

PACIFIC MANUSCRIPTS BUREAU  
Room 4201, Coombs Building #9

School of Culture, History & Language | College of Asia and the Pacific

The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200 Australia

Telephone: (612) 6125 2521 | E-mail: [pambu@anu.edu.au](mailto:pambu@anu.edu.au)

Web site: <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/>

## Trip Report

### PARBICA 17 Conference in Pacific Harbour and PMB fieldwork in Suva, Fiji

3 September – 30 September, 2017

#### Summary:

The main purpose of the trip was to:

- attend the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) conference in Pacific Harbour, Fiji, and
- copy student theses at the Pacific Theological College, Suva.

The PARBICA 17 conference was held at The Pearl Resort in Pacific Harbour, about an hour from Suva on the southern coast of Viti Levu. The theme of this year's conference was 'Archives Engaged: Personal, professional, political'.



Figure 1 Photo courtesy of National Archives of Fiji

Kylie Moloney and I co-wrote a paper which I presented after morning tea on the Monday. The paper, 'PAMBU: 50 Years of Engaging with the Pacific Islands', looked at the history of Pambu – its origins, its purpose, its collections and some of the achievements of the various Executive Officers. It then looked to the overlapping priorities of the near future – engaging with the challenges and opportunities of digital technology, engaging with member libraries and of course, continuing our engagement with the Pacific. A big thank you to Kylie for her work on this paper even after moving on to a new role at the National Library of Australia. Vinaka vaka levu, Kylie.

The papers that followed on Monday and Tuesday were of a high standard and great variety. There were many positive, inspiring stories about implementing new records management plans, working at the cultural interface, collection digitisation, new information laws and approval for several new archives buildings. On Wednesday, 6 September, Dianne Macaskill and Roslyn Russell from Memory

of the World Committee for Asia and Pacific (MOWCAP) delivered an excellent workshop on implementing the UNESCO recommendation on documentary heritage. It was a small group which allowed for really productive and insightful discussions about the MOW program, challenges Pacific applicants may face and some practical ways to address some of these challenges.

On Thursday morning, after watching a firewalking demonstration at the Pacific Arts Village, we headed into Suva for a tour of the National Archives of Fiji (NAF). The NAF building is beautifully organised and NAF staff enthusiastically showed us key items from their holdings. We also toured their digitisation facilities, before enjoying a delicious lunch (including amazing Fijian ice cream!). The passion and enthusiasm of NAF Director Opeta Alefaio and his team was wonderful to engage with. Together with PARBICA staff, they organised and hosted an excellent conference that all involved should feel proud of.

The conference also provided the opportunity to meet with Pambu Management Committee members from two of Pambu's longest standing member libraries, Eleanor Kleiber from University of Hawaii at Manoa and Cristela Garcia-Spitz from University of California San Diego. Both presented excellent papers, engaged in meaningful discussions about Pambu matters and were excellent company.



*Figure 2 Delegates greeted by NAF staff for a tour and lunch*



*Figure 3 Inside the NAF repository*



*Figure 4 PARBICA delegates tour NAF's digitisation facilities*

The conference sadly over, on Friday, 8 September I moved into Suva, where I would spend the next three weeks. I visited the gorgeous Laucala campus of the University of the South Pacific (USP), where I met more Pambu Management Committee members: Elizabeth Fong and Gwen Rounds from the library, and academic representative Dr Morgan Tuimileali'ifano. Gwen gave me a tour of the library's Pacific collection, we discussed ideas for both USP and Pambu to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2018, and I passed on to Gwen a few tips and tricks for using the Pambu catalogue. Over the next few weeks I was lucky enough to meet with other USP academics who have long been friends of Pambu.



*Figure 5 The entrance to USP, Laucala campus*

On Monday, September 11 I visited the Pacific Theological College (PTC), located in a beautiful spot by the sea wall in southern Suva. PTC is an ecumenical institution founded in 1966 to grow a highly trained indigenous ministry for the Pacific. PTC teaches Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology programs, of which the thesis is a core component for both. In 1994 Pambu copied student theses from 1968-1993 (see PMB MS 1084), so I was aiming to copy the remainder of theses from 1994.





*Figure 6 Pacific Theological College*

I was based in the wonderful PTC library which is a small and peaceful place to work. The library is managed by head librarian Nalini Premadish and her two lovely staff, Suliana and Anna. For theses submitted on paper, the library holds two copies of each – a bound copy which is shelved for student reference, and a loose leaf copy stored in an envelope in the library strong room for preservation. It was these loose leaf copies that I used to create digital surrogates.



*Figure 7 Collection of student theses, PTC Library*

The nature of the collection meant that listing was straightforward and completed in one day. As this was my first extended experience working with the camera, this part was a bit slower. I spent a lot of time in those early days - and periodically over the following weeks - adjusting camera settings and generally fiddling to get things right.

The older theses were printed on a variety of paper types, with some papers being quite fine and delicate. The more recent theses were on thicker, standard quality copy paper, which would have

been suitable for a sheet feeder scanner. I didn't quite finish copying the collection, so will finish on a return trip in 2018.



*Figure 8 Suli and Anna*



*Figure 9 Farewell selfie*

I would like to thank Nalini Premadish for hosting me in the library and in her home for the first week of my visit to PTC. When Nalini became unwell Dr Donald Samuel and his family kindly took me in to their home. I was extremely fortunate to have such kind and generous hosts throughout. A very big vinaka vaka levu to both the Premadish and Samuel families. Many thanks also to Prof Holger, Suliana, Ana, Lusiana, Rebecca, Saimoni and Kini for their kindness and assistance throughout.



*Figure 10 The reward for the early flight home*