

'Learning for tomorrow' at the PIALA conference

President Imengel Mad opened the 15th Annual Conference of the Pacific Islands Association of Libraries, Archives and Museums (PIALA) was held on the beautiful 'Isle of the Sleeping Lady', Kosrae, in Micronesia, 7–10 November. Its theme: 'Learning Resources Today; Learning for Tomorrow'.

College of Micronesia vice-president Jean Thoulag's keynote address, delivered during Opening Ceremonies at the Kosrae Capital Building by Pacific librarian Iris Falcam, traced the progress libraries, particularly in Micronesia, have made in technology, and in information access since the inception of PIALA back in 1991. She also cautioned librarians not to lose sight of service to their patrons, reiterating ALA president Michael Gorman's first Law of Librarianship: 'Libraries serve humanity'. In capitalising on the second part of the theme, 'Learning for Tomorrow', Thoulag reminded everyone of the need to gather the countless materials — such as journals, book and/or photo collections, school and official records that are being tossed out every day from peoples' homes and offices — and ensure these are gathered and preserved, not only in libraries but in archives and museums, for their cultural value and history. It was a follow-up to the campaign started by Micronesian Seminar's director, Father Francis Hezel, during a previous PIALA conference some years before. Most important of all, Thoulag emphasised the critical need for advancing the credentials of library staff through various college and other training programs to fulfil the requirements of accreditation. The University of Hawaii and the University of Guam were called upon to come to the aid of these libraries. Palau Community College recently

instituted an associate's degree in library studies. Currently College of Micronesia–Federated States of Micronesia (COM–FSM) is exploring Cuesta Community College's (California) offerings toward a Librarian Technician's degree. Thoulag's final remarks were a call to all Pacific Advocates — librarians, archivists and museum curators — to focus on making educators, community and political leaders more aware of the importance of these institutions and to rally their support now for the benefit of future generations.

At the general meeting two days later Dr Karen Peacock announced a Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) proposal in the works for three 3-week training sessions to be conducted by Peacock (University of Hawaii), Christine Ku Scott-Smith (University of Guam) and Sonja Evensen (PREL) hopefully by summer 2006.

The conference was a huge success, thanks to the obvious support and co-operation of Kosrae's Governor, Rensley Sigrah, and legislators, as witnessed by their presence at opening ceremonies, and the beautiful and often exciting, sometimes even humorous, presentations, ranging from aquaculture, tourism, HIV/AIDS, cataloguing, the 'BYU story', public library activities, US government documents and many more.

The organising committee, spearheaded by COM-FSM librarian Aaron Sigrah and co-chair, Romeo Aliksa, have participants' warmest admiration for their generous assistance to ensure the success of this conference. Kulo Malulap! Enormous thanks for a job well done!

Iris Falcam



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