

## ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA WORKSHOP

Monash University, Saturday, 6 November 1993

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The ASAA organised a one day workshop to discuss issues concerning its relations with government and matters concerning Asia in both school and university studies. About fifty people attended. The workshop was chaired by the ASAA President, Professor Colin Mackerras of Griffith University. The day started with a President's report followed by five sessions where various speakers gave brief presentations which were followed by general discussion.

Librarians present were Eric Wainwright, Jan Fullerton and myself (from the National Library of Australia), George Miller (Australian National University) and Edward Lim and Choi-Hon Ho (Monash University). Two senior staff from the Department of Education and Employment and Training (DEET) were present - Anna Kamural of the International Relations Branch and Fran Hinton of the Schools Branch.

### President's Report

Colin Mackerras reported on the Working Party consisting of Pamela Gutman (Vice President), Jamie Mackie (ANU), Marika Vicziany (Monash) and himself. They had considered how to raise the profile of ASAA in government and the importance of Asian Studies in Australia. The group had held discussions with senior officers from DEET. The result was that DEET had asked ASAA to prepare a coordinated policy on Asian Studies as a basis for further discussion.

Colin Mackerras also announced that the Association had been advised of DEET's agreement to ASAA's proposal to fund scholarships for students undertaking research to visit to libraries, particularly Canberra libraries.

### Discussion sessions:

- (1) Infusion versus Area Studies or Centre Models as the best way to enhance the study of Asian Countries

Dr Oliver Mendelssohn, Director, Institute of Asian Studies, La Trobe University, Dr Joan Grant, Executive Officer, Monash Asia Institute, and Professor Jamie Mackie, of the Research School of Pacific Studies (RSPacS), ANU, spoke. They pointed to the differences between focusing the study of Asian countries in one particular centre or faculty, and infusing such study into the various discipline-based departments. A consensus emerged that both were necessary and supported each other.

(2) Library matters

Eric Wainwright said that National Library of Australia saw itself as having two roles in Asian Studies. The first was the direct provision of Asian services. He described the services as "relatively strong". The other role was in collaboration with other institutions. He felt that there were some concerns about the ability of Australian libraries to support Asian studies.

The two National Roundtables on Libraries and Asia had been a useful device to focus support and to see what could be done collaboratively.

Two major concerns were the lack of a multiscript automated system and the maintenance of Asian language collections. The NLA foresaw that the concept of the Distributed National Collection is a useful one for Asian Studies which could be achieved through the gradual development of collecting agreements. He hoped that ASAA would become more involved. Eric said that ASAA input would be welcomed at the National Roundtables as NLA intended to continue and maybe increase its interest in Asia. NLA could facilitate collaborative action.

George Miller said that there had been some comments on the statistics in his report on Asian research trends in Australia but they were the best available. He thought that there needed to be improvements in the collection of statistics on the number of graduates and students. He saw three issues in handling library resources:

1. Long-term strategy
2. Local action by academics
3. Library action.

Jamie Mackie presented a paper giving his views which put forward conclusions on national needs.

(3) Language Versus Non-Language

Professor Peter Worsley and Jim Wilson, both of the University of Sydney, spoke about their experiences in language teaching.

There seemed to be a strong diversity of opinion and facts on the present situation. It also appeared that the statistics varied a great deal state by state, meaning that people generally spoke from the situation they know best. Professor David Goodman of Murdoch University said that Asian specialists should join with the other specialists in other languages to promote language teaching *per se* in order to reduce the present feeling of competition between language teachers.

(4) Asian Education Foundation

Jennifer McGregor, Manager of the Asian Educational Foundation, outlined the Foundation's activities. They are in the process of building

on existing strengths and interests in specific schools and organising in-country training or refresher for teachers.

A suggestion was made that special teachers' conferences should be held in alternate years to the ASAA's present biennial conference.

Jamie Mackie suggested that research was needed on the impact of secondary studies on patterns of tertiary study. He suggested that ACER be queried if such a study has been made. This was supported.

### **Priority of Australian Studies in Asia**

This matter was raised by Jamie Mackie who saw the possible need to provide those teaching Australian Studies in Asia with some background on Asia.

### **Other library-related issues**

I raised with some of those attending the idea that e-mail might be used to provide current information. The idea had some interest.

Dr Carney Fisher of the University of Adelaide raised the possibility of libraries coming to an agreed plan for the acquisition of currently published Chinese local histories and gazetteers. This would be using as much as possible their State relationships with provinces. David Holm of Macquarie University had formed this plan. Andrew Gosling would investigate this further.

### **Conclusion**

A number of academics appear to be quite keen on greater contacts with librarians. They see the need to obtain more factual information on what is being spent by institutions, what national plans are being developed and what should be the standards of library support they should be getting.