

Documentation in Thailand.
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Thailand, sometimes better known by its older name of Siam, is still largely an agricultural country, although a considerable amount of industrial development has begun in recent years. The value of scientific research as a means of accelerating the country's development is now fully recognized by the Government and the first important step taken towards improving scientific research was the establishment of the National Research Council of Thailand as a central body to advise the Government on scientific policy.

The National Research Council, in turn, recommended that the Government should take two further important steps. The first of these was the establishment of a Thai National Documentation Centre, to operate a full range of documentation services including a national science library. The second major recommendation was for the establishment of an Applied Scientific Research Corporation of Thailand, which would function as a semi-governmental body for the purpose of setting up and operating national research institutes in the main fields of the applied sciences.

It is worth noting that the National Research Council asked for these two projects in the correct order. It was essential that the initiation of the Documentation Centre should precede the expansion of the research activities because such research work as was already in progress in the country was being severely handicapped by the lack of modern organized facilities for obtaining information. The planning of new research institutes also, and of their programmes, even before they went into operation would require the services of an efficient documentation centre. Only on this condition could the research programme be established on a rational basis.

The National Research Council therefore took action to set up a national documentation centre. In 1961, at the request of the Government of Thailand, Unesco started providing specialized aid for this project under the United Nations Technical Assistance programme.¹ The aid from Unesco is mainly in the form of the services of three expert advisers for several years, to assist in planning and implementing the project, together with equipment to the value of some \$25,000 and fellowships for training the staff of the centre.

The Government, through the National Research Council, provided funds to the amount of \$750,000 for the building and equipping of a modern documentation centre. This centre, the Thai National Documentation Centre (see illustration), went into operation in May 1964, and is at present in a stage of rapid expansion of its services.

1. See *Scientific and technical documentation centres: Unesco's contribution to their development*. Paris, Unesco, 1965, 55 p., illus.

The TNDC, to give the centre its short title, is designed to carry out a number of functions. It is a national documentation centre providing services of document procurement, bibliography compilation, and translation for science and industry throughout Thailand. It includes a national science library with approximately 2,000 square metres of stack rooms and a reading room. The centre also provides the special library services for the research institutes of the Applied Scientific Research Corporation which are being established on the same site as the TNDC.

The value of this new development, the establishment of the TNDC, can be assessed, of course, only against the background of the general position regarding scientific library and information services in the country.¹

Thailand has at present about sixty scientific libraries, all but one or two of them being located in the capital, Bangkok. They range in size and effectiveness from two or three fairly large libraries with a well qualified and experienced librarian to small, poorly stocked collections in charge of untrained or part-time librarians. Inter-library collaboration is better than might be expected, thanks to the existence of an active Thai Library Association, but is still hampered by various factors, including the restrictions that are commonly due to government control. The stock and services of these libraries are usually available to a limited range of users. One or two of the larger libraries provide documentation services, such as procurement of microfilm or photographic copies of papers, to their users; the majority of them, however, do not attempt to go beyond the collection and use of their own stock.

The combined resources of these libraries, even if they were all available for general use, would still be very small. On a reasonable estimate, perhaps one in ten of the published documents that a scientist in Thailand might need to consult would be available in the country. The remaining nine-tenths are at present obtainable only by procurement from abroad. In such circumstances, it is obviously not possible to carry out serious scientific work.

In order to improve this situation, the immediate programme of the TNDC is to fill the huge gaps by providing a low-cost, fast service of scientific document procurement by modern photographic methods, available to all who can use it. The resources of the Bangkok libraries are made fully available through this service, since the TNDC has compiled a union card catalogue of periodicals held in these libraries and can supply microfilms or photocopies of any article from them on request. For the remaining 90 per cent of papers, the TNDC has established contact with some thirty documentation centres throughout the world from which microfilm copies can be obtained by the TNDC on request.

This service, together with other supporting services such as bibliography compilation and translation, at least enables the scientist to get on with his work. It is recognized by the TNDC, however, that the full long-term solution requires much more than this.

The TNDC is therefore working in various ways to reduce the dependence of the Thai scientist on time-consuming and expensive procurement of individual papers from abroad. The centre's own library is being stocked up as rapidly as possible, particularly with important publications that are not otherwise available in Thailand. Encouragement, help and advice to other libraries is an avowed part of the policy of the TNDC, since it is realized that the specialized scientist needs the direct services of his own special library in addition to those of the national centre. In its training programme for its own staff, the TNDC is recognizing that the keen, carefully-selected young people who are now learning the intricate operations of scientific documentation in the centre will one day almost certainly be drawn away to organize and operate specialized centres in the more important branches of science and technology.

The steps described above will, it is hoped, keep the development of scientific

1. See *Bulletin*, vol. XX, no. 3, May-June 1966, item 139.

documentation in Thailand in its proper position, that is, ahead of the needs of the research workers. The execution of such a programme is, of course, not without its problems, but the excellent support of the Government is making it possible to solve these as they arise. The more urgent needs, both in the TNDC and in the scientific libraries, are for training facilities, particularly study abroad, and for aid in the massive problem of building up the stocks of libraries to a reasonable level.

We in Thailand are fully aware that collaboration is a two-way operation. We are grateful for the opportunity afforded to us by other countries under which we can draw on their knowledge, their libraries and their services. For our part, we are making every effort to collect and process the scientific literature of Thailand, and we will always be glad to deal with any requests or inquiries in relation to that literature.

The recent progress of the Thai National Documentation Centre also deserves to be mentioned. Practically, the TNDC has been established to provide a variety of documentation services both to the staff of the Applied Scientific Research Corporation of Thailand and to research workers and technical personnel in other institutions in Thailand.

The centre was officially inaugurated on 2 December 1964, and the growth of the demands on the 'responsive' services can be seen by comparing the demands on these services during 1965 and 1966. The numbers of requests received were:

	1965	1966
Document procurement	638	1 702
Bibliography compilation	46	36
Translation	55	63

The library continues to grow rapidly. The book intake in 1965—2,500 volumes—was equal to the total intake of the previous three years of preliminary collection. Research reports, bulletins, etc., received during the year numbered 7,100. The number of scientific periodicals being received by subscription, exchange or gift was increased during the year from about seven hundred to over a thousand titles, and good progress was made in building up the library's holdings of back volumes.

The demands on the microfilming and photocopying services reflected the growing demands on the documentation services. There was also an increasing demand on the facilities for making copies of scientific documents provided by the user organization. Comparative figures for 1965 and 1966, were:

	1965	1966
Microfilm (frames)	19 138	28 490
Photoprints from microfilm (pages)	8 459	52 766
Direct photocopies (pages)	2 722	9 297
Jobs requested	476	1 139

The services of the printing facilities were also in heavy demand. In 1965 the offset printing presses carried out jobs totalling 1,065,410 impressions (single-side printing), while the duplicating machines produced 232,260 impressions.

Last but not least the *List of scientific reports relating to Thailand*, no. 2, was published in December 1965 and included 2,115 items in various fields of science and technology.

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