

# ALLA Pacific Law Library Twinning Program

## *Guidelines for Australian Twins*



September 2007

### **Information included:**

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Welcome to the rewarding and exciting  
world of the ALLA Pacific Law Library  
Twinning Program

The twinning of law libraries came about out of concern at the Asian Pacific Law Librarians' Conference held in Canberra in September 1991, about the ad hoc provision of legal materials to the South Pacific.

The twinning arrangements provide a focus for the provision of both legal texts and librarian assistance and training.

The Lionel Murphy Library (LML) of the Information Services Branch at the Australian Attorney-General's Department (AGD), agreed to coordinate Pacific twinning activities on behalf of the Australian Law Librarian's Association (ALLA) and has put together information and some guidelines to assist you in confidently supporting your Pacific Twin.

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*The Attorney-General's Office library, Samoa*

# Cultural Awareness

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*Fale, or traditional house, Boomerang beach, Samoa*

As most Pacific nations have been exposed to western society for some time; cultural issues may not appear to exist once you make contact with staff from your twinned agency. This does not mean, however, that misunderstandings will not occur if you are ignorant of certain cultural clash points. Before contacting your twin it is useful to give some thought to the cultural differences that will exist between your agency and your Pacific counterpart.

Be aware that the foundations of our societies are very different. In many Pacific nations the word 'I' does not exist in the native language. They have many loyalties, constraints and demands that impact on their daily lives. As a twin you should be slow to take offence and recognise that when you feel uncomfortable it will usually be caused by a cultural difference rather than right or wrong behaviour.

Most Pacific nations are comfortable and familiar with verbal interaction. They are generally slow to speak in an open forum and prefer one-on-one information-gathering in order to present a group opinion, fully formed, rather than expressing individual opinions. A phone call will go a long way to maintaining relationships. Although e-mails may be efficient from our perspective, you may find that your e-mails go unanswered because this is not a preferred form of communication to Pacific people. An e-mail, followed by a phone call, will usually be much more successful in information transfer. If at all possible, a visit, is the best way to quickly form good relations and increase your understanding of your twin's circumstances. Another conflict between our societies is 'time'. In the Pacific there are many issues that have a much higher priority than time. Be prepared to slow down and smell the hibiscus when you are dealing with your Pacific twin.

Local newspapers and events can usually be found on the internet which give a good insight into a particular culture.



# Responsibilities

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The Lionel Murphy Library will try to twin you with a 'like' agency, eg Court to Court, Attorney-General to Attorney-General. This should make it easier when assistance is requested.

Don't forget you are not alone and if you are unable to help your twin with their request the Coordinator can send out a call for help through the ALLA-ANZ mailing list. Ideally, the following duties should be allocated to someone in your agency.

## **A contact person to open and maintain communication**

Nominate a suitable contact person who will initially make contact with your twin and then follow up with regular, informal contact. This need only be brief. We would suggest bi-monthly if you don't hear from your twin sooner.

## **Ascertain holdings and determine need**

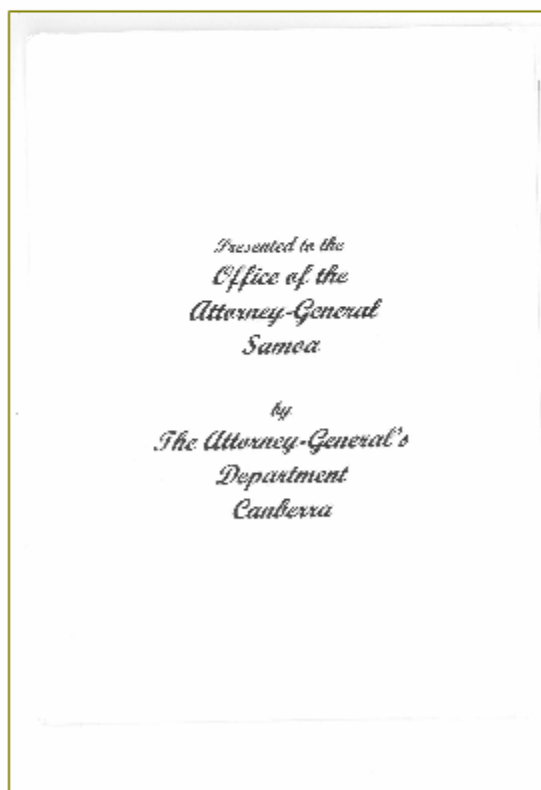
Different Pacific nations have differing legal systems. Some will rely heavily on Canadian or New Zealand legislation while others have an English-based system of law with an Australian mix. Your counterpart will be able to explain their system and their needs, which should always be kept in mind when sending material. If you are having difficulties there is often an Australian or New Zealand judge in country so it is worth contacting the AusAID Pacific Desk in Canberra. AusAID can supply the name and contact number of their staff member in Country who can supply a list of Government departments and department heads.

## Book plating

Due to the turnover of staff in Australia and the Pacific there is a high rate of lost knowledge regarding where certain material was obtained.

Often support agencies will be asked questions regarding library texts on the mistaken premise that we are all linked together.

A simple book plate, stating 'donated to the (agency) by the (agency)', allows this information to be captured and lessens confusion. Large sticky address labels can be printed on mass and attached inside the front cover of each text sent.





*Supreme Court, Vanuatu, destroyed by fire June 2007*

## **Catalogue or List**

Twins are asked to keep, at the very least, a list of any materials sent to the Pacific. (Even if it is as simple as a file of invoices or donations). It is ideal, if possible, to keep a back-up catalogue as a risk management strategy. In the past the Pacific has been hit by disasters both natural and man-made, and it is not uncommon for a library to be destroyed.

# Issues to keep in mind when sending material

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**Currency:** Please ensure material is as up to date as possible.

**Librarians:** Due to budget limitations, many Pacific agencies do not have a librarian or a staff member assigned to look after their collection. You may be able to provide suggestions on easy record-keeping methods to help manage collections.

**Humidity:** Humidity in the Pacific makes mould and book-worm infestation an issue. Ask if your twin has an air-conditioned environment. If they don't, do not send leather-bound volumes where buckram or cloth is available instead. Always recommend metal shelving rather than wooden.

**Condition:** Please send material that is in good condition. Do not send material that is not well bound as it will soon deteriorate and fall apart.

**Binding:** Very few Pacific nations have the ability to bind volumes. Unless you know your counterpart is not just being polite and will actually be able to afford binding, do not send loose parts. They become separated and are often lost.

**Space:** Space is usually at a premium in the Pacific and often libraries are housed on shelves over a work space, in cupboard-sized rooms, or in reasonably-sized rooms with a collection that is far too big for the space available and which is also used for other storage. Do not send material that has not been requested. If you are able to visit your counterpart you may be able to help them with weeding and sorting their collection. Remember to advise that wherever material is stored it should be in an air-conditioned environment.

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*Court House Library, Nauru, April 2005*

**Internet:** It is a good idea to make sure your twin is aware of resources available on the internet. The coordinator at LML has a list of links to free sites. If possible, when asked for reference assistance, please send a link to the material via e-mail as well as any hard copy.

**Shipping:** Small parcels for your twin should be sent by post, however the Lionel Murphy Library at the Attorney-General's Department in Canberra can arrange for larger shipments to Pacific Libraries. If you need to ship boxes of materials please contact the coordinator via the contact details on the back of this brochure.

## Other Assistance

Some twins are able to offer further assistance to their counterparts with funding from their own agencies or through AusAID grants. The Coordinator at Lionel Murphy Library is happy to discuss any further assistance an agency may be considering.

Examples of past assistance include: supplying shelving, library management advice, floor plan advice and assistance with applications for Australian Youth Ambassadors. In country assistance has included: weeding and shelving, training in cataloguing and library management practices, training in legal research and legal information management and planning and setting up new libraries.

ALLA sponsors the attendance of a Pacific library worker at the annual conference and you may be able to encourage your twin library worker to apply for this sponsorship.



*Legal research training, Tonga 2007*



*National University of Samoa Library, April 2007*

## Contact Details

For further information, or any enquiries regarding Pacific Twinning activities, please contact the Lionel Murphy Library.

### **ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT**

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**Australian Government**  

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**Attorney-General's Department**