

Welcoming Address for “Encyclopedia Writers & Editors Forum” (via Zoom)
Monday, August 10, 2020 at 07:00 GMT

Good Day for everybody, I am happy to meet some of you for the first time, hoping to see the other colleagues in the future.

In pursuit of fulfilling my mission in the World Crafts Council, I thought of initiating long standing projects that help in preserving and reviving traditional handicrafts, being an important component of the human cultural heritage, that protects the identity of social communities.

Coming from an academic background, I found out that publishing an Encyclopedia of Crafts will serve this purpose as a starting point. I was confident then that, through publishing this project, I can contribute, somehow, in building a wider scope of awareness about the tremendous value of preserving the traditional handicrafts, as well as reviving some of the languishing ones. The objective is to sustain them, and to use them today and in the future as a source of inspiration for creation and innovation.

When I first submitted the concept of this project to my colleagues on the Asia Pacific Region Board, during its 3rd Board Meeting (held on 1 & 2 of June, 2014 in Muscat-Oman), it was welcomed enthusiastically at that time. Today, with your efforts and contribution, it is welcomed region-wise and world-wide.

Dr. Kevin Murray, VP of South Pacific subregion then, being a scholar was very interested in contributing to this long-lasting cultural project. He exerted enormous effort to put things together. We together discussed the project with Mr. Indrasen Vencatachellum, whom we met in Muscat-Oman he was as enthusiastic as us along with the APR Secretariat. I had several meetings with Dr. Kevin and the Encyclopedia website developer. He afterwards kept on contacting you, following up and liaising between you and us.

I first thought of publishing the Encyclopedia as a printed compendium of volumes, each representing one or two of the Asia Pacific Sub-Regions depending on the size of crafts in the respective subregion. Then, I decided with my colleagues and Dr. Kevin during a special meeting, in Dehua-China to have it Online rather than in printed form for easy access to the reader. I immediately contacted the subregional Vice-Presidents to connect with the National Entities and crafts organizations in their respective subregions, so as to select the experts and master craftspersons in each craft, to contribute to this monumental cultural project. Their commendable endeavor was successful and fruitful. At this point, we started to receive names of scholars and master craftspersons. Hence, we had the chance to know you by your names, and countries and now we have the chance to meet you virtually, which is better than not meeting you at all.

It was planned, as stated in the concept I submitted, to keep the Encyclopedia project alive through organizing “Forums for Writers to interact and share information”. So, Covid-19 crisis has prompted Dr. Kevin to realize this idea of the Forum, by suggesting to hold a virtual meeting, as physical meetings would have been difficult or limited to a certain number of countries and individuals. So, among the many advantages of the terrible pandemic circumstances of social-distancing and travel limitations, we have been obliged, just like other sectors, (business, education, etc.) to go online.

Having the chance to meet with the writers and the editors in APR countries is great. This first experience will open for us other similar venues with different topics, where we will hopefully meet again, and again, in larger or in smaller groups.

Before introducing you to my colleagues of the Editorial Board, I would like to brush on the end result of this publication, accompanied with some of my observations.

The end result of this publication is 449 entries written and edited by 102 writers and editors from 44 countries.

To go further, I would like to say that the contributions fluctuate from one subregion to the other, from one country to the other and from one medium to the other, so it is worthwhile to highlight some specified details on the high contributing countries and the highest number of entries etc.

For instance, the contributing number of countries from each subregion fluctuates between 11 countries and 2 countries depending on the member countries in each subregion: for example: 11 countries from South Pacific and the same number from West Asia; 9 & 8 countries from South East Asia and East Asia respectively; 5 countries from Central Asia, which is in fact the whole component of the subregion, and 4 countries from East Asia.

As for the number of Entries contributed from each subregion, South East Asia entries amount to 101, South Asia 83, East and West Asia in the high 70s, South Pacific and Central Asia in the low 50s.

In terms of countries’ contributions, India comes at the top where it contributed with over 30 (i.e.33) entries, while China’s, Malaysia’s and Thailand’s contributions are between 30-20 entries each. 12 countries contributed from 20-10 entries, and 33 countries’ contribution was below 10.

If we move to contributions medium-wise, it is interesting to see that the Textile entries jump over 100 (119), followed by a huge drop to 61 entries of Fiber, followed by Metal 55 entries, Wood 52 entries, and Ceramic 44 entries. The rest of media like Leather, Lacquer, and Paper the entries amount to 13, while Stone, Glass and Shell are under 10 entries. The Miscellaneous part of the other crafts totals to 49 entries.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce you to my colleagues, members of the Encyclopedia Editorial Board, who have been a good support in their enlightening ideas and their comprehensive experience in the field.

1. Mr. Indrasen Vencatachellum
2. Ms. Usha Krishna
3. Raja Datin Paduka Fuziah binti Raja Tun Uda

Now, I give the floor to the Editorial Board Members to express their thanks, appreciation and views briefly, and then we open all our ears to listen to your valuable suggestions and ideas in this meeting.

I start with inviting Dr. Kevin Murray the Co-ordinating Editor of the Encyclopedia, whom you must have known very well.

Dr. Kevin will then invite ladies first, Ms.Usha Krishna, Past President of the World Crafts Council, Raja Datin Paduka Fuziah binti Raja Tun Uda, Past President of Asia Pacific Region, and Mr.Indrasen Vencatachellum, the well-known expert in handicrafts, who has been the head of the handicrafts department in the UNESCO for 3 decades and nowadays he is the founder of RIDA a well-known NGO.

Closing remarks

Definitely, as usual, nothing is always complete and there must be some gaps to be filled.

We hope that you, as experts and scholars in the field will help us in perfecting this work by your views and enlightening ideas.

I informed Dr. Kevin, being the Coordinating-Editor, that we can accept some additions, corrections, amendments, etc. to be uploaded on the website. And I added that any other addition of new entries, after the launching of the Encyclopedia in September 2019, will be accepted as a voluntary contribution. So, if anyone of you finds an urgent need for correcting any information, he/she is welcome to send it to the Editorial Board to do so with our utmost appreciation.

Thank you and good luck, wishing you all continuous safety and good health, looking forward to meeting you again and again in the future.

Dr.Ghada Hijjawi-Qaddumi
President of WCC-APR (2013-2020)