

'22 JUL 13 AIO :47

SENATE
S.B. No. 477

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Introduced by SENATOR WIN GATCHALIAN

AN ACT
DIGITIZING ALL BOOKS NECESSARY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE ONLINE LIBRARY, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

COVID-19 school closures have left many children behind, even when remote learning options were offered due to a lack of access to and preparedness for remote learning. The World Bank reports that in a commissioned survey of low-income households, about 95.5% use paper-based learning modules and materials in 2021.¹ This leaves a negligible share of learners who utilizes digital learning materials through online platforms such as the DepEd Commons.

However, according to one study, digital education tools could likewise

¹ World Bank. 2021. Philippine Basic Education System: Strengthening Effective Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond. (See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/35649/Philippines-COVID-19-Monitoring-Survey-Policy-Notes.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&fbclid=IwAR10qkI62HEkr1CPKDbBlenTWAdo2n0st3MEwl0lu1pecCtGsaUDfWJ6ZU>)

help learners catch up and bridge the learning gaps created by school disruptions. The same tools can also be beneficial as schools reopen for mitigating learning losses and supporting curricula implementation by providing different modalities to reach the most marginalized children.²

As we return to face-to-face classes, our public libraries, one of the country's pathways to educational resources, should remain pandemic-proof – ubiquitous and accessible – regardless of the geographical location and type of device used by the learners.

One example of a successful government-operated e-library is the Socioeconomic Research Portal for the Philippines (SERP-P), designed and maintained by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). SERP-P is an online knowledge resource that contains socioeconomic studies and materials produced by the PIDS and other academic and research institutions in the country. For the first half of 2022 alone, SERP-P already had 11,843 users with 35,219 page views.³

This bill aims to establish the Philippine Online Library which will emerge as a vital pathway to high-quality e-books and educational content as it will be the repository of the digitized copy of all textbooks and reference materials necessary for the public education of our elementary and secondary learners. It envisions an entire online library of essential reading materials easily accessible to all learners for free and without disruption.

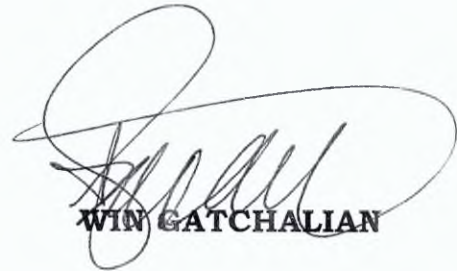
The digital divide is an information divide. This online knowledge portal will open up a new channel to the universe of knowledge and information. It

² UNICEF, UNESCO & World Bank. 2022. Where are we on education recovery? (See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381091>)

³ See SERP-P Site Usage Statistics (See <https://serp-p.pids.gov.ph/stats/public/index-analyticsP>)

will likewise enable learners to access a broader range of textbooks and materials to help them cope with learning loss and teachers to reach out to marginalized learners, and thus, connecting cultures across geographical and social boundaries.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is highly recommended.



WIN GATCHALIAN

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
First Regular Session

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Office of the Secretary

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AN ACT
DIGITIZING ALL BOOKS NECESSARY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND
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THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Philippine Online*
2 *Library Act*”.

3

4 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It shall be the policy of the State to ensure
5 that its citizens are computer literate and are provided access to an
6 increasingly digitized world. Thus, the State shall provide its citizens with the
7 opportunity to increase their adaptability to information and
8 communications technology, and to enhance their learning experience by
9 providing access to digitized copies of textbooks necessary for the provision
10 of quality elementary and secondary education.

11

12 Sec. 3. *Philippine Online Library.* – The Department of Education
13 (DepEd) shall create a digitized copy of all textbooks and reference books it

1 deems necessary for the public education of Philippine elementary and
2 secondary students. This shall be compiled in the Philippine Online Library
3 which shall be jointly managed by the DepEd and the Department of
4 Information and Communications Technology (DICT).

5
6 Sec. 4. *Provision for Access to the Digitized Copies of Textbooks.* – The
7 DepEd shall ensure access to the digitized copies of textbooks by providing
8 computers, laptops, or other appropriate devices to all elementary and
9 secondary public schools nationwide. Similarly, in order to ensure access to
10 the digitized copies of textbooks, the DICT shall provide free, reliable and
11 secure internet access to each elementary and secondary public school
12 pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10929 or the Free Internet
13 Access in Public Places Act.

14
15 Sec. 5. *Recycling of Computers.* – In order to offset expenses related to
16 the procurement of computers, laptops, or other appropriate devices
17 necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Act, national
18 government agencies, government-owned and controlled corporations, and
19 other government financial institutions which have procured new computers
20 shall endorse their old units to the DICT to check if the computers can still
21 be used for the intent of this Act and thereafter shall be given to the DepEd
22 for deployment to elementary and secondary public schools nationwide.

23
24 Sec. 6. *Additional Online Educational Materials.* – The DepEd can utilize
25 the National Library of the Philippines to complement the Philippine Online
26 Library's digital repository of textbooks with additional materials that are
27 representative of Filipino culture and literature. DepEd shall also be allowed
28 to add other online materials that it deems necessary for expanding the
29 learning opportunities for students.

30
31 Sec. 7. *Custody over Digitized Copies of Textbooks.* – The DepEd and the

1 National Library of the Philippines shall have joint custody over the digitized
2 copies of the textbooks. The DICT shall likewise ensure the technological
3 management of the digital repository to ensure the integrity of the system.
4

5 Sec. 8. *Appropriations.* – The initial amount of Five Hundred Million
6 Pesos (Php 500,000,000.00) shall be appropriated for the immediate
7 implementation of this Act and shall be jointly managed by the DepEd and
8 the DICT. An annual budget of One Hundred Million Pesos (Php
9 100,000,000.00) will be included in the annual budget of the DepEd to ensure
10 that the equipment and internet connection of public schools for the purpose
11 of this Act will be maintained.
12

13 Sec. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days
14 from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, the DICT, and the National Library
15 of the Philippines, in close coordination with the Department of Science and
16 Technology, and other stakeholders shall jointly issue the rules and
17 regulations implementing its provisions. The Implementing Rules and
18 Regulations (IRR) issued pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30)
19 days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.
20

21 Sec. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid
22 or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force
23 and effect.
24

25 Sec. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, executive orders,
26 presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances,
27 or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are
28 hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
29

1 Sec. 12. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this
2 Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette
3 or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,