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REPORT

MEETING ON THE APPLICATION OF NEW INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY ON RESOURCE-SHARING AMONG MEDICAL/HEALTH
LIBRARIES
IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

Convened by:

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
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NOTE

The views expressed in this report are those of the participants in the Meeting on the Application of New Information Technology on Resource-Sharing Among Medical/Health Libraries in the Western Pacific Region and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Organization.

This report has been prepared by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific for governments of Member States in the Region and for those who participated in the Meeting on the Application of New Information Technology on Resource-Sharing Among Medical/Health Libraries in the Western Pacific Region which was held in Beijing, China, from 23 to 26 November 1999.

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Key words

Library services / Libraries, Medical / Information services / Library cooperation / Information technology /
Communication technology / China



SUMMARY

The health and biomedical information programme supports library and health literature services to ensure the exchange and dissemination of relevant and up-to-date information in Member States of the Western Pacific Region. Recognizing that biomedical information exchange is an indispensable component in the development of national health systems, the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, during its 33rd session in 1982, adopted Resolution WPR/RC33.R18 which "urges Member States to coordinate and strengthen their biomedical information services and facilities by designating and supporting a focal point for a national network which will eventually coordinate and maintain liaison with similar focal points in other countries in relation to their biomedical services."

The economic crisis in Southeast Asia and the Pacific has adversely affected the delivery of information services by libraries and information centres. For example, the Southeast Asian Medical Information Centre (SEAMIC), based in Tokyo, Japan, has cut back its support for free photocopy service, distribution of reference materials, and training of medical/health librarians from member countries of the Western Pacific Region, such as Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore.

The advent of new information technology, such as the CD-ROMs, Internet, electronic mail, online full-text access and retrieval of information, electronic document delivery, and powerful computer systems can make information services widely available and more cost-effective. Resource-sharing among the medical/health libraries and documentation centres could, therefore, be facilitated by using the full potentials of new telecommunications and information technologies.

This meeting presented an overview of the current status of medical/health libraries and documentation centres in the Region and assess their potentials and capabilities for mutual cooperation, in the delivery of quality library and information services through resource-sharing.



1. INTRODUCTION

A regional meeting on the application of new information technology on resource-sharing among medical/health libraries in the Western Pacific Region was held in Beijing, China, from 23 to 26 November 1999. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and develop strategies for resource-sharing among the medical/health libraries in the region using new information and communication technologies (ICTs).

1.1 Objectives

(1) To review current resources, operations, services, and activities of the medical/health libraries and documentation centres.

(2) To explore the feasibility of enhancing electronic search/retrieval of technical information and document delivery among the medical/health libraries, using new telecommunications and information technologies.

(3) To discuss the activities related to establishing and enhancing health literature services through networking and resource-sharing, particularly for countries with limited resources.

(4) To develop a plan of work for the medical/health libraries and documentation centres which will strengthen resource-sharing at the regional and/or country levels.

1.2 Participants

The four-day meeting was participated in by librarians and information professionals from sixteen (16) countries in the Western Pacific Region, namely, Australia, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Laos, Malaysia, Micronesia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, and Vietnam. Also in attendance were a consultant and a temporary adviser, four observers, and five members of the Secretariat from the WHO Headquarters Office as well as from the WHO Southeast Asia Regional Office and the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office.

The list of participants is shown in Annex 1.

1.3 Opening ceremony

The welcome address was delivered by Dr Chi Gao Ming, Director General of the Department of Science, Technology and Education, Ministry of Health, China.

1.4 Opening remarks

In his opening address, Dr. Shigeru Omi, Regional Director of the Western Pacific Region, stressed the significance of the meeting in the face of rapid changes brought about by advances in information and communication technologies, which have greatly affected the management and operations of libraries and information centres worldwide. He further stressed that the information needs of clients would be better served if the libraries in the region would cooperate to share resources, expertise, and experiences in order to maximize the transfer and exchange of information.

The Regional Director pointed out that the principal objective of resource-sharing was to increase timely access to documents which users needed but which were not readily available to them. He noted that with the advances in information technology, requested materials could be delivered very quickly by electronic means. He also indicated that new information technology was fundamentally changing access to information and held the promise of collaborative collection management on a scale that had not been possible before. In the rapidly evolving environment of networked information, remote access and desktop delivery, the Regional Director observed that technology offered the potential for realizing a seamless web of interconnected and interdependent collections accessible to geographically distributed users.

The Regional Director concluded his address by strongly urging the participants to focus their four-day discussions on how to create mechanisms strong enough to support regional resource-sharing activities more effectively and efficiently. The full address is attached as Annex 2.

1.5 Appointment of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur

Ms Achamma Alexander of Australia was appointed as Chairperson, Ms Fenlan Cai of China as Vice-Chairperson, and Ms Hong-Kiat Ong of Singapore as Rapporteur for the meeting.

2. PROCEEDINGS

2.1 Review of the global and regional medical/health information services programme

For the global perspective, Ms Yvonne Grandbois, of the WHO/HQ Library and Information Networks for Knowledge (LINK), gave a brief presentation on the current state of information services provision at the WHO Library in Geneva, Switzerland. She pointed out that librarians were now empowered by new information technologies to provide quality services to users. In a demonstration session, she accessed the WHO Library website and described the types of information that users could get from it. She also described the library's *Blue Trunk Project*, designed for health workers assigned to remote areas where access to the information was limited.

Ms Anchalee Chamchuklin, Librarian of the WHO Southeast Asia Regional Office based in New Delhi, India, presented an update of the information services being provided to the ten member countries in that Region. This was mainly done through the Region's networking effort called Health Literature Library and Information Services (HELLIS), established in 1979. Operational for the past 20 years, the network had just modified its structure in order to be more responsive to the changing needs of the Region's users. The new national focal points were called national HELLIS centres (NHCs); national HELLIS research libraries were called HRLs; and national participating libraries were called PLs. In addition, there was increasing emphasis on product-oriented services at country levels.

For his part, Mr Julio Dizon, Jr., Librarian of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office based in Manila, presented an overview of information services provision at the regional level. He cited the problems and constraints facing the Region, as well as possible courses of action to remedy these. Mr Dizon also cited possible activities that the regional network could embark on. The full text of his presentation is attached as Annex 3.

2.2 Country reports

Australia

Ms Achamma Alexander, Director of the Department of Health and Aged Care Library in Canberra, indicated that medical/health libraries in Australia were included within government, hospital, organizational, and university libraries. She outlined the issues facing these libraries: positioning the library within the organization, marketing and promotion, increasing concern for evidence-based health care, privatization of hospitals, outsourcing and downsizing, and budgetary constraints. Ms Alexander also touched on the pervasive use of information technology affecting the libraries in their provision of services.

As for her own library, she provided the five key strategies it follows: monitoring and delivering information on global trends and developments in health, care of older persons and management; serving as the first point of contact for the information and research needs of clients; continually improving the library's role as a knowledge centre; ensuring that the library staff have the skills, knowledge and experience to provide quality information services; and contributing to better management of information as a national strategic resource.

Cambodia

Mr Khim Phearum, Chief of the Medical/Health Library of the Technical School for Medical Care in Phnom Penh, stressed the paucity of the library collection. There were also limited library facilities and equipment, which in turn reflected on the quality of information services provided to the users. No new information and communication technologies were presently in use.

China

Ms Fenlan Cai, Deputy Director of the Health Sciences Library of the Peking Union Medical College (PUMC), Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (CAMS), reported on various resource-sharing activities among the Chinese medical/health libraries. She indicated that the major medical/health libraries in the country possessed more than 70% of the medical literature resources of China. Among the networks currently in use were the China Education and Research Network, established in 1993, and the China Medical Information Network (CMINET), established in 1996. The library of CAMS and PUMC was part of the CMINET project to develop a fully automated national information network to make resource-sharing in the fields of medicine and health a reality in the country.

Ms Cai also delved into the information activities of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine (CAPM), which was composed of eight institutes, three centres, and one union school of public health. It formed a consortium with the Peking Union Medical University. The CAPM made extensive use of IT in the provision of information services.

Fiji

Mr Chandraiya, Senior Librarian of the Fiji School of Nursing, reported that no plan existed for the national development of biomedical information in Fiji. According to Mr Chandraiya, the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM) housed the best health library in the country in terms of collection and resources. As the designated national focal point of the WHO Western Pacific Medical/Health Information Network, FSM, had the best-equipped library to store, retrieve, and transfer medical and health information in the country. It boasted of an integrated library system (Horizon) and used CD-ROM databases and other related technology in the provision of its services.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Dr Thiphakesone Douangchak, Supervisor of the Medical Library of the Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS), reported that Laos had only one major health/medical library, which was the library that she supervised. Her library collection was composed of more than 20 000 medical books, but these were in various foreign languages. Dr Douangchak stressed that no information and communication technology was in use in the library. Internet connection and fax were available only in the administration section of the FMS.

Malaysia

Mr Kamalzaman bin Othman, Senior Assistant Medical Record Officer of the Information and Documentation System Unit of the Ministry of Health, described the use of information technology for medical/health information work in Malaysia. He indicated that the automation of all the major medical libraries began in the 1990s. The networking of Malaysian libraries began in 1994 through a project called *JARINGAN Ilmu (Joint Advanced Research Integrated Networking)*, which included 62 libraries. Mr Kamalzaman further reported that there were over 36 medical and health-related libraries in Malaysia, of which the three major ones were at the University of Malaya, National University of Malaysia, and the Malaysia Science University. He further indicated that there were 30 medical and health-related libraries including hospital libraries under the Ministry of Health. The use by medical/health libraries of the Internet and other related technologies to provide services was pervasive and was expected to accelerate in the future.

Federated States of Micronesia

Mr Dakio Syne, Director of the Learning Resources Center of the College of Micronesia in Pohnpei, pointed out that library services in the Federated States of Micronesia depended largely on United States Federal Government grants. Although medical libraries did not exist in the country, the Micronesian Human Resource Development Centre (MHRDC) and the Division of Health Services (DHS) Library more or less functioned as such. The MHRDC took over from the defunct Pacific Basin Medical Officers' Training Program, including its library collection and facilities, and was now the home of the Pohnpei State Health Diabetes, Mental Health and Nutrition/Agriculture programmes. Mr Syne reported that the facilities and the equipment were available for reference work, online literature search and referral services; networked services via the Internet were also available. The DHS Library, on the other hand, was intended to become a research library in the future. At the moment, it provided diverse library services to users, including access to the Internet. Mr Syne stressed the need in his country for training in information processing and handling.

Mongolia

Dr Dashuren Tserendulam, Officer-in-Charge of the Central Medical Library of the National Medical University in Ulaanbaatar, reported that the Central Medical Library contained some 200 000 medical books, manuals and journals. More than 10 000 of these were in English. The full range of information services provided by the library to its users included Internet services. The library was also preparing to use the UNESCO-developed database management software, micro CDS/ISIS, for its bibliographies and other related reference materials. Due to shortage of trained librarians and information specialists in Mongolia, Dr Tserendulam pointed out her country's need for training in information management.

New Zealand

Ms Janine A. Pickering, Librarian of the Ministry of Health in Wellington, indicated that health services in New Zealand were provided by a mix of publicly-owned, privately-owned and voluntary providers. Publicly-owned hospitals provided most secondary medical and surgical care, while most primary care was provided by publicly-subsidized but privately-owned general practices. Structural changes took place in the health system of the country recently to make it more effective.

Ms Pickering reported that the health/medical library sector in New Zealand comprised government, hospital, university and private sector libraries, and resource-sharing among them was supported by the National Library's *Te Puna* bibliographic database. The most prominent among the government libraries were those of the Ministry of Health, Health Funding Authority, ESR Kenepuru Science Centre, and the New Zealand Health Technology Assessment Clearing House. There were 23 hospital and health services in the country, each of whom had a library. The university medical schools in New Zealand had well-developed library collections. In addition, all provided the full range of information services to their users with the aid of the information and communication technologies in use in libraries and information centres. These included the use of integrated library systems (e.g. Voyager), academic networking via Library Electronic Academic Resources Network, and extensive use of the Internet.

Palau

Dr Stevenson Kuartei, Chief of Public Health and Primary Health Care, Ministry of Health, reported that the medical library system in Palau was adequate to meet the minimum needs for information access to provide both learning and problem-solving opportunities for those involved in health care issues. The availability of medical information research done in other parts of the world and updating the information were important issues because of financial constraints.

Some of the constraints in the development of the sustainable Medical Library in Palau were lack of national coordinating system and trained librarians, expensive shipping and Internet cost, legal ramifications of patient information over the Internet, poor computer literacy, sustainability of updated books, journals, hardware, software, government-sustained support, cost of maintaining the systems and lack of locally-researched information.

Papua New Guinea

Ms Lena Wangatau, Librarian of the Medical Library of the School of Medicine, University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), reported that the Medical Library of the UPNG was the major medical library in the country. It was solely funded and supported by UPNG. The Medical Library catered not only to the UPNG users but to those from the School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Department of Health as well. Aside from the range of information services offered, the Medical Library maintained the *New Guinea Collection*, a special collection of all materials relating to health sciences in the whole island of New Guinea. Also attached to the Medical Library was the Medical Learning Resources Unit, responsible for producing audio-visuals, clinical slides, photographs, used as teaching aids. According to Ms Wangatau, the UPNG library system was using *Adlib for Windows* for its own networking and was preparing the Medical Library for access to the Internet.

Philippines

Ms Susette M. Severo, Librarian at the Central Library of the Department of Health, indicated that medical and health libraries in the country could be classified under three major groups, i.e. academic medical libraries, hospital libraries, and special medical/health libraries in agencies and institutions that supported medical/health-related development. Under the Department of Health, there were 35 hospitals, 21 of which had libraries. Among the 15 regions in the country, only eight had libraries. The Department of Health Library offered a whole range of information services to its users by means of new information and communication technologies. Ms Severo described two ongoing networking initiatives in the country: the first being the Department of Science and Technology - Engineering and Science Education project, funded by the World Bank, and the Medical and Health Librarians' Association of the Philippines project.

Republic of Korea

Ms Won-Soon Lee, Librarian at the Ministry of Health and Welfare in Gwacheon City, reported that there were three types of medical/health libraries in her country, i.e. those in medical/health colleges and universities, those in hospitals, and those in government/public health institutions. Among the three, the collections and facilities of the medical/health colleges and universities were the best developed, fully-automated and used an integrated library system. Information services were provided through information and communication technologies (ICTs). Ms Lee pointed out that resource-sharing and networking activities of medical/health libraries in her country were managed by the Korean Medical Library Association which, established in 1968, had grown from an initial membership of five college libraries to 169.

Samoa

Ms Leilani Matalavea, Health Information System Administrator at the Samoa Department of Health, reported that only one health library existed to service the health sector in Samoa. In 1994, an Australian aid project which focused specifically on upgrading the nursing teaching faculty and curriculum included the overhaul of the health library collection and facilities. The library was being managed by the Health Planning and Information Division of the Department of Health. Internet access was available for use at the library and the adjacent computer room. Ms Matalavea indicated that the key issue facing the library was the lack of a steady source of funds to update its collection. Another issue raised was the scarcity of qualified library staff with skills in new information technology. Ms Matalavea also stressed the lack of computer skills among many officials in the Department of Health and in the health sector in general, as well as among the users of the library.

Singapore

Ms Hong-Kiat Ong, Assistant Librarian, Medical Library, National University of Singapore, reported that the largest medical library in Singapore was the National University of Singapore Medical Library (NUSML).

The richness of the NUSML resources and services attracted external corporate members which included pharmaceutical companies and external individual members comprising hospital doctors, health-services personnel, general practitioners, medical officers of the Singapore Armed Forces, and staff of government, scientific organizations, and research institutes.

NUSML collection covered a wide range of subjects relating to medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and health care. As of July 1999, the print collection comprised over 70 100 titles and 171 500 volumes. There were about 4460 serial titles, of which 1640 were active subscriptions. There were 100 compact discs and 1700 media titles. The microform collection contained 140 microfilm titles and 410 microfiche titles. The theses collection contained over 1250 titles.

Complementing the above was the digital library which was accessible through NUSNet, the campus network. The digital library comprised the Library InfoGate web databases on all subjects. Included were MedLine which was linked to 42 full-text journals, PyscInfo, which was linked to 10 full-text journals, Evidence Based Medicine Reviews (Cochrane), EMBASE, International Pharmaceutical Abstracts, Current Contents Connect and Harrison's Online. Also available were examination papers, over 2000 electronic journals on all subjects of which at least 440 were on medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, health care and biomedical sciences. For user convenience, electronic forms for applying for library services had been included. Another recently added feature was Library Instruction OnLine (LION), a new website set up specifically to provide instruction to users on how to access and use the vast resources made available by the NUSML.

Because of the size and richness of the NUSML collection, it was almost the default library for the doctors and persons involved in medical research in Singapore. Senior government officers and members of statutory boards, including public sector doctors and dentists, could apply for free membership to the NUS libraries, including the Medical Library. Other doctors and dentists, many of whom were NUS graduates, could apply for membership under the alumni scheme. Alternatively, they could join as corporate members. Besides directly using NUSML resources as members, health care personnel also tapped on NUSML resources through the library staff in their hospital and departmental libraries.

Viet Nam

Mr Nguyen Tuan Khoa, Director of the Central Institute for Medical Science Information (CIMSI) in Ha Noi, reported that the Institute evolved from what was formerly the Central Medical Library, established in 1979 under the Ministry of Health. Composed of five functional units, CIMSI provided information and library services to medical/health practitioners and acted as a national focal point for medical/health information and documentation work. It also provided training in information work to medical/health information professionals in the country. According to Mr Khoa, CIMSI also offered services such as access to its in-house databases and online search of major medical/health databases like CD-MedLine, PopLine, etc.

2.3 Summary of discussions

2.3.1 Networking and resource-sharing

(1) Existing information systems/services

(a) Currently available

There was a great diversity in the availability of information services among medical libraries in the developing and developed countries. Some libraries had very few services and others very comprehensive ones. Even within the developed countries, the disparity existed between the major medical/health libraries and the minor libraries in hospitals/departments and rural areas/aboriginal communities. Nevertheless, it was heartening to note that there was at least one computer in at least one library in every country.

(b) Problems encountered in the provision of services included;

- lack of funds;
- lack of technological infrastructure and equipment;
- lack of skilled/trained manpower;
- lack of political commitment; and

- management of information and/or information overload.

(2) New modalities for national/regional information-sharing

Strategies identified to facilitate resource-sharing included:

- capacity building;
- formalized training and skill transfer programmes through modules (e.g. blue trunk concept) to enable the participants to achieve the minimum standard of information and library management;
- maintaining listserv discussion lists and help out with queries; and
- visits of staff from 'developing libraries' to participating countries.

(3) Collection building

(a) Participating countries can support the gift and exchange programme to build collections of less developed libraries.

(b) Extension of services through inter-library loans and document delivery.

2.3.2 Redefinition of roles of WHO (regional lead centre) and national focal points (NFPs)

There was agreement that the meeting was timely given the lapse of ten years since the previous one. As participants were not sure of the status of the organization/library from which they came and of the definition of NFPs, they called upon WHO to redefine the structure for cooperation and networking, the terms of reference for NFPs and to request the ministries of health of member countries to designate/redesignate their NFPs. It was felt that this step would ensure that NFP participants at future WHO meetings would be empowered to do what is necessary to achieve a goal. It was suggested that information about NFPs be posted on WHO website.

With NFP status established, the responsibilities of WHO could be:

- to support regional activities which should be need-based and customized to fit the situations in the countries;
- to play a catalyst's role in cooperative efforts; and
- to accept (with other agencies) direct requests from NFPs.

More specific activities of WHO could be:

- to provide necessary resource (funds or equipment) for human resource development and training;
- to provide hardware and software (e.g. CDS/ISIS) or funds to NFP libraries;
- to provide resource to support document delivery activities;
- to provide resource to enable information-sharing through telehealth and telemedicine programmes;
- to host moderated discussion list; and
- to maintain communication between WHO and NFPs through listserv, groups, newsletters or through the WHO website.

Responsibility of NFPs to achieve resource-sharing:

It was felt that the suggestions below were subject to the resolution of the empowerment issue stated above.

- (1) National activities should be coordinated.
- (2) Information needs should be defined and submitted to WHO accompanied by a list of the need requiring WHO's action and/or resources to meet them.
- (3) Training needs should be defined and submitted to WHO with a list of the needs requiring WHO's action and/or resources to meet them.
- (4) Minimum guidelines and requirements should be defined with regard to:
 - (a) core collection;
 - (b) skills; and
 - (c) interlibrary loan and document-delivery service for the NFP library to fulfil its role in meeting information needs.
- (5) Activities should be coordinated to create a union catalog or a facility that can serve as a union catalog (e.g. a collection of hyperlinks to catalogues of libraries in the country).
- (6) Intranational (within country) and intercountry (between countries) document-delivery activities and training programmes should be supported.
- (7) Liaison between WHO and the libraries should be established and maintained.
- (8) A request should be made to the Ministry of Health for support in the development of medical libraries when required and feasible.
- (9) Working with and tapping on the resources of library association(s) when feasible or relevant should be considered.

Specific activities and courses of action by NFPs for a revitalized network can be:

- (1) Interlibrary lending between libraries within country.
- (2) Document-delivery activities through e-mail, fax and even regular mail.
- (3) Setting up a union catalog or a facility to facilitate resource-sharing.
- (4) Extending reference and bibliographic search services to researchers from Member States.
- (5) Supporting a gift/exchange programme, and donating duplicate copies of materials to Member States.
- (6) Upgrading technical infrastructure and skills.
- (7) Maintaining regular communication between and among NFPs and WHO through e-mail, discussion lists, newsletters, regular meetings.

2.3.3 Provision of information services using new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and training needs of different user groups

The great diversity in the capacity of participating libraries to meet the need for medical and health-related information was reiterated. Hence, IT applications to be used in the provision of library services and training needs would be situation-based depending on current capacity and level of self-awareness. In addition, it was felt that needs assessment should be done. This could be achieved with a survey of user and the library scene within country, and/or tapping on information available on the Internet. To this end, there was a suggestion that a directory of resources be made available. The currency of such a directory must be maintained for it to be useful.

Against the scenario outlined above, ICT applications that can be used to provide and/or enhance the quality of information services are:

Service	Problem	Strategy for solving problem
1. OPAC	Lack of hardware, software, skills, funds	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. WHO to support/provide hardware/equipment.2. WHO/partner agencies to provide/support software, e.g. member countries that are also members of UNESCO to apply for CDS/ISIS.3. WHO to provide/support training modules which could be print packages, mounted on web, delivered through distance-learning mechanism.

<p>2 Provision of critical information (situation-dependent)</p> <p>2.1 Library currently with no or low capacity</p>	<p>Lack of resources (core collection), hardware, software, skills, funds</p>	<p>1. WHO and member countries to help build core collection through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. gift/exchangeb. extension of other member libraries' collections through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ILL• document-delivery via fax, e-mail and regular mail <p>2. WHO and member countries to support transfer or "extension" of knowledge of trained staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. formal training/support for training courses for library staff starting out at the job, by means of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fellowship programmes• exchange programmes, visits or attachments to more developed libraries• experts to be sent to train library personnel in country of "developing library"• modules– printed, correspondence course through regular mail– distance learning through Internet, mounted on web and continually updatingb. provide structure/support for continuing education programme for medical librarians e.g. WHO fellowship programmec. provide/support translation serviced. WHO and member countries to help out with queries and request for help posted to listserv
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<p>2.2. Library currently with high capacity</p> <p>(a) Promote and market library and its services. Create awareness at top-management level</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge and skills</p>	<p>WHO or countries to provide/support management and marketing courses by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sponsorship for attending courses or seminars 2. distance-learning with updated modules on the web and disseminate the information about existence of such modules
<p>(b) Provide access to electronic journals, online services including electronic table of contents and selective dissemination of information services</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need for local area network and remote access technology 2. Copyright issues 	<p>Other agencies to provide/support for upgrading of equipment</p> <p>Look for government support</p>
<p>(c) Organize resources to improve access and enhance usage of electronic resources by creating subject guides and/or online help</p>	<p>Lack of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common interface for various resources • user-friendly interfaces • language skills – English, Chinese, etc. • programming knowledge 	<p>Use of systems and computer platforms that comply with international standards like MARC and Z39.5 and are Y2K-compliant.</p> <p>Staff training: upgrading of skills in areas of web-page creation, programming. WHO/member countries to provide support through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. distance learning modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updated and on the web b. exchange programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visits to advanced/resource-rich libraries

2.3.4 Other comments and suggestions for future meetings

- (1) Computing facilities should be provided for participants to directly enter their discussions and comments for presentation if they so wish.
- (2) Country paper should be submitted with the required abstract.
- (3) Participants felt this "reactivation" meeting was timely and useful.

The agenda of the meeting is shown in Annex 4 and the timetable is in Annex 5.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of the meeting may be summarized as follows:

3.1 Need for strengthening of the regional health/medical information network

The participants were unanimous in observing the need for resource-sharing among the health/medical libraries in the region and elsewhere, especially with the rapid advances in information and communication technologies which can readily be applied to the provision of information services to users.

There is a pressing need to reactivate the regional information network, which has been somewhat inactive during the past decade. The national focal points (NFPs) in the participating countries need to be either designated or re-designated at the earliest possible time, and their terms of reference defined, in order to get the regional information network's planned programme of activities for the next five years started without too much delay.

There is a need to thresh out the structural configuration as well as the technical aspects of the network to enable it to function properly.

There is a need to involve the major health/medical libraries in each country either as NFPs or as participating libraries, so the departments or ministries of health might be requested to look into how effective liaison with other government departments/ministries concerned could be achieved.

3.2 Need for benchmark data on the information needs and information infrastructure in each participating country to guide policy on the nature of interventions that the regional network should undertake

There is a wide disparity among the Western Pacific countries insofar as the capacity for providing quality information services is concerned. There are member countries where information provision is already at a very high degree of sophistication, while there are others where the library collections are very poor, and the use of ICTs non-existent.

The information needs of closely-targeted user groups are important especially in the context of primary health care.

Data gathering for the required information could well be undertaken by the NFPs, or at best coordinated by them.

3.3 Need to build capacity for networking/resource-sharing among the member countries

While some countries in the region are already well-prepared and well-equipped for networking, the other countries, particularly the countries in the South Pacific and former Indochina, need extensive help in both human resource development and in the augmentation of material resources, like computers.

There is a pressing need to address the training needs (at both informal and formal levels) of some of the participating countries in order to bring them up to standards for resource-sharing. Various approaches could be used to achieve this upgrading, like short-term training programmes, formal degree programmes (either in-country or externally), study tours, inservice training programmes, and staff exchanges. Many of these activities could be undertaken at the country level.

3.4 Planned networking activities and resource-sharing

It would be highly desirable for the participating countries in the network to be able to exchange and share information among themselves by year 2001. Those who already have the capability may start to do so at the earliest possible time.

The provision of information services such as online literature search (for both critical and general information requirements), document delivery (whether manual or electronic), and translation services are seen as crucial resource-sharing activities by the participants. Networking with the use of the various Internet applications would be an efficient way to provide services, as well as a means to liaise with other national, regional, and international information systems and networks.

There is a need for the heads of the NFPs to come together as an executive committee or governing board periodically (every three or four years) to discuss progress, decide on policies and plan the future directions of the network. These should be convened and coordinated by the WHO/WPRO as the regional lead centre.

Small technical working groups should be convened by the network from time to time to draw up guidelines for the various projects/activities of the network.

3.5 Regional workplan for the next five years

To guide action, the participants drew up and agreed on a practical, output-oriented workplan. The workplan is attached as Annex 6.

MEETING FOR THE MEETING ON THE APPLICATION OF NEW INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY ON RESOURCE-SHARING AMONG MEDICAL/HEALTH LIBRARIES
IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

Beijing, China
23-26 November 1999

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**OPENING ADDRESS OF DR SHIGERU OMI, REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
WHO WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE,
IN THE MEETING ON THE APPLICATION OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
ON RESOURCE-SHARING AMONG MEDICAL/HEALTH LIBRARIES IN THE
WESTERN PACIFIC REGION
Beijing, China
23 - 26 November 1999**

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I am pleased to welcome you to this meeting on the application of new information technology on resource-sharing among medical/health libraries in the Western Pacific Region. This meeting is timely and relevant in this era of rapid changes and innovations in communications and information technology that are affecting the management and operations of libraries and information centres worldwide. With the recent advances and continuous application of information technology in library operations and services, the information needs of your clients will be better served if your libraries cooperate to share resources, expertise, and experiences to maximize the transfer and exchange of information.

During this four-day meeting, you will be discussing various agenda items concerning resource-sharing activities and how the full potential of new information technology can be harnessed to enhance and facilitate the implementation of these endeavours. You are the experts in this field and I have great confidence that you will be able to identify issues of common concern and find solutions to achieve the desired results.

The principal objective of resource-sharing, as you know, is to increase timely access to materials which users need but which are not available to them directly. This is one of the most challenging aspects of your responsibilities as librarians. Before the advent of new information technology, you had to request such materials personally or by telephone from nearby libraries and information centres or by telex or mail from sources in other countries, either through interlibrary lending or as photocopies. These traditional methods often caused undue delay and inconvenience. Now, with advances in communications and information technology, requests can be sent by fax, email or on the Internet. The full-text of requested materials can now be delivered fast by electronic means.

Perhaps you agree with me that resource-sharing is inevitable in the face of such factors as rising publication costs, declining financial resources, increased user demands for library resources, and technological changes. The escalating costs of library materials and budgetary constraints have eroded the ability of most libraries to build comprehensive on-site collections. The biggest factor in the transformation of library services, however, has been the rapid emergence and development of electronic information technologies that make it possible to envision different ways of organizing library collections and services. With new developments in communications, computerization of administrative and technical functions, CD-ROMs, fax and email, digital delivery of information, and others, the means of delivering needed information to users have been improved immeasurably. New information technology certainly supports new capacities for resource-sharing. One example of this is online access to the full-text of electronic journals, whether accessed directly or through online service

Annex 2

agents like the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), Ebsco Online, SwetsNet. A consortium of libraries could possibly be established that would subscribe to a common group of journals which could be accessed online by *bona fide* users of all the participating libraries.

Other cooperative ventures that could facilitate resource-sharing among your libraries include the development of a union list of periodicals and catalogue of books or other resources that could be maintained on the Internet. The creation and eventual publication on the Internet, of a regional index to health publications produced by the Member States which are not covered by international indexing services is also a worthy activity that you may discuss in your meeting. The availability of such health literature indices on the web is not a far-fetched dream. Although it will require considerable effort, time, and financial resources, I am confident that, with your commitment, will, and full support from your institutions, such endeavours can be realized in the future.

During the meeting you will be discussing the pros and cons connected with resource-sharing including such issues as interlibrary loans, document delivery, intellectual property rights, and the cost of sharing, staffing, and training for services. As librarians, I believe you do not question the need to share resources but may be more concerned with how to do so effectively. I therefore urge you to focus your discussions on how to create a mechanism strong enough to support resource-sharing activities more efficiently.

New information technology is fundamentally changing access to information and holds the promise of collaborative collection management on a scale that has not been possible before. In this rapidly evolving environment of networked information, remote access and desktop delivery, technology offers the potential for realizing a seamless web of interconnected and interdependent collections that are accessible to geographically distributed users. Individual libraries must act as if each is a part of a world library. Each library must find ways to put materials from the world library into the hands of its users and must be ready to supply materials from its own collection to others, quickly and cost-effectively.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the presence of two important people, Dr Josephine Sison of the University of the Philippines and Professor Gao Lan, Director of the Chinese Institute of Medical Information. They will provide advice and facilitate the discussion during the meeting.

Libraries need to evolve from the old world of traditional interlibrary lending to the world of information access at the desktop. I trust that you will have a fruitful meeting by being able to identify and agree on areas of collaboration which will assist you in delivering quality services to your users and exploiting the full potential of new information technology.

I wish you a pleasant stay in Beijing.

Thank you.

**MEETING FOR THE MEETING ON THE APPLICATION OF NEW INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY ON RESOURCE-SHARING AMONG MEDICAL/HEALTH LIBRARIES
IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION**

Beijing, China
23-26 November 1999

**THE SITUATION OF MEDICAL/HEALTH LIBRARIES
IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION**

**Mr Julio Dizon, Jr.
Librarian
WHO/WPRO**

Medical and health libraries are key instruments in the exchange and dissemination of health information among health personnel, health planners, and researchers in the Member States of the Western Pacific Region. They are indispensable agents that help promote the World Health Organization's Regional Biomedical Information Programme (RBIP) towards attaining Health for All in this part of the globe. In view of their vital role, the World Health Organization has encouraged Member States to support their medical and health libraries by including in their national budget allocation provisions for their development and improvement. In collaboration with the Member States, the World Health Organization has provided technical and financial support in various areas of health literature and library services.

Government support for the development of medical and health libraries, however, depends on the state of the economy and political will of those who run the department or agency to which the medical or health libraries are attached. It is therefore not surprising that medical and health libraries in developed countries of the Region have the edge over their counterparts in developing and less developed Member States. Bigger library budget allocations, more comprehensive library collections, more advanced technologies, and better trained library personnel are expected among medical and health libraries in rich Member States while the opposite situation is prevailing in poor countries.

The advent of new information and communications technologies (ICTs) and their application in medical and health libraries to enhance and facilitate the delivery of library and information services has made the gap even wider between medical and health libraries in developed and developing/less developed countries. The benefits offered by these new ICTs may have gradually trickled down to some medical and health libraries in developing countries of the Western Pacific region; however, many are still wanting and some may not yet heard or unaware of the presence of these new information technologies.

A lot of small medical/health libraries in developing and less developed countries in the Western Pacific, especially those located at the grassroots level, still lack the basic library books, journals and other information materials that could be used for the health education of the public, for research, and for the continuing education of health personnel. This is aggravated by the lack of trained library personnel who should act as information brokers and assist in the collection and dissemination of health information to local researchers.

Annex 3

In these times of adversity brought about by the economic crisis, medical and health libraries are not spared from suffering the negative consequences, especially in poorer countries of the Western Pacific Region. It is necessary that these medical and health libraries must find ways to help each other in order to weather the crisis. One way to achieve this is to share resources and establish a good networking relationship. This could be more enhanced if the new ICTs could be put in place among most, if not all, medical and health libraries in developed and developing or less developed Member States.

The World Health Organization, in its effort to alleviate the sad state of medical and health libraries in some poor countries in the Western Pacific Region, has provided support, in collaboration with the concerned Member States, in the areas of library staff development, such as providing financial support for fellowships, study tours, attendance to seminars and workshops on various library management and operations, upgrading the library infrastructure by providing equipment and supplies to certain medical and health libraries, such as computer software and hardware, printers, photocopiers, and others, developing the library collection by purchasing essential medical books and journals, and by recruiting library consultants to visit medical and health libraries to assess their needs and make recommendations for their development. These efforts have surely reaped dividends and must have improved, to a large extent, the conditions of the recipient medical and health libraries in the Western Pacific Region.

With the incoming new millennium, the World Health Organization in the Western Pacific Region would vigorously strengthen its support to medical and health libraries by continuing its support to library staff development, such as sponsoring seminars, workshops, study tours, fellowships, and others, by promoting resource-sharing and networking through the provision of necessary computer hardware and software, e.g. videoconferencing technology, by supporting the production of a regional union list of serials in printed and/or electronic format, by supporting a regional focal library to subscribe to various service intermediaries that supply full-text of articles, documents, and others on the Internet.

The application of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the operation and management of medical/health libraries has indubitably facilitated the retrieval, exchange, and dissemination of health information. This opportunity must be exploited fully by medical/health libraries in the Western Pacific region, especially in their resource-sharing and networking activities in order to deliver optimal library services to their users. In this regard, the World Health Organization would encourage medical/health libraries in Member States of the Western Pacific region to form a network and equip themselves with the appropriate information and communication technology that could enable them to interact, communicate, and exchange their experiences; for example, the creation of an electronic discussion group/list using the same software, the publication of a newsletter in printed or electronic format, and other collaborative activities.

To ensure that resource-sharing and networking would be maximized by the medical/health libraries forming the network, the World Health Organization would also encourage the creation of online catalogues, the establishment of automated interlibrary loan and referral systems, as well as automated document delivery systems, among the libraries. The above activities are easier said than done; however, with firm determination, full support from management of the parent institution, and full cooperation among medical/health librarians and information staff who are involved in the network, anything is possible.

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TECHNOLOGY ON RESOURCE-SHARING AMONG MEDICAL/HEALTH LIBRARIES
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AGENDA

1. Opening ceremony
2. Review of regional medical/health information services programme
3. Country reports
4. Networking and resource-sharing
ICT applications in library and information work (Professor J. Sison)
5. Existing information systems/services
New modalities for information-sharing
6. Redefinition of roles of WHO and NFPs
7. Provision of information service using ICTs
Training needs of different user groups
8. Visit to Medical Library
9. Preparation of regional workplan
10. Finalization of regional workplan
11. Closing ceremony

MEETING ON THE APPLICATION OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
ON RESOURCE-SHARING AMONG MEDICAL/HEALTH LIBRARIES IN THE
WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

23-26 November 1999
Beijing, China

WPR/HST/HIN(2)/99/1-A

18 NOVEMBER 1999

TIMETABLE

		23 November	24 November	25 November	26 November
0830 to 0930	Registration <u>Item 1</u> Opening ceremony (0900H)	0830 to 1000	<u>Item 4</u> Networking and resource-sharing ICT applications in library and information work	<u>Item 7</u> Provision of information service using ICTs Training needs of different user groups (Group discussion 3)	<u>Item 9</u> Preparation of regional workplan
<i>Coffee Break</i>					
1000 to 1200	<u>Item 2</u> Review of regional and global medical/health information services programme <u>Item 3</u> Country reports (Australia, Cambodia, China, Fiji)	1015 to 1200	<u>Item 5</u> Existing information systems/services New modalities for information- sharing (Group discussion 1)	<u>Item 7</u> Continued in the plenary session	<u>Item 10</u> Finalization of regional workplan
<i>Lunch Break</i>					
1300 to 1500	<u>Item 3</u> continued (Laos, Malaysia, Micronesia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau)	1300 to 1500	<u>Item 5</u> Continued in the plenary session <u>Item 6</u> Redefinition of roles of WHO and NFPs (Group discussions 2)	<u>Item 8</u> Visit to Medical Library	<u>Item 11</u> Closing ceremony
<i>Coffee Break</i>					
1515 to 1730	<u>Item 3</u> continued (Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Viet Nam)	1515 to 1700	<u>Item 6</u> Continued in the plenary session		

REGIONAL HEALTH/MEDICAL INFORMATION NETWORK WORKPLAN 2000-2004

Activity/area for regional resource-sharing/networking	Objectives	Support/Resources required		Target dates	Remarks
		WHO/Other agencies	Country		
1. Preliminary activities				Q1/2000	
1.1 Clarification of structure for cooperation in terms of defining selection and terms of reference of NFPs	To clarify the terms of reference of NFPs	x			
1.2 Request for identification/selection of NFPs to the MOH of countries concerned formalized	To get the right NFP/country identified and selected	x			
1.3 NFP libraries formally designated/re-designated			x		
2. Network mobilization	To initiate framework for gathering of required bench work data from participating countries				
2.1 Needs analysis survey on information needs of target users, existing information infrastructures, kinds of training required (short-term & formal) by librarians/information professionals					
• preparation of questionnaire		x			
• conduct of survey		x	x	Q3/2000	

Annex 6

Activity/area for regional resource-sharing/networking	Objectives	Support/Resources required		Target dates	Remarks
		WHO/Other agencies	Country		
2.2 Specification of minimum hardware/software requirements for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • library operations • Internet connectivity 		x		Q3-Q4/2000	Other agencies: University of the Philippines Institute of Library Science for help in licensing agreements for UNESCO CDS/ISIS software Country: Purchase of Integrated Library Systems (ILS) software of choice
2.3 Requests for equipment needed for information work by countries where required.			x	When required	
3. Capacity-building for networking/resource-sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • automating library operations • use of the Internet and its applications for enhancing library services and for resource-sharing • management skills for librarians 	To upgrade the knowledge, skills and tools of librarians in NFPs where required			ongoing to 2004	
3.3 In-service training programmes			x		
3.4 Study tours of libraries in region and elsewhere		x	x		
3.5 Staff exchange		x	x		

Activity/area for regional resource-sharing/networking	Objectives	Support/Resources required		Target dates	Remarks
		WHO/Other agencies	Country		
4. Networking and resource-sharing	To improve access to required health/medical information by all types of users (librarians, policy-makers, researchers, health workers, medical practitioners, etc.)	x	x		
4.1 Design, launching and maintenance of website for the WPRO information network (provision of links to other sites)		x	x	Q4/2000-Q1/2001	
4.2 Initiation and maintenance of discussion groups via listservs (moderators, rotated)		x	x	Q2/2000 onward	
4.3 Initiation and maintenance of a newsletter		x	x	Q2/2000 onward	
4.4 Meetings of the regional information network at regular intervals (every four years) to assess progress and plan for future requirements		x	x	Q3/2002	
4.5 Creation of small technical groups to work on requirements of network (e.g. standards, interfaces)		x	x	As and when required	
4.6 Creation of national medical librarians associations to liaise with NFPs.		x	x	Q3/2000 onward	

Annex 6

Activity/area for regional resource-sharing/networking	Objectives	Support/Resources required		Target dates	Remarks
		WHO/Other agencies	Country		
5. Provision of information services	To cater to the information needs of health/medical information users in the region efficiently and effectively.				
5.1 On line literature searching (both critical general information requirements)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation and maintenance of union lists of serials and incorporated into the regional website • holdings lists of NFPs on website • access to all WHO websites 		x	x		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to related websites/data bases (e.g. SEAMIC, etc.) 		x	x	Q2/2000- Q4/2004	
5.2 Document delivery (via regular mail, fax, ftp, etc.) including interlibrary loans (ILL)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • country to country arrangements • country to WHO arrangements 			x		
5.3 Translation of required documents			x	Q3/2000 onward	
			x	When required	