



# LESSONS LEARNED FOR EFFECTIVE OVERSEAS DONATIONS

The Canberra-based aid organisation Nusa Tenggara Association (NTA, [www.nta.org.au](http://www.nta.org.au)) has been donating books to village school libraries in Flores and West Timor since 2002 as part of a wide range of village development projects. These areas are among the poorest parts of Indonesia and many rural schools lack even the most basic facilities such as chalk, blackboards, desks and, of course, books. The NTA has donated small numbers of reading, reference and textbooks to over fifty schools. It has been found that providing attractive reading material not only raises literacy levels but improves attendance and encourages children to stay at school longer.

But it has been found that providing the books alone is not effective. The donations are therefore part of a wider library development initiative that now also includes short courses for school teachers by local professional librarians on how to manage these small collections, while equipment such as book shelves, bookcases, catalogue cards and borrowing slips are also provided. Many of the primary school teachers have never seen or used effective working libraries before.

The books are provided following discussions with the schools during twice-yearly field visits. Some schools prefer reading or reference material, others, who lack even the basic textbooks and teaching material, prefer the NTA to assist them to acquire these basic tools. Some schools request material for higher classes, others request books for kindergarten and Years 1 and 2. There have been long debates about whether bookcases are preferable to open shelves; the former provide greater protection against the dust in the dry season and the damp in the tropical wet but, adversely, do not provide the open access which stimulates children to make use of the books.

Most of the books are in Indonesian and are purchased locally. Finding a good bulk supplier in the regional capitals of Kupang and Maumere was important in order to have a wide selection and obtain discount prices. Even after acquiring the books, arrangements still need to be made and finances allocated to enable the books to be transported to the village schools, frequently located in places where communications can be difficult. In the NTA's case, working with a local NGO has been critical.

A number of schools, particularly on Flores where the level of schooling is somewhat more sophisticated, have found books in basic English also valuable. English in theory is taught in primary schools, but many schools



do not have teachers competent in the language. Simple children's books, particularly those with illustrations, are of use in these schools. Reference books such as atlases, in English, may also be acceptable. The NTA has recently agreed that where it does provide basic English-language books, it will also provide inserts of simple translations to make the donations even more effective.

Several parcels of these simple English-language books have been acquired in Australia through donations from former primary school teachers, discards from school and public library collections and even through purchase at garage sales. In such cases, the transport to Indonesia has proved problematical. Postage costs may be high and there may be problems associated with clearing the books through customs, paying import duty or incentives to officials. Again, it is important to obtain local advice before taking this step. Books - as we know - are quite heavy and if they are carried from Australia as part of the luggage of NTA members participating in monitoring visits, it has been found that the baggage allowance, particularly on domestic Indonesian flights, may be exceeded, and costs incurred.

Providing a small collection of reading material may stimulate pupils' reading, but if they have nothing to go on with, the children can become quickly bored. The NTA is currently experimenting with taking out a subscription to a local children's monthly magazine for a number of schools in the hope that this will provide a continuing source of reading material for those pupils keen to read. This involves training the teachers in how to process serials correctly.

The NTA has found that attention to detail, consultation with library users, and advice and training from local library professionals and other key players are important elements of a successful book donation project.

**George Miller**

[gmillar@grapevine.com.au](mailto:gmillar@grapevine.com.au)

## NEW MEMBERS

### Member to Associate

Jeffrey W. Har	NSW
Neil Godfrey	VIC
Peta Wellstead	WA
Felicity Morgan	NSW
Kerrie Brownscombe	NSW
Glenda Morris	VIC
Loretta Sergovich	VIC

### Member to Associate (Allied Field)

Gudrun von Furt	SA
-----------------	----

### Technician to Associate

Michele Gaudry	NSW
----------------	-----

### Current Member

Emily McLeay	VIC
Jacqueline Kempton	ACT

### New Associate

Guopeng Liao	VIC
Lucia Walton	NSW

### New Library Technician

Thuy Teresa Tran	VIC
Nalini Pathmatheva	NSW

### New Institution

Canterbury Hospital Medical Library	NSW
-------------------------------------	-----

### New Member

Alison Curry	NSW
Kerryn Whiteside	QLD
Barbara Hunt	VIC
Stephen Kime	NSW
Debra Caine	QLD
Susan Murray	NSW

Jane Thompson	WA
Stephanie Keogh Shine	VIC
Helen Conidaris	NSW
Katy Greenland	VIC
Yifat Miller	WA
Christopher Bourne	NSW
Michael Herlihy	NSW
Abigail Day	SA
Robert Cettl	SA
Stephanie Cusworth	VIC
Robin Costelloe	QLD
Brooke Graham	WA
Andrew Dale	SA
Inderjit Kaur	WA
Jennifer Anne Window	VIC
Tegan Cobby	WA
Selma Bihnam	NSW

Joanne Coleman	QLD
Melinda Richardson	VIC

### Readmitting Associate

Frances Shanks	QLD
Jeannine Goasdoue	QLD
Lee Hayes	SA

### Readmitting Member

Virginia Walker	NSW
Rosalie Austin	VIC
Umarani	
Ayikudi-Rathnasamy	NSW
Tansy Bradshaw	VIC

<b>Grand total:</b>	<b>103</b>
---------------------	------------