

From tropical island to the superhighway?

First comments seem to be 'It's paradise, but what do you do for newspapers and TV?' The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are a beautiful coral atoll situated 2768 km north west of Perth and 3685 km west of Darwin in the Indian Ocean. The islands are an Australian Territory, administered by the Department of Environment, Sport and Territories (DEST), and home to approximately 500 Cocos-Malay people and about 100 expatriate Australians. We have most of the amenities of mainland Australia but many of us miss ready access to information resources and good books. There is access to computers but modems do not seem to

work well, and telephone charges are prohibitive so use of internet is rare.

Needs for information and recreation were first met by a voluntarily run library as part of the Cocos Club, and funds provided by DEST for the purchase of new books. This income was supplemented by a charge of twenty cents per loan.

Eventually the best of this 'library' was added to the West Island School library to form a community library and, combined with the school library on Home Island, is now the Cocos Community Library. The libraries are now staffed for a total of 12 hours per week in the evenings and sup-

ported by the local Shire Council and District High school in a joint use arrangement. Statistics indicate use by at least ten per cent of the population on any one night.

Serials librarians would be well aware of the costs of periodicals by air compared with surface mail. Hence all our periodicals are out-of-date by the time we get them and even those that we do pay extra for air travel by some perversity of Australia Post generally come surface mail. There are frequently delays of up to eight weeks between ships to Cocos.

After five years of lobbying and submissions it appears that we are closer to an agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the WA State Government to become part of the LISWA service. This means an initial book stock of 1000 items for each of Home and West Island libraries, with regular rotations of approximately twenty per cent of this stock six or seven times a year. For the regular readers the first shipment will be an event to celebrate. For the Cocos-Malay people it will mean access to information in their own language along with extra videos and spoken-word audio tapes to assist their acquisition of English. For primary and secondary students it will mean access to up-to-date reference resources and fiction along with a wider range of videos and audio tapes.

Until the last few months almost all of the work to bring this dream to fruition has been voluntary. Those who envisioned a full library service were supported over the years by the local administration of DEST and past and present directors of public library and lending services of LISWA. It was Ron Davis (previous director) who first visited us in 1992 and showed us the dream of a mainland type service. Thanks go to all those people. To those on the mainland, don't be surprised if you get a request for an ILL from Cocos one day soon. We look forward to sharing our time with you on the Australian library network.

Claire White, Cocos Community Library

6th Conference of Nat Lib Directors: Asia and Oceania Brisbane, 27 May 1995

The National Library of Australia hosted the 6th meeting of the conference of Directors of National Libraries, Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) in Brisbane on 27 May 1995, prior to the State Library of Queensland's Asia-Pacific Library conference which was also attended by all CDNLAO delegates. The National Library of Australia Council met in Brisbane on 26 May to also meet CDNLAO.

CDNLAO is an organisation formed in 1979 on the initiative of Dr George Chandler, the National Library's then director-general. It has met in Canberra in 1979, Tokyo in 1982, Sri Lanka in 1985, Beijing 1989, and Kuala Lumpur in 1992. Twenty-one Directors of national libraries from the Asia and Oceania region attended the 6th meeting in Brisbane, and a mix of funding from the NLA's trust funds, the State Library of Queensland and Australia's international aid agency, AusAID, enabled attendance of delegates from the less developed countries in the region. It was particularly pleasing to welcome Mrs Carmen Temata, chief librarian, National Li-

brary of the Cook Islands, and Mr Tokintekai Uereti, National Library and Archives of Kiribati. They were the first representatives from the Pacific to attend the CDNLAO meetings.

CDNLAO once again provided a valuable forum for information exchange on recent developments in the region's national libraries, and allowed delegates to candidly share successes, frustrations and problems. There was considerable discussion about the future of CDNLAO at the meeting, during activities of mutual interest between meetings. The National Library of Australia will be responsible for CDNLAO developments until it next meets, and a sub-committee comprising the CEOs of the national libraries of Australia, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and Japan will be developing this program of activities for the next three years.

The National Library of Papua New Guinea is investigating the possibility of hosting the 7th meeting of CDNLAO in Port Moresby in 1998.

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