

## Conservation of Archival Materials

A number of national records and documents have crumbled into dust due to neglect or faulty conservation techniques. Owing to these invaluable losses, in many of the Southeast Asian countries, there is a felt need for additional training in the protection of documents and related materials.

In view of the regional call for more up-to-date preservation and restoration techniques, the **SPAFA Regional Centre** has conducted, with the cooperation of The National Archives of Malaysia, the **Training Programme in Conservation of Archival Materials**. The programme aimed to increase the overall professional competence of the Southeast Asian participants in the conservation of archival materials.

It was particularly designed for personnels responsible for the conservation of documents in archives, libraries, museums and other governmental institutions. Altogether ten regional participants plus a number of Malaysian observers attended the training.

Held in Malaysia, the training programme was implemented from November 1 to December 10, 1988. With the help of German film expert,



Mr Harold Brandes, and other Malaysian experts, the SPAFA trainees were provided with direct experiences on the conservation of three major archival materials, namely : film, microfilm, and paper base.

SPAFA trainees and Malaysian observers studied the chemical and physical properties of archival materials, the causes of their deterioration (due to light, heat, humidity, micro-organism, air pollution, etc.), and the appropriate preventive measures

to arrest and delay their further deterioration.

Moreover, trainees acquired knowledge and skills in the appropriate conservation methods to take. Practical sessions stressed preventive measures and conservation techniques utilizing locally available materials, equipment and the assistance of local conservation experts available within the country.

"We were exposed to conservation techniques not usually applied



**Thai trainee, Vira Pimpa (left) tries the sewing frame for bookbinding.**

in our country," says Participant Praneat Niyaylub, Archivist 5 from the National Archives of Thailand. "However, owing to inavailability of materials some of these techniques cannot be utilized in Thailand."

"Nonethess, we learned a lot of new things from the SPAFA training programme," stresses Participant Vira Pimpa, Archivist 5, also from the National Archives of Thailand. He adds that conservation techniques taught in the course are actually useful for Thailand.

Before parting, participants of the programme agreed to continue contacting one another to update themselves with developments in the conservation of archival materials. Significantly, the duration of the training activity has enabled them to share specialized knowledge and experiences in conservation.

Because of the amity developed by the group during their training, experts and specialists among themselves were identified. They could now be called upon for advice and assistance. Vira says, "Our continuous contacts will be useful for sourcing supplies abroad as well as information on conservation developments."



**SPAFA trainees and observers practise cleaning glass plate negatives.**



**At the Records Centre of the National Archives of Malaysia.**



**As part of their practicum on films, SPAFA trainees and observers visit Malaysia's GAYA Laboratory. Harold Brandes, invited expert from Germany, is seen standing fifth from left, second row.**

The SPAFA participants of the course are : Mr Sudiono and Mr Sri Sugiyanti from Indonesia ; Mr Shariffuddin Baharom, Mrs Nor Janati Bt. Ibrahim and Miss Noriah Jalil from Malaysia ; Mrs Amelia M. San Luis and Mrs Elena Alfonso from the Philippines ; Mr Chng Yak Hock from Singapore, Mr Vira Pimpa and Ms Praneat Niyaylub from Thailand.

Hopefully, after the programme, all of them will be more appropriately armed to combat the challenges of insects, humidity, and other agents responsible for the irreparable destruction of valuable documents in the region's national archives, libraries, museums and other government institutions. ☐

*- Wynette Puntuna*