

Literacy, Book Publishing, and Civil Society

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Despite batteries of tests given at intervals during schooling years, literacy rates among Pacific Islands populations are low, particularly in Melanesia. Low literacy rates are markers not only of inability to read but also of a lack of communication flows. Remedies are scattered and piecemeal at best, dramatically affecting book publishing, an under-rated area of importance for civil society. I use the term civil society here in three senses:

- contractually, as in the rights of citizens within states;
- representatively, as in peoples' participation in non-governmental activities (both formal associations and non-formal communities) to supplement or to balance states' actions; and
- morally, as in the ability of people to discuss their differences (including digitally, electronically, in print and writing), rather than resorting to violence, to settle them.

Some coordination exists among different sectors of the book chain -- writers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers, readers -- but the scope for improvement is great. Although some publishers cooperate, by and large, they operate independently if not competitively -- be they governmental agencies, churches and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals, or groups. Local, national, regional, and international attempts to address information needs through book publishing are often shortsighted and contradictory. The politics and economics of publishing are such that Oceanic peoples are often deprived of resources needed for informed, stable societies.

Although many Pacific Islanders are literate, their reading is often limited to school or religious activities. In predominantly oral cultures, rumour and rhetoric can be powerful tools that affect governance, meaning "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank 1992:3 quoted in Iati 2000:68). Although misinformation and disinformation occur in print as well, people's discernment, thus ability to respond, rises with increased literacy because they can access other sources of communication to validate what they have heard. As Diamond (1999), Gellner (1988), Goody (1968, 1977, 1986), Goody & Watt (1968), McLuhan (1962), Ong (1982), and Weber (1947) pointed out, the organization of various societies has changed significantly with the introduction

and refinement of writing and printing, acquisition of literacy, and development of associated skills. Communication becomes storable, thus retrievable, beyond memory. Technological knowledge accumulates and can be organized and compared, encouraging experimentation and innovation. Culture is examinable through historical records as well as myth. Commercial systems other than barter develop, then legal systems to resolve disputes. People learn to abide by laws and gain ability to contribute to forming them. Thus, literacy is "the key to active participation in political life" (Phillips 1970:21).

Literacy

Unlike Polynesia where education has been widely available for a century and more, Melanesia's far larger populations spread over more rugged terrain have been introduced to reading and writing much later. Literacy rates are 64% in Vanuatu (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:102), 45% in Papua New Guinea (Parade 1999:41), and 30% in Solomon Islands (UNDP 1999:13). The rates give us ideas of trends although literacy rates are not truly comparable across the region because assessment measures are different. Some measures use years at school, with measures neither of attendance during those years nor of quality of instruction. Some measures address literacy in the language of instruction, not mother tongues (Benson 2002, Tavola 2002). I telephoned the South Pacific Board of Educational Assessment to ask for literacy rates and to gain better understanding of literacy and how it is measured; I was told that SPBEA had an agreement with governments not to release literacy statistics.

Recent Pacific Islands Literacy Levels (PILL) tests showed percentages of people at risk in terms of literacy and numeracy, eg in 1998 60 per cent of people in Kiribati were at risk in terms of literacy (Kaiuea 1999). Different from literacy rates, PILL tests were diagnostic tests that were supposed to lead to strategies for literacy. PILL test results are generally not publicly available. Although some governments are quite open about releasing the information to those who request it, many governments are ashamed of the results -- even in countries generally believed to have high literacy rates. Other scholars and international workers have encountered similar blocks when trying to gather information about literacy. If we do not know the extent of the problem, how do we address it?

Not only is knowledge of rates an issue, but also basic understanding of literacy is at stake. In the course of compiling a survey on book provision (Crowl 1999a), I telephoned Fiji's Ministry of Education to obtain literacy rates and was told by the officer assigned to the task that, because the children were taught in English, they were literate in English! Instruction is not synonymous with performance. Compounding any analysis is the question of what constitutes literacy. If people can read the Bible cover to cover, but have trouble understanding food labels or simple tax forms, they may be literate but, in reality, they may endanger their health and lack skills to negotiate with government, businesses, or other sectors of society. Low literacy rates, different reading capabilities vis-à-vis a variety of documents, and scarce reading materials are

markers of limited written and printed communication flows.

Scarce Reading Materials and Studies on Book Publishing

Books are not plentiful in the Pacific Islands and become scarcer the farther one travels from urban centres. Rural underemployment and illiteracy are interdependent (Phillips 1970). Mass media can generate aspirations without supplying the wherewithal (reading materials) for people to gain literacy, to learn to participate in political processes (Lerner 1958). Netine (2000) showed how the ability to read and write affected Ni-Vanuatu women's contributions to the economic, political, spiritual, and physical well being of their communities. Literacy workers in Papua New Guinea have told me the same (field-work 1997).

Elley and Mangubhai's (1981) study demonstrated that Fiji children's language abilities and desire to read increased with greater availability of reading materials. A plentiful supply of reading materials is key to improving literacy.

Worldwide, studies on book publishing have generally concentrated on how-to manuals, the structure and history of the industry; and memoirs (eg Dahl 1968, Febvre & Martin 1997, Kilgour 1998, Schottenloher 1989, D. Smith 1989). Since the late 1940s, however, the body of literature on how media interact with society and politics has grown (eg Deibert 1997, Eisenstein 1980; Innis 1949, 1950, 1991; McLuhan 1962, 1987; McLuhan & Fiore 1967). Likewise, the literature on books themselves, text culture, and effects on society and politics has grown (eg Burke 2000, Coser 1965, Coser et al 1982, Darnton 1982, Eisenstein 1992, Escarpit 1966, Gedin 1977). Numerous centres and programmes for the study of publishing and of the history of books have been established, eg the Centre for the Book at Monash University (Australia), the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University, the Scottish Centre for the Book at Napier University, and the Centre for the Book at the Library of Congress in Washington DC. Scholars and interested individuals have established international networks and Internet sites, eg the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing at <http://www.sharpweb.org>, the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand at <http://www.uq.edu.au/~enctiffi/bsanz.htm>, and Bruce Jones at <http://communication.ucsd.edu/bjones/Books/booktext.html>.

For the Pacific Islands, studies of mass media -- journalism, television, radio, newspapers, satellite communication -- and freedom of the press are increasing in number. Richstad et al's (1978) bibliography, however, showed few entries for printing and none at all for book publishing as a subject heading. Some articles on the book business have since appeared in *Pacific Islands Communication Journal* (1985a&b, Walcot 1984) and a few other scattered books and journals (eg L. Chapman 2000, Crowl 1996). In the course of her MA studies, Linley Chapman (1984, 1986, 1987, 1993), former editor for the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai'i, wrote a number of papers on publishing, but those papers were not published. The only lengthy, published, generally available study specifically about publishing in the Pacific Islands has

been Lingenfelter's (1967) on the first 50 years of presses. The literature by and about missionaries gives scattered details of particular publishing efforts (eg Buzacott 1985, Hezel 1991, Larson 1997, Mantovani et al 1994, O'Brien 1995, O'Reilly 1958, O'Reilly & Laracy 1972, Oates 1992, Rademaker 1994, Talu 1995).

This large gap in the literature can only be explained by the fact that scholars have generally taken books themselves for granted, though not the communication within them. Just like most media today, more copy is sold by publishing about guns, murder, and mayhem than by publishing about books or governance and civil society. Yet, if we take a historical look at the Pacific Islands, we cannot help but notice that books and book publishing have contributed to political and social change.

Beginnings of Publishing in the Pacific Islands

Just as the rural life of most European peasant societies inhibited communication (Stock 1983), similarly did the isolation of Pacific Islands populations' slow awareness and adoption of text culture. From time immemorial, however, literacy has developed along transportation routes and concentrated where routes intersected (H.J. Martin 1994:343). It was only natural, as soon as Europeans developed their sailing vessels, navigational skills, techniques, and tools -- including books, charts, maps, and tables (Eisenstein 1980) -- that Europeans' text culture was on its way to the Pacific Islands.

European ships began traversing the Pacific in 1521. On land and at sea, Islanders watched the actions of Bible-toting priests, document-signing officers, and note-taking scientists just as Europeans noted Islanders' actions, tools, and crafts. Story telling has always been an intrinsic part of travelers' and Islanders' oral culture. With their knowledge of books, first beachcombers and missionaries, and very soon thereafter Islanders, augmented the number of stories in circulation (see Schofield 1968:312-313, Stock 1983 for the transmission of textual culture). As contact increased, so did the number of books (imported and later locally published). Instances of Islanders' interest in writing and printing abound in the literature (eg Chamisso 1986; Hezel 1978, 1983; Hezel & Berg 1980; Lamont 1994; Langdon 1988; Lockerby 1982; J. Martin 1991; Maude 1968; Spoehr 1978; Vason nd. See also Crowl 2002b).

Arriving from the end of the 1700s, the first wave of evangelical missionaries to the Pacific used strategies that had proved successful for the preceding several hundred years in Europe, ie distributing a plethora of tracts, pamphlets, and biblical books (Altick 1957, Febvre & Martin 1997, H.J. Martin 1994). They began by learning and designing orthographies for local languages, teaching reading and writing, then distributing publications in vernaculars. The London Missionary Society, the Anglican Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and later the Presbyterians and the Catholics introduced reading, writing, orthography, grammar, biblical studies, and general subjects

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aimed at saving Pacific Islanders' souls and 'civilizing' them (eg Buzacott 1985; Garrett 1982, 1992, 1997; Gill 1984; Hezel 1991; Raucaz 1928). Pacific Islanders took up Christianity in various forms, and native teachers have long and vastly outnumbered White missionaries (eg Crocombe & Crocombe 1982, 1984; Garrett 1982, 1992, 1997; Maretu 1983; Munro & Thornley 1996; Nau 1994). The missionaries' influences on religion, society, and politics, particularly the centralization of power, were profound (Douglas 1974, Koskinen 1953, Latukefu 1974, Laracy 1976, Gunson 1978, Hilliard 1978, Rutherford 1996). It behooves us to remember that the coronation ceremonies for Pomare and Taufa'ahau included bibles. These books were powerful symbols of authority -- totems of Christianity and the missionaries and rulers who accepted it and used it.

Missionaries have left rich and readable records of their aspirations, policies, practices, and political situations, including about book publishing. Of all agents of book publishing in the Pacific Islands today, missionaries remain the most prolific, continue to work with the grass roots, and have the greatest distribution networks. The British and Foreign Bible Society has become the Bible Society of Papua New Guinea and the Bible Society of the South Pacific with offices throughout the islands. Kristen Pres, Christian Books Melanesia, and the Liturgical Catechetical Institute remain strong in Papua New Guinea. The Assemblies of God, Seventh-day Adventists, Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses (the second wave of religious movements and arriving from the mid-1800s) have impressive publishing programmes in many islands countries, and thousands of publications have come off the presses of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Religious publishing is generally subsidized internationally and paid for in part locally; it reaches audiences because church workers bring faith and generally a great deal of commitment to their work. Furthermore, although church workers generally earn less than comparable private- or public-sector workers, theirs is a paying profession in a region without many jobs. The pentecostal movements and the fly-in, fly-out evangelists (the third wave) generally do not have publishing programmes in the islands, but a massive amount of biblical titles flow in their wake; these are by and large in English and from the United States. The second- and third-wave religious movements are particularly good at assigning tasks to people and giving them responsibilities within communities, one of which is spreading their literature, something the first-wave churches no longer do as vigorously or successfully (Akerson 1992, Barr 1998, Duru 2001, Ernst 1994, Jackson 1998, 1999, 2001; James & Yabaki 1989; Jehovah's Witnesses 1993; Kautil 1997; Larson 1997; Linden & Wakefield 1993; Namunu 1997; Prasad 2002; Savaiko 1997; Wakolo 2002; Wroge et al 1997).

Government and Publishing

Colonial governments sometimes took over presses formerly run by missionaries, eg the Marist press at Balade was moved to Noumea to become the Imprimerie du Gouvernement (Lingenfelter 1967:95), or they set up their own, eg

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the Government Printing Office in the Colony of British New Guinea (Bloink 1973), for the administration of their territories. They produced mainly gazettes, newspapers, and reports but also books. Until after World War II, schools remained largely under mission or community auspices and are still so proportionately more than in Western countries. Education in particular territories reflected policies and practices derived from their colonizers (eg Guy 2000, Hezel 1991, Tavola 1991). Concurrent with the push toward independence, the literature on economic takeoff, communication, development, and innovation and diffusion influenced governments and governmental agencies to undertake or to bolster information and educational programmes (eg Deutsch 1953, Lerner 1958, Pye 1963, Rogers 1962, Rostow 1960, Schramm 1960). Experiments based on these studies and their conclusions can be seen in school and university policies, some of which were designed or evolved to train an élite for governmental bureaucracy, and in departments and ministries of education and information throughout the region, some of which were set up as or became blatant promotional arms for the government of the day (eg development plans, education reviews, Crocombe & Crocombe 1994, Crocombe & Meleisea 1988, Groves 1922-1962, Kadiba 1989, Patton 1995, P. Smith 1987, 1989).

The creation of orthographies, grammars, and bodies of literature in local languages helped to solidify ethnic identities. The quest to develop nation-states necessitated promotion of national languages, thus the favouring of one language over others. With their pervasive authority (Foucault 1972, 1980, 1991) and set curricula, governments have promoted, even enforced, the idea of nationalism (eg Anderson 1991, Deutsch 1953, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1992, Innis 1950, 1991).

Despite pressures from colonizers and colonized for the creation and perpetuation of nation-states, separatist sentiments and actions have been noticeable in the Pacific Islands for decades and, in some cases, since before independence. Linguistic differences among peoples have reinforced their economic differences. Although the United States wanted to keep the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands as one entity, Micronesian countries split, claiming linguistic and cultural differences but economic reasons were just as great. Emphasis on a single local language reinforced by almost exclusive publishing in that vernacular (outside the colonial/metropolitan language), such as Bauan or Tahitian, papers over political and economic differences, such as with western Vitilevu or the Marquesas respectively.

The paper trail of policy and practice within colonial and independent governments with respect to book publishing programmes is much harder to follow. Despite a plethora of reports about a wide range of subjects, widely published reports or studies of book provision itself are few (eg Askerud nd; Benson 1999; Crowl 1999a, 2002a; Elley & Mangubhai 1981; Kuelinad 1999). Although policy makers have written their memoirs, by and large, they were not running the presses, as early missionaries had in much smaller operations. Government press workers and education and information officers generally have

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not written their memoirs or had them published, so information about the crucial role of books in developing civil society is not obvious and is often overlooked. Some Islanders' journals rest in library collections, others with their authors or their descendants; research and translation are needed to investigate this gap in the literature.

Colonial administrations have left several legacies in the book business. Colonial languages continue to pervade Pacific educational systems and redirect energy that might otherwise be spent on developing creative, indigenous educational matter. Territorial agreements that rule the book business mean that the South Pacific generally has to purchase books through Australia and New Zealand and the North Pacific through the United States. Entrenched colonial and aid practices favour publishers in Australia, Chile, France, Indonesia, New Zealand, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States by arguing present financial economies of scale, production appearances, etc. Human capacity building is at stake.

Independent governments, sometimes unwittingly, impede education and communication in their efforts to raise revenue for public service programmes. For example, although government officials agree that education is a priority, 8 of 13 countries impose 'knowledge taxes' (customs duties or value added tax) on books, paper, ink, plates, machinery, and film (Crowl 1999b: 109), thus raising the cost of providing reading material. Although some NGOs have exemption, not all do. If governments impede the voices of civil society (in the representative sense) however subtly or unintentionally, then they impede good governance, of which freedom of the press is a prerequisite.

Publishing by Individuals and Firms

Although Pacific Island economies are small and governments are large in relation to those economies, there are individuals and firms who publish outside governments, and along commercial or non-profit lines. Most common are newspaper or magazine companies that have printed books for churches, governments, and governmental agencies, then published some of their own: eg *Fiji Times*, *Samoa Observer*, *Word (Times of Papua New Guinea, Wantok, and New Nation)*, *Vava'u Press (Matangi Tonga)*, and *Micronitor (Marshall Islands Journal)*. Bookshops have gone into publishing: eg Aruligo in the Solomons, Friendly Islands in Tonga, and Desai in Fiji. Individuals have established their own publishing companies, and special tribute is due to two who have left us: Grace Mera Molisa of Vanuatu, who started Blackstone Publications, and Kauraka Kauraka of the Cook Islands, who started Sunblossom Press. Many individuals have published only one book, and they have had highly variable experiences with production and distribution.

Cooperation or Conflict?

Little coordination exists among different sectors of the book chain -- writers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers, readers -- and little

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coordination exists among publishers themselves -- be they churches and other NGOs, governments, individuals, or groups. This has been true historically as well, and in most countries around the world.

Religious Infighting

At least in the beginning because of cooperation in some places between missionaries and local rulers, religious publishing constituted the curricula of educational efforts. Missionaries were not without petty politics within particular societies. One might think the Catholics and Protestant missions spent more energy, ink, and paper conducting 'pamphlet wars' and real wars than in producing biblical or educational literature for Islanders (Lingenfelter 1967). By promoting ecumenicalism and use of vernaculars, however, Vatican II has helped to overcome some Catholic-Protestant differences. Some countries, eg those in Micronesia, have majority Protestant populations but have agreements with the Catholic Church to design curricula (Garrett 1982, 1992, 1997; Hezel 1991; Hockman 1991; Talu 1995). Faced with competition from Pentecostal churches, the mainline churches have also drawn closer together.

The volley of venom today is mostly between mainline and new religious movements (eg Barr 1998, Ernst 1994). Religious differences among individuals can have serious consequences for church publishing. The Friendly Islands Book Shop (FIBS) began publishing when Tongans came to the shop's manager, David May, asking for local productions. FIBS suffered fire damage in 1980, 1987, and 1997, losing 600,000 *pa`anga* (Tongan currency) in the 1997 fire. Arson was suspected as three other businesses burnt to the ground in just four days and all fires began about 6:00 am (May 1992, 1996, 1998). Who is to say if rivalry between individuals of different churches provoked these fires or if they were the result of personal grievances?

National Curricula, Examinations, and Books

Examination systems for primary school and secondary school in the South Pacific and for high school entrance in the North Pacific mean that teachers have to teach to set curricula. So, often teachers neither use different books nor improvise. Students often learn by rote. Moreover, students are often using textbooks that are 10 to 20 years out of date (eg Ratuva 2002, and based on personal experience in the Marshall Islands). Even at university, the practice of memorization is continued. This inflexible learning cannot be called thinking, much less problem solving. If children and young adults are not coached in problem solving, they are ill prepared for governance.

Only Papua New Guinea has national information and communication policy (Crowl 1999, Paraide 1999). Niue tried to implement national book policy, but the government changed just as the policy was about to be considered (Magatogia 2000). Following representations of needs, the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre (ACCU) for the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is interested in running a consultation on national book

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policy for the Pacific States (ACCU 2002).

Even such seemingly innocuous book publishing as poetry and schoolbooks becomes political in the very tight economies of the Pacific Islands. In Papua New Guinea, Word produced a few good books and a journal for schools, but the Department of Education (DoE) would not purchase these books and said DoE should be designing the curriculum. DoE did, however, give a photocopying budget to each school, and each school photocopied Word's journal multiple times -- a vastly more expensive exercise than DoE's buying printed copies from Word would have been (Walcot 1984, 1996, 2002). In Solomon Islands, Dorothy Prince ran a good bookshop in Honiara and published a few titles, but the government pulled its contract for supplies and Aruligo bookshop went out of business (M. Chapman 1994). When *Marshall Islands Journal (MIJ)*, 1991 printed news about the controversy surrounding Justice Byrd's tenure, the government pulled its textbook contract from *MIJ's* parent company, Micronitor. In Samoa, book publishing was not Sano Malifa's main line of work, but he had taken on publishing Samoans' poetry -- a real service because poetry is generally highly subsidized worldwide. The *Samoa Observer's* plant was burnt to the ground in the mid-1990s, and Sano Malifa was not in agreement with the government at that time (Aiavao 1994, J. Malifa 1995). Governments may not be thinking about the fate of education and civil society when putting small operations out of business.

Regional and International Agenda

There was a time when colonial governments accepted the Tate Oral English and Junior Reader programme initiated by the South Pacific Commission, the oldest regional organization outside the churches. Some governments later adapted these books to publish their own national versions. Although SPC no longer produces school readers, it continues to produce a wealth of technical reports. SPC generally gives away most of its publications (Capiez 2001), so all the money spent on production, distribution, and advertising is not recouped. I am unaware of any attempts to measure the volume of production of these publications and their use in educational institutions.

National governments have accepted some of the books published by the institutes of Education and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, but in the case of one book, *The Making of Modern Samoa* by Malama Meleisea, more than one Samoan government tried to prevent publication because each found the book too critical of itself. Generally, the level of cooperation between curriculum development units and regional and international agencies could be better.

A number of other agents, such as the United Nations Development Programme, produce reports and directories with nice covers. Physically, they are books but they do not have popular markets. The agencies generally have the budgets to give away the books, and, even if they do not plan to give them away, in the end, they usually do. Regional and international agencies often do not

consult with national curriculum development units beforehand to develop readers or textbooks rather than reports. To give these regional and international agencies their due, the national bureaucracies involved in textbook adoption are dense and regional and international agencies have their own deadlines to meet.

Non-governmental Organizations and Individuals

Many NGOs in the Pacific Islands provide a wealth of valuable literature, such as *Signposts to the Summit: Towards WSSD+5*, *DAWN Regional Debates on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation* by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN 2000) and *Wei Fo Raetem Olketa Wod Long Pijin* by the Solomon Island Christian Association (Beimers 1995). Many NGOs receive their funding from international or regional agencies or from grant-making foundations based in other countries. While not true for all, some may be under subtle pressure to publish in the language of their cohorts rather than the language of the neediest sectors of Pacific Islands societies.

Individuals and firms who operate on a commercial basis often look for the quickest return for their investment. Worldwide, publishing is a risky business and returns take years while publishers build up a backlist of reliable titles. Worldwide, banks generally do not finance publishing ventures. With technological changes, publishing equipment depreciates quickly, and blank paper has more value than printed stocks of books that may or may not sell in 10 to 20 years. Without significant collateral, most publishers operate by the seat of their pants, hoping that the next book will be a bestseller.

Individuals who are new to book publishing often have misconceptions that it is a high-return type of business. These individuals price books quite highly. When the books don't sell, they drastically mark them down, thus signaling just what they do not want people to think: the books are not worth much. They usually end up giving the books away or leaving them to rot somewhere. Selling in quantity at a low price is a much better strategy, but few people try this with books. Despite the international hype about bestsellers, most books are not. Furthermore, market analysis, quality book production, and assiduous promotion and sales in a region of declining literacy rates and low incomes are hard work.

Such commercial firms as Bess Press, Learning Media, and Oxford University Press have negotiated with ministries of education to produce class sets, but generally market analysis is slim. Except for religious materials and some magazines and journals, subscription sales are limited.

Large, commercial firms often, intentionally and unintentionally, denigrate island efforts. With their high-gloss books produced overseas by skilled divisions of labour, company representatives often give arguments that students learn better from high-gloss, full-coloured books. For example, publishing representatives were out in full force at the World Education Forum held in Senegal in 2000 and their message, again and again, was that the developing world could not produce, and that children could not learn unless they had, quality books -- meaning glossy, coloured editions, not necessarily those with

high levels of indigenous content.

Civil Society

Despite concerns to the contrary, locally produced publications are increasing: the number of titles and the number of copies of some titles are growing. More and more people are involved in publishing because technology has made production easier for individuals. However, whether publications are available, ie are they are distributed and used, is another question. Whether publications are keeping pace with population growth is unanswerable because census figures are unreliable for some countries and book production figures are unreliable or non-existent. Moreover, lending rates and Internet use will factor into consideration of distribution and readership.

As Iati (2000:69) pointed out, "the advocates of good governance do not promote good governance in perfect harmony with each other." While I am in no way denigrating freedom of the press, more thoughtful book publishing would help civil society in the Pacific Islands by contributing to education, by rationalizing scarce resources, and by increasing the pool of literate people and giving them tools (other than fists, cane knives, and guns) to address political injustices. Some of the very agencies that contribute to governance – churches and other NGOs, governments, individuals, and firms -- waste precious energy, ink, and paper by producing some materials that few people read or that are out of date. In addition to thinking just about profit or the message, (would-be) publishers need to think harder about the audience and how expanding the audience and expanding the audience's capabilities might help civil society (in all three senses).

Better research regarding production, distribution, and potential audience is needed. Within the islands, ministries of education should laud independent production of books and purchase copies for use in schools, but often do not and spend far more purchasing unsuitable and expensive books from overseas. Appearances and supply matter, but continually giving books (or supplying them from the developed world) to the current generation -- ostensibly to promote development -- without training people in the Pacific Islands how to make books for the next generation cannot be called development or governance. It is thoughtlessness, crass capitalism, overt power, or perhaps all three.

A bit more coordination -- civil discussion and book education -- between sectors might assist good governance. In the present age of promotion, a great deal of money is spent by the élite trying to impress the élite (eg coffee-table and scholarly books that are so expensive that only a handful of Pacific Islanders can buy them, eg Arnell & Wolk 1993, Campbell-Jones 1995, Whyte 1990). Research about what the masses read and how their reading matter affects society (eg Hoggart 1959, Watt 1963) is non-existent in the Pacific Islands. Society will remain 'uncivil,' and lacking in governance until the élite put more thought into sharing information and increasing communication flows. More, and better coordinated, book publishing is one avenue, of many, that must be taken.

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Achieving civil society (in all three senses) requires long-term, grass-roots efforts and thoughtful choices to expand communication channels so that people can make their own decisions about the kind of governance they want.

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