

COUNTRY REPORT

For the 16th Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) October 20, .2008

2008 was a good year for Cambodian libraries and the National Library in particular achieved some major milestones. We have received funding from ANZ Royal Bank to provide an Information Literacy Program to students on Saturdays. This is the first time the Library has been able to open on Saturday, so this increases our opening hours for our customers.

We have also received funding from UNESCO to produce a National Bibliography of Cambodia. Once completed, this bibliography will provide access to more of Cambodia's written cultural heritage for Cambodian and international researchers.

Project Valse has provided funding to adapt and install a new integrated library system (PMB) at the National Library. This system has been adapted to become Unicode compliant and so can be searched using Khmer script. Eventually the OPAC will be available over the Internet.

National Library:

Organization structure

The National Library of Cambodia (NLC) was established by Royal Ordinance in 1921. In the centre of Phnom Penh and in French colonial style architecture, the Library opened to public in 1924 with a collection of 2,879 volumes.

Today, NLC is under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. The mission of the National library of Cambodia is to :

- Collect, preserve and provide access to the Nation's documentary heritage.
- Provide information and documents to support education, government and research in Cambodia .
- Promote public library services and support the work of other library.
- Coordinate resource-sharing and inter-library loan between all types of libraries in Cambodia

National library is divided into the following sections :

- Administration
- Technical Services
- Reading Services
- Research and Reference
- Conservation and Bookbinding
- Lending Services
- Manuscripts

Manpower

Library Director

Head of Sections 3

Section Deputies 3

Library staff 28

Library Users:

The NLC has many different types of users, mainly students, researchers and the general public. As of 2007, the number of registered members was 21.296

Collection :

The collection of the NLC is estimated at around 59,592 volumes, including a collection of “Cambodiana” (i.e. material of Cambodian cultural significance). This collection is available to researchers and to the general public.

The National Library maintains the country’s most comprehensive collection of Cambodiana, including books, reports, newspapers, serials and non print items, published in Cambodia, about Cambodia, or by Cambodians, mainly in Khmer, English or French. There is a computer catalogue of the post-1970 collection and a printed classified list that includes over 5000 records of pre-1970 documents. The Library compiled a separate Cambodiana Catalogue in late 2007.

The French collection at the NLC dates from the founding of the library in 1924 and contains over 20,000 volumes. It contains legal and administrative documents for Cambodia and Indochina as well as books about art, travel and

the history of Cambodia. In addition the collection contains many French novels from the 19th and 20th centuries and recreational reading typical of a French public library. The entire collection has been restored and kept as a special collection, which reflects the anthropological, historical and social thinking of the time. It is valuable to the understanding of both the French community in Cambodia and Cambodian history. A bibliography of this collection is currently in preparation.

The National Library is also the home of an important set of palm leaf manuscripts. Other palm leaf manuscript collections exist at the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, the Royal Palace, the National Museum and individual Buddhist temples.

Services:

On Saturday, March 22nd, the Library began the ANZ Royal –NLC Information Literacy Program. The NLC staff train students and other library customers how to search the online library catalog and the internet. The program lasts for one and a half hours and is held two times during the day. Feedback to date has been very positive.

Library volunteer Jade Furness from New Zealand trained the library staff in how to run the program for the library customers.

On 15 November 2007, the Library had a ceremony for the National Reading Festival .

In 2006-2007, the NLC launched its lending collection to the public and the use of the collection continues to grow; there are now almost 2000 registered borrowers in the system. A variety of institutions are involved in reading promotion, including the Department of Books and Reading in the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. The Department administers the National Library of Cambodia and, among many activities, maintains a mobile book service to rural areas in Kandal Province. The Federation for the Development of the Book Sector in Cambodia (FDBC) is active in supporting access to books throughout the country, while NGOs such as Room to Read and SIPAR, have focused on help to school libraries, particularly in the villages. The Buddhist Institute Library has also set up branch libraries in the provinces.

Information literacy programs are conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF and some NGOs such as Buddhism for Development. The French Embassy is supporting the Writing Improvement Project VALEASE (Projet du Fonds de

Solidarite prioritaire de Valorisation de l'Écrit en Asie du Sud-Est) which includes training in children's literature.

Project Valease has also kindly renewed the contract to fund the NLC's internet access and ongoing service contract until the end of 2009.

We therefore have some of the requisite infrastructure to deliver the information literacy programs over the upcoming year.

Digital library services are relatively undeveloped outside the university and special libraries of Phnom Penh, although all eighty-five libraries listed in the *Repertoire des bibliotheques et centres de documentation* indicate some automation of their catalogues and promotion of online information services. The privately-run Centre for Khmer Studies has an online catalogue of its Cambodiana Collections and other libraries such as the government's Senate Library do have websites which at the very least list the collections of the library.

There are currently no formal inter-library loan services, although informal exchange arrangements do exist among some cooperating libraries.

The ISBN Agency at the NLC has worked with the Federation of the Development of the Books Sector in Cambodia to produce a Books in Print publication that is distributed across Cambodia as a service to publishers, booksellers, libraries and researchers.

The Library, in association with the Federation for the Development of the Book Sector in Cambodia, has published 3 volumes of the Books in Print, covering the period 2006/2007. This publication is freely available in print form and on CD.

Projects:

The Library has tendered a proposal for the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation 2009 for the "Conservation and digitization of historical Khmer books from the National Library of Cambodia's book and microfilm collections."

A proposal for a Mobile Library Service for the Blind in Cambodia was submitted via the Force Foundation in June 2008.

Library at the National Level:

The Cambodian Librarians and Documentlists Association (CLDA) was founded in 1995 and now has over 100 members.

The National Library of Cambodia (NLC) is continuing to develop its research services and Cambodiana collections as well as its Lending Collection which is the only such public lending service in Cambodia. Particular areas of focus are the development of the Reader Services, and the integration, conservation and promotion of the Cambodiana Collection.

There are some 13 academic libraries in Cambodia. A few have recently incorporated internet access. In addition, there are 28 libraries in various government institutions, including the National Assembly, the Senate, the Buddhist Institute and various ministries. In the provinces, there are now 22 Community Information Centers with Internet access. In addition, there are over 1000 school libraries.

There are over 50 medium or small-sized specialist or private libraries and at least 23 non-government organisations that have their own libraries, as do at least 5 UN agencies.

Probably the busiest library in Cambodia is the Hun Sen Library at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, which receives on average 600 visitors per day. The National Library receives 65 to 75 visitors per day. Smaller libraries throughout Cambodia tend to receive 10 to 15 visitors per day.

Library buildings in Cambodia are generally of an acceptable standard. Many buildings are quite old and do not have the appropriate infrastructure for the establishment of network connections and so forth. However some of the major libraries such as the National Library are seeking funding for capital works and library building expansion at this time and the government's Senate Library has recently moved to new premises. Two new libraries have recently been opened – one in Kratie province and one at Boengdrabei School in Phnom Penh.

Infrastructure:

There are currently a few dedicated library networks in the country and the Royal University of Phnom Penh is currently establishing a library network for its campuses. All major libraries in Phnom Penh are currently exploring the transition to Unicode for Khmer script, and while some progress has been made, only the new PMB Library system can be searched in Khmer script.

Basic Internet connectivity is provided for Library staff to assist in their work and some Libraries have the internet also for public use.

Preservation and Conservation

Towards the end of 2007, the Library received funding from UNESCO for conservation and preservation materials and for a library security system.

The Library's conservation program covers activities such as paper repairing, rare books repair, rebinding, encapsulation, and making boxes.

A concern of National Library is that at present, it is not able to fully play the role of a national library in terms of safeguarding the nation's written heritage. It does not receive any budget from the government except salaries. The equipment of the NLC is not sufficient or adequate to achieve anything substantial in preservation terms.

Digitization:

To date, only the old rare books have been digitized. Most of the titles are old and fragile, dating back to the colonial period. Some books are in a state of decay and need to be scanned to be preserved. The books are scanned and the electronic versions are stored on CD-ROMs.

Disaster Planning:

There is no current disaster plan for the library and its documentary heritage. National Library and the National Archives staff have received training in conservation and preservation but unfortunately a disaster plan is heavily reliant on funding from the ministries and international agencies.

Education and training:

Cambodia has just four fully trained professional librarians. There are no library training schools in Cambodia. Some on-the-job training is provided by trained librarians, including international volunteers from Australia and New Zealand. The only training regularly available is a short basic introductory course run by the Library Association of Cambodia. A few staff has also done short attachments of a few weeks or months in libraries overseas in France, Malaysia, Singapore etc.

Copyright and library act:

Cambodia passed copyright legislation, the *Law on Copyright and Related Rights, NS/RKM/0303/008*, in 2003. However, there are not yet any copyright/intellectual property rights watchdog organizations or associations.

Conclusion

Libraries in Cambodia continue to develop and an increasing number of Cambodians, especially younger members of the population, are visiting libraries to access reading and research materials.