

VERZOSA SPEAKS AT BANGKOK LIBRARY CONFAB

Last Nov 19-25, Pres. Verzosa led a delegation of Filipino librarians who attended the Asian Library and Information Conference (ALIC) 2004 in Bangkok held at Dusit Thani Hotel.



On the first day of the conference, she presented a paper on "The future of library cooperation in Southeast Asia" focusing on how the promotion of library cooperation in the fields of documentation, bibliographic access, digitization, and open access scholarly publishing could enhance today's networking and linkage capabilities among libraries in developing countries, particularly those in disadvantaged regions, such as in Southeast Asia. She also chaired the second session on the theme, "Information Access and the Changing Role of Library and Information Professionals in the Digital Age and Knowledge-based

Environment". This session raised the issue on the impact of the popular use of "Google" and "Yahoo" for quick information that has affected the changing perceptions on the role of librarians and information professionals and redefined their function as knowledge navigators.

One group stayed at Mandarin Hotel (in Silom district), where Patpong (the notorious night market) is just around the corner, while the other group of Pinoy librarians stayed at PJ Watergate near the famous bargain street market of Prathunam. Using the skytrain (20 baht) and subway (MRT for 14 baht) and finally the ferry boat that regularly cruises Chao Phraya River (for only 10 baht), they visited the Grand Palace and the Emerald Buddha Temple, the 5.5 ton Golden Buddha, the huge Reclining Buddha, and a jewel factory.



From morning till night, they spent Saturday at Chatujak weekend market. For great bargains, Chatujak is the place to shop (but they had to take the MRT and skytrain to get there to avoid the traffic that can be horrendous in Bangkok from 8am until 10 pm). Here one can buy a dozen Thai-dye batik dresses for less than 200 baht each (after bargaining a lot of course). The wood handicraft souvenir items (of buddha images and other icons) cost about 30-40 baht each. Pashmini shawls are about 200-250 baht. They say jewelry is cheap, but Verzosa did not buy any because she couldn't tell the real from the fake ones (and Thailand is notoriously known as the land of the fakes, fake Rolex, fake Gucci, fake Louis Vuitton, etc.) So she advised buying only items that are uniquely Thai. Food is fairly cheap, especially street food (walang alikabok at langaw, and tasted good). Streets are quite safe until about 10-11 at night, though signs are everywhere warning against pickpockets particularly at crowded places. And another tip to her traveling companions: count your change at all times and ask for receipt.



The one-week Bangkok trip was well worth the travel package offered by PAARL to the Filipino participants. Verzosa recounts only one embarrassing incident --- when she tried to sit beside an orange-robed young Buddhist monk at the ferry boat on her way to Vivarnmek Palace in order to get into a good position for video shots of scenic views along Chao Phraya River. The boat ticketer (kunductora) snapped at her and in sign language told her it was forbidden to sit beside a monk. She had to settle for a much less desirable seat. Also, at the airport, when she presented her Lufthansa electronic ticket document, Verzosa was told her booking was confirmed for Frankfurt. After more than 30 minutes of waiting for her ticket confirmation, she was finally issued her boarding pass and a reserved window seat at the emergency exit! The plane flew to Frankfurt but she alighted at Bangkok airport. Anyway, all's well that ends well.

