

## Chapter LVIII

# Digital Libraries Overview and Globalization

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### ABSTRACT

*Library digitization on a global basis is essential in the twenty-first century. The digital library development initiatives in most countries depend substantially on their national libraries. This chapter focuses on an overview of how national libraries of 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region are involved in digital library initiatives. Most libraries participate in the collaborative efforts to build digital libraries with support from their government. Some focus on digitization and preservation activities, while others concentrate on digitization standards. Requirements for digital library implementation from a global perspective are essential. With the understanding of the current situation in Asia Pacific, we can understand the readiness of national libraries aiming for globalization in this part of the world, and action can be taken to achieve the aim. The globalization of digital libraries is what the world should be heading towards as we enter the next century.*

### INTRODUCTION

There are many definitions of digital libraries, and the concept of digital libraries is invoked in various contexts. It might refer to the system in which a collection is located, or it could refer to the organization underlying a collection. Therefore, the digital library is a system that stores mass digital information resources in different formats and allows their access by end users through net-

work transmission. It is also an organization that provides the resources to select, structure, access, interpret, distribute, and preserve the integrity and usability of collections of digital works so that they are available for use by a specific community or set of communities (Digital Library Federation, 2004; Zhou, 2005).

It is essential for libraries worldwide to aim for globalization in the twenty-first century. When countries around the world exchange digital in-

formation, it increases worldwide relations (Ani & Biao, 2005). An interconnected global digital library can contain the unique cultural treasures of various countries, and by offering free access, it would help people understand one another better (Billington, 2005). The term “globalization” implies that it is a worldwide phenomenon. Therefore it plays a great role contributing economically, socially, culturally, and politically in the world society. It also increases the cooperation among many nations (Iwe, 2005).

The Internet is commonly used today; therefore, libraries should overcome the limitations of physical distance to deliver information through online means. Bultmann, Hardy, Muir, and Wictor (2006) state that digitization improves access to material, saves storage space and minimizes the handling of originals, which helps in the preservation of material. Undertaking digitization initiatives will attract new users and support distance learning (Baba, 2005). Tedd and Large (2005) added that digitization processes are becoming more affordable and effective, therefore digital libraries are being established worldwide, and many countries are digitizing their collections (Bultmann et al., 2006). It is, therefore, the right time for libraries to aim for globalization. In the next section, an overview of how the national libraries of countries in the Asia-Pacific region are involved in digital library development initiatives is discussed.

## **OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS**

There are 58 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Foo & Theng, 2005), and these include countries in East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania. This section focuses on 14 countries, mainly four in East Asia—China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan; two in South Asia—India and Sri Lanka; six in Southeast Asia—Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam; and two in Oceania—Australia and New Zealand.

## **East Asia**

China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan are advancing in their digital library initiatives and digitization efforts. They have collaborated or cooperated with their partners internally. More work in the international arena should be encouraged.

### **National Library of China (<http://www.nlc.gov.cn>)**

China has been undertaking a number of digital library projects since 1996. The China National Digital Library (CNDL) project (<http://www.nlc.gov.cn/ndlc/index.htm>) is one of the collaborative projects that the National Library of China (NLC) is leading. Its partners include libraries, universities, research institutions, and Internet-based companies (Liu & Zhang, 2001). The NLC aims to construct the largest collection of Chinese resources of excellent quality to provide efficient services to both China and the world through the nation’s backbone networks and international principle technologies (Zhou, 2005). The China Academic Library and Information System (CALIS) is a nationwide academic library consortium (<http://www.calis.edu.cn>). Its resource and information service network involves the cooperation of libraries and organizations, such as NLC, Online Computer Library Center (OCLC, USA), the British Library and National Institute of Informatics, Japan (Yao, Chen, & Dai, 2004).

To develop the Chinese Pilot Digital Library (CPDL) project, the NLC aims to cooperate with nine public libraries in China. The objective is to unify distributed resources and construct standardized digital libraries. There is ongoing research and they have made good progress on metadata standards (Liu, 2004; Zhou, 2005). The CNDL, CALIS and CPDL are funded by national investment, which is under the Chinese government (Zhou, 2005). The NLC adopts modern technology, leads the standardization of the digitization of libraries, and works to provide online

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