

range of Chinese language resources and information.

On January 13, 2006, Mr. Chan visited the NCL accompanied by Panama's ambassador to Taiwan Julio Mock C., to express thanks for the book donation and to sign a cooperation agreement with the library. The signing ceremony was observed by NCL staff and a 30-plus-member delegation from the ROC-Panama Cultural Center's Sun Yat-sen School. NCL Director Juang Fang-rung and Mr. Chan then exchanged gifts and posed for a memorial photo. The cooperation agreement marks a new step for the NCL in the development of international exchange relations.

■ New "Virtual Reference Taiwan" Service Launched

In face of new challenges in the global era, libraries have made the first few steps in the creation of e-library services, including technical services, reader services and digital collection resources. Now the NCL is taking it to the next level with the roll out of various inter-library programs aimed at giving readers access to an even broader spectrum of information and resources.

To this end, the second edition of the Virtual Reference Taiwan (VRT) is now running smoothly at the NCL, about three years after its initial adoption. The new system includes all of the basic functions of the "Digital Reference Service System" as well as several new ones, such as: answers to reference questions, methods of referral, statistics, website design selection, design of collection characteristics, and account management. The system was first made available

to libraries throughout Taiwan on September 28, 2005. It is hoped that the abundant resources of this system can be shared with libraries at all levels in order to bridge the urban-rural information divide and enhance the quality of library services overall.



A page from the Virtual Reference Taiwan website (<http://vrt.ncl.edu.tw/>)

The aim of the system is to facilitate cooperative efforts among librarians nationwide in the building and sharing of collection resources, human resources, databases, and online resources. The NCL welcomes all Taiwan school libraries at the university level or above, public libraries and specialized libraries to take participate in the VRT system. The launch of this system represents an important milestone for Taiwan libraries in providing cooperative reference services. It helps Taiwan achieve par with libraries in the most advanced countries of the world and serve readers globally. (Chinese text by Chung Hsueh-chen)