

Friday September 9, 2013

FNU PLAYS LEADING ROLE TO SETUP A FIJI LIBRARY CONSORTIUM FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO INFORMATION

FNU hosted a meeting to set up the Fiji Library Consortium on August 27th and discussed the importance and different requirements of a Library Consortium for Fiji and the benefits that the member libraries can gain from the initiative. The main aim of setting up a consortium is to promote sustainable access and exchange of knowledge through global leadership of libraries to improve the development of society and the economy. Today, libraries need to support research and development in the country in removing all boundaries to knowledge, whether economic, technical or legal. FNU University Librarian, Dr. Chaminda Jayasundara chaired the meeting and presented a report of the vision and plan for the consortium with the assistance of EIFL and solicited feedback from the representatives of 10 institutions in attendance.

Fiji became an EIFL partner country in May 2013 which was led by the Fiji National University (FNU) in signing a Memorandum of Agreement with EIFL. **EIFL is an international organisation based in Europe with a global network of partners with the objective of implementing wide range of [programmes](#) and [events](#) designed to increase access to knowledge in developing and transitional countries.** Today, EIFL partners with libraries and library consortia in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America and now Fiji as the first country in the Pacific. Their work has also expanded to include other programmes designed to enable access to knowledge for education, learning, research and sustainable community development. FNU University Librarian is the current Coordinator of EIFL in Fiji. He expressed his views in the meeting that access to knowledge is crucial to education and research, the improvement of lives of wider community, and the creation of human capital upon which the development of societies depend. Libraries play a key role through the provision of high quality information resources and services to enhance quality of research outputs and the knowledge of academicians, researchers, policy makers etc. in a country. However, factors such as the prohibitive cost of commercial e-resources, and poor technological infrastructure risk leave many communities around the world behind. Thus, developing a consortium and partnering with EIFL, Fiji libraries can have numerous benefits which include free and largely discounted electronic journals as EIFL negotiates highly discounted prices and fair terms of use to increase access to scholarly material which is essential for research and education. Also, EIFL builds capacities to launch and sustain open access repositories in countries, supports the deployment of free and open source software and provides the necessary training, enabling libraries to achieve significant cost savings and particularly special training programmes in different areas of library and information services in the country. Importantly, EIFL is working with public libraries to develop and pilot innovative services that meet the changing needs of their local communities and support sustainable development. Dr. Jayasundara further expressed that Public libraries in Fiji really need more support from different organisations, and they are simply not getting it. Thus, our social responsibility should not limit to universities and large scale libraries and we should be more than active to help out our communities particularly the underprivileged communities in the society to improve their lives to be wellbeing and well-informed

civilians. The attendees added that this consortium should address the concerns of public libraries with the reduction in services that would result from inadequate financial and other kind of support for reading material in small libraries. Mrs. Sokoveti Tuimoala representing Fiji Library Association appreciated the initiative especially as public libraries need more support in this crisis.

Attendees were in general agreement with the direction presented by Dr. Chaminda Jayasundara, University Librarian, Fiji National University and to form a governing board which consists of different libraries that will work in Fiji to implement different library related work under the assistance of EIFL. Ms Judith Titoko from the University of the South Pacific library proposed to expand the service to the other South Pacific counties as they also need to be benefit from this endeavor.

FNU University Librarian thanked the library community for participating in this very important meeting and supporting the concept of a library consortium. He further stated that the most important aspect of this consortium is that members can accomplish much more as a group than a single member could accomplish on their own. Consortia can effectively reap the benefits of the power of numbers and of collective endeavors. The meeting was successfully held with professionals of 10 organizations representing the University of the South Pacific, University of Fiji, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Fiji Library Association, Pacific Island Forum secretariat, Pacific Theological College etc.

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