Chapter I

Guam and Micronesia: Research Sites in the Asia-Pacific Region

Pacific means “peaceful.” Ferdinand Magellan named it when he became the first European to sail across the ocean in 1521. Since it was so calm, he called it the Pacific Ocean. Magellan never saw one of the Pacific typhoons. A few years before Magellan, a Spanish explorer named Balboa was the first European to see the ocean when he walked across the Isthmus of Panama. Since he was facing south, he named the ocean the South Seas. Actually, most of the ocean was to the west of him. If you look at a globe of the Earth, you will notice that the Pacific Ocean is the single largest feature on Earth. All other oceans and all continents are smaller than the Pacific. (Ridgell, 1995, p. 3)

While teaching at a high school in Guam, Ridgell became frustrated with the lack of educational materials on the Pacific island. He developed a textbook to give ninth-grade students a background in Pacific geography, culture, and history, in addition to a general overview of the different Pacific island groups (basically Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia). The importance of the Micronesian region has been recognized because of its geographical location and diverse
cultures. The term “Micronesia” has gained popular usage as a political entity referring to the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Wang, 1992). The island of Guam is geographically a part of Micronesia. Today, Guam is a modern and cosmopolitan community that reflects the cultures of its original Chamorro inhabitants influenced by European, American, Asian, and Micronesian populations. (Note: Appendix A is a list of Web sites on Guam and Micronesia.) Guam and Micronesia have been selected as research sites, and the purposes of this book are listed as follows:

1. To share challenges of technology, encouraging collaboration throughout the region to promote information literacy and facilitate the learning process
2. To provide multiple perspectives with which to view technology in higher education
3. To provide a regional baseline understanding of technological access and competency levels
4. To establish a greater infusion of technology throughout the region
5. To promote the embracing of technology across geographical borders
6. To delineate concerns and provide guidance for regional collaboration of resource sharing

The focus of this book is the use of technologies for enhancing teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region. To best understand and appreciate the rich and unique qualities of this region as a research site, this chapter provides an introduction to Guam and Micronesia including the following areas:

- Pacific Nations and Territories
- A University as a Regional Learning Center
- Multiculturalism and Higher Education in Guam

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Pacific Nations and Territories

Because the tropic zone gets more direct sunlight than other parts of the Earth, as Ridgell (1995) describes, it is consistently warm even in winter. There are