CDNLAO ANNUAL MEETING – MAY 2012

THE FUTURE OF LAP: LIBRARIES OF ASIA PACIFIC DIRECTORY

1   BACKGROUND

LAP: Libraries of Asia Pacific Directory is an online database of over 500 libraries and archives in the Asia-Pacific Region, which is hosted on the National Library of Australia website (http://www.nla.gov.au/lap/).The online directory was established by the National Library of Australia as a Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) initiative in 2000. The directory's purpose was to provide a single web-accessible source of information about the functions, services and collections of libraries in Asia and the Pacific region. In 2003, the National Library of Australia introduced a feature enabling libraries to update their own details with a password provided by the National Library. Unfortunately, in recent years the directory entries have not been updated regularly and the National Library's web statistics suggest that usage of the online directory is very low.

The National Library is migrating its websites to a new content management system. A significant amount of work would be required to set up the *Libraries of Asia Pacific Directory* in the new web environment and the National Library does not have the resources to commit to this work, particularly given the low usage of the directory. For this reason, the National Library will not be able to provide access to the directory from 1 July 2012. This paper provides some information about the directory and suggests a couple of options for its future.

2   CURRENT DIRECTORY

2.1 Content & functionality

Much of the original content for the directory came from the print-based *Directory of Libraries and Archives in the Pacific Islands (published in 1997)*, but this has been supplemented over time by additional information from CDNLAO members. The directory has just over 500 entries for different institutions - primarily libraries in the Pacific region, although there are also some entries for Pacific archival institutions and major libraries in Asia. Libraries at all levels – school, government, public, institutional, university, and national – are represented in the directory.

Entries include, where available, information about the functions, services, collections, legislation and contact details for the individual library or institution concerned.

The directory can be browsed by country or searched via library/institution name, subject area, country and library type.

In May 2003, the directory was redeveloped to enable all entry holders to update their own entries using a password. Despite this, we believe that many of the entries are now out of date.

2.2 Website activity

Activity on the *Libraries of Asia Pacific Directory* website, both from users wishing to search the directory and libraries updating their entries, is almost negligible.

National Library of Australia staff have received only two queries in the last 12 to 18 months about the directory: one from a member of the Pacific Islands Association of Libraries, Archives, and Museums **(**PIALA) wishing to pass on passwords etc to libraries at a PIALA conference; and one request from a library wishing to update its entry.

It is not possible to obtain statistics on how frequently libraries are updating their own entries, but overall traffic to the *Libraries of Asia Pacific Directory* website has been extremely low.

3   FUTURE OPTIONS

Due to an upgrade to the National Library of Australia's web content management system, the National Library will be unable to continue to host the directory from July 2012. There are, therefore, two options for the directory: hosting by another library/organisation or cessation of the online directory completely.

Should CDNLAO favour the first option, the National Library of Australia is happy to provide the data in an Excel spreadsheet to any library or organisation wishing to host the directory in future. The National Library is unable to provide the database in its existing form as some of its functionality is dependent on legacy applications developed in-house. The National Library will archive the Excel spreadsheet on its internal system.

The second option, suggested by the low usage of the online directory, is that it be allowed to lapse as there may no longer be a need for this directory. It is worth noting that the *Libraries & Archives in South Asia wiki* (with over 200 entries for a more limited geographic area) - https://coral.uchicago.edu:8443/display/lasa/Home - duplicates, or has better coverage of, some of the countries covered by *Libraries of Asia Pacific Directory*. Another reason for allowing the directory to lapse is that most libraries now have their own websites which are maintained regularly and provide access to a greater range and depth of information. Access to institutional websites is now far better with the general improvement in the searching capability of search engines.

4   RECOMMENDATION

That CDNLAO members consider the options for the future of the *Libraries of Asia Pacific Directory*.