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REPORT ON THE NIA LIBRARY

by

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The period of one week is too short to have extensive thoughts and accurate judgment on the progress and future of the NIA library. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to record a few observations and recommendations for the NIA library.

In general, I have found that the NIA library has made considerable progress since my departure fifteen months ago. Under the very able leadership of Miss Kim-Sa and then Miss Ti, the operation of the library appears to me to be very satisfactory.

The assistant librarians and clerks are capable in performing the duties assigned to them and there seems to be an "esprit de corps" among the library staff. Each staff member has made his or her contribution to the effective operation of the NIA library. The routines--ordering, processing, reference, etc.,--have continued and improved without any major problems.

The problem of lack of adequate physical quarters which had plagued the library for over four years will be solved within a few months when the library will move to its new building. However, many problems that have existed before still exist.

A major problem is the overdue and/or loss of books among the faculty of the NIA. Although steps have been taken to improve the situation with the adoption of new library rules, only little progress has been made in having overdue books charged out to faculty members returned to the library. This problem has been dealt with many times. I fully agree with the librarian and Dr. Child that perhaps the only remedy to this deplorable situation is to have the present regulations enforced and to make the faculty aware of their responsibility by the Rector of the NIA, since all other methods seem to have failed. This has been recommended in the "NIA Organization, Activities and Procedures Recommendations" of January 1961.

Another problem which has been adequately discussed in this same report as well as in Dr. Child's memo to Vice Rector Dang of Sept. 29, 1960 is the problem of the acquisition policy. I agree entirely with the recommendations suggested in these reports. Since there will be probably a more limited budget in the future, it is imperative to be more selective in the placing of orders for new books. I would like to suggest that the library committee take a more active interest in the book selection, taking into consideration the need of the students as well as seeing to it that there will be no imbalance in one subject field or the other in the NIA library.

I would also like to propose that a thorough study be undertaken of what periodical subscriptions should be continued. It is my opinion that a number of periodical subscriptions could be dropped because they are not utilized adequately.

I should like to recommend that a greater effort be made to have the NIA library as depository for all Vietnamese government documents. Although the library has made great efforts to avail herself of documents, it seems that various departments of the government are not very cooperative. It is also essential that all documents in the possession of the NIA will be integrated into the NIA library so that they can be catalogued properly by the librarian and made available for research. As far as I know, there is no library in Vietnam that has tried to collect all the Vietnamese government documents, and I believe that it should be the function of the NIA library to collect documents. However, this can be done only with the full cooperation of government departments.

The NIA library is not yet a center for information, reference and research for the various government agencies in Vietnam. The library has the resources and, at present, the personnel to be such a center, but greater efforts have to be made on the part of the NIA library to inform the government of the resources and services of the library and to encourage the use of its facilities. However, unless the status of the librarian improves, it may be difficult to raise the status of the NIA library to a reference center for the government.

Library staff needs

At present there are six persons working in the NIA library (in addition there is a part-time American librarian), and a janitor who takes care of the building and the dusting of books. These are the librarian and five assistants.

The entire library personnel has been trained for library work. It can be said that two of the library assistants perform duties of professional nature, one person can be classified as "sub-professional" and the other two as library typist clerks. However, it should be pointed out that even a library clerk is not an ordinary clerk, because the typing of catalog cards and bibliographies and the servicing of the circulation system takes a certain amount of specialized training.

The two assistants that perform duties of a professional nature are the reference librarian and the cataloging and acquisition librarian. These persons have been trained over a number of years in order to be able to perform their duties.

The NIA library is now open evenings and Saturday afternoons and therefore, three members of the staff work 18 hours overtime every week.

In order to continue the operation of the NIA library efficiently, and taking into consideration the needs of the new library building, I would like to suggest that in addition to the NIA librarian there should be five assistants. This would enable the library to stay open evenings and Saturday afternoons without overtime for the staff. On the other hand, it has been taken into consideration that the monthly acquisition rate of the library will decrease from about 120 books to 60 books and the number of periodical subscriptions would also decrease somewhat.

With a staff of six the library would be able to give its present services such as the monthly bulletin, the bi-annual accumulated catalog, a Vietnamese subject catalog, the preparation of bibliographies, etc. It is also possible, that if there is competent and qualified staff as exists now, that with a staff of six library activities could expand. Such activities could include more reference services to government departments, the development of the documents collection, the preparation of a Vietnamese periodical index, etc.

On the other extreme, if the NIA cannot provide the necessary staff to operate the library at more or less its present level, the absolute minimum staff needed to keep the library open is three trained and competent persons. Two persons would have to be present constantly in the main reading room (for reference, circulation and control) and the third person would be in the processing department or filling in, in case of absence of one of the others.

A staff of three would include the librarian, an assistant librarian (acquisition and cataloging) and a library clerk (typing, circulation, shelving, preparation of books).

This minimum staff would result in extensive curtailments of most library services. The library could only be open during regular hours. The preparation of the monthly bulletin and the bi-annual catalog could not continue, and not more than 30 or 40 books could be ordered and catalogued monthly. In addition there would have to be a substantial reduction in periodical subscriptions. It may also be impossible to continue the organizing of documents. The main activity of the library would be circulation, some reference, checking in of periodicals, the processing of a very limited amount of new materials, and the upkeep to some extent of the present collection.

Since the desirable number of persons for the library is six and the absolute minimum is three (in addition to a janitor/messenger), perhaps a staff of four or five would be a realistic figure under the budget limitations of the NIA.

The personnel need of the library is to some extent related to the amount of funds available for books and periodicals. If the budget for acquisition is very small, a staff of four may be more or less adequate to continue the more essential services of the library.

Although it is extremely desirable that the library stay open evenings and Saturday afternoons, particularly since students will be living in dormitories on campus, this cannot be done unless there is enough staff available (six, or five if the library would stay open only some evenings).

Perhaps one solution to this problem would be student help, though it has to be ascertained that the students working in the library will be competent and reliable, since the NIA cannot afford the loss of books through negligence of staff.

It is of course more than desirable to keep all or at least some of the present MSUG library staff in the NIA library, because of the extensive training and experience they have had in the library. However, if the present MSUG library staff has to be replaced by new NIA staff, I would strongly recommend that this new staff should be put on as soon as possible, so that the new staff can be trained by Miss Ti and the MSUG staff. If the new staff does not receive at least six months of training, prior to the departure of the MSUG staff, the efficient operation and services of the library will be hampered considerably.

Budget for the library

In order for the NIA library to continue to give service to students, faculty, and the government, and taking into consideration that a good basic collection of about 15,000 books in public administration and the social sciences now exist at the NIA library in addition to a good collection of periodicals, the desirable budget for the NIA library for acquisition of books, periodical subscriptions and equipment should be about \$5,500.

This would include the acquisition of about 1000 books (\$4.50 per book and LC card) amounting to \$4,500; about 170 periodical subscriptions amounting to about \$800 and \$200 for equipment and miscellaneous items.

It would be desirable if the NIA could obtain part or all these funds from a Foundation, USOM or MSU. In addition, the NIA must provide funds for the binding of books and periodicals which I would estimate at about 40,000\$VN per year.

It would thus take about 10 years to accomplish the ultimate goal of the NIA library which would be about 25,000 books in addition to an extensive periodical collection (perhaps 4000 to 8000 volumes) which would be adequate for the activities of the NIA if they continue at their present levels.

The NIA library could of course get along with a smaller budget, which would mean fewer books and periodicals. However, in order that the library continues to grow and does not become static, and in order to provide at least a number of the latest publications in the field of public administration which are essential for the teaching and research program of the NIA, the minimum budget should be not less than \$2,500 and 15,000\$VN for the binding of materials.

New library building

I have spent a considerable amount of time looking over the new building and the plans for equipment. I have discussed these with Miss Ti and Mr. Emery and would like to sum up my major recommendations which could be further explained by Miss Ti and Mr. Emery:

1. That there be at least a wash basin and preferably a toilet in the cataloging office of the library, since it is essential that the library staff has easy access to a wash basin and water at all times.
2. That there should be better and more lights in that part of the library where there are the stacks and carrels.
3. That there will be screens along the windows of the main room which is used by the public in order to prevent any theft of books.
4. That the microfilm reader and the microfilms be kept in one of the rooms in the library and that the room will be air-conditioned. The smallest room is a room now assigned to EROPA, and since it would be the most inexpensive room to air-condition, I recommend that the microfilm equipment will be kept in the EROPA room.
5. It is my understanding that the cost of air-conditioning the main room of the library would be too prohibitive at this time. This is very regrettable, since the cost of the upkeep of books will be considerably more expensive in a non-air-conditioned building and many books may eventually have to be replaced because of damage caused by humidity and insects. I would strongly recommend, however, that at least great care is given to the dusting and shellacking of books. This takes more staff time than would be needed in an air-conditioned building.
6. It appears that almost all of the equipment with the exception of the catalog and a few small items can be manufactured locally. In addition certain items now available at MSUG can be utilized for the library.

7. The amount of stacks ordered for the library should be sufficient for about 25,000 to 30,000 books, and 5000 to 8,000 volumes of periodicals plus a sizeable document collection.
8. In addition to the circulation desk there will be a reference desk in the main library room, and there should be two librarians or assistants staffing these two desks at all times except evenings. This would also establish a system of control in order to prevent any loss of books.
9. Two lounging areas with available MSU furniture should be made available in the library: One in the faculty reading room, the other in the periodical section of the library.
10. The door on the side of the building should be closed at all times, while the door opening into the cataloging room should only be opened by a staff member to the mail and delivery of packages. A staff member of the catalog room should have the key for that door. All traffic will circulate through the main door.
11. I have checked the list of equipment for the new building and have recommended some changes.