

to information on the U.S., supported by the NTL's ample facilities and central location.

The U.S. has established American Corners around the world in cooperation with organizations and government agencies in the host countries as a reference service for people interested in learning more about the United States. The first American Corner was established in Russia, and in Asia there are similar facilities in Thailand, Korea, and now Taiwan. One of the unwritten rules about American Corners is that they are always opened in cities without a U.S. embassy or representative office. Since AIT operates offices in Taiwan's two major cities of Taipei and Kaohsiung, Taichung became the top contender as site of the new American Corner. The NTL was a perfect candidate due to its size, features, and operating concept, all of which closely matched the needs of the center. Strong support and assistance from NTL director Hsueh Mao-sung and Taichung Mayor Jason Hu also helped seal the deal.

The American Corner in Taichung is stocked with materials acquired directly from the U.S. by AIT, including publications on U.S. society, English-language education and research, and U.S. education and travel. The facility is also equipped with computer terminals providing access to a wealth of U.S.-related information, virtual exhibitions, American art and music, and chat rooms for exchanges with experts in various U.S. industries and fields. In a departure from past practice, the American Corner will also provide a lot of "soft" cultural information, such as introductions to works by well-known U.S. novelists. In future, the American Corner plans to

invite U.S. novelists and cultural workers to Taiwan to give presentations and foster closer cultural exchanges between the U.S. and Taiwan.



*The reading room at the American Corner
(Photo by National Taichung Library)*

■ **National Taichung Library Opens Virtual Reference Service**

National Taichung Library (NTL) officially launched its "Virtual Reference Service" website, providing a convenient and free channel for the public to get reference help from library personnel. The new service is available from the "Reference Assistance" link on the library's Chinese-language website (www.ntl.gov.tw). The service also serves as a cooperation mechanism, enabling readers at participating public libraries to submit inquiries and staff at the participating libraries to work together on responding to such inquiries.

Through this cooperative model, participating libraries can share reference resources and personnel to enhance the scope, operation hours, timeliness, efficiency, and professional quality of library reference services available to the public,

while also reducing the cost and geographical restrictions of such services.

■ *Taiwan Delegation Attends 2005 ALA Meeting*

The American Library Association held its 124th Annual Meeting on June 23 to 29, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. The Taiwan delegation was organized by the Library Association of China and headed by professor Chao-chen Chen, the association's secretary general. The 23-member delegation brought together university professors, public library personnel, and representatives of the Parliamentary Library under the Legislative Yuan. The NCL's Lin Ya-hui also joined the delegation.

Three Taiwan exhibitors took place in an international poster exhibition held during the annual meeting: National Taiwan Normal University showed posters on the theme "Shaping the Future: A Librarian's First Experiences in e-Learning"; National Taichung Library exhibited posters on "A Large-scale Public Library Renovation in Taiwan"; and the Taipei Public Library's exhibit was entitled "Cultivating the Reading Garden in the Taipei Public Library of Taiwan."

The delegation also visited several major libraries, including the Chicago Public Library's Central Library, the Harold Washington Library, the East Asian Library at the University of Chicago, the University of Washington Library, and the Seattle Public Library to learn about the technology adopted by these libraries. The visitors and hosts also enjoyed productive exchanges of experience. (Chinese text by Yea-Huey Lin)



Taiwan's delegation to the 2005 ALA Annual Meeting pictured in front of the Harold Washington Library in Chicago. (Photo by Yea-Huey Lin)

■ *Library Association of China Kicks Off Summer Courses*

The Library Association of China (LAC) kicked off its summer workshop series on June 27. The series includes courses on 11 library-related fields, as detailed in the following:

- Library Upper Management
- Legal knowledge
- Agency Archiving and Digital Publishing
- Advanced Information Organization
- E-Learning and Libraries
- Readers and Libraries
- Information Literacy and Reference Services
- Reading Event Planning and Implementation
- Library Marketing and Management
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Digital Content Collection, Management, Publication, and Application