Asia, and the Pacific

Anthony Ketley, APSIG convenor

hen the Asia-Pacific Special Interest Group (APSIG) was established in 1988, the founding members believed that the group had three tasks: to raise the profile of activities relating to Asia and the Pacific within the library community in Australia; to improve lines of communication between librarians interested in Asia and the Pacific; and to act as a lobby group within ALIA and in other forums

The most obvious success had been the regular publication of the APSIC newsletter, initially edited by George Miller and Susan Prentice at the ANU and more recently by Craig Boaden at the AusAID Centre for Pacific Development and Training in Sydney. The newsletter has consistently reported on matters of interest to librarians and others, covering events within Australia as well as in the Asia/Pacific region.

The group's activities in promoting discussion on current topics at conferences is well-known and will continue. Less well-known may be the projects with funding from AusAID and ACLIS. These have included a series of on-site

training programs on the management of library preservation for libraries in Asia and the Pacific and a project to identify and publish a list of databases available on-line in Australia containing information about Asia. This task is now complete and is likely to be available on the Internet, in hard copy and on a CD-ROM, details of which are still being negotiated. APSIG plans to continue to update the database, particularly the electronic versions.

The group's lobbying activities have seen some interesting outcomes. For example, the projects undertaken by the National Library of Australia and other institutions to design and establish an on-line bibliographical system using vernacular Chinese, Japanese and Korean scripts originated from a submission by APSIG to the *Ingleson inquiry on Asia in Australian higher education*, followed by APSIG lobbying the *Ross inquiry into library provision in higher education*. The group has also been recognised by the *Roundtable on libraries and Asia*.

One significant event has been the revival and restructuring of ALIA's In-

ternational Relations Committee (IRC) in 1992. This committee's terms of reference cover the whole of ALIA's 'active involvement' in the international arena, but also refer directly to the Asia Pacific region. APSIG ran a workshop at the NZLIA/ALIA conference in Wellington for members of library associations in the region.

The IRC not only has members with special interests and expertise in the region, but specifically provides a position for the convenor of APSIG. This gives APSIG unprecedented access to the affairs of ALIA by regular reporting to Council meetings and by consultation about relevant matters. From 1996, the IRC will meet in a cycle designed to tie in with Council meetings.

What of the future? APSIG has about 200 members and, in addition to Canberra, has chapters in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. Even with a relatively small and dispersed membership, the group intends to maintain its current range of tasks, including creating a directory of libraries and related institutions in the Pacific, subject to attracting financial sponsorship.

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