

Asia fellowships

Marilyn Beamish has been awarded an Asian fellowship to study the changing structure of higher education institutions in Vietnam as part of the initiatives announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in March, 1993 as part of the Australia in Asia package, was the Asia Fellowship Program. The Fellowships allow professionals to undertake a short term placement in Asia in order to complete a project of commercial significance and enhance their contribution to the Australian community. The Asia in Australia Council, under the auspices of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been given responsibility by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) for implementing the program.

Applications for Fellowships were advertised in 1995, with applications closing 21 July 1995.

Each applicant was sponsored by the relevant professional organisation, in this case, ALIA. Applications were selected on the basis of the applicant's project and its value to the profession; qualifications and experience; project and research skill; and interest in advancing the profession through establishing further links with Asia.

There are stringent timeframes in which the projects must be undertaken — this year's projects must be completed by the end of February 1996, and a final report presented within two months of completion.

There are also specific responsibilities for the professional and industry associations in sponsoring an applicant. These include assistance in determining the project work to be completed; assistance with visas, work permits and insurance; and assistance with travel, accommodation and other arrangements.

The changing structure of Vietnamese universities and other higher education institutions means major changes in the redevelopment of their libraries. The draft *IT-2000* plan developed by the Agency for the National Programme on Information Technology recognises the need for a move to the implementation of information technology to encourage the development of Vietnamese graduates in all areas. The move to make the huge jump from a 'technology free', environment to gaining the benefits of a 'technology rich' environment requires a great deal of preparatory work for library staff and students.

Library staff will benefit from understanding the concepts of automating not only routine tasks but also the resultant new ways of working. Automation brings with it a whole new work environment — social structures change

as individuals have increased control over their work. Tools such as the Internet offer great benefits to a very poor country needing to develop library resources. The emphasis can be on information access rather than information ownership. Of course this presupposes the appropriate infrastructure, which is slowly being created.

The aim of the project is to identify a small number of strategic 'pilot' libraries in higher education institutions and assist them in moving from nothing to an information technology-rich environment by working with them to: identify what is required for their institution in regard to library and information delivery services; understand what information technology can offer their institution; develop an action plan; and prepare training strategies.

In order to turn this into a reality I would also like to propose to strategic vendors that, by forming partnerships with specially trained Australian librarians, they have a greater 'value added' product. Such partnerships provide opportunities for long term relationships with large educational clients.

I have a background in libraries of many types as well as sales and marketing in the computer industry. My role at Griffith university is to identify future IT directions for the delivery of information, and assist in the preparation of strategic plans to implement these. I have had a great deal of practical experience throughout my career in helping people move from low/no technology environments to high technology ones.

I plan to be Vietnam from mid-December until the end of February.

I look forward to sharing my experiences with the Australian library profession, and hope to be able to report on opportunities in the near future.

Marilyn Beamish, Information Technology Project Specialist, Griffith University



Marilyn Beamish

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