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NATIONAL LIBRARIES GLOBAL (NLG) : A PROPOSAL

AIM OF PAPER

This paper gives an overview of the National Libraries Global (NLG) project and proposed collaborative efforts with partners in the ASEAN region.

INTRODUCTION

2. NLG was a project mooted by National Library New Zealand (NLNZ) in collaboration with National Library Australia (NLA) and National Library Board (NLB) Singapore to network the digital collections of national libraries in Asia and Oceania (AO) for wider access. The Proof of Concept was released in August 2007. As a common platform, NLG would like to invite ASEAN libraries to share and have access to digitised materials in their collections.

OBJECTIVES OF NLG

3. Global exposure and visibility of content from ASEAN, Asia and Oceania. Knowledge in the ASEAN region is diverse with respect to culture and language, and is not adequately exposed and represented for discovery on other global and regional platforms. The creation of NLG aims to address the lack of such representation and foster greater awareness of the diverse cultures and heritage in this region.

4. Nurturing appreciation of ASEAN Identity. NLG can effectively engage citizens of ASEAN nations and their dialogue partners in sharing and learning about their cultures, heritage and shared history. This supports the "Declaration on Asean Unity in Cultural Diversity: Towards Strengthening Asean Community" that was signed between ASEAN members on the occasion of the 19th ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia on 17 November 2011.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF NLG

5. The desired outcome of NLG is the creation of an access, discovery and learning platform for participating library and educational institutions to share digital content. This collaboration will be governed by a content-sharing policy framework formulated and implemented with the agreement of participating institutions. Core guiding principles for the framework could include:

- a. Quality. Standards of quality and comprehensiveness for metadata and digital content hosted on the NLG platform.

b. Equitable Access. Maximising the ease of access, search, discovery and use. For instance, criteria could be set for material to be made accessible for fair use or research purposes at no charge.

BENEFITS OF NLG

6. Besides the objectives in paragraphs 3 and 4, the following benefits could be delivered with successful implementation of the project:

a. Increased visibility of member institutions. The success of NLG will raise international prominence of content from Asia-Oceania and ASEAN. This will address imbalances in global mindshare, which is increasingly dominated by regions such as Europe (through its Europeana project). An ASEAN-centered platform will also ensure greater control over the visibility, presentation and curation of our region's content for more effective cultural rapprochement.

b. Professional expertise. Professional expertise among member institutions in the development of digital content for discovery and use will be deepened. Standards and best practices meeting the unique requirements of diverse content (e.g., ontologies specific to Asian knowledge concepts and linguistic translations) will also be encouraged.

c. Academic research. NLG, and its member institutions, will be the preferred source of information for academic research on issues related to Asia-Oceania and ASEAN. A virtuous cycle of research utilizing and contributing to this regional knowledge network will ensure the sustainable growth of NLG's content.

d. Regional projects. The aggregation of ASEAN-related information on NLG will facilitate regional research projects, which could support the developmental objectives of international fora such as the ASEAN Meeting for Ministers of Cultural and the Arts (AMCA) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

e. International Cooperation. In the longer term, NLG could be linked to other regional digital library networks and initiatives, such as "The European Library" (TEL) and WorldCat. This initial effort in Asia-Oceania will ensure the region's content keeps pace with digital access developments in the globalised information environment.

PROPOSED WAY AHEAD FOR NLG

Step One: Formation of project team

7. NLB would like to propose the formation of a project team to negotiate and establish the terms and objectives of collaboration. Substantial interest has already been expressed by the National Libraries of Australia, New Zealand, China and Singapore to pursue this project. For a start, the team could:

- a. articulate in specific details the outcomes and strategies of NLG;
- b. negotiate common terms of agreement among members; and
- c. propose a timeline of deliverables with agreed procedures for collaborative implementation.

NLB would also like to propose the representation of ASEAN institutions in this project team, which should aim to finalise the above by the third week of June 2012 for ASEAN COCI funding (see para 9).

Step Two: Formation of consortium

8. Following the articulation of NLG's objectives, timelines, and strategies, a consortium among the interested institutions could be formalized to oversee the execution of NLG. Specifically, the aims of the consortium could include:

- a. Sharing and harmonization of metadata across member collections for easy discovery and sense-making in the immediate term, and
- b. Providing direct access to digitised content in the collections of consortium members in the medium term.

The consortium, which would comprise ASEAN members, and the National Libraries of Australia, China and New Zealand, should be finalised by December 2012, with a formal agreement (e.g., MOU) entered into by participating members by January 2013.

FUNDING

9. With the participation of ASEAN libraries, the project team can apply for two possible sources of funding from the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI):

a. ASEAN Cultural Fund (ACF). The fund's objectives are to preserve the cultural heritage of the ASEAN member countries, and to foster greater cultural interaction and awareness of ASEAN cultures. At the ASEAN meeting in July 2012, ASEAN Member States (AMS) shall present proposals for use of ACF to implement projects which meet these objectives. Projects must involve the participation of all AMS. For this funding, ASEAN COCI awards up to US\$50,000 per project per year. For example, the amount requested for a 3-year project can be up to US\$150,000. However, the funding will still be released on an annual basis (i.e., US\$50,000 per year).

b. Flagship project during 2013-2015 under the ASEAN Declaration on Unity in Cultural Diversity. This is a one-off funding provision for projects to be implemented between 2013 and 2015, with at least one project each year. The fund available to carry out the project proposals is US\$200,000. ASEAN COCI SCC will meet in July, where each ASEAN Member State shall present its proposal(s) to the meeting and the meeting will decide on the project/country to award the fund to. **The initial proposal should be submitted latest by the third week of June 2012 to the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) Singapore.**

NEXT STEPS

10. We would like to seek your cooperation to participate in NLG by nominating a representative to the project team (please see paragraph 7) to define the details of collaboration. A project team should be formed by early-June to work towards an initial proposal by the third week of June 2012.

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