

Conference Report on the Asian Literacy Conference 2026, titled “Multilingual Literacy in the Age of AI,” held on 18–19 June 2026 at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Thailand

Conference Overview

The **Asian Literacy Conference 2026 (ALC2026)**, themed “*Multilingual Literacy in the Age of AI*,” was held on **18–19 June 2026** at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre. The conference was jointly organized by the Faculty of Liberal Arts and partner organizations, including the International Literacy Association (ILA), Thailand Literacy Association, Chulalongkorn University’s Office of Academic Resources, Bangkok Library Network, and the Thai Library Association.

The conference brought together participants and literacy organizations from across Asia and beyond, including USA, Japan, Taiwan, Brunei, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand. It featured international keynote speakers, plenary presentations, panel discussions, research presentations, poster sessions, and related activities. The programme explored the changing nature of literacy in the AI era, with particular attention to:

- Multilingual literacy and AI literacy
- AI literacy and education
- AI applications in libraries and information services

The conference also provided opportunities for academic exchange, recognition of outstanding research, and networking among organizations working to advance literacy across the region.

Summary of the Academic Content

Day 1 - June 18th, 2026

1. The IDAC Country Reports from member countries/organizations, both online and on-site, including Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Brunei, and Thailand.



2. The IDAC Leadership Development Training workshop on Action Research led by Sakil Malik (Childhood Education International)



3. Poster Presentation



4. Study visit to the Office of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University



Day 2 - June 19th, 2026

1. Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony was welcomed by the Conference Chair, Professor Emeritus Dr. Namtip Wipawin, who expressed appreciation to the five key partner organizations whose collaboration contributed to the success of the conference. More than **180 participants** attended, with over **30 papers** submitted for oral and poster presentation. The opening ceremony was also attended by Assistant Professor Dr. Songlak Sakulvijitsinthu, Vice President for Research, Innovation, Information Technology and International Relations, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. She congratulated the organizers on the conference's success and expressed her hope for continued collaboration to foster a strong and sustainable learning society in the future.



2. Keynote and Plenary Sessions

Keynote and plenary speakers from five countries—Taiwan, Japan, Brunei, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines—highlighted the role of AI and emerging technologies such as VR in promoting multilingualism and reducing gaps in access to quality reading materials. They emphasized the importance of ethics and investment in local-language data to protect cultural identity. Literacy was also expanded toward **“Multiliteracies”** and **“Crossed Literacy,”** with AI positioned as a learning partner for lifelong learning, supported by research and participatory teaching.



Key presentations included:

- **Sakil Malil:** AI, equity, and linguistic diversity in Asia, emphasizing AI ethics, privacy, community knowledge systems, and language learning.
- **Prof. Chiou-lan Chern:** Generative AI for developing multiliteracies and supporting personalized learning in diverse academic contexts.

- **Dr. Hikaru Katsuta:** Japan's reading promotion and its development since 1956, including current research on working-age adults and older people and the *Handbook of the Science of Reading*.
- **Prof. Dr. Josephine Hsin-chou Huang:** VR for cross-cultural learning, demonstrating its contribution to digital skills and intercultural understanding.
- **Dr. Malai Zeiti Sheikh Abdul Hamid:** AI's impact on higher education in Brunei, highlighting risks of overreliance, critical thinking, AI ethics, and academic integrity.
- **Gulsanam Karimova:** Modern reading instruction in Uzbekistan, emphasizing participatory approaches, critical thinking, and collaborative activities.



3. Panel Discussion: “Case Study of Multilingual Literacy in the Age of AI”

The panel, moderated by Asst. Prof. Dr. Laksamee Nuamthanom Kimura, brought together international experts Dr. Merlene Alon, Ms. Linda Warfel, Dr. Rizalina C. Labanda, and Asst. Prof. Dr. Banjerd Jongapiratkul to examine literacy development amid rapid AI-driven technological change. The discussion focused on four areas: **reading development, the literacy ecosystem, the science of reading, and literacy needs in the AI era.**

Dr. Merlene Alon highlighted a “Proficiency Collapse” in the Philippines, where nearly half of learners have reading skills below grade level. Contributing factors include limited early-childhood development centres, increasing reading demands in secondary education, and insufficient direct reading instruction at higher levels.

Ms. Linda Warfel presented successful reading initiatives across Asia. Examples included Malaysia's national campaign, which engaged over 413,000 children in simultaneous reading; public-private partnerships in South Korea; culturally adapted books and school libraries in China; and Family Book Clubs in Taiwan. Regional initiatives such as Talking Story Books, Scholastic Early English, Let's Read, and Library for All have also expanded access to multilingual reading resources.

Overall, the discussion emphasized that literacy extends beyond basic reading and writing and must reflect social and cultural contexts. Visual, audio, and digital formats offer new pathways for literacy development, while sustainable reading cultures require

collaboration among governments, private organizations, international agencies, schools, publishers, and communities.

4. Academic Presentations: Sessions and Full Papers



The academic presentations were organized into three main sessions, with 11 full papers included in the conference proceedings. The key themes were:

1. Multilingual Literacy & AI Literacy: multilingual library management in international schools in Bangkok; AI in language teaching, including opportunities, risks, and classroom practices; and Generative AI language assessment and critical speaking practice using SpeechAce.

2. AI Literacy: NotebookLM for information literacy using multilingual social media; the National Library of Thailand's role as an AI literacy hub; and Generative AI storytelling in the Metaverse to support digital literacy in higher education.

3. AI in Libraries: AI strategies in Thai higher-education libraries; factors influencing agricultural researchers' participation in open research repositories; and applying the 7Ps service marketing mix to TK Park Yala.

In addition, five poster presentations addressed information behaviour among Generation Z, AI-assisted cataloging, AI for multilingual cultural heritage access, and the Living Books and learning-resource initiatives in Songkhla Old Town.

5. Awards for Outstanding Papers





The **Outstanding Paper Awards** were presented to the following papers:

1. “Conversational Web Archives Using NotebookLM to Support Information Literacy Practice from Multilingual Social Media Sources”
Author: Thanavie Sommoon
2. “Curators of Information Integrity: The Evolving Role of Reference Librarians in Preserving Family History in the Royal Thai Government Gazette during the Generative AI Era at the National Library of Thailand”
Author: Thanachcha Suwannavach
3. “Towards Deep Cataloging: AI-Powered Paradigm Shift in Metadata and Cataloging”
Authors: Haiqing Lin and Sasipimol Prapinpongsakorn
4. “AI Literacy in Action: Insights from the Academic Forum of a Community of Thai Professionals in Europe”
Author: Tanapaksorn Vipavin

The **Best Undergraduate Paper Award** was presented to:

“The Tale of Living Books in Songkhla’s Old Town”

Authors: Gewalee Maunkun, Phumipat Ketrak, Teera Rachapol, Warut Natee, Komgrit Rumdon, and Prin Khwanriang.

Conference's Main Conclusions

Over two days, ALC2026 brought together voices from across Asia to ask a simple but urgent question – what does it mean to be literate in the age of AI? The conversation began with reading and writing, but quickly moved beyond them. Literacy is becoming broader and more complex, encompassing multiple languages, digital environments, information, culture, and the ability to engage critically and ethically with AI.

However, AI presents a paradox. It can widen access to knowledge while deepening linguistic inequality. It can support local-language learning and content, but languages with limited digital resources risk remaining underrepresented. Linguistic diversity must therefore be treated as a question of equity, culture, ethics, and access. The conference also revealed a changing role for **libraries and information institutions**. They are no longer simply gateways to information, but become spaces where people learn to evaluate, manage, and use information responsibly in an AI-mediated world.

Finally, a lesson that connects them all i.e. the future of literacy cannot be built alone. Governments, educators, libraries, researchers, communities, and international networks must work together to shape an AI future that is multilingual, inclusive, ethical, and equitable. ALC2026 was therefore not simply a conference about AI. It was a conversation about **the kind of literate society Asia wants to build in the age of AI.**



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