

PIALA in Micronesia

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Established in 1991, the Pacific Islands Association of Libraries and Archives (PIALA) is a regional association committed to fostering awareness and encouraging co-operation and resource sharing among libraries, archives and museums and related institutions of the Pacific Islands. Networking and resource sharing projects are difficult in the region. A vast and diverse area, Micronesia encompasses an expanse of water almost as big as the contiguous United States but with a total land mass less than that of Rhode Island. The total population for the region is less than 300 000 with half living on the island of Guam. Years of unreliable power and telephone services have made communication among the islands difficult and costly.

To assure the chance for some regular interaction among members and regional librarians and archivists, PIALA holds an annual conference each year rotating the location among the various island groups so that as many local librarians as possible can attend. For many, attendance at PIALA is the only conference experience they have. Pre-conference training sessions bring in the only library training for the region outside of Guam. From 1-7 November, Pohnpei played host for PIALA 97. Offerings included a pre-conference work-



The beginning: a 1991 planning session planted the seeds for the establishment of PIALA.

shop on classification and the use of computerised systems for cataloguing. The three-day conference provided sessions on grant writing, collection development, and educational opportunities for Pacific librarians as well as library tours and group discussions. A two-day post-conference workshop funded by IFLA's Advancement of Libraries in the Third World Program allowed for the training of library association leaders in library advocacy and policy development.

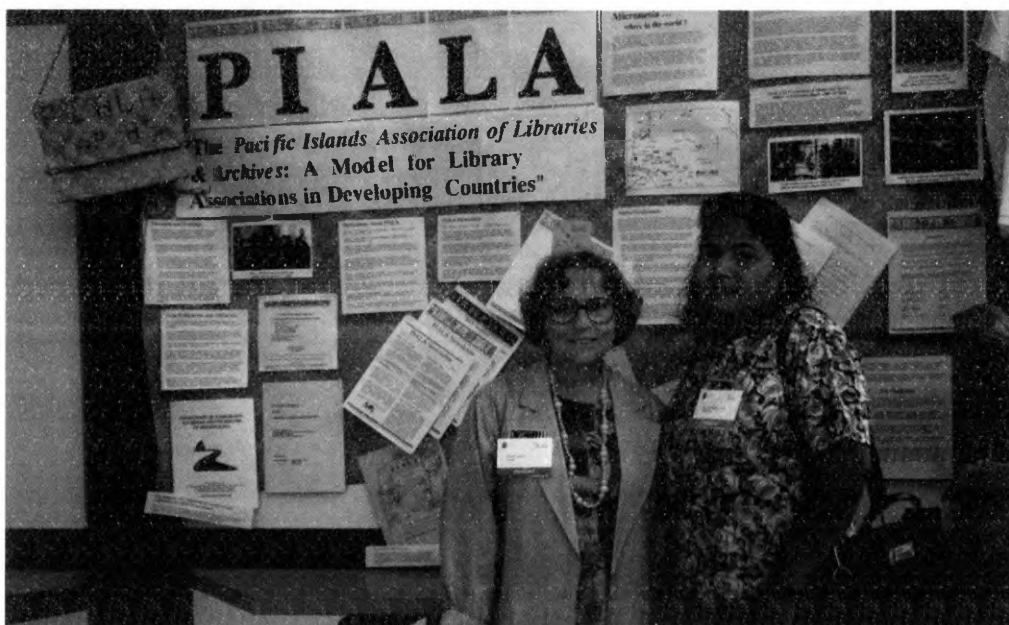
To disseminate information to members throughout the region PIALA publishes a newsletter three to four times a year. Announcements of new developments, construction projects, grants received or local accomplishments by island library associations are shared with the 120 individuals and institutions in twenty-five different countries or island

groups that make up the PIALA membership.

Two publication projects undertaken by PIALA have been a *Directory of libraries, archives and museums in Micronesia* and a *Union list of serials in libraries of Guam and Micronesia*. The Directory, last revised in 1993, will soon be replaced by the ALIA publication, *Directory of libraries and archives in the Pacific Islands*. These two works have focused attention on the region and revealed how many small but important collections exist already within Micronesia. Likewise, the Union list serves as an indication of what is and is not available locally and serves as a valuable tool for interlibrary loan and collection development. Also, this regional Union list picks up many local publications not found in traditional commercially-produced indices and databases.

Proceedings from the previous conferences are available; for details and to order copies contact Arlene Cohen, proceedings editor, RFK Memorial Library, University of Guam, UOG Station, Mangilao, Guam 96923 USA. Fax: 671-734-6882; telephone: 671-735-2345; or e-mail: acohen@uog9.uog.edu.

More information about PIALA and its activities and conferences can be found at their website at <http://uog2.uog.edu/rfk/piala.html>. ■



PIALA representatives, Arlene Cohen, vice-president, and Isabel Rungrad, president take PIALA to the world at the 1997 IFLA conference held in Copenhagen