

CDNLAO

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The 10th CDNLAO Meeting held in Singapore on 21 April 2002 saw the participation of 14 countries including all ten ASEAN countries, plus Australia, China, Japan and New Zealand. The meeting was scheduled back-to-back with the inaugural World Library Summit and Pre-Conference Seminars from 22 – 26 April.

The half-day meeting included a round of updates on status of projects, initiatives and developments from each of the countries present. What was noteworthy, emerging from the reports was that despite the economic downturn, all is not gloom and doom.

Several countries reported new library building projects either completed or underway that would lead to the expansion of library facilities, increasing physical capacity – i.e. floor space, while others highlighted developments underway or in progress in other areas including digitisation and preservation of cultural heritage and rare materials.

China had set in place an expansion programme that would transform its 70,000 sq metres National Library of China building to 240,000 sq metres, and upgraded it to the largest in Asia and 4th largest in the world in terms of physical space and materials collections.

Japan's new Kansai-kan Library, scheduled to be open in October 2002, would result in the growth of the National Diet Library's floor space by about 60,000 sq metres. In addition, its International Library of Children's Literature has been remodelled and will open to the public in May 2002. In Laos, three new regional libraries are being built in the regions of Savannakhet, Luangprabang and Vientiane. Myanmar's new 7-Storey National Library building will increase its floor space ten-fold from 24,900 sq ft to 234,252 sq ft.

In Thailand, a new 6-Storey building project (National Depository Library) is underway which would house the original copies of Books, Thesis and Newspaper collections published in Thailand. This is targeted for completion in September 2003. Furthermore, the central building of the National Library of Thailand would be upgraded with a new wing to provide disabilities facilities and services. Singapore's new National Library Board Building is scheduled for completion by the year 2004. When completed, the 10-storey new building, with a floor space of 79,030 sq metres would be approximately six times the size of the existing National Library building.

Others reported developments on digital libraries initiatives, human resources development initiatives, as well as cultural and heritage preservation initiatives. Governments in many countries are paying attention to the importance of the role that libraries play, not only in the conservation and preservation of its culture and heritage, but also in dissemination and making their vast resources accessible to the population.

Over the last 12 months Australia had embarked on a major digitisation programme, an example of which is *PictureAustralia*, a web service hosted by the Australian National Library on behalf of a range of Australian cultural institutions including galleries, museums, libraries, archives and historical societies.

The National Library of China had been give approval for the establishment of the National Digital Library.

The National Library of Laos opened a new section of the *Archives on Traditional Music in Laos* and *Microfilm of Rare Manuscripts* at the Office of Lao Manuscript Preservation Programme. Malaysia's digital library initiative is moving ahead with the development of its pilot *MyLib* portal as a gateway to web resources and 6 other projects in the pipeline, two of which *RajaKita* (Our Kings) and *MyKedah* (Kedah State Library) had obtained funding approval from the Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme.

A digitisation project in Myanmar which started early this year and scheduled for completion by end 2002, included plans for the digitising of Myanmar's rare books.

In New Zealand, the National Library of New Zealand is making efforts to transform itself into a "hybrid" library and developing policies to meet the challenges of digital preservation and digitising documents for access. Two significant developments in New Zealand in the area of digitisation are "*Papers Past*" – a collection of New Zealand's heritage online and "*Discover: Te Kohinga Taonga*" – an online curriculum resource project. Thailand will be embarking on a digitisation project of the S.E.A Write Awards at the end of 2002. The S.E.A. Write Awards are given to writers, novelists, poets or literary works creators from Southeast Asian countries every year.

The questions of Legislations, Legal Deposits and Copyright also came up for mention. The issue of how to treat the new electronic and digital publications vis-à-vis copyright and intellectual property rights management were also very much on the minds of participants at the meeting. It was therefore timely, that on the agenda was a presentation giving an overview of the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act 1998*, its impact and challenges for libraries, with a focus on "*anti-circumvention*".

One of the highlights of the meeting was a sneak preview of the new National Library @ Singapore – a video presentation of the new 10-Storey building that would house the National Library Board HQ, the National Library, and the Central Community Library. The new 10-storey building, targeted for completion in April 2004, would have a floor area of 79,030 sq metres, three basement levels and an observatory pod on the rooftop. The National Library @ Singapore is embodied as a centre for research, a place where users can tap the knowledge of the world, ignite and kindle their imagination, and explore infinite new possibilities.

In addition, a paper on "*Deployment of Digital Libraries to Remote Communities*" was presented by Mr Cameron Esslemont, Director of Global Library Services Network.

The Meeting concluded with an agreement that future CDNLAO meetings be scheduled three years in advance to allow the host country plenty of time for preparations. It was proposed that 11th CDNLAO in 2003 be hosted by Brunei, the 12th CDNLAO in 2004 by China and the 13th CDNLAO in 2005 by the Philippines, with the 11th and 13th CDNL Meetings coinciding with the Biennial CONSAL meetings scheduled to be hosted by Brunei and the Philippines respectively.