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### **Networking cultural heritage: an overview of initiatives for collaboration among national libraries, museums and archives in Asia and Oceania**

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#### ***Introduction***

*The rapid development of digital technology and networking and its utilisation by libraries and other organisations responsible for national heritage collections, has brought about a paradigm shift in cross domain solutions to providing access to the contents of these repositories. The revolution in the information access and dissemination resulting from digitization and networking is creating new opportunities in both the production and consumption of information and knowledge. These changes provide opportunity to create and publish multimedia documents and to share cultural heritage materials with a world-wide audience in integrated media formats ( text, image, animation, audio, video, hyperlinking). Increasingly, attention is being focused on contents of cultural heritage institutions particularly libraries, archives, museums and art galleries, and how these can be made more easily and speedily accessible to the public. A desktop survey on the internet for English language sources revealed substantial information on collaborative activities among cultural heritage institutions initiated by or involving libraries in the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia particularly. However, not much information is available about such initiatives among cultural institutions in providing access through networking of cultural heritage digital resources in the Asia Oceania region. The detailed project reports of successful collaborative initiatives provide very useful guides and lessons as well as motivation for those embarking on similar initiatives.*

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## **2. Definition and concepts**

Collaboration comes from the Latin words *com* and *labore* which means “to work together”. It is a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more people to achieve common goals by sharing responsibility, authority and accountability for achieving results. ( Chrislip, 2002:41 ). The purpose of collaboration is a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any single party. Chrislip (2004) explains the basic concept of collaboration as

“ the idea of working together that incorporates several closely related concept fundamental to its practice including the distinction between adaptive work and routine challenges, the notion of a holding environment to contain the stresses of collaboration and to do adaptive work, the use of facilitation to guide or orchestrate adaptive work, and the use of consensus-based decision-making rather than majority rule.”

Collaboration is widely practiced in civic community and in solving community issues but is gaining popularity among public and private sector organizations, as well as academia.

## **3. Objective, Scope And Limitations**

In line with the topic suggested by IFLA Standing Committee on National Libraries, the objective of this paper is to provide an overview of initiatives for collaboration among National Libraries, Archives and Museum in networking cultural heritage in the Asia and Oceania region. The role of National Libraries, Archives, Museum and Art Gallery in the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, the need for collaboration, lessons learnt and best practices from successful collaboration projects reported in the professional literature are highlighted. An overview of the state of the art in selected countries in Asia Oceania is presented followed by issues and challenges faced and proposal for possible projects for collaboration. The treatment of the topic is limited by the information and data available and accessible on the internet as well the lack of collaboration activities undertaken by most National Libraries in Asia Oceania at present.

## **4. Role of Libraries, Archives and Museums**

National Libraries, Archives and Museums, and Art Galleries are entrusted with the responsibilities for the collecting, preserving and making available the nation’s cultural heritage. National Library collections essentially comprise of published materials, in printed or electronic form as well as hand written manuscripts. The National Archives’ core responsibility is the preservation of public records, whether on paper or electronic form. The National Museum is responsible for collecting, preserving and exhibiting artifacts about the nation’s history and culture, while the Art Gallery collects, preserves and exhibit art works by local artists. In some cases, these distinctions are not as clear cut as institutions may interpret or perceive their role differently. All four cultural institutions differ in their approaches to acquisition, documentation, processing, preservation and usage of the collections, due to a large extent to the nature of the materials collected and the conventions and practices of their professions. Librarians, Archivists,

Museum and Gallery Curators adhere to their own professional philosophy, practices, standards and ethics.

Libraries provide a catalogue to the Library's collections and ultimately aim to make the entire library collections accessible and available for reference or loan. Archives provide listings to their collection and selectively make available the material in their collection for consultation, although not for loan. Museums and Art Galleries are similar in that they make their collections available for viewing only through exhibitions or display. Usually a catalogue of exhibits accompanies these exhibitions. It is unusual for Museums or Art Galleries to make available or provide access to the records of their acquisitions or collections.

With present day digital and multimedia technology however, it is possible for Libraries, Archives, Museums and Art Galleries to make not only a catalogue of their holdings accessible, but also their collections accessible in text, images and sound and also in three dimensional should the need arise. They can do this by converting text and physical items into digital form and creating the necessary metadata and search engine to retrieve and call up the items they wish to see or refer to. Not only can bibliographic records be accessed but the full text of a document can also be accessed online via the internet. Beyond that the technology also allow for the collections in the four separate institutions be searched from a single gateway, making it a nirvana for researchers and users. With the availability of technology and expertise to make this possible there is every reason for cultural heritage institutions to work together and make this happen. Apart from this ultimate aim, there are a number of reasons why Libraries, Museums, Archives and Art Galleries should work together for the benefit of the communities they serve.

## **5. Need For Collaboration And Networking**

### 5.1 Blurring of functions of cultural heritage institutions

In the initial stages of their establishment, cultural institutions like libraries, archives, museums and art galleries developed separately focusing on their respective statutory responsibilities. These domains however, are not always clear-cut and in practice collecting of certain materials have been known to overlap. With more and more information 'born digital' and as well as increasing volume of material converted to digital form, the legal depository and preservation functions of the National Library and Archives, particularly in respect of government publications and information is blurring. Clearly, these are issues which need to be addressed and which make it essential for collaboration and networking between the two closely related cultural institutions.

### 5.2 Wider access to cultural heritage content

With the rapid development of digital libraries and increasing demand of users for faster and easier access to content of collections, collaboration on digital initiatives is becoming increasingly important and urgent. Libraries on their own or in collaboration with other libraries have undertaken digitisation initiatives to attract new users, preserve and improve access to their collections, support distance learning, and participate or lead creation of metadata standards. Inevitably, however, the realisation and recognition of the bigger prospect of more

comprehensive results which can be achieved in creating easier and speedier public access to contents of heritage collections for users makes it imperative for heritage institutions to collaborate.

### 5.3 User trends

Some of the trends and issues among user communities which motivate the development of cross-community project such as the The MOAC (Museums and the Online Archives of California) include :-

- (i) Increasingly, researchers, educators, students and even general public are expecting as a matter of course that information resources in public institutions should be open and accessible;
- (ii) There is generally greater awareness and higher expectations of public service quality partly due to or motivated by move to hold public institutions, especially government agencies more accountable;
- (iii) With the development of multimedia technology with the internet, the public are less willing to accept more cumbersome and difficult modes of access to publicly held information?
- (iv) Public or researchers are not concerned where sources of information is located or where an artifact or book is held as long as they had some intellectual access to it;
- (v) Users now prefer access to content, easily locating closely connected, if not integrated access to similar content from as many sources or institutions as possible.

### 5.4 Benefits

Several benefits accruing from a number of on-going and successful collaboration projects for networking cultural heritage may provide the motivation for heritage institutions to work together :-

- (i) Bigger and better collections
- (ii) Wider clientele and more users
- (iii) Shared experience enrich and broaden professional traditions and expertise
- (iv) More cost effective with shared infrastructure, facilities, hardware and software
- (v) With shared goals, collaboration leads to common language
- (vi) Develop best practices
- (vii) Better coordinated training programmes
- (viii) Collaboration attracts more funding opportunities, and are encouraged by fund providers
- (ix) Adoption of metadata and interoperability standards, critical for digital library networks
- (x) Resolve differences of cultures, missions, values and funding structure
- (xi) Better negotiation strength for out-sourced services
- (xii) Availability of cross-domain funding or cross-sectoral funding
- (xiii) Blurring of boundaries between libraries and archives and between museums and art galleries
- (xiv) Available technology to create across the board access to contents

## 5.5. Requirements for Successful Collaboration

Learning from the lessons of successful collaboration projects, networking cultural heritage require a number of factors to be in place in order for the collaboration to be a success :-

(i) **Language**

Although collaborating institutions may have common goals and visions, they need also a common language. Otherwise the lack of shared vocabulary can cause professionals from different institutions to talk at cross purposes. This applies also to common language between professionals in libraries, archives and museums and IT professionals. For example, content to a librarian is the information, image, facts or data contained in a document. To an IT person content is the software and system. As pointed out by Liz Bishoff (2004), Coordinator of the successful Colorado Digital Archive,

“Contributor in a Dublin Core record to a librarian is someone who has a role in the creation of the work i.e. illustrator, translator or photographer. To museum professionals, the contributor is a donor.”

(ii) **Team Work**

(iii) There must be a readiness and willingness on the part of Librarians to work with a range of professionals and library workers, including archivists, computer scientists, museum curators, and embrace what they do.

(iv) **Interoperability**

Interoperability is critical in a digital library community. Metadata standards and format need to be rationalised within a digital library community and adoption of metadata and interoperability standards, such as Z39.50 or Open Archives Initiative (OAI) is required for participation. However, neither of these standards is widely used across the community of cultural heritage institutions.

(v) **Metadata**

There is a need to accommodate the various institutions, subject disciplines and formats, which the Library of Congress Subject Headings cannot cater for. The Colorado Digitisation Program (CAP)'s solution for handling vocabularies was to develop categories and sub-categories based on the subjects covered in the collections and supported by a series of pre-coordinated searches. This allows users into the collection although there is room for improvement.

(vi) **Rationalisation of Cultural Conflict**

Heritage institutions bring into collaborative projects their organisational culture and values. All partners in the project must therefore from the outset, be fully aware of this and commit to making cooperation work in these disparate cultures. There must be an appreciation and respect that each institution has a different mission, culture and funding structure. Digital collections should be developed based on these common values, ensuring that every participant will benefit from the end product.

## **(vi) Readiness to participate**

The Library community must be prepared and ready to participate in collaborative initiatives to make the reservoir of content available and accessible by initiating the following actions :-

- (a) Seek funding for collaborative projects
- (b) Establish relationship with museum and archives
- (c) Train library staff in new skills and vocabularies, convert-skills in cataloguing to metadata skills;
- (d) Negotiate group price for outsourced work
- (e) Address the system issues associated with interoperability
- (f) Come to terms with the fact that not everyone uses MARC or LCSH and learn to adapt and adopt more generic new standards that will be compatible with a variety of source materials from different repositories or digitization projects.

## **(vii) Need for Standard Vocabulary**

NINCH has developed a guide which is aimed at creating a standard vocabulary that can be used to read new iterations or specifications in any particular genre or field. The set of core principles drawn up by the working group provide a useful guide for the creation of cultural heritage resources. The National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH)'s working group on Best Practices agreed on an approach emphasizing principles by extracting generalisable issues from existing documented practice. This is based on the rationale that:

“One of the biggest challenges for the cultural community is not in developing or even adopting technical or information standards. Rather it lies in translating and grafting them to a set of practices, governed by principles, that are shared and widely deployed across a community”

An important lesson learnt from the MOAC project apart from the technical and metadata specs which are needed to create a useful, integrated content repository is that no one standard or level will suffice to solve every institution's needs different institutions have different platform support and different workflow needs have already required the development of additional tools.

## **6. Collaborative initiatives in Asia Oceania**

### **6.1 Profile Of Countries In Asia And Oceania**

IFLA member countries in the Asia and Oceania region covers the following countries in the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, Oceania and South East Asia :-

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| (a) MIDDLE EAST | (b) SOUTH ASIA   |
| Iran            | <b>India</b>     |
| Israel          | Pakistan         |
| Kuwait          | <b>Sri Lanka</b> |
| Saudi Arabia    | Kazakhstan       |
| <b>Syria</b>    | Bangladesh       |

United Arab Emirates

**Bhutan**

© EAST ASIA

**China**

**Japan**

Korea

**Taiwan**

(d) OCEANIA

**Australia**

**New Zealand**

Papua New Guinea

Fiji

Niue

(e) SOUTHEAST ASIA

Brunei Darussalam

**Cambodia**

**Indonesia**

Laos

**Malaysia**

**Myanmar**

**Philippines**

**Singapore**

**Thailand**

**Vietnam**

From a bird's eye view of the land mass of the Asia Oceania region, it becomes immediately apparent that there is wide diversity in its geography and physical conditions. Basic facts about each country also show wide disparity and diversity in political, economic and social development, racial components and ethnic groups, religion and culture among the countries in the sub-regions of the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, South East Asia and Oceania.

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that there are equally, many similarities among the people and countries in the sub regions of Asia including physical conditions, racial origins, language and literature, religion, customs and practices, cuisine, folk and performing arts; arts and crafts. Common traits can also be traced in the political and historical development of sub-regions and countries in Asia Oceania, for example, colonial rule, Japanese invasion and occupation, and the second world war. More recently countries in the region shared a common calamity in the tsunami devastation of Aceh in Indonesia, Phuket in Thailand, Sri Lanka and to a lesser extent in India and Malaysia. There are perhaps on balance, more similarities than differences, and this should be the focus of collaboration initiatives – aspects that would be of mutual interest and benefits to the parties involved.

## **6.2 Data Collection**

### **6.2.1 Internet search and Questionnaire**

A preliminary desktop survey was conducted on the internet but revealed little useful or relevant information about the topic in the Asia Oceania region, except for Australia and New Zealand. However, the search was limited to sources in the English language, which is not the main language used in the Middle East, East Asia and parts of Southeast Asia. To complement the internet search, a questionnaire survey was undertaken in collaboration with the National Library of Malaysia for the purpose of eliciting pertinent data which could provide leads to sources of

information about related activities and projects. The questionnaire was sent to thirty-one National Libraries in Asia and Oceania who are members of IFLA, covering the Middle East, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania. The questionnaire sought the cooperation of National Libraries in providing information on collaborative activities among cultural institutions in their respective countries, namely archives, museums and art galleries, either on-going or planned projects, documentation, future development, website or url addresses of relevant organisations and projects as well as issues and challenges faced by National Libraries or anticipated in collaborative efforts.

Out of 31 questionnaires sent out, 16 responses or 51.4% were received from National Libraries including the National Library of Malaysia. This paper is based mainly on responses to the above questionnaires received from the following :-

**OCEANIA ( 20% )**

National Library of Australia

**MIDDLE EAST ( 16.6% )**

National Library of Syria

**SOUTH ASIA ( 50% )**

National Library of India

National Library of Sri Lanka

National Library and Archives of Bhutan

**EAST ASIA ( 75% )**

National Library of China

National Diet Library Japan

National Library of Taiwan

**SOUTHEAST ASIA ( 80% )**

National of Cambodia

National Library of Indonesia

National Library of Malaysia

National Library of Myanmar

National Library of Philippines

National Library Board Singapore

National Library of Thailand

National Library of Vietnam

**6.2.2 13<sup>th</sup> CDNLAO Meeting in Kuala Lumpur 2005**

To further enhance the data available, input was also obtained from discussion on the topic at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO), which was hosted by the National Library of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2004. Possible projects for collaboration among National Libraries, Archives and Museum was an item on the meeting agenda. Directors of National Libraries or their representatives from 17 countries in Asia Oceania, namely **Australia, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Japan, India,**



**Indonesia, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Vietnam,** attended the meeting.

### **6.2.3 Workshop on Leadership Development for National Library Directors 2005**

Further input was obtained from the group discussion and presentation session of the Workshop on Leadership Development for Directors of National Libraries in Developing Countries, organized by the National Library of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur from 25 -27 May 2005. The Workshop, held for the first time in 2004, was the second organized for Directors of National Libraries in Developing Countries by the National Library of Malaysia under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Under this programme, the Malaysian Government sponsors participants from developing countries to attend courses in Malaysia. Two other annual courses organized by the National Library under this programme, namely the Library Visits and Attachment for Library Professionals and the Basic Course for Library Assistants will be held in August 2005. The Workshop for National Library Directors was themed ‘ Collaboration between National Libraries, Archives and Museum’, to generate awareness on the need for collaboration, identify possible projects which needs collaboration, the means to provide access to cultural heritage collections , capacity building and and human resource development. 17 participants from **Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Vietnam** and four senior librarians from **Malaysia** attended the 3-day Workshop. It is hoped that the Workshop for Directors of National Libraries, which was mooted at the meeting of the Standing Committee for National Libraries at IFLA in Glasgow in 2002, will become an annual programme under the MTCP.

### **6.3. Establishment Of Cultural Heritage Institutions**

The responses from to the questionnaires show that the fifteen countries in Asia Oceania have established National Libraries, National Archives and National Museum. Except for Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam, all the rest have established National Art Gallery, either as separate institutions or dual function institutions. Some National Libraries including Australia and Japan, were established earlier than other cultural institutions like National Archives and National Museums. The National Library of Australia’s history goes back to 1901and is one of the few National Libraries to celebrate its centenary. In comparison, the National Archives started more recently in 1961, the National Art Gallery in 1975 and the National Museum in 1980. In Japan, The National Diet Library, has its origins as the Imperial Library ( 1872 ) and the Library for the House of Peers and the House of Representatives (1890) was established much earlier than other cultural institutions. The National Archives was established in 1971, the Museum in 1895 and the Art Gallery in 1952.

The importance of keeping, preserving and accessing records of cultural heritage in most colonized countries was recognised relatively early by most newly independent governments. The National Archives is one of the earliest institutions established upon attaining independence. In many countries the establishment of national archives preceded the establishment of national libraries. For example in Malaysia, the National Archives was established in December 1957, the year Malaya became an independent nation. The National Library started as a unit under the Department of National Archives in 1966 to implement the Preservation Books Act 1966. It then developed into a full-fledged organization to become a separate federal department in 1977. In

Sri Lanka, the National Library was established more recently in 1970 while other National Cultural Institutions were established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The National Archives was established in 1901, the National Museum in 1877 and Art Gallery in 1897, among the earliest cultural institutions established in Asia Oceania. The National Library of Myanmar's history dates back to 1883, much earlier than the National Museum which was established in 1952 and the National Archives in 1972. One of the most recent National Library is in Bhutan, where the National Library and Archives was established as a dual function department in 2004. The National Museum was established in 1968. On the whole, the cultural institutions for collecting, preserving and providing access to cultural heritage in the above countries in Asia Oceania are in place and have potential for collaboration.

#### **6.4 Professional Leadership**

With the exception of Japan, India, and Singapore The National Library is headed by academicians or political appointees, national cultural institutions in the above countries in Asia Oceania generally are headed by professionals in the respective fields. However, while all cultural institutions in Japan are also headed by scholars or political appointees, other cultural institutions in India and Singapore are headed by professionals. This is an that national heritage institutions in the countries surveyed are relatively well established and that the professional leadership exists to ensure that the requirements of and input from the National Library, Archives, Museum towards standards and guidelines and other collaborative efforts will be competently represented. This can create a positive environment for collaboration as the partners, being professionals in their own respective fields, are equals.

#### **6.5 Governance of cultural Institutions**

The fact that cultural heritage institutions in some countries in Asia Oceania come under the Ministry of Culture or are under the same Ministry is an added advantage as it would facilitate closer cooperation and collaboration. This is true of Australia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Syria and Singapore. With the exception of Taiwan, where the National Library, Archives and Museum come under three different authorities, at least two cultural institutions come under the same Ministry in the other remaining countries surveyed in Asia and Oceania. Being under the same authority, cultural institutions will be more focused towards common goals and strategic directions as well as funding in the collaborative effort.

#### **6.6 Collaborative Initiatives**

Cultural institutions in all the countries surveyed have to a greater or lesser extent progressively applied ICT in their operations and service delivery. Most have embarked on digitization projects, while a few have not yet begun especially in countries ravaged by war or civil war and are in the process of rebuilding such as Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia. The East Asian countries on Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are well known for their advanced ICT application and manufacturing. This is reflected in the advanced use of ICT in their cultural institutions especially Libraries, Archives and Museums. Surprisingly however, there are hardly any collaborative initiatives involving these institutions reported in the internet nor in the questionnaires returned by the respective national libraries. In the South Asian region, India

especially is making headway towards collaboration with Library Associations, and not necessarily with other cultural institutions. Sri Lanka is involved in on-going collaboration with the National Archives and Museum. For Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Singapore have begun collaborating with the Archives and Museum on an ad-hoc project basis but are positive about future collaboration.

The National Library of Australia and The New Zealand National Library are the most active in initiating as well as participating in collaborative projects with Archives, Museums, Art Galleries in their respective countries as well as other cultural institutions in the Asia Oceania region. There is clearly a wide disparity between these two countries and the rest of Oceania in terms of networking cultural heritage in the region. A number of networks are already established and are accessible on the internet while more are being developed with nationwide participation of cultural institutions. Examples of networked cultural heritage projects based on information on the internet or the questionnaires returned are listed to indicate the level of activities and involvement of National Libraries in collaborative efforts in networking cultural heritage.

### **6.6.1 National Library of Australia**

National Cultural institutions in Australia, namely the National Library, National Archives, National Museum and National Gallery of Australia are under the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. This may be one of the motivating factors for the active collaboration among cultural heritage institutions, not only among libraries but also archives, museums and art galleries at the federal and state level, as well as public and private institutions. Examples of successful collaboration projects are listed below :-

#### **(a) Picture Australia**

National Library of Australia (NLA) hosts a federated image service which includes online images from the Australian Archives and the National Gallery. PA has 38 participating cultural institution including library, galleries, museums, archives: <http://www.pictureaustralia.org>.

#### **(b) Metadata Activities**

National Archives and National Library cooperate in metadata activities, including the publication of guidelines on the use of metadata in government records, the organisation of conferences on digital publications and consultation of standards issues. Several joint publications by the Library and Archives have been produced and can be located at the following website: <http://www.nla.gov.au/guidelines/govpubs.pdf>.

#### **(c) PANDORA**

Australia's web archive contains 24 million files captured for the internet representing over 8,000 web titles. Partners in Pandora including State Libraries and National Library, Australia War Memorial, National Film and Fund Archives, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies.

**(d) Ask Now!**

This is a chat reference service involving all of the State Libraries and the National Library, as well as the National Library of New Zealand and the National Library Board Singapore.

**(a) Music Australia (<http://www.musicaustralia.org>)**

Launched in March 2005, MA provides access to music resource such as digitised music, music scores, information about performers, composers, links to print resources and websites. ±300,000 resources.

## **6.6.2 National Library of New Zealand**

### **Matapihi ( Open the window )**

The Matapihi as the name suggests is a window onto places, events and people of New Zealand. There are 50000 pictures available for searching with sounds and objects. The selection of pictures, sounds and objects are made available through collaboration between archives, libraries, museums and galleries in New Zealand. Penny Carnaby, Director-General of the National Library of New Zealand, commented in her speech ‘Oceans of Opportunity ‘ in October 2003, that “ Matapihi is a great step forward in the standards-based architecture which will help us achieve the free flow of digital resources in the country.”

### **Second Digital Forum**

The Second Digital Forum entitled “ Collaboration foundations for the future ” was held in 2003, to discuss the future of online heritage in New Zealand. The forum brought together people from libraries, museums, archives and galleries and government departments throughout New Zealand.

## **6.6.3 National Library of Myanmar**

Collaboration with National Archives and universities historical research department in microfilming project of paper manuscripts and palm leaf manuscripts. Future plans to network with Department of Archeology, University of Culture, National Archives Department and Department of Cultural Institutes at the states and divisions level.

## **6.6.4 National Library Board Singapore**

NLB has collaborated with National Archives of Singapore and the Singapore National Museum (which comprise of the Singapore History Museum, Singapore Art Museum and Asian Civilisation Museum) on a number of cultural heritage projects:-

- (i) Joint development of content, i.e. digitisation and cataloguing of National Archives of (NAS) posters database (completed in 2000).
- (ii) Joint production of CD-ROM on “Transition of Nationhood: A Resource Guide to Singapore’s Merger and Separation (completed in 1999).
- (iii) NAS and partner in the NLB project on Chinese Overseas Databank since 1998.

- (iv) Singapore History Museum channels history related enquiries received to NLB's [ref@nlm.gov.sg](mailto:ref@nlm.gov.sg).

The NLB, NAS and SHM are heritage departments under the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA). This perhaps justifies its positive outlook for collaboration in the future.

#### **6.6.5 National Library of Sri Lanka**

The National Library, Department of National Archives collaborate on the compilation of the National Bibliography with funding provided by the President's Fund. The NL also collaborates with the Department of National Museums for the restoration of the Museum Library collection with funding provided by the Japanese government. The National Library, Department of National Archives and Department of National Museums are under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage in Sri Lanka.

#### **6.6.6 National Library of Taiwan**

The National Central Library of Taiwan R.O.C. collaborates with National Archives of R.O.C. in a project called "National Archives Programme" coordinated by the National Science Council. (<http://www.ndap.org.tw>).

#### **6.6.7 National Library of Malaysia**

The Department of Museums and Antiquity, the National Archives collaborated with the National Library of Malaysia in the development of the portal on the Malaysian monarchy, the institution of the *Yang diPertuan Agong*, the King of Malaysia (<http://www.yangdipertuanagong.com>). The project was funded by the National IT Council under the Demonstrator Application Grants Scheme (DAGS.).

The National Library also collaborated with the Department of Museums and Antiquity for the celebration of 25 years of ASEAN, where the National Library compiled a bibliography in conjunction with the National Museums exhibition on 25 years of ASEAN.

A bibliography of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia was compiled by the National Library as a collaborative project libraries, Archives and Museum as partners. The Bibliography was published as a series of Bibliographies on the Prime Ministers of Malaysia by the National Library of Malaysia.

The National Library of Malaysia also conducted a regional workshop on Digital Preservation with the support of UNESCO in Kuala Lumpur on 6-11 December 2004. 21 participants from South Africa, Nepal, Maldives, Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka and Malaysia including Archivists and Museum Curators attended the Workshop. Mr. Colin Webb from the National Library of Australia was the resource person for the Workshop.

The National Archives of Malaysia has prepared guidelines for the preservation of electronic records in the public sector in its homepage. The National Library is a member of the Steering Committee for the guidelines coordinated by the National Archives. The National Archives is expected to revise the guidelines this year following a 10-member consultancy mission provided through the International Records Management Trust based in London.

With the experience in the National Digital Library System (PERDANA) with its website at <http://www.mylib.com> and the International Islamic Digital Library (IIDL), which can be accessed at <http://www.iidl.com> the National Library of Malaysia is well positioned to initiate discussion on collaboration with the National Archives, National Museum and the National Art Gallery. Historically too, the Library, Archive and Museum have always been sister departments under the same Ministry until the National Library was placed under the Ministry of Education in 1991. With the recent Cabinet decision to place the National Library under the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage together with National Archives, Department of Museum and Antiquity and the national Archives, the prospect of future collaboration between the three heritage departments is even more promising. The announcement made by the Minister of Culture Arts, and Tourism on 19 May 2005 brings the National Library back under its fold after a 14 year separation.

#### **6.6.8 National Library of Bhutan**

As a dual function department The National Library and Archives of Bhutan jointly organize exhibitions and conduct research on cultural heritage. A Joint Committee has been established for the acquisition and purchase of materials for the National Library and Archives collections.

#### **6.6.9 National Library of Taiwan**

The National Library participates in a collaborative project with the National Archives called the “ National Digital Archives Program ” coordinated by the National Science Council. ( <http://www.ndap.org.tw> )

#### **6.6.10 National Library of the Philippines**

Cultural institutions are involved in an ASEAN-COCI (Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Committee on Culture and Information) project on the preservation of cultural heritage and dissemination of cultural materials among ASEAN countries. The partners in this project include the National Library, National Museum, Cultural Centre of the Philippines, Records Management and Archives Office, National Historical Institute and Commission of the Filipino language.

#### **6.6.11 National Library of Thailand**

The National Library of Thailand reported its involvement in the National Cultural Heritage preservation and conservation under the Department of Fine Arts Policy. Participants of this project include the National Archives and Museum as well as private archives, museums and art galleries.

## **6.7 Issues and challenges**

Any collaboration project, whether between Division or Units within a Department, or between 2 Departments, or among a number of libraries or Departments presents many challenges. Establishing, sustaining and developing cooperation, commitment and motivation of the parties involved must be seriously worked at and cannot be taken for granted, regardless of official policy and funding provided. From the questionnaire returns and discussion held with Directors of National Libraries or representatives of selected countries in Asia and Oceania, the following are the problems and issues raised by those contemplating the idea of collaboration with other cultural institutions in their respective countries :-

- (i) Leadership – who will take the lead ?
- (ii) Relatively low level of ICT development and digital content creation
- (iii) Lack of expertise and infrastructure for collaboration technology
- (iv) Low priority of cultural institutions by government and policy makers
- (v) Lack of support and interest from stakeholders
- (vi) Lack of funding
- (vii) Departmental priorities
- (viii) Different professional orientation and processes
- (ix) Governance of cultural institutions under different authorities
- (x) Traditional professional rivalry
- (xi) Perceived threat of diminished status or merger of cultural institutions

Issues raised by National Libraries from experience participating in collaborative projects include the following :-

- (i) Need to establish appropriate structure for project administration
- (ii) Appointment of suitable representative
- (iii) Organisation of meetings – dates, venue and secretarial support
- (iv) Geographic spread of participating institutions in large countries
- (v) Determining the relative cash and in-kind support to be provided by partners
- (vi) Sustainability of project – collaborative project must fit in with institution's own strategic directions

## **7. Proposals for Action**

### **7.1 National Libraries to begin initiative**

National Libraries that are actively involved with digitization, networking and online services are urged to take a positive and proactive approach towards collaboration in view of their experience in library networks and cooperative projects. For most developing countries, collaboration for networking cultural heritage may have to begin with two or more National Institutions such as National Library, National Archives, National Museums and National Gallery. The National Library can take the initiative to invite or convene meetings to discuss the need for collaboration, establish a working committee and prepare joint proposal for funding. If the National Library takes the initiative, it must be prepared to provide secretarial service to facilitate and support the committee's work. However each participating institutions can also take turns to host meeting.

## **7.2 Follow-up at 14<sup>th</sup> CDNLAO Meeting**

As a follow-up to the discussion at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia Oceania ( CDNLAO ), national Libraries include in their country reports for the 14<sup>th</sup> CDNLAO progress in National Libraries' involvement or initiation of collaborative projects for networking cultural heritage. To motivate National Libraries in this enterprise, an expert can be invited to present a paper on principles and practice of collaboration and share success stories of collaborative projects in 2006.

## **7.3 National Conferences on Collaboration**

To generate awareness and support from professionals involved with cultural heritage, National Library Associations in conjunction with national cultural institutions can organize their annual national conference on the theme of collaboration for networking cultural heritage or to include the topic as a sub-theme in National or regional conferences. Countries which regularly organize national digital library conferences, for example the 5<sup>th</sup> Digital Library Conference in Kuala Lumpur, September 2005 can also include collaboration for networking as a special session. Forthcoming regional conferences such as International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries (ICADL) in Bangkok, December 2005 and the Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL) in Manila, April 2006 would also be appropriate venues for introducing the concept to librarians in the region.

## **7.4 Directory of collaborative projects**

Library school students can be encouraged to compile a directory of successful collaborative projects from all parts of the world for reference and networking.

## **7.5 Workshop on Collaboration**

IFLA Standing Committee on National Libraries collaborates with the National Library of Malaysia in organizing an IFLA Pre-session Workshop on Collaboration management and technology for library and information professionals in 2006.

## **8. Conclusion**

Collaboration for networking of cultural heritage is generally a new concept among National Libraries in Asia Oceania. There has to be more effort made to generate awareness and familiarity with the principles and practice of collaboration, the need for collaboration, prerequisites, challenges. The technology available for networking cultural heritage needs to be exploited and optimised to provide wider and more comprehensive access to cultural heritage content residing in libraries, archives, museums, art galleries and other cultural institutions. National Libraries traditionally work together and network with other libraries, institutions and communities and can leverage on this experience to take a proactive approach towards initiating collaboration with cultural institutions in the country.



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