

## Session 2: Pacific Networks Collaboration

*Moderator: Amy Butros*

### THE PACIFIC MARINE & ENVIRONMENTAL LIBRARIES TWINNING PROJECT: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PACIFIC LIBRARIES

**Dorene Naidu**

SPC Library

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Suva

Fiji Islands

[dorenen@spc.int](mailto:dorenen@spc.int)

#### **Abstract:**

Libraries in the Pacific face many challenges: vast geography, capacity building, attaining and retaining skilled librarians, funding and support are just a few. The Pacific Marine & Environmental Libraries Twinning Project came about after Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information Systems (PIMRIS) and the Group of Experts–Marine Information Management – International Data and Information Exchange (IODE- GEMIM, a UNESCO Program) meetings, in which these challenges were identified by all participants in the Pacific. Those involved at executive levels in the meetings have been trying to address these challenges as best as they can in support of their Pacific counterparts by having early consultations and involvement with PIMRIS. The Twinning Project had been tried by the Law sector for a decade and so it seemed to be a viable idea for the Marine sector as well, and to be a substantial start to respond to this situation. This paper looks at the implementation of this pilot for the Twinning Project that started in 2012 with funding from AusAID, involving three Australian libraries and three Pacific Island libraries.

**Keywords:** Libraries, capacity building, twinning projects, Oceania, AusAID, Pacific libraries, Australian Libraries, IODE GE-MIM, PIMRIS.

Being able to provide information to clients remains one of the most important aims of any library because of the value to its stakeholders and decision makers. This is even more significant in the Pacific's marine and environmental sector, which needs access to valuable information for decision and policy makers. For that to happen, there is an implicit need for skilled librarians to provide this, and most if not all libraries face challenges in doing this.

In the Pacific, it is even more difficult as all the libraries are spread over a large geographical area and separated widely from each other, so that it is difficult to exchange or share information physically. For the developed countries this may not be a challenge because technology developments allow for the Internet to overcome this; however, in the Pacific many countries are still developing and face challenges of technology, infrastructure or framework. Sometimes the librarians are not professionally trained in library science but are actually fisheries/environmental officers doing library work because there is no funding available to provide for a dedicated librarian or information management professional; this means they end up operating in several different capacities. Where it is possible to get professional librarians, it may then become difficult to retain them due to other attractive opportunities as well as lack of support and funding for libraries in general, so there is a high turnover in these positions. In the instances where it has been possible to retain these professionals, because of isolation over large geographical areas they are deprived of

continuing professional development. In light of these challenges, which are continuously highlighted by the Pacific partners at meetings at both regional and international levels, or at trainings and conferences conducted by Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information Systems (PIMRIS), Group of Experts–Marine Information Management – International Data and Information Exchange (IODE-GEMIM, a UNESCO Program), there were discussions of how to best help with this. In the past the law libraries tried twinning projects and were successful over the years. A twinning project with the marine and environment libraries seemed to be a viable possibility. Therefore, in consultation with PIMRIS and the IODE GE-MIM, it was decided that the pilot for the Pacific Marine & Environmental Libraries Twinning project would be given a trial. Susie Davis from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) libraries along with Chris Nelson and Joanna Ruxton compiled the proposal for funding from AusAID. After it was initially declined in 2010, the proposal was approved in 2011 [Davies].

The objective of the twinning project was to specifically strengthen the capacity of selected Pacific libraries to provide marine/environmental information and to improve environmental governance to the sector by establishing long term twinning relationships with similar libraries in Australia. The three libraries from Australia included the, then helmed by Suzie Davis, which became the lead library; James Cook University represented by Joanna Ruxton; and Geoscience Australia N.H. (Doc) Fisher Geoscience Library, represented by Chris Nelson, who later took the lead after the GBRMPA library experienced capacity loss. The three libraries from the Pacific included the Kiribati Ministry of Fisheries & Marine Resource Development Library represented by Mwaba Bakarere, who also works as a fisheries officer; Samoa Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, Fisheries Division Library with represented by [Ina] Tuluiga Taito James, who also works as a fisheries officer; and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, SPC Library, based in the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division in Fiji represented by Dorene Naidu. SPC was the lead organization in the Pacific.

The twinning project was completed in three phases. The first of these was a three week long work internship with GBRMPA, James Cook University and Geoscience Australia (Doc) Fisher library; the second was the return progress visits by the Australian counterparts to the Pacific Libraries; and the third was a workshop hosted by the Library at Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Apart from this the ongoing mentoring of the Pacific libraries would continue with advice, Duplicates items Exchange Program with free materials; and any other special services that their Australian counterparts would be able to provide.

The various activities during the internship based in Australia in the first phase of the project included development of Pacific library collections (paper-based & digital) and sound library management practices, in conjunction with the ODIN-PIMRIS network. This was achieved by activities that included basic library skills such as organizing collections, both physical and digital; introduction to digital wikis for managing tasks; introduction to digitization and archiving for large format items, e.g. maps and charts; and disaster planning. Participants were provided with exposure to and training in advanced information management skills, with an introduction to electronic document and records management (EDRMS), repositories (e.g. E-Atlas) where the process of data gathering from scientists and populating the repositories was demonstrated; introduction to LibGuides; and introduction to environment controlled archives and Web 2.0. Also included in the activities was the development of information alerting services to enhance dissemination of information to clients such as decision-makers and policy-makers. This was achieved by providing training for doing interlibrary loans; exposure and networking with various libraries including visits to the Australian National University Pacific Institute, National Library of Australia, and Townsville Health Library; and observing first-hand the maritime boundaries workshop that was being coordinated by the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division of SPC at the University of Sydney.

These provided opportunities for the Pacific participants to be exposed to the importance of the information management services they provide for their countries.

In the second phase of the project Joanna Ruxton (GBRMPA library) and Joel MacKeen (CSIRO Library) visited Kiribati and Samoa as part of the return progress visits by the Australian participants to the Pacific libraries. The Kiribati Ministry of Fisheries & Marine Resource Development Library with Mwaba Bakarere involved hands on training in assessing and identifying items for inclusion in the collection and organizing the materials on the shelves with the transformed library organized and ready for use. Mwaba had about 1000 reports digitized using the Greenstone Digital library. In the Samoa Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, Fisheries Division Library [Ina] Tuluiga Taito James completely rearranged the library collection with what she had learned during her internship in Australia. She also learned to identify and select unique items for inclusion into the PIMRIS. Chris Nelson from the Geoscience Australia Doc Fisher library visited the AGTD SPC Library to see that it was involved in one of the internal projects that were compiling the SOPAC Compendium. The Compendium is a digital collection of the entire body of knowledge of SOPAC's work in the Pacific Region from the time of its inception in 1972 to 2010. The exposure during the internship at Geoscience Australia Doc Fisher library contributed towards the implementation of a photo depository and large format digitization as well as building Archives for the Compendium project. Apart from this, collection development assistance was provided with interlibrary loans, map copying from National Library, and a CD of digitized legacy reports of Geoscience Australia research in the region being provided to the AGTD library.

Training and assistance were also provided for the important task of moving the SOPAC Petroleum Data Bank from Canberra to be included in the Compendium project based in AGTD. This was facilitated by Peter Butler, another Geoscience Australia staff member.

The workshop in SPREP was the third phase of the project and comprised several components, including training for the Greenstone Digital library software to manage small library collections; setting up current awareness services for Information gathering and how to use inexpensive tools for this activity; setting up alerts on various sites for Google Scholar, Science Direct, etc.; accessing portals; establishing Google profiles; collection development principles and practice; the values of dissemination/sharing/distribution of new information using existing resources like bulletin boards, emails, newsletters, blogs etc.; how to get resources for your clients using document delivery through formal networks such as IAMSLIC (IAMSLIC listserv or the Z39.50 catalog) and FAO (ASFA) and through informal networks such as professional networks, listservs, direct emails to colleagues, etc. There were also discussions on Open Access and a range of available relevant resources. The benefits of having an IAMSLIC membership were also discussed, including the range of resources were available as well as support, coaching and mentoring from other IAMSLIC members.

There were several challenges faced by the Pacific participants in the project. For some it was the first time they had travelled overseas out of the Pacific. Using the English language for communicating was difficult as it isn't a first language for all the participants, and there were feelings of being overwhelmed with culture shock; technologically challenged with the use of the Internet and other applications on Windows plus the introduction to Web 2.0; and processing and absorbing new information.

The project itself also faced some challenges when it was necessary to transfer the lead agency from GBRMPA to Geoscience Australia NH Doc Fisher Library after the GBRMPA library suffered capacity loss. Apart from this an extension to the project from December 2013 to March 2014 was requested upon the postponement of the PIMRIS meeting. In an ironic turn of events near the completion of this project, Australian Government libraries were being shut down due to policy changes by the

Australian Government's aid program. This remains only as a pilot project since no further funding will be available for continuing the twinning project in the marine and environmental sector.

However, this pilot project was successful from the perspective of the Pacific participants, and overall the main objectives were achieved with results that included exchange of experiences and knowledge leading to capacity development. The establishment of long-term and structural working relationships led to effective twinning of libraries. Professional networking helped libraries in the Pacific with limited or no budgets and resources, assisting with collection development and document delivery to provide valuable research for clients. Training and improvements in capacity allowed for better provision of the information needs of clients, along with populating existing networks like PIMRIS and PIMRIS ODIN with grey literature specific to the Pacific countries, making this accessible digitally. The development of better communication and coordination took place with the use of tools such as email and the Internet. All of these accomplished what the twinning project set out to achieve for the information/library/fisheries officers, which was to provide the stakeholders and policy makers in the Pacific with quality information in the marine and environmental sector.

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*Notes:* SOPAC, the South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission, is now known as the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (AGTD) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).