

IFLA/FAIFE World Report: Libraries and Intellectual Freedom



Thailand

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In Thailand there are two major policy documents related to access to information and freedom of expression, namely 1) the National Information Policy and 2) the National Information Technology Policy

The National Information Policy

The National Information Policy, proposed the following policy: (1)

1. The government will certify that information is an integral part of national development and high priority should be given to information sources.
2. The government will give attention and allocate appropriate resources for the improvement of information systems and services in accordance with the objective of the National Economic and Social Development Plan.
3. The government will promote the awareness of and access to information to all users and grant the right of access to information to all Thai people.
4. The government will promote, arrange, and operate user education and training at different levels in order to maximise the effective use of information for both self and country development.
5. The government will promote and arrange appropriate professional education and training for different levels of personal engaged in information activities.
6. The government will promote and support information personnel in area of professional security and achievement.
7. The government will promote and accept a special responsibility for fostering research in the development of information systems and services.
8. The government will promote and facilitate co-operation and co-ordination of information activities at a national, regional and international level with special consideration for national benefit and protective security.

The National Information Policy is also promoted in the Thai National Information System THAI NATIS project. The government has also appointed a National Committee for the Direction and Co-ordination of the THAI NATIS in 1987 with the Deputy Prime Minister as chairperson.

The IT 2000 - The National Information Technology for the 21st century

The National Information Technology Committee under the auspices of the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) is drafting the IT 2000.

IT 2000 emphasises the mission : (2)

1. creating a National Information Infrastructure (NII)
2. investment in human resources
3. improvement of public services via public electronic information.

Implementation are for example rural communication development, school information system, and nation-wide government information program.

Another move related to information access is the drafting of the information act. The principle of this proposed act is to certify the rights of the public to receive government information. It emphasises the mechanism to protect public rights. The purposes of this act are to: (3)

1. certify the public rights in receiving government information as a checking mechanism to protect the misconduct of the government power to governmental power affecting the benefits of the community or the public.
2. determine protection criteria in creating or exposing various types of government information.
3. set up effective information systems beneficial for national development and administration

There are no serious problems in "access to information". There is an example about the restriction to the use of libraries

Population:	58,703,000 (1996)
GNP per capita:	\$ 2,960 (1996)
Government / Constitution:	Kingdom
Main languages:	Thai - Chinese, Malay
Main religions:	Buddhism - Islam
Literacy:	94% (1995)
Online:	1,65% (March 2000)

that the public seems to think that libraries are obstructing the access to information. Few years ago some academic libraries started to collect fee for "entering" libraries. This issue was reported in local newspapers, causing a lot of discussions both pros and cons. "Freedom of expression" is guaranteed by laws and recently there is no incident about any restrictions.

During the past year 1998, there was no case of censorship of library materials, nor of political or religious pressures resulting in limitations on access to information in libraries, nor of restrictions on librarians and other information specialists who provide reference or other information services.

Economic pressures, shortage of foreign currency result, to a certain extent, on limitation is acquiring foreign books and other information materials. Library networking and interlending has helped to reduce pressures.

Notes

(1) Nongphanga Chitrakorn. "National Information Policy and the Progress of National Information System in Thailand." in Ian Dickson and Lisa Dewyer, eds. *National Information Policies for the Asia and Oceania Region*, 80-81. Clayton: FID/CAO Secretariat, 1990.

(2) *IT 2000 (3rd Draft)*. Bangkok: the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 1995. (in Thai)

(3) "The Proposal About the Drafting of the Information Act." *IT Management*. (January 1992): 96-107. (in Thai)