

Cambodia—still more help needed

As an Australian volunteer abroad on a two-year placement as a consultant librarian at the National Library of Cambodia (NLC) and the University of Phnom Penh (UPP), I welcome Jenny Cram's Front Line article (*inCite* 8) on the urgent needs of libraries in Cambodia.

Yes, it is true that staff of the NLC, deputy directors included, are rostered a couple of times a week to sleep overnight on guard duty at the building. And it is true that they have to spend time, despite so many other pressing tasks, trying to maintain the Library's garden, without the benefit of adequate tools, or else they have to pay someone to do it from the meagre funds obtained from the small charge made for minding users' bikes.

And last Saturday morning the NLC was closed for cleaning: we mopped floors and dusted shelves, while the Director and another senior staff member cleaned the toilets. When I told this to UPP staff, they said that if they had toilets they would be happy to clean them.

Like other Cambodian institutions, the libraries have suffered greatly during the past 20 years of turmoil. Their present situation offers run-down buildings or make-shift accommodation; poor or non-existent facilities (the UPP Library has neither electricity nor running water); old or inadequate furniture and equipment (the NLC has neither telephone nor photocopier); very limited supplies of library consumables; small collections of donated books, with little current material; no serial subscriptions; small staffs whose members are very poorly paid (about \$10-\$12 a month), are largely untrained and work largely in languages foreign to them.

Past overseas assistance has gone some way to improving this bleak picture, and further welcome advances are occurring. Recent grants of money to purchase current resource materials, a commitment to carry out some renovation and repainting of the NLC building, and another proposed in-country training course are heartening measures.

It seems that a climate now exists in which great strides can be

made in developing the country's libraries, if only the next few years remain peaceful.

A few days ago a young Cambodian medical student surprised and somewhat disconcerted me by saying, simply and directly, 'Thank you for coming to help my country.' My reaction to her remark was to wish that I could do much more, tinged with guilt at deriving so much enjoyment from what I am doing here, and to recognise that I was receiving her thanks on behalf of many other Australians.

These include individuals such as Gail Morrison, a former Volunteer, who worked hard to revive the NLC, and Dr Helen Jarvis, who has initiated various forms of assistance over the past six or seven years, as well as institutions such as the NLA, which has (amongst other things) donated a sizeable amount of the NLC's English language holdings, and the University of NSW which has helped in training.

Any other individuals or institutions offering assistance—money, appropriate book donations, gift subscriptions, training sponsorships etc. will know that they are doing something worthwhile which will be greatly appreciated by their

struggling but dedicated Cambodian colleagues.

Eric Marsh
National Library of Cambodia

Back to paralibrarian

As a *paralibrarian* I feel I must respond to the letter written by Glen Sanders (*inCite* 10, p30). I believe that Glenn misunderstood the purpose of Alan Bundy's suggestion. I think Alan realises as many of us do that we must communicate our role as information workers better to the members of the general public for whom the term library technician is meaningless.

The general public associates the term *librarian* with anyone who works in a library or information resource centre. People also understand the distinction which is made by the term *para* as it is used by other professional groups, ie. para-legal service, paramedic, etc. I believe this is the point Alan was getting at, we must use terms which have both a meaning and a relationship to the rest of the community.

If the term *paralibrarian* finally gives technicians a recognisable position in the community then I have no problem with using this term.

Michael Wayne Soo ■

Maureen Sullivan to visit Oz

Top US specialists to conduct AIMA training courses during December

Maureen Sullivan, Organisational Development Consultant and on contract to the Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Services, Washington, DC is visiting Australia in early December. Her visit is sponsored by AIMA Training and Consultancy Services Ltd. Maureen will be accompanied by Jack Siggins, Deputy University Librarian at Yale University from 1982-1992.

Maureen, who co-presented early AIMA/OMS Management Skills Institutes, will present workshops on *Building Management Teams* in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne as well as Colloquia on *Self-Directed Work Teams* in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.



Maureen Sullivan

Contact AIMA at the NLA for details. ■