

CORMOSEA Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19

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The Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia (CORMOSEA) acknowledges the substantial contributions of the [Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials \(SALALM\)](#) for its pathbreaking resolution entitled Collection Development in the Time of COVID-19 on June 11, 2020, and subsequent statements by the [Middle East Librarians Association \(MELA\)](#) on June 22, 2020, and the [Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation \(CONSALD\)](#) on July 17, 2020.

CORMOSEA shares the same priorities, challenges, concerns, and issues regarding the scholarship, curatorship, and stewardship of the ecosystem of print and electronic resources, and the economies to support publishing in the midst of the current pandemic. We fully endorse open access initiatives and continue to advocate for library administrative support in assuring the diversity, equity, inclusion, and access to Southeast Asia scholarly resources in the United States and beyond. This statement outlines the specific challenges of collecting library resources on Southeast Asia, the collective measures that CORMOSEA will take as an international studies consortium, and those areas of national and international collaboration for which we depend on our library administrations for support.

State of the Field: Challenges to Collecting for Southeast Asian Studies

Southeast Asia is the smallest community of Title VI-funded National Resource Centers. Its boundaries include exclusively less-commonly taught languages with some of the lowest language enrollments institutionally, such as Hmong, and nine important national languages taught at various U.S. institutions, and the annual Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) consortium.

Despite the low profile of its core learning community, Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Studies have a large and important impact across a wide range of scholarly fields, and provide case studies of considerable interest to undergraduates across disciplines on global and social issues such as: war, ethnic conflicts, terrorism, human trafficking, human rights, gender and education equality, environmental change, public health, migration, poverty, and food security, to name a few.

The Library of Congress Jakarta office manages the Cooperative Acquisitions Program for Southeast Asia (CAP-SEA) and its sub-offices in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Manila. CAP-SEA acquires materials published in 11 Southeast Asian countries for its participating libraries in the U.S. and beyond based on subject profiles or circular title lists. However, many institutions also rely upon supplementary vendors, and the market networks that are referred to in other statements as imperiled in the current COVID-19 crisis. Onsite acquisition trips have always played a critical role in ensuring that fugitive materials are represented in our collections. Because of the linguistic diversity of the region – with over a dozen major national languages and hundreds of regional languages and scripts – Southeast Asia library collections have a history of collaboration through CORMOSEA and SEASSI.

Due to the shortage of MLIS Southeast Asia catalogers in the field, and the relatively low institutional priority of Southeast Asia collections, most libraries have hired non-MLIS library professionals, para-professionals, or student assistants to perform the Southeast Asia cataloging work, resulting in a lack of professional cataloging leadership nationally. The Library of Congress Jakarta Office offers cataloging records for Southeast Asian language materials that participating libraries acquire through CAP-SEA. However, most institutions maintain large cataloging backlogs, particularly for less-commonly collected languages, such as Burmese or Javanese. Other libraries rely on outsourcing cataloging for Burmese, Thai, and Vietnamese language materials to improve users' access to the ongoing backlogs.

Many CORMOSEA institutions rely heavily on graduate students from the region to assist in selecting and cataloging Southeast Asian language materials. Although much remains unknown, it is very likely that fewer

international students from the region will attend U.S. universities, resulting in disruptions in processing Southeast Asian language materials.

Southeast Asia and the Institutional Responses to COVID-19

Difficulties resulting from COVID-19 have exacerbated access inequities within our institutions, particularly disadvantaging international programs such as Southeast Asian Studies, for which fewer digital resources exist, beyond the mainstream press and English language texts that serve lower level undergraduate teaching. Upper level undergraduate, professional and graduate programs require access to library resources that are currently only available in print or analog formats, including monographs, journals, newspapers on microfilm, historical data sources, and archival and special collections.

Besides the long-standing destabilizing effect of electronic journal prices, the post-COVID trend towards electronic monograph access for the general undergraduate curriculum will have the long-term effect of undermining print markets and distribution networks by diverting library resources. This trend has been adequately referenced in other statements mentioned above.

Recent national discussions around issues of equity and diversity have highlighted the need for increasing emphasis on unique institutional resources that represent minority views and cultures, bringing such resources into the scholarly mainstream and recognizing their importance to histories of disadvantaged American ethnic communities, including Southeast Asian and Pacific Island American histories. In this quest to enhance access to unique and archival sources, we recognize the need to consider access practices and rights regimes that differ from the standard copyright and licensing schema that dominate North American/European library models.

As a cooperative organization, CORMOSEA will:

- ❖ Enlist the support of relevant funding institutions – the U.S. Department of Education Title VI, American Overseas Research Centers, and the Henry Luce Foundation – to coordinate response and advocacy work in collaboration with library administrators to ensure that the role of library collections in research and teaching remain prominent in national debate.

- ❖ Continue to strengthen our communication with the Southeast Asia Council of the Association of Asian Studies, and its various country studies groups, and with academic partners in the region for collaborative initiatives, such as expanding the *Bibliography of Asian Studies* to include the increasing volume of open access journals published in the region, in exchange for expanded access to the *Bibliography* within the region.

- ❖ Collaborate with the Library of Congress offices in the region by leveraging the language and in-country expertise of CAP-SEA, together with the specialized subject and language knowledge of CORMOSEA librarians, to identify new materials for purchasing, and to ensure a cooperative model for the processing of materials into OCLC in a timely manner.

- ❖ Collaborate with the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI), the Southeast Asia Digital Library (SEADL), and the recently Luce-funded Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asia Studies (GETSEA) to maximize our strengths for resources sharing and scholarly support.

- ❖ Partner with the Center for Research Libraries and its Southeast Asia Materials Project (SEAM) on increasing digital access to its SEAM holdings and consortial licensing of materials from the region beyond our standard institutional purchasing practices.

- ❖ Connect with international stake-holding institutions (libraries, archives, and museums) interested in creating Southeast Asia born-digital and intangible cultural heritage resources for online resource sharing through linked open data and innovative rights management.
- ❖ Seek administrative support to ensure that the significant challenges of Southeast Asian languages are represented in the American Library Association and the Library of Congress national discussions, as libraries move to BIBFRAME and linked open data, enabling more seamless access to Southeast Asia resources across formats and discovery tools.
- ❖ Reach out to the HathiTrust Digital Library, JSTOR, Artstor, Ithaka S+R, and Portico for collaborative strategies in incorporating Southeast Asian vernacular materials in those national digital depositories for institutional subscription access to and preservation of facilitated national Southeast Asia collections.