**Talk to PIALA, Guam, Nov 2019**

***Part 1: Mission***

Our mission:

* not just offer reading space and materials for those who would like to entertain themselves or even learn something.
* but to provide the tools people need to understand and absorb their past as they face the future.
* PIALA, not PIAL–organization includes archives (even museums considered in the past)

Explanation (excerpts from past talks to the organization, 20-30 years ago)

We might begin by comparing your work to that which went on in Benedictine monasteries during what we call the "Dark Ages". There, as you know, whole communities worked to build libraries for the future. They busied themselves preserving writings that were not entirely understood, seldom read, but would be the beacon of the future. The abbots must have believed that they were feeding generations not yet born with the wisdom of the ages. Why else would their monks laboriously copy these parchments, page by page, year after year, adding to the stock of written materials that was the treasure of these monasteries?

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So you see that library/archival work and religious life have common roots, and share, at least in part, a common tradition. Archivists save cultures, and churchmen save souls. We both are tying to feed the people of the future in some way through the preservation of the best of the past.

Let me know move to the point of my talk tonight by replaying what has become a constant theme of mine whenever I talk to librarians and archivists. We are told that we have here in Micronesia sound and vibrant cultures--a living museum if you want in one of the last parts of the world where exotic customs flourish....

You who have lived in these islands for a while, however, can surely see beyond this. The changes in the culture are becoming obvious. Not that this is such a disaster in itself, for all cultures change. No people is in danger of "losing" their culture, anthropologists would say. After all, a culture is like the air we breath. It is an indispensable element of life in society. People in South-Central LA have a culture, or perhaps an amalgam of several cultures, Buffalonians have a culture, and the Pohnpeians and Yapese of the distant future will have a culture, although it could be far different from the culture they assimilate and pass on to their children today....

“What does all this have to do with us librarians and archivists?” you might ask. I believe that it sets our agenda and determines our major goals. It gives our work a sense of urgency that it might not have if we were working in another part of the world. Our mission today, it seems to me, is to do what the monks in those European monasteries were doing. Not preserve the past–no one is capable of doing this–but to preserve the images of the past. We are entrusted with the task of keeping alive the memory of the past–past cultural forms and past history. We are the ones who collect the great volumes of the past and detritus alike in the hope that the children of the future will be able to use these things to reconstruct their past and get a sense of their roots.

How this works in practice: (examples from 1990 talk)

* Mau Pialug navigational techniques to Nainoa Thompson
* Moch’s construction of new men’s house using traditional lashing styles
* Chuukese consulting book of legends on hints of how th group was settled

More examples (from 1992 talk)

* Whaling logbooks: their importance in history of Micronesia
* Journals of traders such as James Lyle Young in Marshalls
* Medical records of the USS Whidby after war

Conclusion: The vision of what the library/archive can do is not a romantic ideal. It happens!

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*Response from participants*

* How does this fit with their own view of their mission?
* What holdings in their own collections can best contribute to this proposed mission?

***Part 2: Where to Start***

The Library Today (from 2009 talk)

... The library of today is much more than just books, particularly with the expansion of electronic communications. Yes, it includes books for sure, but it also includes what Jane Barnwell and other people are fond of calling “grey material.” I didn’t know what that was until a couple of years ago, but I sure understand it now. Grey material is stuff that doesn’t come out nicely bound. Grey material is stuff that the government puts out: it might be looseleaf, it might be just photocopies of documents. But it’s stuff that tells its own story, a story very often of what’s happening today, not yesterday. And it needs to be collected, at least if in some time in the future we hope to tell other people the story of what’s happening today.

The library today includes other resources, of course--Internet, myspace, facebook, forums of all sorts--a tremendous resource for getting information in and out of the islands...

But then again we also have something else in the libraries today. We have the media of different sorts: music, photos, videos—on the islands and on the rest of world. All of these can become tools for educating our people. There’s an embarrassment of riches today, an enormous quantity of material—in fact so much that we need help in deciding what to invest in, what to acquire for ourselves and the people that we serve. That means, friends, that we need to keep our antennas out and open. That means that have to keep contact with schools, with governments, with businesses for ideas on what is needed, what is more important than what. We don’t have unlimited resources, but there are almost unlimited materials out there to tap into....

MicSem Library (talk to PHA in Taiwan, 2015)

* Library (modeled on MARC, growth over time, help from UH Library, Houghton, PAMBU)
* From Library to Resource Center (additional of visual materials and music)
* Offering Access to the Public

What MicSem Can Offer

* Review of MicSem products on new website (http://www.micronesianseminar.org)

(Micronesian Counselor, articles, talks, photo albums, videos)

* Glimpse of the MicSem collection (print materials, photos, videos, music) with search tool.

*Discussion and Questions on MicSem Resources*:

* Revision of the new website for ready access soon to be completed
* Library currently located at Xavier High School, Chuuk

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Other Materials throughout the World (JPH article: Resources on Micronesia)

[on thumbdrive under “Current Projects 2019"]