

2.23 Vietnam

Information Technology in Vietnamese Libraries

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Introduction

This chapter looks at the impacts of information technology (IT) on Vietnamese libraries in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The first part examines the role played by the several governments, including the Vietnamese government, and a number of international organizations in making IT feasible in Vietnamese libraries. The second part discusses the implications of IT in Vietnamese libraries. Like most sectors of Vietnamese society, Vietnamese libraries have experienced important technological changes in the ways they gather, organize, produce, and disseminate information. Discernible changes include the increases in the number of personal computers available in the libraries, online catalogs, electronic databases, and especially the proliferation of library websites. The last part looks at the challenges of and prospects for IT in Vietnamese libraries.

Vietnam's Library Systems

There are five major library systems in Vietnam.¹ The public library system, under the management of the Library Department of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. It includes the National Library of Vietnam, 64 provincial and municipal libraries, 582 district libraries, and about 7,000 commune and village libraries. Many of the 7,000 “village libraries” also serve as telecenters. Except for the National Library of Vietnam, the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City, and several provincial and municipal libraries located in large metropolitan areas, most of Vietnam's public libraries remain largely underdeveloped. In fact, according to the *Development of Public Library Performance in Laos and Vietnam* (2009), prepared by Barbro Thomas of the National Library of Sweden, “some 60 percent of the Vietnamese libraries

¹ National Library of Vietnam, *Vietnam Country Report* (Hanoi: National Library of Vietnam, 2008): 2.