

Chief Advisor

September 26, 1958

Richard K. Gardner, Library Advisor

Development of the NIA Library,

July 1957- September 1958

As I look back over the past fifteen months during which I have directed the activities of the NIA Library, I see certain areas of considerable process, I see other areas where we have made a beginning but where a great deal remains to be done.

Physical plant: The Library is rapidly outgrowing its present quarters. Certain changes have been made in the internal arrangement for better utilization of the available space. The former choir loft has been turned into a work room for the cataloging, marking and shellacking of books. One reading table has been removed to make space for a reference and circulation desk. The big problem now is where do we put more books until the new library is built. If the new NIA campus continues to be delayed, this problem will become a very serious one. One solution might be the removal of the UN document collection to a storage location outside the library. This would give us an additional alcove for books. This would only be a temporary solution, however.

After having drawn three sets of plans for a new library, I feel that the latest ones submitted are the most satisfactory. I recommend that Dr. Chapin be consulted on these plans, that he be asked to draw up an equipment list for the library, and that he give us any practical advice on things to watch for during construction so that we will avoid as many mistakes as possible.

Personnel and Services: When I came to the NIA fifteen months ago the staff consisted of two library assistants employed by MSU. The NIA had no one assigned to the library. The library now has a staff of five - four employed by MSU and one by the NIA. A complete job analysis and classification plan was done and duties reassigned on a more rational basis. This also gave us the opportunity to show that the library staff was not interchangeable with other clerk-typists and secretaries and that they should be financially rewarded for the training they were receiving as librarians.

.../...

Otherwise we were in danger of losing our qualified staff periodically.

The question of training personnel for the library has occupied at least half of my entire time in Vietnam. This has included not only the training of our own staff, but also a course in cataloging and classification for government librarians given under the sponsorship of the In-Service Training Division of the NIA. From this has also come a text-book in Vietnamese and English on cataloging and classification and a tri-lingual (English, French and Vietnamese) abridged edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification especially adapted for use in Vietnam. These will both be published later this year by USIS for free distribution to Vietnamese libraries.

The Vietnamese staff of the NIA library can now handle all technical services (ordering and receipt of books cataloging, classification, etc.) with a minimum of supervision. Where more training needs to be done is in the field of public services, particularly reference work. The staff needs more training in the use of reference books and in ways of serving the public. They have yet to acquire the idea that technical routines must be put aside when a patron comes to the library and every effort made to see that he gets what he wants and what he needs.

In this connection, serious thought should be given to the indexing of Vietnamese and French periodicals, for which no printed indexes are available. Another problem which needs consideration is the development of a Vietnamese subject catalog or at least an index in Vietnamese to the present English subject catalog.

Book and Periodical Collection: The book and periodical collection has more than doubled in size in the last fifteen months, rising from 4,000 to about 8,500 volumes. A major effort has gone into the development of the periodical collection, the backbone of any research collection. This should definitely be continued. There has never been any budgetary problem and one of my strongest recommendations is that before MSU ceases its support of the library that periodical subscriptions be extended as far into the future as possible, so that the NIA will continue to receive as many periodicals as possible after we pull out.

The document collection at the NIA consists mostly of UN documents. VN government documents have remained in the hands of the Research Section of the NIA. A great effort must be made to coordinate our activities so that all will serve the common goal, without unnecessary duplication.

Relations with NIA: This leads me to the one question on which we have made only a little progress. The administration of the NIA continues to view the operation of the library as largely an MSU task. This is quite true, when you consider that 80% of the staff, in addition to the Library Advisor, is paid for by MSU. In addition there continues to be a failure

.../...

to understand what goes into making good library service possible. I am sure they feel that we are extravagant with staff, whereas we barely have time to take care of all necessary duties. This lack of comprehension applies also to the knowledge of what a good library can do for a school. They cannot be blamed for this, since they have little background from which to judge. We must continually work to push our services and to cooperate with them in every possible way in order to demonstrate the value of the library.

Another delicate question remains in the relationship of the library to the Institute. As long as Cao Huu Dong holds the title of Librarian, without devoting any of his time or energy to the library, there will be friction. We have an oral agreement with the NIA that Miss Ti will be named Librarian upon her return from the Philippines. The sooner this happens the better for all concerned. If not, then we will be faced with the same problem all over - getting them to name someone for us to begin training again. I should hate to face that possibility.

Summary: The overall development of the NIA Library is encouraging. There has certainly been considerable progress during the last fifteen months. Our book collection now serves our needs quite adequately. The periodical collection is on its way. Our service to government agencies is increasing and I think we can look forward to continued progress in this area during the next year under Miss Heyman's guidance. Barring unforeseen difficulties I see no reason why MSU should not be able to withdraw its Library Adviser by the end of next year.