

On Australians trying to build bridge with Indonesia in respects to books and publishing - note a 7-8 year gap which happened when Indonesia was cut off from the outer world by WWII

B/73 (15/2/1).

Australian Consulate-General,
Batavia.

3rd June 1947.

MEMORANDUM to:

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA.

I set out hereunder an extract from a letter received from the Indonesian Minister of Education and should be glad to know what can be done :-

- "1. The cultural contact between Indonesia and the outer world, which had already decreased strongly by the threat of the second world war, was broken entirely since the outbreak of that war and especially after the German occupation of the Netherlands.
2. This had as result a.o. that Indonesia has been devoided entirely of the supply of scientific books, periodicals and magazines during 7 & 8 years, which had appeared in that period and of which the examination and study must be considered of the highest importance for the upbuilding of our country.
3. The Indonesian Republic is in the possession of a library containing + 600,000 books, which has fallen behind by mentioned isolation period and needs completion urgently. The faculties (law, medicine, technical, sciences) in Djakarta, Jogjakarta, Soerakarta and Malang, are lacking in the most necessary books.
4. The international regulations on monetary domain after the war make it impossible to us for the present to provide for the abovementioned wants by means of normal purchases abroad.
5. On the other hand we call ourselves happy to know, that the outer world pays great attention and entertains interest for all what is laying on the domain of cultural collaboration and that mentioned interest, I mean, is greatly present in Australia too.

On the ground of the abovementioned I take the liberty to turn to you with the kind request to inform me please whether and in which way Australia would be prepared to grant help and mediation in this matter."

I hope the request will be examined most sympathetically in association with the authorities who are most likely to be able to help. English is being treated by the Republican authorities as the principal foreign language, and their eagerness, as well as that of the people as a whole, for English books can scarcely be exaggerated.

This request is a typical manifestation of the attitude of friendliness hope and expectation of the Republic towards Australia and I feel strongly that opportunities such as the present should not be neglected, both to avoid chilling the existing goodwill and also for the advantages they offer.

Consul-General.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA HOUSE
STRAND - LONDON
W.C.2.



PLEASE REPLY TO
THE DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER
AND QUOTE

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
"CROTONATE, ESTRAND, LONDON"
TELEPHONE: TEMPLE BAR 1567

LCK/LB
432/24/107

13th May, 1947

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

I have recently been in conference informally with various members of the Information Department of the Foreign Office about the production of English publications in Australia for distribution throughout Asia and Indonesia, and also about the development of cultural exchanges between Indonesia and Australia.

Among those with whom I discussed the matter of publication were Mr. Goodman, Mr. McDonald, Mr. Pilcher, Miss Vining and Miss Aitken.

The conversations, which were held at the suggestion of the Foreign Office, arose from the strong desire of the British Foreign Secretary to have suitable British publications freely available, now and in the near future, throughout the regions mentioned, and the inability of the British publishing trade to meet the demand because of the circumstances now obtaining.

The opinion is strongly held by Mr. Bevin, and indeed by the Foreign Office staff and others competent to judge, that it is of great importance to the United Kingdom that English text books, English literature and English periodicals, should be in every shop and on every bookstall in these countries, and that they should be offered at prices within the reach of the literate section of the population. It will already be known to you, however, that the British publishing trade is operating under severe restrictions at the present time. Paper for books was heavily rationed during the war, and by the end of 1946 had risen only to 80% of the amount used in 1938, the year taken as the basis for rationing, and a year when the British publishing industry experienced near-slump conditions. The effect of the fuel crisis of this year has been that coal deliveries to paper manufacturers has been heavily cut and the current paper allocations reduced in consequence. It is thought that the total 1947 paper allocation will be little, if at all, more than 50% of 1938. As well as paper difficulties, there is great congestion in the printing shops because of a shortage of skilled labour and of factory space. A further serious bottleneck is book binding, because of an acute shortage of materials, including boards and binding cloth, as well as a shortage of labour. The nett result is that the United Kingdom publishing trade, in spite of the efforts it has been able to make, aided by a special 10% increase in the paper allowance to assist export, and the deliberate starving of the domestic book market, is quite unable to meet the demand for English publications in any of its principal overseas markets.

Faced with this situation, the United Kingdom Government is seriously considering whether it should not develop the production of English books elsewhere. If this is done, the obvious areas would be the United States, already a big book-producing country, or ~~in~~ the Dominions.

Continued.



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IGK/LB
432/24/107

- 2 -

13th May, 1947

It is thought that the Dominions should be first given every opportunity to assist in this development, since it would keep production within the British Commonwealth, would help to develop the publishing industry in the Dominions, and would also have advantages from the point of view of foreign exchange.

My opinion was therefore sought as to whether the Australian publishing industry could usefully be approached.

The next point for consideration is the quality and selling price of the publications. Two types of books are broadly under consideration. One is the text book, containing illustrations and diagrams, preferably bound in stiff covers, and consequently selling at a higher price. The other kind of book is a cheap paper-covered production somewhat similar to the "Penguin" or the "Australian Pocket Library" type of book, reasonably produced but able to sell at the equivalent of something between one and two shillings. The question of price is important because of the conditions in Chinese publishing. Piracy among publishers is a common thing in China, where there are no copyright laws giving adequate protection. Pirate firms, consequently, are able to reproduce books for which there is any substantial demand, using cheaply made local paper and Chinese labour, and in this way are able to undersell many publications issuing from European or American houses. Mr. McDonald, at one time the "Times" correspondent in China, and who has given a good deal of attention to this aspect of the matter, was very insistent that this question of price was important if the operations of Chinese pirate publishers was to be successfully combated.

It appears to me that the implications of the proposals are so far-reaching that every consideration of them should be given in Australia. The production of the Australian Pocket Library series during the war showed that Australian publishers could produce paper-covered books of reasonable quality at a low price, given sufficient paper and an assurance of a market justifying big editions. The present proposals, if carried through, would mean that Australian publishing houses would be able to add substantially to such a list and the size of the editions required would be much greater in the case under review than for the Australian Pocket Library. Further, the distribution of the books throughout China, Siam, Burma, Indonesia and possibly other Asiatic countries, would assist in the opening of trade channels with Australia which might well be valuable in regard both to Australian publications ~~purely~~, and also to other commodities.

As regards the text book type of publication, for which the Asiatic demand is also strong, several Australian firms have shown their capacity to produce such books at a price which compares reasonably with similar books produced in the United Kingdom. With the prospect of greater sales, I think that reduced production costs could reasonably be expected, since much of the overhead goes in the preparation of the manuscript, setting up of type and the making of blocks.

Continued.



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- 3 -

13th May, 1947

The Foreign Office have discussed the position with those English publishers who are in the best position to fill mass demands for the lower price book, particularly Penguin books and the British Publishers' Guild. It has been suggested that one or both of these firms might set up a production unit in Australia, either in addition to Australian firms entering this trade or as an alternative to that course. Penguin books will already be known to you. Guild books have been produced in big quantities in the last two years by the British Publishers' Guild, some six and a half million having been distributed on the Continent. The British Publishers' Guild is composed of a group of the bigger English publishers, though it does not include all of them. Its manager, Mr. Lyle Blair, is an Australian who, I am convinced, has the welfare of Australian publishing at heart and whose ability as a publisher is proved by the development of the British Publishers' Guild since the war, under his management. I know him well, have been in touch with him about this project, and know that his advice can be had in future if required.

I would ask that you give the fullest consideration to the proposals I have discussed. I assume that it might be desirable to confer with representative Australian publishers, and I think that the advice of the Commonwealth National Library would also be helpful. I undertook to transmit these proposals to Australia and to discuss the matter again when Australian reaction to them had been obtained.

Miss Vining, who recently returned from Indonesia where she had been on British Government service, raised with me the question of closer cultural exchanges between that country and Australia. She was impressed both with the need and the opportunity for developing such exchanges, and wished to know whether the Commonwealth Government was actively interesting itself in the matter at this stage. She is of opinion that exchanges of students and teachers, possibly the granting of scholarships to Australian institutions, and assistance in broadening the educational and technical development of Indonesia, could usefully be assisted by British countries from the point of view of continued, and developing close relations. At the same time she realises the distance of Indonesia from the United Kingdom and also the great shortage of facilities in this country at present for accommodating additional students. I pointed out that an equal shortage existed in Australia, but that I thought the Commonwealth Government would be prepared to consider how such exchanges could be further developed. In Miss Vining's view, Australia, because of her propinquity, is most favourably placed to offer such assistance, and as a member of the British Commonwealth would, in so doing, be rendering a service to the Commonwealth as a whole. Miss Vining has particularly in mind the training of technical students from Indonesia who could take their part in the necessary development of Indonesian economy. Facilities for such training in Indonesia itself are few, and Australia's wartime developments in technical training would seem to strengthen her ability to take technical students as trainees. It is fully realised by Miss Vining that such proposals might raise racial questions and that this is an aspect which would have to be carefully examined. I wish to stress that our discussions on this were quite informal, but again it is felt that if Australia is in fact able to render such assistance to Indonesia and if there are no obstacles to her doing so, the influence of the United Kingdom may be added to her own in making her a friendly instrument in Indonesian development.

Australia trying to make more connections with the people of Indonesia - through Information Library

P.I.47/13/1/7.

Note for File.

Cultural Relations between Netherlands
Indies and Australia.

I discussed the whole question with Mr. Binns who is submitting a statement suggesting the setting up of an Information Library in Batavia requiring:

- (a) Librarian
- (b) Field Officer
- (c) An officer in Canberra to provide Australian material and ascertain material required by Indonesian Universities, etc.

As to the publishing of English books referred to in Mr. Key's letter of the 13th May, he suggests that the British Council be given some idea of plans for increasing the market in this area and they can bring British and Australian publishers together if need be as the scheme develops.

Am.

13th August,
1947.

P.I.47/13/1/7.

Note for File.


Cultural Relations between Netherlands
Indies and Australia.

Mr. Binns forwarded a submission on this subject some weeks ago but it was returned to him so that he could take account of possible UNESCO aspects of his proposals, and he intended to discuss this further with the Office of Education before finally submitting his statement.

Dr.
26th September,
1947.

Approval of Department of External Affairs on the idea of publishing books to send to Indonesia etc.

86 5978

Commonwealth  of Australia

TELEPHONE: M 0424
TELEGRAMS: OFFED SYDNEY

OFFICE OF EDUCATION
1ST FLOOR
GRACE BUILDING, YORK STREET, SYDNEY

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
NO. 16/8/1 **072409**

DEPARTMENT OF
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO
BE ADDRESSED TO:
THE DIRECTOR,
COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
OF EDUCATION,
BOX 3579, G.P.O., SYDNEY.

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File No. *P.47/13/17*

22 OCT 1947

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

For the attention of Mr. Legge.

Thank you for your memorandum of the 26th September, which contained extracts from the letter of the Indonesian Minister for Education, about which information was requested in my memorandum of the 25th September. It is felt that this request is an important one, since it is the first indication of the manner in which an Asiatic country desires assistance from Australia. In this connection I refer you to my memorandum OEU/9/1/065670 of the 3rd June, which contains the general proposal of this Office for a programme of Reconstruction.

It is felt that the request from the Indonesian Minister should be considered in the light of this over-all programme, and arrangements might be made to meet the request for assistance as soon as approval of the proposed programme, either in its present or in an amended form, is given, and finances are made available.

You will note that a sum of £10,000 is suggested under item 2. of the memorandum referred to, and attention has already been given in this Office to the reserving for this purpose of suitable text books in Law, Medicine and Technical Sciences from Army Disposal lists.

With reference to the last paragraph of the Consul General's letter, I would urge that consideration be given to a speedy response to this request so that Australia's good-will towards Indonesia might be expressed in a concrete manner in at least providing some books of a technical nature such as the Indonesian Minister has suggested.

Your comments on this proposal and on the general proposal for relief would be appreciated.

revised
(R. C. MILLS)
DIRECTOR.

PI

National Archives of Australia NAA: A1068, PI47/13/17

This Identifies that Indonesia is under the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme of UNESCO
- likely made after the end of the war

TELEPH. M 0424
TELEGR. OFFED SYDNEY

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
NO. 16/8/1

071217

Commonwealth of Australia

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
Rec'd 26 SEP 1947
File No.

OFFICE OF EDUCATION
1ST FLOOR
GRACE BUILDING, YORK STREET, SYDNEY

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO:
THE DIRECTOR,
COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OF EDUCATION,
BOX 3879, G.P.O., SYDNEY.

MEMORANDUM for :

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA.

25 SEP 1947

In a letter to this Office from Mr. K. Binns, of the National Library, quoted from a memorandum from the Consul-General of Batavia, B/73(15/2/1), transmitting the proposal by the Indonesian Minister for Education for cultural assistance. In view of this Office's interest in the cultural needs of Asiatic countries under the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme of UNESCO, I should be grateful if a copy or relevant sections of the memorandum be forwarded to this Office for information.

forwarded 9/9.

R. C. Mills
(R. C. MILLS)
DIRECTOR. *P*

PT

NAA: A1068, PI47/13/17

National Archives of Australia

COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OF EDUCATION.
SYDNEY.

22nd October, 1947.

Mr. K. Binns,
Librarian,
National Library,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

Dear Mr. Binns,

I refer to your letter of the 17th September, and regret that this reply has been delayed. The delay has been caused because this office was not in possession of the memorandum from the Consul-General at Batavia on which your commentary was based. I have now had the opportunity of reading the memorandum and, with you, consider that this first request for assistance from an Asiatic country should receive early and serious consideration.

In the general matter of relief this Office has put forward a proposal to the Department of External Affairs which embraces not only such matters as the provision of text books, but also the matter of providing training facilities and fellowships (including the training of librarians) for Asiatic students in Australia. It appears that the establishment of an Australian Information Library at Batavia, while it could do valuable work, is largely a matter for the Department of Information. Your additional suggestion of the Field Officer is a valuable one. At the present stage of staffing in the Office of Education, however, it does not appear at all likely that a Field Officer could be provided for, as part of the Office of Education, nor does it seem practicable to have such an Officer in every Asiatic country which might ask us for assistance. I do agree, however, that some screening of requests for assistance will be necessary. Just how this may be done is not yet clear.

With reference to the provision of text books, this Office is already reserving quantities of suitable books from Army Disposals, in the hope that these will be readily available when the financial arrangements to back such a scheme are made clear. The National Library, however, in accordance with your paragraph No. 7 could make a valuable and necessary contribution in both suggesting titles and surveying the availability of new books in Australia. A close liaison on this matter between this office and the National Library appears essential.

As soon as the proposals which have been made by this Office are approved, either in their original or in some amended form, I should like to have the opportunity of discussing the whole problem of the provision of books under the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Scheme.

Yours faithfully,

R.C. MILLS
Director.

From Library to Department of External Affairs - about the necessity of bringing international relations back with the public and students of Indonesia



CANBERRA. A.C.T.

November 10, 1947.
G/1947.

MEMORANDUM for:

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

Promotion of Cultural Relations with Indonesia.

1. In connection with the memorandum from the Consul-General at Batavia, B/73(15/2/1) transmitting the proposal by the Indonesian Minister of Education for cultural assistance, I desire now to submit certain suggestions which I outlined to your Mr. Legge on the above subject, and which he assured me would be of interest to you.
2. I am sure I need not elaborate the responsibilities and opportunities which Australia has to assist in the cultural rehabilitation and development of Indonesia for, in addition to the appeal by the Indonesian Minister of Education, UNESCO has recommended that Australia regard East Asia as its particular field in respect to any rehabilitation projects which Australia may undertake.
3. Assuming therefore a desire on the part of the Commonwealth Government to take a part in the cultural rehabilitation of East Asia, I suggest that a commencement could most suitably be made in Indonesia, in view of the appeal made by the Indonesian Minister for Education.
4. Two main lines of action seem to me to be indicated. These are:
 - (a) Assistance in the provision of books for the rehabilitation and development of libraries and teaching facilities.
 - (b) The establishment of an Australian Information Library at Batavia along the lines of our own Information Libraries in London and New York, which could act as a centre to develop permanent cultural contacts.
5. The early establishment of an Information Library service at Batavia would greatly assist in the achievement of (a) for it could be used as a centre for collecting data regarding book and rehabilitation needs and also as a distributing centre. The two activities could however go on hand in hand if provision were made for a field officer as well as a librarian to be appointed to the library.
6. Although Australia does not possess any considerable surplus of text books, etc., some amount of suitable book material could be gathered if a survey were made of the holdings of the various Australian publishers and the remaining stocks of the Australian Pocket Library sponsored by the Commonwealth Literary Fund were collected for this purpose.
7. In addition to this general material the field officer would contact libraries, universities and educational authorities to ascertain specific needs, especially in the field of economic and scientific material, such for example as government papers, proceedings of learned societies and sets of journals of which

duplicate copies may be held in some of our libraries.

8. As regards the Information Library at Batavia, there is no serious problem from the standpoint of material for the overseas library section of the National Library could quickly provide a basic collection and steadily build this up in just the same way as it is now doing for London and New York and, to a lesser extent, for many other overseas posts.

9. The provision of a fully trained librarian, however, such as Mr. Key and Miss Foley, present difficulties because of the great shortage of suitable trained librarians. The only way to meet this would be to take into our library school as soon as possible a suitable young University graduate and to endeavour to equip him within, say, six months for this work. During this time arrangements could be advanced, accommodation at Batavia secured and book material gathered.

10. The field officer would immediately make contacts and a rapid survey. He would take with him publications provided by the Department of Information, also Australian films. He might combine to some extent the functions of a press attache. Such an officer could be provided either by the Department of Information or by the Department of External Affairs, but it would be essential that he should spend some time in the National Library if he is to work in that close collaboration with the Information Library which is necessary to the success of both aspects of this programme.

11. The cost of such an organisation would be comparatively small as some book material is already being provided for Batavia under the Overseas vote of the National Library. Provision would, however, have to be made for the purchase of rehabilitation material as indicated in section 6. Perhaps £1,000 would be an approximate sum for the first year. As this would all be spent in Australia it would constitute a substantial benefit to publishing in this country and would open an important market for future Australian publications. The main expense would be in the provision of a librarian and a field officer. In respect to the former he could be an appointment to the National Library staff, which is seeking such officers for its existing overseas services.

12. An immediate commencement could be made in the gathering of material as indicated in sections 6 and 7 if an additional officer on the clerical level were appointed to our overseas library section which is at present understaffed to meet its expanding needs.

13. While it is probable that the present unsettled conditions in Indonesia would prevent an immediate start in that country, it would be wise to commence preparations both in securing material and training a librarian and field officer.

14. It is probable that the British Council will shortly spread its activities to this area, operating from its main centre at Singapore, and it would be to the mutual advantage of Australia and Great Britain if our two countries could work in close co-operation especially in view of the wide experience which the British Council has had in cultural matters in native countries.

I attach copy of letter I have received from the Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education, to whom I submitted the memorandum in draft form.

Kenneth Burns

LIBRARIAN.

Notions to push back such operations until the government situation is more settled

GSB/SMS.

P.I.47/13/1/7.

17th December, 1947.

MEMORANDUM for:

The Librarian,
Commonwealth National Library,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

Cultural Relations with Indonesia.

Your memorandum No. G/1947 of the 10th November, regarding methods of meeting the request from the Indonesian Minister of Education for cultural assistance, has been studied with interest. While it is felt that we should give what assistance we can in the way of books, and possibly by the appointment of an officer to make direct contact with educational authorities in Indonesia, it is considered that the plan should be deferred for the time being.

2. You will, I think, agree that we will be better able to decide the extent of the assistance we wish to provide after the outcome of the current negotiations is known. There is also the practical difficulty of the consular staff giving necessary assistance to any educational officer at a time when their services are fully required in connection with the meeting of the Good Offices Commission and the Consular Commission.

3. This matter will be taken up with you again on the conclusion of the work of the two Committees.

Secretary.