

Vice Rector Nghiem Dang, NIA

September 29, 1960

Frank C. Child

Library problems

As you know, one of my responsibilities with MSUG is to approve for MSUG payment all book orders for the Vietnam Project Library. Recently in the performance of my duties and in carrying out NIA-MSU policies with respect to book orders, a problem has arisen which has created difficulties for me in my relationships with members of the NIA faculty.

The particular problem is relatively trivial and one which we have discussed on several occasions. It has become important only because of misunderstandings of my role. I am sure you will join me in desiring to reduce any misunderstandings between NIA faculty members and MSU staff.

At the meetings of the library committee held in January and March, book acquisition policy was discussed. At that time it was agreed that it was appropriate to purchase any books relating to public administration broadly defined. At the same time it was agreed that certain types of books being requested for library purchase were not appropriate. These included books such as the following:

1. Rare and expensive first editions of purely historical interest.
2. Music manuscripts, artist's publications, and novels.
3. Books which essentially duplicate existing library holdings--unless these are basic texts of which multiple copies are needed for student use.

In spite of agreement on policy in this respect, some faculty members continue to order books contrary to this policy. Unfortunately it falls to me to disapprove these requests even though it is my practice to approve any book request even remotely associated with the purposes of the NIA. I reject no books on the basis of language, subject matter or personal preference, unless these books should be excluded on the basis of NIA-MSU policy.

May I request that NIA acquisitions policy be communicated explicitly to the NIA faculty members, and that you ask them to avoid ordering books contrary to this policy. This will save me considerable embarrassment and avoid my creating the impression of arbitrary and capricious behavior.

I would also like to call your attention to the fact that I approve virtually all requests for book purchases even though I personally disagree with choices made. For example, I personally feel that it is an unwise policy to order every book on the history of economic thought even though the history of economic thought is an appropriate subject for NIA library books. We have at least 30 histories of economic thought which are standard introductory texts in this field. Most of these are not used. It strikes me as unwise to order additional books of the same type which are essentially the same as existing holdings even though they may be written by a different author. I could cite you other examples of a similar nature. Similarly, faculty members sometimes order reprints of journal articles which originally appeared in journals currently subscribed to by the library. They order books which are clearly marked "Out of Print." Or they order a book and simultaneously order a summary of the same book, and there is an amazing number of orders for books already in the library. Nevertheless I do not consider it my role to question the judgment of the NIA faculty, and approve virtually all orders excepting those which are obviously duplicates of something already in the library.

I hope that by July 1962 the NIA will have the finest library of its kind in Southeast Asia. If this goal is to be attained, maximum effort on the part of each faculty member to insure optimum expenditure of library funds will be necessary. I hope the faculty of the NIA will cooperate to this end; I assure you that I will.