

# The National Library of Papua New Guinea reopens!

On the morning of 24 April, the PNG National Library once again opened its doors to welcome lovers of books and learning. Closed for almost two years while undergoing major refurbishment, the library was officially opened by Bob McMullan, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance.

The refurbishment of the National Library was a gift of the Australian Government in 2005 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of PNG's independence. The \$3.5 million project involved substantial structural renovation of the building, including the replacement of damaged roofing, an upgrade of the air-conditioning system, and new furniture and IT equipment.

Joining Mr McMullan were Mr Oseah Philemon (Chairman of the National Library and Archives Board), Mr Damien Rapese (Deputy Secretary of the PNG Department of Education), and Mr Jacob Hevelawa (Director General of the Office of Libraries and Archives), along with the Sacred Heart Primary School choir, a traditional dance group from Oro Province, and lovers of libraries from around PNG.

Originally opened 30 years ago by Australia's then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and PNG's (then and now) Prime Minister, Michael Somare, the National

Library of Papua New Guinea was Australia's independence gift to the new nation.

Over the past 30 years, the Library has become an important outreach service for the whole country, providing publishing services, coordinating advisory and information services, and promoting literacy in a country where the literacy rate hovers around 57%. It also plays a vital role in documenting the country's culture and history and with PNG's 850 languages and 200 cultural groups, the collection of books, maps, manuscripts, films and photographs it is the central point in the preservation of important traditions for future generations. This spectacular array of material is the only such collection existing in the world, with some items dating back to the late 1700s.

Unfortunately, a lack of funding for maintenance led to significant deterioration to the library infrastructure. Inadequate air conditioning also placed the library's valuable historical documents and film collection at risk.

In addition to opening the library, Mr McMullan made a gift of more than a dozen books by Australian authors, ranging from some older classics like *A fortunate life* by A.B. Facey through to more contemporary titles by authors such as Tim Winton. (As a point of



Bob McMullen chats with some local students

interest, A.B. Facey was a friend of McMullen's father!)

Special mention should be made of the late Mr Daniel Paraide, the former Director General of the National Library. Mr Paraide was a passionate advocate of the National Library and its role in PNG society, initiating and securing funding for the refurbishment. Sadly, he passed away in December 2006; however, his widow Mrs Priscilla Paraide was at the opening to see the results of her husband's efforts to ensure that the National Library remains a significant cultural and educational institution in PNG.

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## Nominations for ALIA's IOG Excellence Award are now open

The IOG Excellence Award is one of ALIA's premier group awards. The award includes:

- Full registration, for an individual, to a conference of their choice anywhere in the world
- Travel to and from the conference
- Accommodation or per-diem allowance

The total value of the award shall be up to \$10,000.

The winner also has the opportunity to disseminate information about their project by:

- Undertaking an IOG *Online OnTour* to a number of Australian locations, to discuss and share information about the project/study

- Submitting an *inCite* article, or journal article for the *Australian Library Journal* or *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*.

2007's inaugural winner was Leona Jennings from the Coast Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) Library Service, for their RFID implementation project. Leona starts her *Online OnTour* to various sites in May.

If you wish to nominate a project that you feel meets the Award guidelines, go to <http://www.alia.org.au/groups/infog/IOG.excellence.award.html>

Nominations close 31 August 2008.

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