

# The Challenge of Records and Archives Education and Training in the Pacific

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*Despite the perception of 'the Pacific' as a distinct and homogenous part of the world, the reality is that the hundreds of islands in the Pacific are geographically disparate, where the scattered populations function in a multitude of languages and cultures. The islands also face severe environmental conditions and significant limitations on transportation and communication. Archivists and recordkeepers in developing countries in the region have few options for education, training and skills development and little opportunity to come together with their Pacific colleagues. There are at present no face-to-face courses in recordkeeping and it is difficult for individuals to leave their posts to pursue studies or even attend workshops or seminars. Distance education seems a reasonable way to raise capacity in the region, but this approach also poses challenges, including the need to tailor curriculum to requirements in different countries and the need to provide a range of delivery options that suit the limitations on communications technologies throughout the region. In this paper, co-authors Michael Hoyle and Laura Millar report on an investigation conducted by PARBICA, the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, into distance education for recordkeeping in the Pacific. They outline some of the educational challenges faced by public sector recordkeepers in the Pacific and offer a strategic approach to action.*

## **Introduction**

To much of the world, the Pacific is seen as 'one' region: a destination for holidaymakers, a 'paradise' of palm trees and warm breezes, a place happily removed from the bustle of modern times. In reality, the Pacific is composed of hundreds of islands covering vast distances. Its 7.6 million people, dispersed over hundreds of islands covering 30 million square kilometres, represent less than 0.1 percent of the world's population but contains one-third of the world's languages.<sup>2</sup> There is no 'one' Pacific culture: the terms 'Melanesia', 'Micronesia', and 'Polynesia' represent general classifications but scarcely begin to reflect

the diversity of culture, language, customs and history found throughout the islands.

The Pacific region is also environmentally volatile, with high temperatures and humidity and a continual threat of storms, floods and cyclones, which place islanders at risk, limit their opportunities for movement and increase their level of isolation. Geography also affects communications: electricity, telephones and electronic technologies, while increasingly common, are not reliable. Whereas in other parts of the world electronic mail may 'go down' periodically and be restored in minutes, in the Pacific such technologies may be unavailable for days at a time. The remoteness of islands in the region is sometimes enhanced, not diminished, by new technologies.

Day-to-day life in the Pacific is its own challenge; protecting the recorded memory of the governments and people of the islands is equally complicated. PARBICA (the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives) seeks to serve the needs of recordkeepers throughout this immense region. On behalf of over twenty nations, states and territories in the North and South Pacific, many of which are developing countries with limited resources, PARBICA strives to:

- promote the preservation and protection of the archival heritage of the region
- facilitate the use of archives through public education and improved access
- stimulate and organise archival activities
- provide and assist with formal and informal professional training
- cooperate with other agencies concerned with the documentation of human and natural history in order to benefit all mankind.<sup>3</sup>

In its desire to support education and training for its members, PARBICA has been investigating the potential for distance-based courses in records and archives management particularly for developing countries in the region. This investigation has included the completion of a country-by-country analysis of the current status of records care in the region and an assessment of potential options for education and training. This paper

outlines the findings of that needs assessment, examines the challenges of education and training in the Pacific and suggests a strategic approach to capacity building for recordkeeping in an area of enormous diversity.

### **Part One: Assessing the need for education and training**

In 2002, Laura Millar, Margaret Crockett and Karen Anderson investigated the options for developing a distance education program in the Pacific. At the time, the University of the South Pacific (USP) was considered a logical agency for delivery of such a program, and so proposals were developed with USP as the potential provider of a distance-based certificate course in records and archives management. Subsequently, however, it was felt that the diversity of the Pacific had to be addressed more fully, in order to determine whether any one program – distance-based or not – would serve the needs of all countries in the region.

Consequently, in 2003, PARBICA worked with archival and educational consultant Laura Millar to complete a broader needs analysis of education and training for recordkeeping in the Pacific, to determine exactly what level of education and training was needed and what specific concerns were faced by recordkeepers in the Pacific.<sup>4</sup> As shown in Table 1, a total of 21 countries were surveyed: PARBICA's 19 member countries (with Pohnpei and Yap considered as part of the Federated States of Micronesia) and two additional countries – Nauru and Tokelau – which are part of the network of countries served by the University of the South Pacific.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1. Membership of countries surveyed

<i>Country</i>	<i>Member of both PARBICA and USP</i>	<i>Member of PARBICA only</i>	<i>Member of USP only</i>
American Samoa		x	
Cook Islands	x		
East Timor		x	
Fiji	x		
French Polynesia		x	
Guam		x	
Kiribati	x		
Marshall Islands	x		
Micronesia, Federated States of (including Pohnpei, Yap)		x	
Nauru			x
New Caledonia		x	
Niue	x		
Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of		x	
Palau		x	
Papua New Guinea		x	
Samoa	x		
Solomon Islands	x		
Tokelau			x
Tonga	x		
Tuvalu		x	
Vanuatu	x		

As will be shown below, the needs assessment highlighted several important issues.

- First, there is a general lack of resources and capacity throughout the Pacific; this is a very poor region of the world, with a population scattered over an enormous area.
- Second, there remains an enormous diversity of cultures, languages and histories throughout the islands that must be addressed when considering the training of individuals

responsible for their society's documentary memory; there is no 'one' Pacific region and so there is no 'one' type of record.

- Third, despite the small size of many countries, several governments have very complex administrative structures, meaning their recordkeeping requirements will be more complicated.
- Fourth, there is a remarkable increase in the use of electronic technologies, especially the Internet, in virtually all Pacific island nations, demonstrating a growing technological sophistication in the region.
- Fifth, most archival institutions are not equipped to care for the official records of their governments, never mind the wider task of preserving their society's documentary heritage.

Based on these findings, it is evident that education and training in recordkeeping are needed in developing countries in the Pacific, but that the different countries have their own cultural, administrative, linguistic and resource realities. It is important to determine the level and nature of training best suited to needs in each country before actually developing any one educational offering. To that end, the issues listed above are examined in more detail here.

### ***Issue No. 1: Lack of capacity***

The population of the entire Pacific is only 7.6 million: less than the population of Austria or Belgium, less than the population of New York City or London. The largest population by far is in Papua New Guinea, with over 5 million people; the other 2 million people inhabit a vast number of small countries, states and territories scattered across thousands of miles.

Based on an analysis of gross domestic product (GDP), it can be seen that most of the countries are seriously under-resourced and marginalised. Table 2 demonstrates the low level of GDP (below USD 2500) in many countries, including East Timor, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu. Given the limited resources available, it is clear that

even if opportunities for education in recordkeeping existed, the likelihood is low that individuals could afford to study without some form of concerted government support.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2. Population and GDP**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>GDP (USD)</i>
American Samoa	70 000	8 000
Cook Islands	21 000	4 200
East Timor	900 000	500
Fiji	870 000	5 500
French Polynesia	262 000	5 000
Guam	164 000	21 000
Kiribati	100 000	840
Marshall Islands	56 000	1 600
Micronesia, Federated States of (including Pohnpei, Yap)	108 000	2 000
Nauru	12 600	5 000
New Caledonia	211 000	14 000
Niue	2 200	3 600
Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of	80 000	12 500
Palau	20 000	9 000
Papua New Guinea	5 300 000	2 300
Samoa	178 000	5 600
Solomon Islands	510 000	1 700
Tokelau	1 400	1 000
Tonga	108 000	2 200
Tuvalu	11 000	1 100
Vanuatu	200 000	5 800

### ***Issue No. 2: Diversity of society***

The Pacific is an enormously diverse region, which is one of the great attractions for tourists and visitors. One could argue that nowhere else are so many different languages found in such abundance. Similarly, nowhere else are so many diverse ethnic groups found within established political units. Table 3 provides a calculation of the languages and ethnic groups found in each country surveyed, in relation to the country's population. It is recognised that diversity cannot be measured simply by numbers and statistics, but still a snapshot of the quantity of

linguistic and ethnic groups in each country is a good demonstration of the reality that the Pacific is not just one region.

As can be seen in Table 3, most countries include among their population representatives of a number of different ethnic groups. Yet it is the diversity of language that is more startling, and more of a challenge for communications, education and information sharing. Even in those countries with only one identified ethnic group, there is more than one language used. The need to communicate in English or French – the two common non-indigenous languages in the region – means that most Pacific islanders are at least bilingual; some speak several languages.

**Table 3. Linguistic and ethnic groups**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Number of languages and Dialects</i>	<i>Number of Ethnic Groups</i>
American Samoa	70 000	2	4
Cook Islands	21 000	2	5
East Timor	900 000	19	3
Fiji	870 000	3	6
French Polynesia	262 000	2	4
Guam	164 000	3	7
Kiribati	100 000	2	2
Marshall Islands	56 000	5	1
Micronesia, Federated States of (including Pohnpei, Yap)	108 000	9	9
Nauru	12 600	2	4
New Caledonia	211 000	34	7
Niue	2 200	2	4
Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of	80 000	3	8
Palau	20 000	6	4
Papua New Guinea	5 300 000	715+	5
Samoa	178 000	2	3
Solomon Islands	510 000	120+	6
Tokelau	1 400	2	1
Tonga	108 000	2	2
Tuvalu	11 000	4	2
Vanuatu	200 000	100+	5



***Issue No. 3: Complexity of government***

Many countries in the Pacific are composed of islands and atolls, where a number of indigenous groups have joined together under one administrative umbrella. Even in a country with a small population, a complex political system of municipalities, regions, provinces, or states may exist, and each unit may have several departments, ministries, agencies, or offices. The management of the records within each unit becomes more challenging as the number of administrative units increases.

Table 4 outlines the approximate number of recordkeeping units in different countries, according to categories (under 10, between 11 and 20, between 21 and 30, between 31 and 40, between 41 and 50 and over 51).<sup>7</sup> In an assessment of educational needs, one could argue that each unit in place would require at least one records management professional to assist with recordkeeping operations. Further, since those people would move from position to position over their careers, additional staff would always need to be trained as replacements. Staff would also be needed when units expanded.

As can be seen in Table 4, several countries have extremely complex recordkeeping environments, with a large number of distinct units. The most complex systems are found not only in countries such as American Samoa, French Polynesia and the Marshall Islands – each of these nations with ties to the United States or France – but also in countries like the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu. In this study, only two countries – Niue (population 2,200) and Tuvalu (population 11,000) – appear to have relatively less complex systems, with only 11 to 20 different administrative units identified.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4. Population and complexity of recordkeeping

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Recordkeeping Units</i>
American Samoa	70 000	41 - 50
Cook Islands	21 000	>50
East Timor	900 000	NA
Fiji	870 000	+50
French Polynesia	262 000	31 - 40
Guam	164 000	NA
Kiribati	100 000	41 - 50
Marshall Islands	56 000	41 - 50
Micronesia, Federated States of (including Pohnpei, Yap)	108 000	21 - 30
Nauru	12 600	21 - 30
New Caledonia	211 000	21 - 30
Niue	2 200	11 - 20
Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of	80 000	21 - 30
Palau	20 000	31 - 40
Papua New Guinea	5 300 000	>50
Samoa	178 000	41 - 50
Solomon Islands	510 000	31 - 40
Tokelau	1 400	21 - 30
Tonga	108 000	21 - 30
Tuvalu	11 000	11 - 20
Vanuatu	200 000	41 - 50

#### ***Issue No. 4: Technological development***

Despite their fragile economic place in the world, many of the countries of the Pacific are becoming more and more technologically sophisticated. Even the smallest countries are 'leapfrogging' past the typical stages of technological development. For example, virtually every country has Internet access and most have commercial and government websites. Email is increasingly common, and countries are moving to satellite and digital technologies much more rapidly than took place in developed countries as recently as five to ten years ago.

**Table 5. Level of technological development**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Level of technological use in country</i>	<i>Level of government use of the Internet</i>
American Samoa	high	high
Cook Islands	high	high
East Timor	low	low
Fiji	medium	high
French Polynesia	high	high
Guam	high	high
Kiribati	low	low
Marshall Islands	medium	high
Micronesia, Federated States of (including Pohnpei, Yap)	medium	high
Nauru	low	low
New Caledonia	high	high
Niue	medium	medium
Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of	medium	medium
Palau	medium	low
Papua New Guinea	low	high
Samoa	low	low
Solomon Islands	low	medium
Tokelau	low	medium
Tonga	low	medium
Tuvalu	low	medium
Vanuatu	low	medium

Table 5 identifies the level of use of technology in the different countries surveyed. The information provided is broken into two categories: level of technological development and use in the country in general, based on the percentage of the population that appears to have some access to telephone systems; and level of government use of the Internet, based on a review of government websites.<sup>9</sup> A surprising finding is the extensive use of the Internet by the government in even the smallest or least developed countries. The Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, for example, have 'medium' levels of Internet use by the government, even though the general population has extremely limited access to such technologies. More developed countries, such as American Samoa,

French Polynesia and Guam, demonstrate more consistent access to technology.

However, many countries do not exhibit the same high level of technological development outside of government. In spite of the increasing availability of communications technologies, not all citizens can access even telephones, let alone the Internet. A total of 16 of the 21 countries surveyed have low (10) or medium (6) levels of technological use. Governments may be developing websites but citizens may still not be able to access computer technologies or even telephones easily.

Any educational program for recordkeeping must address the changing technological environment. One issue to consider is the growing use of computers in government and the recordkeeping challenges associated with the creation of electronic information. Another issue to consider is the challenge of drawing on communications technologies to provide education and training – such as through computer-mediated learning – while ensuring all potential students are not deterred from their studies by an inability to access or use such technologies.

### ***Issue No. 5: Capacity of archives***

The next question is whether the existing records and archives institutions in these countries (specifically the national archives) are prepared to cope with the recordkeeping requirements of the twenty-first century. To assess the capacity of national archives in Pacific island nations, the following issues were examined:

- Whether or not there is an archival institution in place.<sup>10</sup>
- Whether or not that institution is officially involved with public records care (including but not only records management).
- The level of staff in place in the institution.
- Whether other agencies in the country are involved with heritage and cultural resource management (which implies a greater sense of heritage, culture and identity in the country).
- Whether or not the national archives has a web presence (which implies that it is receiving support from government

for expanded services and the acquisition and use of new technologies).

- The overall level of development of the institution, based on an assessment of the above categories and additional research into the institution.

Table 6 demonstrates that the vast majority of national archives in the Pacific are unequipped to handle the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century recordkeeping, including electronic records care. Virtually all PARBICA countries have some form of national archival institution in place (the two countries without identified national archives are East Timor and Tokelau, the latter not a member of PARBICA). However, 10 of the 21 institutions identified do not seem to have any formal responsibility for public records management. It could be argued the others may have the responsibility but not the resources to carry out the tasks adequately.

Overall, this analysis concluded that of the 21 countries examined, 12 National Archives are at a low level of development and nine are at a medium level of development. None could be categorized as at a high level of development, although some countries – such as Fiji, French Polynesia and New Caledonia – are improving the sophistication of their operations more quickly than other Pacific island nations.

The total number of staff identified for all countries is 88, and staff levels vary from one person to 19. In 5 institutions, no staff levels are identified. Of the 16 institutions that do indicate staff levels in the national archives, the average number is 5.5.<sup>11</sup> Of the total number of staff in all countries, 23 ‘professional archivists’ were identified by title or position.<sup>12</sup>

Most countries seem to have other cultural or heritage agencies in place in addition to the national archives, such as a national museum, library, or heritage department. In seven countries, no such institutions could be identified. Where a country seems to have no such identifiable institutions, it often also demonstrates a low level of archival development.<sup>13</sup>

The existence of a web presence in the archives suggests a higher level of government support for its activities. A web presence implies the availability of computer technologies and the development of automated information systems. Out of twenty-one countries, only five – American Samoa, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia and Northern

Mariana Islands — have webpages or an established web presence of some kind.<sup>14</sup> Given the increasing level of computerisation in many Pacific island countries, noted earlier, the fact that only five National Archives have an established web presence suggests that those institutions are a low priority for government support and development.

Table 6. Status of national archives

American Samoa	Cook Islands	East Timor	Fiji	French Polynesia	Guam	Kiribati	Marshall Islands	Micronesia	Nauru	New Caledonia	Niue	Northern Mariana Islands	Palau	Papua New Guinea	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Tokelau	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu
<b>Is there an institution in place?</b>																				
Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
<b>Is it involved with public records care/records management?</b>																				
Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	NA	NA	N	N	NA
<b>Number of employees</b>																				
6	3	NA	19	7	NA	2	1	12	NA	9	1	3	2	14	2	NA	NA	4	2	1
<b>Are other agencies involved with heritage or cultural resource management?</b>																				
Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	Y	NA	NA	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	Y	N	NA
<b>Is there a web presence for the archives?</b>																				
Y	Y	NA	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	NA	N	N	N
<b>What is the overall level of development (high, medium, low)?</b>																				
M	M	L	M	M	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	M	M	M	L	L	L	L	L	L

### ***Consequences for education and training needs***

Based on the assessment of issues above, it is possible to examine needs for education and training in relation to the different capacities found in each country. Three categories of educational level are evident: basic, intermediate and advanced. As can be seen from Table 7 below, thirteen institutions have basic educational needs, six have intermediate needs and two have advanced needs.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 7. Educational and training needs**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Educational/Training Needs</i>
American Samoa	advanced
Cook Islands	intermediate
East Timor	basic
Fiji	intermediate
French Polynesia	intermediate
Guam	intermediate
Kiribati	basic
Marshall Islands	intermediate
Micronesia, Federated States of (including Pohnpei, Yap)	basic
Nauru	basic
New Caledonia	advanced
Niue	basic
Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of	intermediate
Palau	basic
Papua New Guinea	basic
Samoa	basic
Solomon Islands	basic
Tokelau	basic
Tonga	basic
Tuvalu	basic
Vanuatu	basic

**Key:**

**Basic** = the country, through its national archives, is in critical need of core training in paper-based recordkeeping and archives management and needs basic information on the challenges of electronic recordkeeping

**Intermediate** = the country, through its national archives, could expand on basic education and training with more intermediate-level information about electronic recordkeeping

**Advanced** = the country, through its national archives, could expand its education and training to encompass modern electronic records management issues at a more sophisticated level.

**Part Two: Options for education in the Pacific**

Given the assessment described above, the question is not whether education and training in recordkeeping is needed, but rather, how such education is best delivered. There are few existing educational opportunities in the Pacific, and even where programs exist, records staff in governments cannot just quit their jobs or take a leave of absence to complete the necessary course of study. Considerable attention has been focused on the opportunities of distance-based learning, as a means by which staff can receive quality training while remaining in their places of residence, retaining their positions and income and continuing to support their government's operations.

***Existing education programs***

At present, the primary form of face-to-face education and training for Pacific island recordkeepers is the biennial PARBICA conference. There are virtually no other educational opportunities offered in the region. People seeking courses cannot easily leave their jobs to attend workshops or conferences in other parts of the world. Very few can afford to leave their positions for a year or two or more to pursue advanced courses. Only a handful of Pacific recordkeepers have been able to pursue more than short-term studies.

Beyond PARBICA, the most accessible recordkeeping courses for Pacific Islanders are offered in Australia, New Zealand, the western United States and Asia (including, in Asia, courses offered through EASTICA



and the University of Hong Kong and workshops offered through the National Archives of Malaysia). Most of these courses are delivered in universities through face-to-face teaching; usually they focus on recordkeeping issues in the host countries, not Pacific island nations. Many courses are at a graduate level, which means that Pacific Islanders may not have the required prerequisites to enrol. Indeed, many of those who might take such training are likely to be early school leavers, perhaps having left school as young as fifteen. While their individual ability to complete the courses may not be in question, the challenge is whether or not they will be accepted into programs in the first place without upgrading their existing credentials.

Australia offers master's degree programs in records and archives management and accepts overseas students. In 2000, the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (OPNZ) began offering courses in records management at the first year undergraduate level, primarily intended for students in New Zealand. In 2002, OPNZ launched a diploma in records and information management, equivalent to one-third of an undergraduate degree. Again, however, many Pacific Islanders do not have sufficient requirements to enrol in these Australian or New Zealand programs.<sup>16</sup>

In 1990, the University of the South Pacific (USP) introduced a certificate and a diploma in library/information studies, to train individuals in basic and more advanced library skills. This USP program does not include information about records or archives management. As part of the investigation of distance education opportunities for the Pacific, PARBICA has been negotiating with USP about developing a certificate program in records management. Negotiations are still underway as of 2004.<sup>17</sup>

Other archival and related associations also offer some educational opportunities. For example, the Pacific Island Archives and Library Association (PIALA) organises library conferences, sometimes with speakers on archives or records topics. The Pacific Islands Museums Association (PIMA) also organises workshops, sometimes including records issues. But recordkeepers from developing countries cannot always afford to attend.<sup>18</sup>

Some public funding is available through aid agencies, particularly to undertake short courses or secondments, but such funds are not

consistently available throughout the region. Further, many aid agencies will only fund attendance at programs in the region, and the lack of education and training programs in records and archives in the Pacific means that potentially available funds cannot necessarily be used to train recordkeepers.

A number of existing educational institutions in different Pacific island countries could consider developing training programs in records and archives management. Countries with colleges or universities include American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Palau and Papua New Guinea. Recordkeeping courses could be delivered through these institutions, but many practitioners may still not be able to leave their jobs to study full-time. Further, no one country may by itself have the critical mass needed to warrant development of such a program within its borders.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Identifying the target audience***

The first step in a Pacific-oriented approach to education and training is to identify the primary audience, recognising the need for continuity of operations. Four categories have been identified:

1. The first category includes individuals with records or archives responsibility in government offices, records centres or archives. Many of these people have been given responsibility for records care but have not obtained the education or training required to undertake their duties adequately. These individuals are in need of certificate and diploma programs that allow them to study while remaining in their positions, thus not compromising their employment prospects or their incomes.
2. The second category includes support staff in government archives, records centres and offices. These people may work full-time or part-time in clerical or support positions, and they may have responsibility for the creation and management of recorded information. They may be early school leavers and may not qualify for entry to diploma or degree programs. Again, flexible learning opportunities will help these individuals improve their capacity without risking their employment.

3. The third category includes senior government officials responsible for records and archives programs. Many of these people have received education or training in records or archives from programs outside of the Pacific. Because they are such a distinct minority, these records officials have become crucial members of their institutions, who will not be easily replaced should they move on to other more senior positions. Their educational needs will most likely be met by study through overseas institutions, either face-to-face or by distance. Of particular concern to them may be continuing education, especially about rapidly changing topics such as electronic records management and information technologies.
4. Another category is the pre-appointment student interested in recordkeeping as a profession. While pre-appointment studies are all but essential to employment in the records profession in North America and Europe, very few records personnel in developing countries, particularly in the Pacific, have the opportunity to study the topic prior to employment. Consequently, while the profession must set as a long-range goal the development of a culture in which practitioners receive pre-appointment education, in the short term, essential capacity building needs must first be met, ideally by flexible learning that allows recordkeepers to study while on the job.

It is argued that the first two categories of potential students – those people currently working in records management in a professional or support position but without extensive previous knowledge or training – ought to be the primary audience for a distance education program, in order to increase institutional capacity by improving the skills of existing practitioners without interrupting their service for the organisation. The third category – senior practitioners – ought to be supported to attend international courses and seminars until such time as a critical mass of knowledge is in place in the region. And the fourth category – the pre-appointment student – is best served in the short term by distance-based courses, again until such time as the profession is sufficiently well established in the region and governments can establish and enforce hiring criteria that require advanced studies. Only

then will more formal educational programs be supported sufficiently to allow for sustainability.

### ***Addressing Pacific realities in education and training***

Good government relies on quality recordkeeping, but governments in the Pacific – like governments in many other parts of the world – do not offer adequate support for the education and training necessary in the field. There are few indigenous opportunities to study recordkeeping, and even where programs exist in other countries, records staff cannot just quit their jobs or take a leave of absence to complete the necessary course of study. And those individuals who do travel to other countries to train take away their own corporate memory.

As demonstrated by the needs assessment, the Pacific is not just ‘one’ region. The countries of the Pacific are as distinct from each other as they are from their neighbours in Australia or New Zealand, or from countries in North America and Asia. This diversity suggests that a multi-faceted approach to education may be best. For example, the more advanced level of development in American Samoa or French Polynesia suggests that anyone from that country wishing to study records and archives issues may choose to follow a program in another country, such as the United States or France.

Similarly, the diversity of languages and national affiliations in the Pacific also suggests that different administrative systems are in place for recordkeeping. Training needs will vary even more depending on the nature of those administrative systems. The best language of instruction in one country may be French, while in another country it may be English. Even then, the learner may speak English or French as a second or third language and may therefore have problems studying in a foreign language, a challenge made more difficult by the complexity of the subject of recordkeeping.

On an individual level, distance-based education can be challenging as it requires a high level of self-motivation, often without the formal structure of a classroom or even set study times. Distance education students who also have professional and family obligations can find it difficult to complete self-study programs. A much higher level of institutional support is needed in order to help learners complete their programs and therefore help increase capacity within the government.

Ironically, those people who do complete professional studies, whether distance-based or in face-to-face courses, are highly valued both within and outside their institution. They often move quickly into more senior roles or are drawn into more lucrative positions in the private sector. People who study overseas sometimes do not return to their home countries; the pay, living and social conditions abroad can be difficult to resist, especially for people with families and children. While individuals may benefit greatly from their studies, their institutions, governments and countries lose the potential they bring if the learners do not return home to contribute their services.

For personal and national reasons, flexible and open learning remains the best option for building capacity in recordkeeping and promoting public sector reform. It allows learners to stay in their home environment while providing them with the chance to improve their academic and intellectual potential. If well designed, such educational and training programs can offer a 'win-win' situation for individuals and their public sector employers.

But to ensure continuity within the institution and overall capacity building, open learning needs to be part of a coordinated approach to development. Basic training programs could be developed with a certificate or diploma upon completion. These programs could be followed as appropriate with degree studies. The first two levels of study – certificate and diploma – are best developed in the Pacific, while more advanced studies may be best offered through institutions in Australia, New Zealand, or elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Overseas courses may increasingly move to distance delivery to allow wider access for Pacific Islanders.

The following specific issues would have to be addressed to ensure the success of any distance-based educational program.

- It is essential to recognise the varied technological capacity in many Pacific islands; any distance-based course ought to be available for print delivery before any other options, such as online teaching, is considered.
- It is important not only to develop one curriculum product but also to review that curriculum regularly to ensure it meets the changing realities of recordkeeping in the Pacific

and anticipated changes in technology, capacity and government operations.

- It is wise to build on existing initiatives, such as those underway at OPNZ and USP, to serve the wider Pacific, while recognising the distinct educational needs of each country within the region.
- It is essential to support learners to encourage completion of their studies and to help provide an institutional atmosphere that encourages them to remain in their public sector positions after their studies are finished, at least long enough to transfer knowledge or allow a subsequent group of learners to complete their own studies.
- It is wise to provide courses in a cost-effective manner, affordable to Pacific island nations while still allowing for suitable cost recovery and appropriate profit for the educational institution.

As noted, education and training in records and archives management must be relevant not only to the region but also to the distinct countries and territories within that region. Table 8 offers a specific breakdown of activities PARBICA could consider as part of a strategic approach to education and training.

**Table 8. Levels of educational development and related PARBICA activities**

<i>Level</i>	<i>Educational Offerings</i>	<i>PARBICA Activities</i>
Level 1	Basic courses, offered through existing institutions such as USP, OPNZ, or national colleges or universities via distance or face-to-face delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial support for course development and/or delivery</li> <li>• approval of curriculum</li> <li>• financial assistance to students</li> </ul>
Level 2	Intermediate courses, offered through institutions such as OPNZ or national colleges or universities, through distance learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial support for course development and/or delivery</li> <li>• approval of curriculum</li> <li>• financial assistance to students</li> </ul>
Level 3	Advanced courses, offered through national universities, such as in Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial assistance to students</li> </ul>
Level 4	Specialised courses, offered through PARBICA seminars and workshops, national or international seminars and workshops, or sponsorship to international events within or outside the Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of priorities for specialised education and training, based on different needs and capacities throughout the Pacific region</li> <li>• identification of existing courses and workshops</li> <li>• funding for regional offerings</li> <li>• development of biennial PARBICA seminars and workshops</li> </ul>

As shown in Table 8, a strategic approach to the development of education and training is critical to sustainability. Such an approach should encompass the following specific actions.

- The development by PARBICA, as the key professional body in the region, of standards and priorities for recordkeeping education and training.
- The consideration by PARBICA of the appropriateness of certification or similar formal recognition for education and training for the Pacific.
- The development of core curriculum in key topics (such as recordkeeping, archives management, electronic records care, preservation and access) for adoption and adaptation by different countries or institutions in the Pacific.
- The development and delivery of basic courses, offered through USP, OPNZ, or national colleges or universities via distance or face-to-face delivery, as appropriate for needs in that nation or region, based on the core curriculum developed and conforming to the standards, priorities and – if appropriate – certification requirements identified by PARBICA.
- The development and delivery of intermediate and advanced courses, through the agencies identified above or through other educational institutions, in distance or face-to-face mode, to support higher and further learning in the field, while not duplicating other existing efforts and so using resources efficiently.
- The development and delivery of specialised courses, including offerings through PARBICA workshops and seminars, national or international seminars and workshops, or sponsorship to international events within or outside the Pacific, according to priorities set by PARBICA and addressing the differing needs and capacities of practitioners throughout the Pacific.
- The investigation by PARBICA of options for financial support, within individual countries and across the region, for course development and delivery.



- The continued support by PARBICA of students in the Pacific region, including encouraging the completion of studies and recognising individual achievements.
- The continued review of priorities and strategies by PARBICA, as the key professional agency in the region, to ensure continued capacity building throughout the region and to ensure both the achievement of minimum levels of capacity and continued expansion of skills at intermediate and advanced levels.

Of course PARBICA, as a volunteer organisation with limited capacity, will need to be cautious that it does not promise more than it can realistically deliver.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, a distance-based educational program, such as a certificate in recordkeeping, would be a valuable contribution to the development of a career path in records and archives in the Pacific. The certificate would also provide students with the necessary academic, communication and study skills to allow them to complete their study successfully and perhaps eventually progress to more advanced studies.

But such a certificate is not the only solution to education and training needs. It is not possible to develop a 'one stop shopping' approach to training and education in any region. Rather, it is best to consider education and training as part of a regional strategic plan, one that seeks to increase professional capacity throughout the region while recognising the diverse needs in different countries.

Further, it is critical when developing educational and training programs to recognise the importance of maintaining organisational continuity. The loss of staff for more than a few weeks can diminish capacity within a unit; these short-term losses may outweigh the long-term gains. It is a delicate balancing act to improve individual ability while not losing organisational strength. A strategic approach to distance education and training, focusing on institutional growth and addressing organisational, regional and individual needs, will ensure the best possible outcome for individuals and governments.

Ultimately, improvements in education and training for recordkeeping in the Pacific will not only increase the capacity of individual practitioners but will also improve the quality of records care in the region. As in other parts of the world, capacity building is critical to improvements in evidence-based recordkeeping and thus to increased public accountability, transparency and openness. Just as recordkeeping is a critical part of public sector reform, a capable and effective workforce is an essential part of quality public service.

### **Endnotes**

1 This paper draws extensively on the work conducted by, Laura Millar, Margaret Crockett, Karen Anderson and their colleagues at PARBICA and the International Records Management Trust in 2002 and 2003 to investigate options for distance education for the Pacific region. For more information on the project and for details about the research conducted, methodologies used and data gathered, go to <[http://www.archivenet.gov.au/archives/parbica/distance\\_learning.html](http://www.archivenet.gov.au/archives/parbica/distance_learning.html)>.

2 To gain an understanding of the area involved, a useful map is accessible online at the *CIA World Factbook*. Go to <[http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/reference\\_maps/oceania.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/reference_maps/oceania.html)>.

3 See the PARBICA website at <[http://www.archivenet.gov.au/archives/parbica/parbica\\_main.htm](http://www.archivenet.gov.au/archives/parbica/parbica_main.htm)>.

4 The terms 'education' and 'training' may seem to be used interchangeably in this paper. In fact, the authors fully recognise distinctions between the two terms. As will be seen, however, the overall issue of capacity building demands that both education and training be considered as requirements for improvement in public sector reform. There is not adequate scope in this paper to address in detail the distinctions as they affect specific curriculum; interested readers are directed to the reports prepared as part of this project.

5 Because this study examines needs in Pacific Island nations, the following countries were not included in this survey: Australia (including New South Wales and Victoria), New Zealand and Hawaii. While these countries are indeed members of PARBICA, their needs – and the opportunities available to them for education and training in records and archives management – differ substantially from those in Pacific island nations.

6 This information is drawn in part from the *CIA World Factbook*, a key resource for the needs assessment. Go to <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>>. For more information on the data gathered, see <[http://www.archivenet.gov.au/archives/parbica/distance\\_learning.html](http://www.archivenet.gov.au/archives/parbica/distance_learning.html)>.

7 The number given is based on an identification of the approximate number of central government ministries or departments in place; the approximate number of quasi-government offices, authorities, crown agencies, or other major businesses in place (note only a very few businesses with a national presence have been identified and the number of actual businesses and industries in each country may in fact number in the hundreds or more); and the approximate number of distinct administrative units in place outside of the central government (based on number of provinces, islands, municipalities, etc). These numbers are approximate and are calculated only to demonstrate the complexity of recordkeeping even in the smallest of islands.

8 Niue is closely aligned with New Zealand administratively and relies heavily on this external support for its ongoing operations. In January 2004 the island was battered by Hurricane Heta; over 70% of the island's tourist infrastructure was demolished. The archives was also destroyed and emergency salvage operations began in February 2004. Newspapers such as the *New Zealand Herald* reported on the storm and its after effects. See <<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=3542359&thissection=news&thesubsection=general>>.

9 Low use is when the government does not have a web presence or when those web pages in existence appear to be very basic, outdated, or consistently hard to access. Medium use is when the government uses the Internet to disseminate basic information about the country (often about tourism or business) but does not use the tool to disseminate government information on a regular basis or to provide an interactive forum for users. High use is when the government uses the Internet not only to disseminate information but also to provide current documents or resources and to provide an interactive forum. (In one case, for East Timor, no information could be found. Based on this absence of information the ranking of 'low' was provided.) Information for this analysis was gathered from international statistical data on telecommunications, such as the CIA's *World Factbook*.

10 Unfortunately, an archival institution can have been in place for years but never assigned responsibility for current records management. The institution may also have empowering legislation but that legislation may be ineffective or poorly developed. A well-functioning archival institution is one that has official responsibility for current records management and the care and protection of archives, through legislation; has adequate staff and resources to carry out these records management and archival functions; and access to new technologies and the resources and capacity to use those effectively.

11 It should be noted that 3 of 21 institutions have 12, 14 and 19 staff, which skews the average identified.

12 Accurate information was not available about whether these archivists have received any formal education or training or to what level.

13 The underlying assumption in this analysis is that the more cultural and heritage agencies in place, the more aware the government is of its cultural, heritage and archival responsibilities. Ironically, however, it is often the case that when a government has established a number of heritage institutions it groups the national archives with them and so does not allow that institution to move into a more active role in government recordkeeping. So the indicators in this category, while interesting, should not be used as a confirmation of government support for recordkeeping.

14 Interestingly, three of these countries have close formal or informal relations with the United States; it may be that their level of development is associated with access to the sophisticated technologies prevalent in the USA.

15 It is important to remember that this categorisation of need into basic, intermediate or advanced does not suggest that any country can do away with basic training and education. There is an urgent and ongoing need for core training in all Pacific island nations. Rather, the categorisation demonstrates that some countries have moved more rapidly into an electronic recordkeeping environment and so need to address electronic records and electronic government more quickly as they are perhaps at even greater risk of losing those elements of their society's documentary memory now being created in digital form.

16 For more information on the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, see its official website at <<http://www.topnz.ac.nz/programmesandcourses/subjectarea/pcinformation.html>>. For a description of educational programs in records and archives in Australia, see the Records Management Association of Australasia at <<http://www.rmaa.com.au/docs/profdev/index.cfm>>.

17 For more information about the USP library course, see the USP website at <<http://www.usp.ac.fj>> and look under 'distance and flexible learning'.

18 For more on PIALA, go to <<http://www.uog.edu/rfk/piala/piala.html>>. For more on PIMA, go to <<http://www.pacificislandsmuseum.org/>>.

19 More detailed information about the educational institutions identified in the Pacific is included in the project reports prepared for PARBICA.

20 As noted, negotiations have been underway with USP to develop a certificate program in records and archives studies, but other options are also being considered by PARBICA.