



## Utilization of Information Technology in Publishing and Book Development

Following are excerpts from the reports presented at the 2002 APPREB Experts Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 19-21 February 2002

### China

The Chinese E-publishing Industry is developing rapidly although it started late. So far China has trained a powerful team and formed a good developing posture. The production level of E-products has basically reached the international advanced level. We have carried out technical development and applied digitization to Chinese Cultural heritage.

China has 85 E-publishing houses, over 500 producers engaging in E-publications, and nearly a thousand software developers. Most of the E-publishing houses are in Beijing and coastal cities. In 1999 E-publications reached a total of 1,884 categories, 2,254 categories 39.897 million tapes (discs) in 2000, and 2,793 in 2001 respectively.

China also established a group of databases that have tactic significance for economic development. These E-publications and databases with mainly traditional content, provide an information service for the whole society through CDs and Internet. Their customers have over 6,000 spread throughout the mainland of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, US, Germany, and Australia, etc., which have laid a good foundation for the digitization and networking of national cultural heritage.

China also pays close attention to the construction of network environment and the exploration of network resources while it makes endeavour to develop an E-publishing Industry.

The Chinese Internet environment has made dramatic progress in recent years. According to *CNNIC 9th Chinese Internet Development Statistic Report (2001/1)*, by the end of 31 December 2001, the computers going online in China had hit 12.54 mil-



E-publications at a book fair in China

lion, an increase of 40.6% over the same period last year; the number of people going online had reached 33.7 million, an increase of 11 million people over the same period last year with an increase rate of 49.8%. The international output bandwidth in China was 7,597.5 m, going up 1.7 times over the same period last year. The Internet has penetrated into Chinese society. The number of people going online to the Internet has shot up. Surfing the Internet at home has become the major way of going online for Chinese people.

China is building and has completed a party of important online publishing projects, which have tremendously enriched the Internet resource and powerfully pushed the transference from the traditional publication to E- and online publications. The significant projects involve online newspapers, online libraries, online bookstores and remote education online. With the State Digital Library as the representative, the digital level and online search level of the libraries of universities are quite high. They can provide the online search of Chinese information, and most libraries online have established data exchange and online search relations with the overseas data centres, which fully meet the search needs of domestic customers. China has more than 300 bookstores online, offering order online. Some bookstores online also offer E-payment download from the Internet service. Due to the imperfections of both logistic and dispatch systems, it is hard to form a good developing posture. (Mr. Zhou Mingtao, Deputy Director, Publishers Association of China)

### Fiji

Use of computers has increased the production of books as more and more individuals, businesses, offices, and agencies turn to desktop publishing to spread their views. Significantly, the number of books published by their authors has grown, showing that large investment is not needed and that technical skills have spread. Whether these books are distributed effectively is another question altogether as most individuals have neither the networks nor the financial setup to market well. Nevertheless, the availability of books has increased over time and we should celebrate each gain.

Use of the Internet has increased the sale of books. For example, the Book Centre at USP and *fijilive.com* sell books via the Internet. Orders come from all over the nation and the world, and books are dispatched quickly. The Institute of Pacific Studies is implementing Internet shopping keyed to its website and integrated with its stock and dispatch system.

Some schools have received supplies or

gifts of computers, and either case is admirable. Negative and positive effects exist side by side. On the negative side, urban schools are much better off than rural ones, thereby privileging certain socio-economic sectors of the population. A negative effect of the cost of computers may be that books are not supplied. Only one person at a time can effectively work on a computer. If computers break, replacement is not certain. On the positive side, as education in future will be more and more computer-based, accustoming Fiji's students to computers in whatever possible ways, no matter what the difficulties, is essential.

For the same reasons that language is an issue in textbook production, so it is in Internet use. Moreover, the cost of local products is high, in terms of equipment and trained personnel. For example, Fiji has its own television broadcasting service but the bulk of its programmes are imported. With its small population base, Fiji will never be able to mount more than a fraction of the websites that are mounted abroad, and a vast imbalance of internal versus external information is inherent.

(Ms. Linda Crowl, Publications Fellow, Institute of the Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific)

### India

The National Book Trust, India (NBT) is working towards digitizing some of its books. It will be outsourced on royalty basis in the ratio of 30:70. It would have multimedia features, animation etc. But these can never replace books. A book of 50 pages would have a development cost of Rs.100,000. Reading a novel or any serious book electronically is not comfortable, but it can certainly tempt the reader to buy the book. The Net therefore can be a viable marketing tool in India. Buying books online requires e-commerce, which is not yet prevalent.

Secondly, the Net is explored only by people who know English. Information provided on websites needs to be given in Roman script. At one point the NBT attempted to provide information of its language publishing by scanning the annotated language catalogues but it creates a problem in uploading. To put 18 different Indian language scripts would not only require specific skill sets and expertise but would also be difficult to administer. Hence it requires very careful thinking as to what to give and for whom.

Thirdly, at present we are using telephone network for email but data and visuals require better bandwidth. Yet one can explore online sessions with authors, there can be educational programmes. Goa University has launched a Virtual University. The Indian Institute of Technology and

National Institute of Design have started on-line teaching.

Digitising and networking have become popular in the field of libraries. For example Del-net founded in 1992, is a Delhi based organisation. It maintains an online union catalogue of books available in its member-libraries. The information can be retrieved by author, title, subject, conference, series, etc. It has 10,26,827 bibliographic records, and it lists 16,497 periodicals. All this is regularly updated and new titles are added annually. At present it is connected to 367 libraries in and outside Delhi. 150 universities are on the Net. But India has 60,000 public libraries and there are an estimated 10,900 college and university libraries. The total number of libraries under government and autonomous bodies is 2000. What has been covered by Net is only a small portion of the whole.

(Dr. Varsha Das, Director, National Book Trust, India)

#### Thailand

The advancement of information technology in Thailand has been hindered by the high price of equipment and access. A computer set costs as much as the yearly per capita income. The Report of the 1999 Business Trade and Services Survey by the National Statistical Office shows that there are only 155 establishments for computer and related activities in the entire kingdom. Only 2-3% of the population have access to computers and a much lower number have access to the Internet.

Mobile phones are very popular in Thailand. For those who have mobile phones or access to the Internet, they tend to have less time for reading. The advantageous side of IT for reading is its network of clients which stimulate exchange of information on books and reading.

Web boards for bookworms and book forums on the Internet are very active with high numbers of visitors each day. This helps increase the total number of book readers.

Information technology will be very useful for book development. One can search for information on books and publishing through the Internet. Progress in IT also assist illustrators and book designers to work more easily. However, digital pictures generally lack feeling and tenderness.

(Ms. Porn-anong Niyomka Horikawa, Vice-President for International Affairs, The Publishers and Booksellers Association of Thailand)

#### Publications on Reading Survey in Mongolia and Bangladesh

Two publications on reading surveys arrived at ACCU recently.

The first is *Mongolia: Access To Books And Other Printed Materials, A Discussion Paper 2001* published by Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of Mongolia (MOECS). It is the report of a survey conducted in 2001 on the overall state of the book situation in Mongolia. It covers findings on the industry, textbook development, mass media, libraries, etc. along with statistics and reports according to regions. Along with the report, it also includes survey questionnaires and other key reference materials to facilitate its use as a resource document. Published in both Mongolian and English, it will be a useful resource for students, researchers, and those involved in the field. This report was prepared as part of the activities undertaken to support the development of Mongolian book sector capacity by UNESCO, the Mongolian Foundation for Open Society (the Soros Foundation) and the Mongolian Government. (MOECS: Room 117, Government Building 3, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)

The other report is "Reading for Children: Action Research for a Post-Literacy Intervention" published by Save the Children USA Bangladesh Field Office. It reports the encouraging findings of a research that tested the effectiveness of the Reading for Children (RfC) intervention as a viable post-literacy strategy in Bangladesh. The latter part of the report illustrates in detail how the research was conducted, offering a valuable resource for implementations in other regions. (Save the Children USA, Bangladesh Field Office: House 35A, Road 9A, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh)



Mongolia: Access To Books And Other Printed Materials, A Discussion Paper 2001

#### New Initiative of UNESCO "The Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity"

Joining together representatives from the public, private and civic society sectors who share an interest in fostering creative diversity, "the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity" is an innovative UNESCO-sponsored initiative that is intended to promote the ability of developing and transitioning countries to produce and disseminate their creative products at both the local and international levels.

Global Alliance projects will contribute to the development of local creative industries, including those related to books, publishing, music, cinema, audio-visual and crafts, as well as encourage respect for copyright and piracy prevention. In this undertaking, UNESCO is working in collaboration with other international organizations in particular with UN members to promote multilateral partnerships amongst public, private and civil society sectors for ensuring a more diversified and equitable array of cultural goods and services worldwide. The Global Alliance activities will also be supported by a special extra-budgetary fund to provide accompanying measures for the projects in the concerned countries.

Through the Global Alliance, partners will become part of a strategic network committed to cultural and economic development, allowing them to benefit from the increased resources and profile at the local and international level. These partnerships will contribute to the development of cultural industries, rich in diversity.

For more information, please contact:

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