

**Memory, History, and Archives:
SEAPAVAA Conference 2019, Nouméa**

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‘UNESCO uses the concept of “memory institutions”—not history institutions—to collectively describe archives, libraries, museums and similar bodies, including audiovisual archives’. As Dr Ray Edmondson broached the concept of ‘memory institutions’, I mused: What this notion, by implication, could mean?

Under the theme ‘Memory, History, and Archives,’ the 23rd annual conference of the Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA) was held from 25 to 30 June 2019 in Nouméa, capital of the overseas French territory New Caledonia. Bibliothèque Bernheim along with Tjibaou Cultural Centre were the hosts of the conference.

In the two-day conference, keynote speaker Mick Newnham reviewed the history of ethnographic collections, issues confronting the indigenous people, and re-iterated the virtue of respect. Meanwhile, Professor Kwok Kian-woon of Nanyang Technological University Singapore presented a comprehensive analysis of the core attributes of digital transformation. Only through understanding history can humankind adapt to changes.

Memory and history are symbiotic concepts—why propose calling ‘memory institutions’ instead of ‘history institutions’ now? My immediate association was that it signified a shift to a ‘people-based’ approach. Is digital transformation not a subject we all call attention to nowadays? Long live technology! There’s no stopping it. But the seriousness of the inherent problems should not be underestimated. After digesting different notions presented by various speakers, one conclusion is beyond dispute: digital transformation is a bridge that connects us to the new age, cultivating a community that respects diversity. Only then can we exploit the rich potential of cultural heritage. Establishing a sense of identity keeps memory fresh and alive, connecting the past, the present and the future.

I too shared with my fellow attendees the Archive’s research on the Cathay repertoire. During the conference, I witnessed how devoted the many veteran audiovisual archivists and SEAPAVAA executive council members were to maintaining our community in close liaison, as well as boosting the morale of our fellow

archivists—so as to advance our professional standards and evolve with the times. This is precisely the spirit that will inspire successive generations! (Translated by Sandy Ng)

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https://www.filmarchive.gov.hk/en_US/web/hkfa/publications_souvenirs/nletter89.html