



National Library and Archive Service

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Papua New Guinea Country Report

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January 2016



1. Introduction

This brief reports presents to information about Papua New Guinea's Library service. The report covers the inception of Library services from 1957 to 2015. The part of the segment will cover the history. The office of Library and Archives under new management is shaping up to ensure this vital service reach the vast majority of the people in rural PNG.

In the report a brief geography of the country is presented for the readers benefit. The report will also cover the current effort of improvements.

Papua New Guinea is a developing that has many challenges in terms of Social, Economic, Political and Environment. The country has 800 plus languages with thousand tribes that are having huge impact in the education systems. The Office of Library and Archives challenge today to ensure that citizens have access to services.

2. History of Library Services in PNG 1957 to 2015

During 1975, the government of the day decided that the National Archives would also become a branch of the National Library Service. With archives, the colonial administration had followed Australian policies and practices. From 1962 to 1970, an Archives Committee had been set up by the colonial administrator to: -

- i. Promote records management.
- ii. Authorise destruction of archives.
- iii. Issue statements on all policy matters relating to archives and records.
- iv. Assist in attracting archival material from non-government sources.

Subsequently, the role of approving destruction of records was given to the Assistant Ministerial Member for Social Development and Home Affairs (the department responsible at that time for archives). Archives were included in the list of functions given in determination under Section 24 of the Papua New Guinea Act 1949-68. More recently, the role of approving destructions and access has been assumed by the department controlling National Archives, and instructions on archives and records have been issued through the Secretary.

The Act recognises the need for professionals to work together under a broad grouping of libraries and archives, and will also both the National Library and National Archives freedom to develop their particular professional areas as separate but complementary entities in the Office of Libraries and Archives. In no way should the powers of either institution be weakened by this approach.

Although the National Library Service was originally conceived to co-ordinate and rationalise the operations of all libraries funded by the government (apart from university libraries), no legislation was enacted at the time of its establishment to provide the necessary powers to carry out his important task.

After over twenty years of independence, Papua New Guinea has slowly built on the library and archives systems inherited from the Australian colonial administration. Most of the Growth in libraries, however has been random and quantitative, and in the field of tertiary and government departmental libraries, where small collections proliferate and a low level of service is provided. The need for a nation-wide approach to archives development has also been made obvious in the face of a burgeoning bureaucracy which as generated an ever-increasing number of records.

The ad hoc approach to library and archives development has not worked well, and statutory powers to rationalise, direct and co-ordinate developments have been sorely needed. The legislation should enable some of the problems being experienced by the

National Library and National Archives, to be tackled effectively, to allow the full potential of libraries and archives in the major task of nation-building to be realised.

From the year 2010 to 2014 the country's library management has shifted away from their core business and used funds for Library developments to fund activities that are not appropriate. The government has intervened and changed the management however, the effect from such actions are far from over which the office is struggling to service its debts.

3. Plans for the Future

The office under new management has taken major initiatives to reform the library service including archives in the country over the next 10 years. The changes that are about to come are major policy development, structural reforms, infrastructure development that are all geared towards improved library service delivery.

The country has a ten year cooperate plan 2016 – 2025 that is focused on reforming the management, improving better service delivery and overall enabling the organization to become the main information hub. There are plans in place to improve the infrastructure which by 2018 that will cater for all need. The survey work and architectural designs for the new infrastructures has been completed.

The Library services should be automated however our major challenge is the purchase new machine that has been delayed for years due to bureaucratic processes in securing funding. Though this is a good idea but I do not think it will benefit everyone in the country because the communicate network in the country is very poor, internet services offered are very expensive and not everyone in the country have access to communication network. The country will trail out some products on E-Library this year if successful we will roll it out throughout the country.

Assistance for National Government is very limited so the office planned to seek assistance from development partners and others to delivery effective and reliable library services to the people of PNG. The only development partner that is currently assisting the office for over 5 years is American Embassy. The Embassy has an office within Library for them to share information about the country's politics, economic, social and environment of the country. The Library development in the country was initiated by the Australian Government and my office will soon establish communication with the Australian High Commission for further support and improve library services in the years to come.

Many programs, plans and policies were not effectively implemented over the due to lack of proper leadership. The country has learnt from mistakes made by past management to do better years to come. What has happened remains history to remind current and future leaders to manage the organization effectively.

4. Recommendation

The recommendations provided in this report are for the conference to absorb and establish networks with possible donors to support in terms of financial and technical assistance for its member country. In PNG we need assistance in three areas that are;

- 4.1. Automation of Library books – to purchase equipment that will enable PNG to have automated library.
- 4.2. Training in Library management for Staff in PNG Library
- 4.3. Work attachment to member countries who have well established Library systems.

The recommendations are part of the activities in the ten year plan of National Library and Archives.