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NIA Library

After three months of work as Library Advisor at NIA it would seem essential that I attempt to make some assessment of the work that has been done at the Library and the work that lies ahead. With my assuming the position of Library Advisor I feel that a turning point has been reached and that it is time to formulate some definite program for the months ahead. As to exactly what direction my work shall take here, that, I feel, is open to discussion. I should like to set forth here my thinking on a few problems and request that you offer the criticism or comments which seem appropriate.

#### PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The work of my predecessor was largely concerned with setting up a library where none existed before, of cataloging the materials acquired and of training a staff to run the library. This job was a tremendous one and no one person, unaided by any kind of trained help, could hope to have carried off all aspects of the program with equal success. The result was that while certain problems were adequately solved, others remained in abeyance.

When I arrived I found the library a going operation. The two library clerks trained by my predecessor are capable of handling the daily operation of the library. They cannot give any kind of reference service, but they can assist in the use of the catalog, in the location of material on the shelves, etc. They handle completely all matters dealing with the circulation of books and periodicals. Their work requires a minimum of supervision. As long as something lies within the usual pattern of duties which they understand it is carried out faithfully and accurately. This should make it possible for me to undertake several activities which have not been attempted before and to extend my activities beyond the confines of the NIA Library itself.

#### PROBLEM OF PERSONNEL

I should now like to consider certain problems which have occupied much time and thought since my arrival here. The first of these is that of personnel. As you well know, there has been a continuous battle to get the Institute to assign a qualified person to be trained for the post of Librarian by the American Library Advisor. It has been so much easier to let the American Library Advisor assume full charge of the library and its daily operation and to ignore the fact that within the very near future the Institute will have to assume responsibility for operation of a

library which in its planning and in its daily operation is far different from any that any Vietnamese has ever seen.

Shortly after my arrival an effort was made to assign a recently - returned participant, Miss Tang thi Ti, to the Library. This transfer was arranged on August 1st and for one month Miss Ti worked under my supervision. At the beginning of September she was assigned as a receptionist at the Colombo Plan Conference - thus interrupting her training for two months. In the short time she was with me, I was impressed with her desire to learn and with her willingness to undertake serious study. What the eventual results will be it is still too early to tell. Some formal library training would be desirable - most profitably at the University of the Philippines where an orientation toward library problems in under-developed areas is more in evidence than it is in the U.S. and where instruction is given by Filipino librarians trained in the U.S. If this is not possible - and it may not be, since Miss Ti has only recently returned from America - then an inspection trip should be planned for a later date to Manila for her to see other libraries organized on the same plan as that at NIA.

In concentrating on Miss Ti MSU is once again putting all its eggs in one basket. If she should be transferred to another government agency at a later date there would again be no one trained to take over. "Trained" librarians in Vietnam are limited almost entirely to those who worked under M. Paul Boudet, the French archivist and bibliographer, at the Bibliothèque Générale de Hanoi. These people are few in number and are all fairly well along in years. Their ideas are set along the paths laid out by the Ecole des Chartes in Paris, which means they are concerned more with the conservation of materials than with their use for informational purposes. One or two of the younger people involved in library work here are interested in modern library methods but there is no where for them to turn for guidance. In the past few years UNESCO has been making a concerted effort to improve library service in Asia through conferences, publications and the establishment of pilot libraries in certain areas - notably India. Within the past year the American Library Association, with the aid of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, has established an International Relations Office whose primary concern is the development of library education throughout the world. The Director of this Office, Mr. Jack Dalton, recently made an inspection trip through Asia but unfortunately did not visit Vietnam. Miss Nance O'Neill, the Director of the USIS Library here in Saigon, and I are hoping that we can persuade him to visit Saigon sometime next year. Miss O'Neill is concerned, as I am, about the lack of training facilities for librarians here in Vietnam and she is also concerned with the fact that USIS continues to be asked for gifts to dozens of small independent libraries which are being formed indiscriminately without any regard for overall planning. We feel that an insistence on her part that she will provide no more books to new libraries until some overall planning is accomplished and the possibility of technical and material help from UNESCO and ALA may stimulate such planning. Already UNESCO and ALA are working in Indonesia under social and economic conditions very similar to those in Vietnam. Recently, in informal talks, Mr. Pham van Ky, Director of the National Library of Vietnam, has indicated an interest in such planning activities.

The longer I remain here the more I come to feel the futility of MSU trying to train a librarian for NIA without some improvement or advancement in the over-all field of library work in Vietnam. In this we face a problem

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which differs greatly from that which the University of Michigan faced at IPA in Manila. They were able to phase out the library part of their program fairly early with the assurance that it would continue to be capably administered, since there is a supply of trained librarians adequate for at least the administrative positions in Philippine libraries.

A start was made by my predecessor on organizing a Vietnamese Library Association. Great interest was shown by a small but active group here in Saigon and contact was made with the Federation of Asian Library Associations. Permission for the formal organization of this Association has ~~not~~ not been given by the Ministry of the Interior however, so that it has not been possible to push ahead with the work that the Association should be doing. It is still possible that three representatives will be sent to the meeting of the Federation of Asian Library Associations in Tokyo in November with funds provided by the Asia Foundation but these Vietnamese will be going as individual observers and not as representatives of any Vietnamese Library Association. Within this Association lies the possibility of advancing modern library methods, if the Association can only obtain permission to function.

Again, may I repeat my belief that in conjunction with training one librarian for NIA that a great effort must be made to bring about training for other librarians in Vietnam. Only then can we be reasonably sure that the NIA Library will have any kind of a future.

#### PROBLEM OF BOOK ACQUISITION

The second problem requiring my attention has been that of book acquisition. There are two facets to this problem - that of the mechanics of purchasing books and getting them to Saigon and that of building up the book collection in a coordinated and well-balanced manner. We are fortunate in having adequate funds to do this.

The problem of setting up a workable book ordering routine has taken up a good deal of my time during the past three months. The delays of from six to nine months in the delivery of books were due to a variety of reasons, notably the cumbersome administrative procedure used for placing orders and the mode of transportation used to ship books to Saigon. Details of a new system have now been worked out and are gradually being put into effect. Permission has been granted by the University Comptroller to place orders directly from Saigon. Instructions are now being given for publishers and book dealers to ship books directly to Saigon by book post. It is hoped that this new system will enable the library to receive its books within six to eight weeks after an order is placed instead of the six to nine months previously required.

The importation of books into Vietnam - notably from France - has greatly improved within the last month and it has been possible to purchase more items locally with the piaster account. While waiting for details of the new order routine to be worked out, orders were placed through a local book dealer for a large number of French titles.

The building up of a well-balanced collection is a problem that now faces us. Periodically every librarian should examine his collection

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critically in order to assess its areas of strength and weakness. The major weaknesses of our collection at the present time are two - the lack of adequate back files of periodicals in all our fields of interest and the lack of any sizable collection of area - studies on south-east Asia. There are also other gaps scattered throughout the collection due to the fact that few out-of-print books have ever been located and purchased. Indexes for the periodical and United Nations document collections have likewise never been obtained. All of these weaknesses can be corrected. I have already made contact with several dealers in second-hand periodicals and will soon submit to them for price quotation a list of what we need most. A large number of orders for materials on south-east Asia have already been placed to fill in the gaps in this area. Most of the material on Indochina was issued in very small editions and is long out-of-print. This makes the location of copies difficult and prices very high. Furthermore there is little likelihood of much of this material being found locally. Hanoi, not Saigon, was the cultural and intellectual center of Vietnam before the partition and the second-hand book stores of this city contain little that is of interest or value to us. This I have learned through many hours tramping the area around the market. The librarian at the University of Hong Kong reported to me that her most successful contacts were in London, Paris and the United States. I have already established contact with a second-hand book dealer in Washington who specializes in books on Asia and have made a considerable number of purchases from her. I am in the process of circularizing other dealers. The Embree and Lasker bibliographies are proving helpful in building up this field. A great deal of other bibliographic checking remains to be done in the fields of public administration, political science, economics, etc. to ascertain fully exactly how our collection compares with others in the field. This, I feel, is a very important part of the work to be done here.

#### PROBLEM OF STIMULATING USE OF THE COLLECTION

It has been my observation since I arrived that the resources of the library are not used to the extent that they might be. It seems essential that a concerted effort be made to enlarge the scope of our work and to bring our resources to the attention of other government agencies.

The original decree which established the NIA stated that one of the objectives was to be "to establish and operate a library of administrative sciences and practices, to develop a documentation in public administration, and to take part in exchanges of information with foreign countries." Furthermore it was stated that this library should be "available not only to the students of the Institute but also to civil servants responsible for research in all government departments".

Personnel of other government agencies, however, very seldom avail themselves of our resources. For the most part, I believe that this is due to a total lack of knowledge of what is available in the NIA Library. This is why one of my first efforts was to prepare a printed catalog of all the books in the library. This has now been completed and is being mimeographed for distribution to all government agencies and to all the libraries of the Saigon area. Previously only partial lists of our holdings had been made available. It is planned to keep this printed catalog up to date by the issuance of monthly lists of new acquisitions. The publication of a monthly



bulletin should also permit us to bring various of our services to the attention of government officials and employees.

In addition to a monthly bulletin of new acquisitions it might also be useful for the library to issue a series of bibliographical bulletins, each treating of a different subject and citing the materials available in the library - both books and periodical articles - on that subject.

I think that it would also be wise for us to prepare a brief pamphlet on the use of the library for both students and faculty. This should, of course, be made available in a Vietnamese translation. Before I leave Vietnam, I feel it would also be wise for me to write a series of operational manuals for the various phases of the operation of the library. These might be made more general in outlook and possibly translated for wider distribution. This matter is one that needs further thought and discussion, but is within the realm of possibility.

The question of lectures to the students on the use of the library has also come up. To date, only one section - that of the PMS students - has come to the library for instruction. I lectured to this group in French with gratifying results. It is hoped that more opportunities like this will come about. Eventually this is a task that the Vietnamese librarian should assume.

As a final remark in this brief report on the NIA Library's accomplishments and its future capabilities, I should to point out that the selection of the new site for the NIA campus near the airport is going to have a profound effect on the future development of the library's services. Efforts to extend the use of the library's resources to other governmental agencies may be nullified by the distance of the new campus from the center of Saigon. Therefore the development of a full-scale legislative reference service, such as exists in Washington and in many individual cities in the U.S., would not seem feasible under the present circumstances. Our goals must be set somewhat lower and hope that the quality of our collection will attract users in spite of the distance.