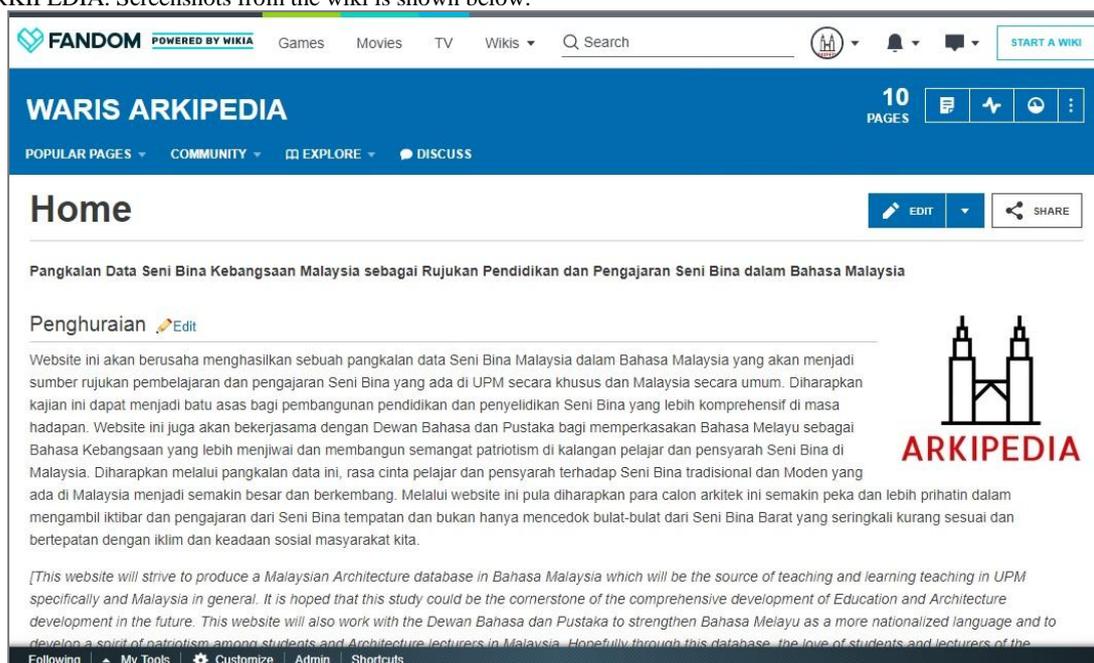


Fig3: Home page for WARIS ARKIPEDIA

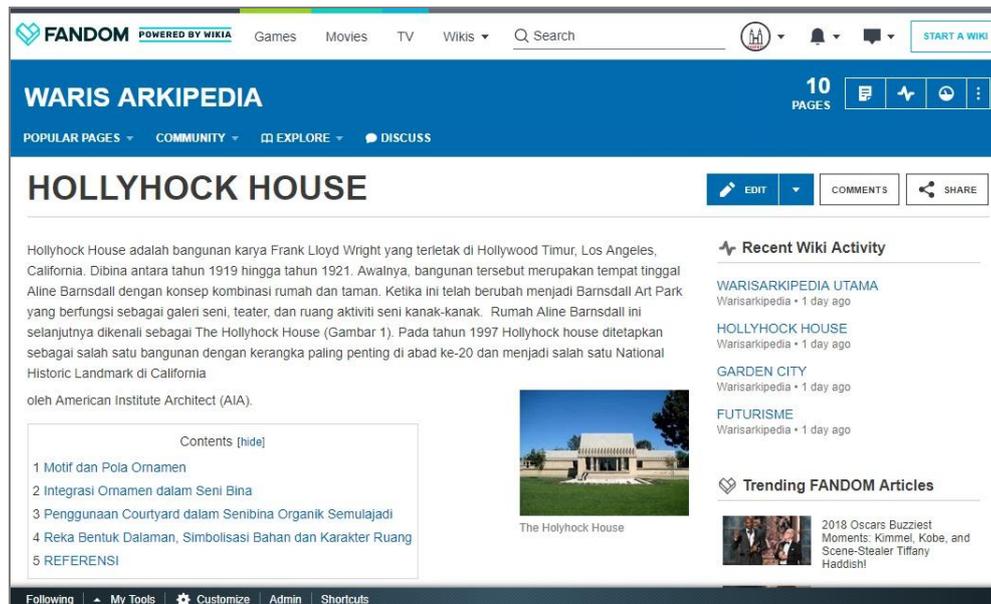


Fig 4: A sample page titled "HOLLYHOCK HOUSE" under WARIS ARKIPEDIA

Above two screenshots gives an idea of the Wikia platform and its user interface. Using the edit button, anyone can participate to improve the writing in terms of correcting or adding information. Editing an article in Wikia platform is similar to that of a word processor like MS Word or Libre Office so that a person with basic computer knowledge now can be a part of this project to add on contents in the field of built environment in Malay language.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper presents the initial attempt to involve students in collaborative writing for adding up to the available Malay literature on built environment. A free wiki platform with user friendly interface is utilized to upload selected number of paper. Further projection for this study would be monitoring the public participation in improving the quality of the articles available online. Provided that this initial attempt becomes successful in engaging users to utilize and improve the written contents, next phase of this study will involve active professional with coding background to build up Arkikipedia's own website.

This database have the potential to play an important role in the learning process and also widen the vision of undergraduate and post graduate students towards a national architectural identity.

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