

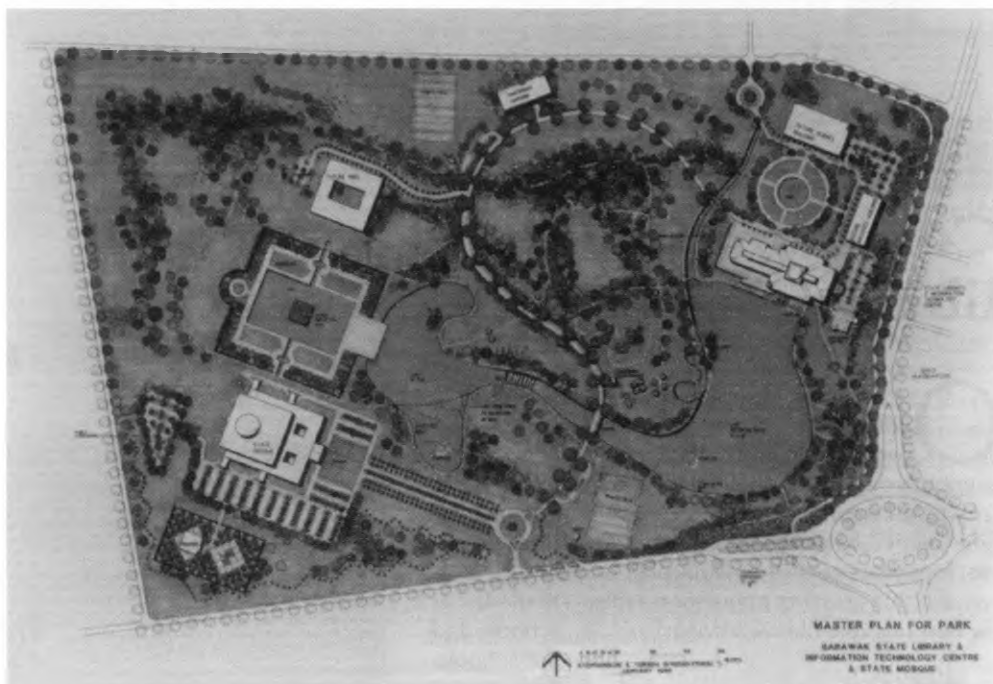
A new state library for Sarawak

In the lush tropical greenery of the west coast of Borneo the State Library of New South Wales Building and Planning Advisory Service is a key player in the design of a world-class library and information technology centre. Dr David J Jones is helping the Malaysian State of Sarawak to plan the Pustaka Negeri Sarawak as the hub of the evolving state network of libraries, many of which are in remote and relatively inaccessible locations.

In 1993 the Sarawak Government asked Dr Jones to prepare a design brief for the Pustaka, which he presented to the State Cabinet in June 1994. The Sydney-based architectural firm Stephenson and Turner International was appointed to head a team of Malaysian and Australian consultants, with Dr Jones acting as adviser during the detailed planning stage.

The new library is being constructed on a two-hundred acre site at Petra Jaya, just north of the picturesque centre of Kuching. The site is in a precinct zoned for educational, religious, cultural and recreational development. The parkland setting incorporates the existing State Mosque, and also makes provision for future buildings for archives, an institute of Islamic Studies and a Science and Mathematics Centre. The masterplan for the site features a large artificial lake, which also serves a utilitarian function as stormwater detention in this high rainfall environment.

Around the lake will be passive and active recreation areas: an adventure playground, sports fields, an amphitheatre, exercise trails, cycle paths and picnic areas. The park will be a contrast to the sophisticated and concentrated mix of heritage buildings, covered markets, narrow streets lined with colourful shophouses, five star hotels, and vibrant waterfront promenade, concentrated in a few square kilometres of downtown Kuching.



Stephenson and Turner International

Construction commenced in February and Pustaka Negeri Sarawak is scheduled for completion in 1999. The new \$A25 million library will include major exhibition spaces, featuring the development of recorded knowledge from clay tablet to information superhighway, an auditorium, a cafeteria and a child-care centre. There will be multimedia areas for children and for the general public, as well as display and reading spaces for general materials and for rare works on Sarawak and Borneo.

When completed, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak will be the most advanced state library in Malaysia. It will be a major information resource centre and the hub of information services for the public and private sectors. It will enable all the information providers within the State to be linked and for their activities to be co-ordinated, so that duplication of scarce resources can be minimised and there can be a wider awareness of what is available.

The Sarawak Government sees the new facility as a major resource for education, recreation and business development. It will help nurture the love of reading in this highly literate society, with resources in Bahasa Malaysian, English, Chinese and increasingly in Iban and other indigenous languages. It will thus help record and preserve the expression of indigenous cultures, as

Master plan for the the park which will contain the Sarawak State Library, Information Technology Centre and the State Mosque

well as promoting 'information literacy' and creating awareness of the latest developments in information resources and services.

Dr Jones derives a special satisfaction from interacting with people from many different cultures and backgrounds, and helping to plan facilities which are appropriate and sympathetic to the local environment. 'What makes the Sarawak project so rewarding', he says, 'is the vision of the client and the ambitious scope of the project. This facility is for people of all ages and backgrounds. Its resources will range from historic documents relating to Borneo to the latest CD-ROMs and on-line services. We have to provide a building to suit this diverse clientele and to access such varied materials.'

The Sarawak project is one of the largest assignments to the Building and Planning Advisory Service so far. Since its establishment in 1989, the service has worked on over 150 library projects of all kinds in Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia. Prior to 1989 Dr Jones co-ordinated the State Library of New South Wales new building and refurbishing project, which resulted in the award-winning new wing of the library in Macquarie Street. ■