

## **Researching People Groups in a Library** *by Deb Sanders*

As followers of Christ we have orders to reach all peoples with the good news of the Gospel. This is a difficult task that cannot be taken lightly. Ninety percent of the unreached peoples live under a government system that does not want them to be reached. However, the first step to reaching a people group can often be taken nearby, even at a local university library.

### *VISITING THE LIBRARY*

Begin with the periodical indices in the reference section. The periodicals are especially helpful for two reasons - few ethnic groups ever have whole books dedicated to them, and most books are out of date from the standpoint of socio-cultural topics almost before they are published.

Walk through the periodical room and browse through the titles, especially the section on anthropology. When you find a journal that looks promising, pull out several of the more recent volumes and find a good seat! Search the table of contents for key words relating to your segment.

As you are researching, keep two lists: a list of sources where you find information (your working bibliography), and a list of related search words or concepts. Jot down the following:

- alternate or former spellings of a group's name
- a city, province, or region where they live
- a name of an indigenous art form
- an author familiar with your people group
- a name of a modern or historical person

When you find an article, look up the list of references. Authors tend to specialize on a group or location. Do not assume that because the title of a journal is in French or Dutch, all the articles are in that language. Some of the best English articles on Indonesia can be found in French and Dutch journals.

Often it helps to begin as focused as possible and then widen the focus. For example, if you want something on the Bugis of Indonesia, start only with material with their name on it. Then expand and begin to look for material on Java or Sulawesi or Celebes, and then on to Indonesia, and even social sciences of South East Asia.

Talk to the reference librarian and explain what you are looking for and what you have already found. Often, certain collections of books are kept in locations that will require librarian assistance.

Recommended reference materials:

- National Geographic Magazine Index.
- Encyclopedia Britannica, Index Volume. The Encyclopedia has a surprising amount of information about peoples and countries.
- Muslim Peoples, Richard V. Weekes, Editor, 2nd edition. These two volumes contain

maps showing the general location of Muslim groups and documents 190 ethnic and/or linguistic Muslim groups

- Peoples of the Earth, 20 volume set published by Danbury Press. General articles, thumbnail sketches, and photographs of people groups. Now out of print, but worth checking if your library owns the set.
- Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mankind, published by Marshall Cavendish, Ltd. These 20 volumes cover more than 500 peoples and cultures.
- Linguistic Bibliography, edited by J. Beylsmit. This technical volume contains a listing of all the descriptions of known languages.
- Catholic Encyclopedia.
- Subject Guide to Books in Print.
- Library of Congress Subject Headings. These volumes list the subject headings used in LOC card catalog systems.
- Machine Readable Catalogue Fiche (MARC).
- Background Notes (US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs).
- Minority Rights. Human Relations Area Files (H RAF).
- Asia Week. Great periodical to check if your people group is in Asia.
- Encyclopedia of the Third World - especially the year books.
- Encyclopedia of Asian History.

Check university or seminary libraries for:

- The Peoplesfile Index.
- The Unreached Peoples Annuals.
- The Ethnologue.
- The Lands and Peoples encyclopedias.
- The World and its Peoples encyclopedias.
- World Christian Encyclopedia.

At seminary libraries:

- History of the Expansion of Christianity by Kenneth Scott Lattourette.
- Restricted World Ministry Handbook, published by Issachar.
- World Directory of Missions Research and Information Centers.
- International Bulletin of Missionary Research.
- US Mission Handbook.
- UK Mission Handbook.
- Encyclopedia of Missions.

This information was condensed from a brochure titled, "Finding Hidden Peoples in the Library: A guide for the effective research of unreached peoples," produced by Bethany World Prayer Center, [102132.52@compuserve.com](mailto:102132.52@compuserve.com).

*THIS DOCUMENT MAY BE FREELY REPRODUCED. GLOBAL MAPPING INTERNATIONAL, DECEMBER 1996*