

# PHILIPPINES

**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE PHILIPPINES**

**PRUDENCIANA C. CRUZ — DIRECTOR IV**

## **ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2003 - 2004**

The National Library of the Philippines (NLP) is the repository of the Filipino intellectual, literary and cultural heritage. As such, it is responsible for preserving the rare Filipiniana collections of original and only copies of books, manuscripts, and serials handed down from the past to the present. The NLP relies on traditional means of preservation, through microfilming, or through digitization, that is, the conversion of print forms into CD-ROM or electronic forms. Because of limited funds, however, not all collections are scheduled for digitization. The NLP prioritizes which among the collections must be digitized first and which will be done later.

Through the Republic Act 7743 passed in 1994, the NLP technically supervises all public libraries in the Philippines. In coordination with local government units, the NLP assists in establishing local libraries by ensuring library standards in terms of collections, staff, and facilities. The number of public libraries has increased from 595 in 1994 to 1,003 as of the end of 2003. Although many local governments remain without libraries, the trend is that many are trying hard to have one in their community.

For cooperative sharing of resources, the NLP launched its Public Libraries Information Network (PUBLIN) in 1999. From a few pilot public libraries as members, PUBLIN now consists of almost a hundred members all over the country. One benefit from PUBLIN is that any member library can access the collections of other members. It simply makes the request through computer link-up. Information may also be shared by diskettes, or by fax machine. To prepare for the technical skills demanded, the NLP provided training on software and hardware to public librarians.

As a national agency that manages knowledge and information, the NLP carries out educational and cultural roles. As an educational agency, it caters to the information needs of the reading public and provides a venue for conferences and symposia. As a cultural agency, it promotes Filipino culture through cultural exhibits and programs. Just as other educational-cultural agencies do, the NLP joins in the celebration of the month of February as Arts Month, May as the National Heritage Month, and November as the Library and Information Services Month.

To harness more the potential of the NLP as an educational-cultural agency, it has been appropriately placed under the umbrella organization of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Through NCCA, the National Committee on Libraries and Information Services (NCCA-NCLIS) was formed, which takes charge of coordinating library and information activities of the agencies concerned for stronger and more lasting impact. For example, through NCCA-NCLIS's coordinative role, the NLP as ex-officio member of NCLIS was invited last year by a foundation in the southern Philippines to assist in the training of local librarians and to give technical assistance in organizing local libraries. Library and information services is thus promoted in all parts of the country, especially in far-flung provinces, not just in the Metro Manila area.

One recent development that fully maximizes the NLP's educational role is the Philippine eLibrary Project. It is a collaborative project involving five institutions or agencies, namely, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the NLP, the University of the Philippines System (UP), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The formerly separate libraries of each agency are now integrated into a single network producing quick, on-line access to combined library resources/holdings. For the NLP alone, two million collections, excluding materials considered part of the national heritage, can be accessed online through the project.

The NLP serves as the project management office and data center of the project. It is in the data center where electronic database content build-up, consolidation and updates are taking place. In this regard, selected collections of the NLP are being digitized for the eLibrary project, which also enhances their preservation. The project started this year and will be fully operational by the end of 2004.

Lastly, the NLP is busy preparing for co-hosting the 2006 Conference of Southeast Asian Libraries (CONSAL) General Assembly and Congress. Librarians of all categories and library associations as well are presently briefed by the local organizing committee through meetings on how to make the CONSAL XIII Congress, with the Philippines as host, a success.

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