



**THE  
BALDWIN  
LIBRARY**

**AMERICAN CENTER  
RANGOON**

*Library patrons catch up on their reading*



## James Baldwin

The Baldwin Library is named after James Arthur Baldwin, one of the twentieth century's most original voices. He wrote essays, novels and plays about politics, society and culture in mid-century America, at the peak of the civil rights struggle. He spoke candidly, often searingly, of his experience growing up black and gay in America. His most famous books (all in the Library's collection) are *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *The Fire Next Time*, *Notes of a Native Son* and *Giovanni's Room*.



Baldwin was born in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City in 1924. The eldest of nine children, he grew up in a poor family. At the age of 12 he published his first story. He became a preacher at a Pentecostal church at the age of 14. After graduating from high school, he drifted away from the church, and moved to Greenwich Village. Critics, however, note the impassioned cadences of Black churches would reappear in his writing.

Baldwin's genius was to transfer this oratorical gift to the page, and match it with a sharp intellect that missed nothing. In 1953 the autobiographical *Go Tell It on the Mountain* was published. The book dealt with a young boy who channels his frustration and ambition into a precocious career as a preacher. By this time he was living in Europe, where he remained until returning to the United States in the late 1950s to work on the campaign to desegregate American schools.

In 1955 came his breakthrough, with the publication of *Notes of a Native Son*. The collection of essays dealt squarely with what it was like to grow up black in America, and found a huge audience among readers of all races. His next book was even more daring. *Giovanni's Room* was one of the first American novels to deal sympathetically with a homosexual relationship.

By this time Baldwin had become a well-known commentator on the civil rights movement. His most influential book, *The Fire Next Time* (1963), looked at how separatism and militancy was changing the civil rights movement, and gave many readers their first look at the Nation of Islam movement.

Baldwin's later books were less well-received, but he remained a presence in American life with his frequent contributions to American newspapers and magazines. He moved back to Europe in the 1980s, and died in France in 1987. Since his death his work has had a resurgence, and they have been part of the reckoning of the multicultural nature of American society.



## **BALDWIN LIBRARY AMERICAN CENTER**

### **Mission Statement**

*The Baldwin Library at the American Center in Rangoon offers people living in Burma access to books, newspapers, magazines, databases, DVDs, CD-ROMs, and Internet resources on a variety of topics. Our goal is to help our clients in their efforts to learn about the world. We want our clients to enjoy the most open access possible to the latest and most accurate information so they can improve their skills and be well-equipped to make decisions.*

*To this end our professional library staff has set up a circulating library of over 7,000 volumes, a reference library of 950 volumes, and an extensive database with access to more than 2,500 periodicals. We receive over 95 magazines, including titles about current events, business, medicine, the arts and sports. We receive six daily newspapers, and subscribe to the online services of those papers which are usually delayed. In addition we have a Self-Access Center designed for English language learners of all levels, with over 900 test guides, grammar books, dictionaries and abridged novels for students of English.*

*The Baldwin Library is the most popular English-language library in Burma, and we are proud of our service to more than 10,000 members. Every month we serve over 9000 Burmese clients. If you are a new member, we welcome you to our community of patrons and ask that you give us suggestions about what you need. If you are a long-time member, please take a look at this updated booklet to learn more about our new services.*

## Areas We Cover

We aim to replicate an American-style library for our patrons. This means our primary focus is to have a heavily-used circulating library. Our areas of focus are current events, Southeast Asian studies (including Burma), business and finance, ecology, computer science, and teen books. But we have a wealth of material in other subjects too, and are constantly upgrading our collection. We have a display of books recommended by our staff, and a suggestion box for exchange of concrete proposals about changes we can make to serve you better.

**The Self-Access Center (SAC)** is the American Center's newest facility. It is designed to provide learners with opportunities to improve their English skills on their own. The books and materials are divided into six different levels, and further still by skill or topic areas, such as reading, listening, grammar, etc. You decide what books and tapes match your level and what you need to study. A special orientation program for users of the SAC, offered once a month, will tell you how to get the most out of the facility and out of your independent study. The material in the SAC is all reference material, but you may make copies of those pages you would like to study at home.



*Students prepare for tests and do homework at the new Self-Access Center*



Circulation English

Suggestion Box

*The Baldwin Library  
has over 9,000 books,  
DVDs and periodicals*



## Eligibility

Anyone living in Burma who has graduated from high school, i.e. completed the 10<sup>th</sup> standard, is eligible to apply for a library card. Annual dues of 5000 kyats are paid on application. Two passport-sized photographs are required, as is the signature and address of a guarantor.

Membership cards are not transferable: you may not loan your card to a friend or family member so they may check out books.

New members are required to attend an orientation program before using the Internet stations or the Self-Access Center. The orientation program is given monthly, and you may sign up at the library counter.

## Hours of operation

The Library is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. We are closed for two weeks every December to take inventory and to perform necessary maintenance work. The Self-Access Center has the same hours, except it is closed from 12 noon to 1 p.m.

## Location

The Baldwin Library is located at the American Center in Dagon Township, Rangoon. It is behind the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs and across from Basic Education High School Number Three. We are a five minute walk from the National Museum bus stop.







*A Library patron catches up on his reading*

## Newsstand



*We receive over 90 periodicals and academic titles, including Journal of the American Medical Association , Seventeen, National Geographic, The Economist, Vanity Fair, Vogue and many others*

## Library Policies

***Circulating material:*** The main body of our collection is for circulation. We now have over 7000 books available for users to borrow. A library patron is allowed to take out two books at a time. One book must be returned one week later, and the other returned two weeks later. We must maintain this policy because of the high number of users and the popularity of many titles.

Patrons who do not find the book they are seeking should ask the library staff to put it on reserve. This means that once the book has been returned, a staff member will call your home or office to let you know the book is available, and will keep it behind the counter for you for four days.

We ask clients not to write in the books or to break the books' spines, as this is irksome for other patrons and shortens the life span of the book. Library patrons must pay for the damage to any volume while it has been in their care.

Given the heavy use our library receives we have a strict policy on lateness. Every book's due date is stamped on the card in the back of the book. For every day a book is late after that due date, the user is charged 100 kyats. However, patrons interested in renewing their books may do so in person at the Library, provided no other patron has placed the book on reserve.

The Library also has a circulating collection of DVDs, with a focus on the latest popular titles. We try to get movies that have English language subtitles. However, be aware that our DVDs usually come from the US, so your DVD player *must* be equipped for multi-regional use. To rent DVDs from the Library, you first purchase a DVD card for 12,000 kyats. Each time you rent a DVD, another box worth 200 kyats will be checked off your card. The DVD must not be copied nor screened for commercial purposes.

We have a special policy concerning circulating books on how to prepare for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Because of demand, we check the books out on alternate Thursdays for two-week periods. A patron is limited to one TOEFL book per two week period. Many of the books come with tapes or CDs.

In case of loss of any item, the patron is required to pay the full cost of replacing the book, including shipping fees.

**Reference works:** The Library also maintains a collection of over 900 reference books on a wide range of subjects, including atlases, dictionaries, encyclopediae, almanacs, photography books and books about Burma. Users are free to use these books at the Library and may order copies for next day pick-up at a cost of 50 kyats per page. Please note that we can only copy 50 pages of material.

All magazines are considered reference material; again, we are happy to make copies of any article you would like to take home.



*Patrons browse the websites at the twelve Internet workstations*

## **Internet stations/Databases**

The Library maintains 12 Internet workstations for our patrons. Two of them are priority stations. One is for graduate students doing research on higher education in the US. The other is for journalists. If a user is on either of these two terminals and does not fit this description, he or she must be ready to cede his or her place should a student or journalists arrive.

Our Internet service provider is Myanmar Info Tech, and the speed is variable. If there are other clients waiting, there is a time limit of 45 minutes at each workstation. You may sign up at a roster near the Internet stations for a particular time. You may print pages you want to read later at a cost of 100 kyats per page.

We regularly offer short introductory courses to the Internet for our patrons. Any staff member can tell you when the next one is scheduled to take place, and you may sign up at the counter.

Several newspapers, journals and magazines do not offer free access to their archives through their websites. To better serve our patrons interested in back copies of articles, we have bought access to several databases of abstracts and full text of articles that appeared in American periodicals. These include popular titles such as the *Wall St. Journal* and the *Financial Times*, and academic journals such as *Foreign Affairs*.

We have followed the lead of most American libraries and moved to on-line encyclopediae, which are less expensive and far more up-to-date than the paper versions. Please ask staff members which stations have access to the Grolier and Americana encyclopediae.

## **Theft**

There are security guards at the American Center. Any library member caught stealing material will have his or her membership revoked.

*Finally, the Baldwin Library is a resource for you. We exist because of you, the Burmese client. We are eager to hear what you have to say about our facility and how we can better address your needs. We hope that you will find the Library an asset in your quest for information, entertainment or enlightenment.*

# TESTIMONIALS FROM CLIENTS

*The Library is very beneficial for Burmese people. It improves my critical thinking and provides a lifelong education.*

Han  
Teacher

*I have learned a lot about economics and political science at the Library. It has become a remarkable place for scholars and students alike.*

Khin  
University Lecturer

*I am a post-graduate student specializing in International Relations, and am doing a term paper for a master's degree. The American Center's Library is very useful for my research. I have found very reliable materials and up to date information from the books and the Internet.*

Nyi  
Graduate student

*We enjoy consulting the Information Technology books at the Library. It is valuable material for IT students and specialists.*

Zin  
Graduate student

*The Library is very useful for everyone who wants to learn about American business and the world financial system. It helps academics*

*in every field. We have access to some professional journals at the Library, for example, the Harvard Business Review.*

Aye  
Businesswoman

*The English as a Second Language resources available at the Library help to improve my knowledge of sentence structure and give me many tools for adding vocabulary.*

May  
Student

*We can get articles and books on journalism, particularly in fields like ethics, news writing and interviewing. These books open our eyes. Young journalists dedicated to the profession are usually Library members and we have many advantages including surfing websites about journalism.*

Saw Lin Aung  
Journalist

*After becoming a Library member, I found that my knowledge of International Theravada Buddhism has improved and I am more familiar with the English terms for Buddhist concepts.*

Ashin Kuthala  
Monk





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