PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, Africa has had a strong communication mechanism through families, villages, communities, countries, etc. have disseminated information – formal and informal meetings in which issues of concern were raised, deliberated and resolved. Thus, oral means were mostly used to transfer information. The concept of the public library as a forum created to provide information, through the written word, to communities, was imported to Africa from the West, and appears to have been mooted in a philanthropic philosophy that encourages the equitable distribution of information resources to all people. The idea is that everyone should have equal opportunities for development. The aims and objectives of public library provision in the UK, the USA and Scandinavian countries reflect this philanthropic view.

The Colonization of Africa was a turning point in the colonial powers' establishment of their dominating influence in Africa. The renowned negative aspects of this phase of history will not be delved into in this chapter. But there were also positive developments that took place, such as the phenomenon of humanism, which regarded Africa as a huge arena for missionary work geared towards the betterment of African people. For the most part, the missionaries gave spiritual counselling through Christianity although some used other religions, such as Islam. In doing so, they utilized key religious sources of literature, such as the Bible and the Koran, on top of other development literature. They therefore had to spread literacy among the converts and create new literature for consumption. In turn, this literature had to be processed, stored and retrieved for use whenever necessary. They couldn't have known it then, but this was the first step towards the creation of a reading facility for all. One of the pioneers in this respect was Bishop Anglionby in the former Gold Coast (Ghana), who donated money for library causes and was particularly instrumental in the development of Ghanaian library services. Another example was Bishop Hannington, who started the big Mengo Hospital Library in Uganda. Even then, the idea of the library, let alone the public library, had not taken strong roots.

The upsurge of colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries ushered in a political phase that culminated in the colonial rule of African territories. Colonial powers were represented by governors, under whom a hierarchy of administrators was commandeered. This chapter does not intend to examine the pros and cons of colonialism, but rather seeks to link the advent of libraries, and public libraries in

particular, to colonialism. Coming from a background in which libraries were a course of habit, the colonialists soon proceeded to establish libraries for political and administrative purposes, and later for the privileged elite for information and educational purposes. Colonial cultural agencies such as the British Council, Alliance Francaise, and the United States Information Services, etc.; soon followed. Their emphasis was on promoting their culture in colonized countries. This was achieved through libraries – not, strictly speaking, public libraries, but cultural centercenters open to the public under certain arrangements.

The major breakthrough in the growth of the formal public library was initiated by UNESCO, which is the educational, scientific and cultural arm of UN (Gardner, F.M. (1966). The Second World War had just ended, and UN and its functionaries was one of the key strategies created to promote international understanding and peace. In 1949, the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto was published, with core guidelines stipulating the aims, services and beneficiaries of the public library. The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto has since been revised in 1972 and 1994.

UNESCO, in collaboration with the Nigerian Government, organized the first regional seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa at Ibadan. The Ibadanian Seminar focused on and highlighted three main areas:

1. Organizing public library services on a regional basis or national scale
2. Provision, selection and use of publications and audio-visual materials in African public libraries (and)
3. Professional training for public library services

The Seminar further advocated library legislation to ensure functional libraries through adequate financial backing and efficient administration according to national standards (http://www.emeraldinsight.co/Unsught/ViewContent?Filename-Publishers/Emera.Retrieved 11/12/2007).

UNESCO further set up a model public library in Enugu, Nigeria. This public library was a step in UNESCO's efforts to create educational and cultural institutions in Africa. The library was a teaching and learning center that functioned as a model for what good practices, facilities and services in a public library should be. These were to be emulated by other countries in Africa. The library was the designated venue for the second African public library development seminar in 1962. This Seminar reviewed the public library developments in Africa as they stood, and refocused the goals and development principles and directions that public libraries in Africa were to follow. Once again, key issues relating to public library development, such as the adoption of national legislation, establishment of centralized library services, emphasis on children's library services, education and training of professional librarians, establishment of national professional library associations, and production of suitable literature; were re-affirmed. By all appearances these seminars, particularly the Enugu Seminar, were a turning point for a number of countries. Public library development in regions such as East Africa

moved faster and grew more focused – national legislation was adopted, centralized library services were launched, education and training of librarians initiated, etc.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES

Challenges and New Initiatives in the Provision of Public Libraries in Africa

It would not be possible to discuss the public library provision of each individual country in the entire continent of Africa. The approach adopted, therefore, is a blanket discussion of pertinent issues on the provision of public libraries taking East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria) and Central and Southern Africa (Zambia and South Africa) as case studies.

The aspects discussed include: historical perspectives and issues on the provision of public libraries in Africa – the case studies; the challenges in the provision of public libraries in Africa; and ushering in the future – the new initiatives mooted as alternative approaches to the provision of public libraries in Africa.

The Public Library's Universal Mission, Objectives and Services

According to IFLA/UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto (1994), the public library is the local center of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equal access to all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example, linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, or people in hospitals or prisons.

All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental.

Materials must also reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavorendeavors and imagination.

Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political and religious censorship, nor commercial pressures.

Mission of the Public Library

The following key missions, which relate to information, literacy, education and culture, should be at the core of public library services:

1. Creating and strengthening the reading habits in children from an early age;
2. Supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
3. Providing opportunities for personal creative development;
4. Stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
5. Promoting an awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations;
6. Providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
7. Fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favoring cultural diversity;
8. Supporting the oral tradition;
9. Ensuring citizens have access to all sorts of community information;
10. Providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;
11. Facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills; and
12. Supporting and participating in literacy activities and programs for all age groups, and initiating such activities when necessary.

How has the real development of public libraries in Africa measured to the above specified ideals?

PROVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN EAST AFRICA

East Africa, in this context, refers to the provision of public library services in Kenya, Tanganyika (Tanzania) and Uganda.

Until 1948, no real attempts had been made to provide public library services in East Africa. Most public libraries in the area had been founded by individuals or by trusts, and were initially only open to Europeans. Limited resources made it impossible to have trained personnel, and the stock often reflected the tastes of subscribing members. Services to elementary schools had been neglected, and where they existed (in secondary schools), stocks were inadequate and accommodation was poor.

At the time, the East African Literature Bureau, which originally had an ambitious programme for public library services throughout the territories, offered services such as the static branch library, book box and postal services. In 1959, S.W. Hockey was commissioned to conduct a study on the state of library services in the region and make proposals for their future development. The Hockey report was published in 1960 and made several recommendations that became the basis

of library development in East Africa. Major recommendations include: the adoption of national library acts; the establishment of library Boards; centralized library services incorporating schools and public libraries; the establishment of library schools to educate and train librarians; and strong government financial support, among others.

Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania adopted the National Library Services Act in 1963, 1964 and 1965 respectively. Kenya and Tanzania adopted centralized library services under the same boards, but Ugandan public library services were managed separately from other types of library services. The public libraries provided postal, book box, mobile and static branch library services. Since then, the development of libraries in general and of public libraries in particular has varied in success because of factors to be examined later.

PROVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN UGANDA

In Uganda, the 1964 Public Libraries Act set up the Public Libraries Board, a body co-operate that aimed to establish, equip, manage and maintain libraries in the country. Libraries were interpreted to mean public libraries only. The services which had been transferred to Ugandan library services by the then East African Literature Bureau were taken over by the Public Libraries Board which was established by 1964 Public Libraries Act. The services were centralized and consisted of the headquarters where administration, selection, acquisition, processing and distribution of stock took place; the branch libraries; the postal services; and mobile and book box services.

In 1997 the Local Government Act was adopted, which decentralized public libraries under district, town and urban authorities. This in itself was a drawback because the new authorities appeared to have lower priorities about library development.

The Public Libraries Board was dissolved in 2003 and replaced with the National Library of Uganda Act, which set up the National Library of Uganda (NLU), which is under the Ministry of Gender and Community Development. NLU has some co-coordinating powers over other libraries – including public libraries – through the Ministry of Local Government. The mission of the National Library is to collect, preserve and disseminate Uganda's documented intellectual literature and culture, to give professional leadership in library and information delivery, and to promote the reading habit. The objectives of the NLU are:

1. To develop sound library services, plans and policies related to national development priorities and aspirations

2. To make library services accessible to all for the purposes of education, information, development and recreation
3. To promote and facilitate the provision of library services to all parts of Uganda, including rural areas where most people live and work
4. To acquire, preserve and make accessible documents of cultural, historical and educational value
5. To provide technical, professional and advisory services to local government and private sectors in the field of library services
6. To ensure that services are efficiently managed and that there is effective utilization of all material and human resources available
7. To support adult literacy and other continuing education programs by providing timely and relevant reading and information materials.
8. 8. To build institutional capacity for the promotion and delivery of library and information services

It is an ideal Act with very good intentions. However, some library authorities begrudge the Act for usurping their powers, creating a lot of duplication, and being a gigantic project not matched by the funding, staff, infrastructure and facilities required.

Despite the above complaints, NLU has supported public and community libraries by stocking them with the help of charity donations and purchases from donors under different projects, e.g. the Intra Africa Book Support Scheme and the Book Trade Project.

NLU also orients and trains staff from public and community libraries, giving them better library and marketing skills. Furthermore, library and community authorities are provided with guidelines on how to start and run libraries (http://www.nlu.go.ug/s2libs.htm Retrieved 11/6/2007).

NEW TRENDS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY PROVISION IN UGANDA

There are new trends in public library development, management and provision in Uganda today. First, though the Local Government Act, 1997, has its limitations its main provision namely the decentralization of public library development is commendable because it has brought public library service concerns down to grass roots level. The immediate effect of this policy has been the appreciation of library services in rural areas where the majority of Ugandans live and work. For example, this has resulted in the implementation of a rural library service project involving several districts in Uganda, including Mubende, Masaka, Mbarara, Kapchora and Luweero.

These operate on the same basis as community libraries, whereby accommodation, furniture and staff are provided by the community, but stock and supervision are the responsibility of the National Library.

Another timely development is the Multi Purpose Community centerTelecenter (MCT) at Luweero. It is funded by UNESCO, the International Telecommunications Union (ICU), and the International Development Research Center (IDRC). The Library at Nakaseke now has telephone, fax, Internet and e-mail connections and services, in addition to traditional library services.

The Acacia Initiative (Community and the Information Society in Africa) has introduced Telecenters in Uganda at Masaka, Kasangati, Zigoti, Kibaale, etc.

The National Library of Uganda's Reading Tents and the consolidation of books to school and children's libraries through Book Aid International are also new developments with great potential.

Public Library services in Uganda were and still are faced with a lot of problems, such as political interference, poor administration, lack of funding, poor staffing, etc These are discussed in detail in another section. New developments are expounded under New Initiatives.

PROVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN KENYA

Kenya adopted the Hockey Report (1960) when it enacted the Kenya National Libraries' Services Board Act in 1965. The initial stock of 400,000 books was inherited from the East African Literature Bureau, which up to then was running public libraries through static, book box, postal and mobile library services. The first Kenya National Library Services Board commenced its functions in 1967, and the public library in Nairobi opened its doors to the public in 1969. The functions of the Board comprised of the establishment, equipment, management and maintenance of libraries in Kenya. The Board was particularly mandated to oversee the provision of public and school libraries in Kenya.

New Developments

Through the support and funding of the government of Kenya and donor agencies like the British Council, NORAD and UNESCO, KNLS has managed to put up a library in each of the eight provinces' headquarters in Kenya.

Currently, the services provided are managed from the KNLS headquarters – where the administration of the entire national library services is also based – and the Nairobi Provincial Library. The Public Library Network now embraces a total of 23 libraries in all provinces, districts and divisions. The total stock in all the services is up to 800.000 volumes. The total membership in the libraries network is 400,000, which excludes the [close to] million people who visit the libraries annually. These figures exclude the total figures of membership and use of other libraries (e.g. academic, special, etc.) in Kenya.

KNLS also provides community based libraries. This is an alternative to public library provision and requires the local community to contribute basic infrastructure such as land, buildings, furniture and equipment while the Board avails initial stock, staff and recurrent expenditure.

KNLS also provides the Camel Library Service (CLS), targeted at villages and settlements outside a 5 Km radius but within 10 Km of the regional library. The CLS works on the same basis as a mobile library service, except that the vehicles are camels. The advantage is that through the CLS, scattered populations are reached and served.

In order to ensure the sustainability of libraries and to enhance the funding of public libraries, the KNLS has instituted reasonable membership fees.

KNLS has also initiated innovative outreach approaches to public library provision. These involve the community in the administration of services that are appropriate to the community, and contribute towards service maintenance.

In the past those who wanted to establish public libraries anywhere in Kenya, were expected to provide a building. However, responding to the challenge of having a library building before public library services could be provided, today a book box service for farmers and children/students has been introduced by KNLS. The community contributes money to buy books, and KNLS processes and transports the books in boxes to the designated places. The set aim is for at least nine book boxes to be provided to each community, and for a student to have read at least 36 books a year. The book box service also includes the training of teacher-librarians to manage the services.

KNLS has also started two vital library services: the AIDS Awareness Service and Constitutional Information Services. Both services have played a role in educating the public. Through the support of the British Council, KNLS has also set up the Braille Unit to meet the reading needs of the blind.

Reacting to the problem that centers on the library being a foreign concept, KNLS has started a sensitization program to teach the relevance and importance of the public library for personal and community development. A public relations office has been established that publishes the Kenal Newsletter, which propagates the messages to the users wherever they are through and during exhibitions, such as agricultural shows, and National Book week.

The challenges that KNLS faces in the provision of public libraries will be discussed in a later section.

PROVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN TANZANIA

Tanzania was the first in line to provide the public library services as proposed by Sydney W Hockey in 1960. The Tanzanian Libraries Services Board Act was enacted in 1963, followed by the Ugandan Public Libraries Board Act in 1964, and the Kenyan National Library Services Board Act in 1965. The Act empowered the

Tanzanian Libraries' Services Board to promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain and develop libraries in Tanzania (Dahlgren, C (1994).

The 1963 Act was replaced with a new one in 1975 which extended the functions and powers of developing libraries under one umbrella, as per the NATIS concept. This concept was echoed by President Julius Nyerere in 1967 at the opening of the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam when he said: "*The real importance to our nation of this Central Library services is from the fact that this is the hub of a wheel, from which spokes will reach out to towns and villages throughout mainland Tanzania*". The new act broadened the powers of the Tanzanian National Library Services Board by giving it the responsibility of supervising documentation services, training librarians, controlling and supervising public libraries, promoting literacy campaigns, stimulating interest in Tanzanian literature, promoting and developing indigenous literature, to libraries (Tanzania Library Services Act, 1975).

In order to fulfill this mandate, TNLS gives the following nation wide services:

1. Public Libraries
   This service includes the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam. Public libraries have reference and free lending services for both adults and children.
2. Rural library services
   According Sturges and Neille (1993), in 1989 Tanzania had over 3,000 village libraries with approximately 400 titles in each. These were and still are under the supervision of local staff, and are located in schools, clinics, courthouses or the offices of local authorities. The purpose of the libraries is to bring library services to rural areas.
3. School Libraries
   Tanzania has over 10, 000 primary schools and over 140 secondary schools. In order to begin to meet the needs of these institutions, six model secondary school libraries were developed, and a school mobile library service was initiated.
4. Government Libraries
   The Board has lent a hand in organizing government department libraries and in training the staff who work in these libraries in order to improve the provision of library services.
5. Special libraries
   The Board provides support and personnel in the running of these libraries.
6. Training/Staffing
   The Board conducts the National Library Assistants Certificate Course and organizes short continuing programs including seminars, workshops, etc.

7. The Board gives a supporting hand in the running of the Tanzanian Library Association; the current Chairperson of the Association is the Director of the TLS.

It may be safely stated that Tanzania has had a competitive edge in the provision of public libraries in East Africa. First, it had a very supportive President in the form of Julius Nyerere, who was always at the frontline of public library development. His support was instrumental, as was that of President Nkrumah in Ghana. This support continued in regimes that succeeded Nyerere. There was also the recruitment of a strong, knowledgeable and experienced Director, Max Broome, who equalled the appointment of Evans in Ghana. The Director implemented effective and coordinated library plans throughout the country. His good programs won government and foreign funding. A staff training program was also put in place.

Though public library provision has somewhat slowed down, new plans are underway to return Tanzania National Library Services to its former glory. These plans include: new procedures in recruitment membership in order to reduce congestion; the provision of rural public library services by reactivating the postal and mobile services; and the provision of rural public library services through community ventures with TNLS involvement. Also needing urgent beefing up is funding in order to meet the service costs.

Today, the recruitment of qualified and experienced staff, for example Dr. Ali Mcharazo, recently appointed Director of TNLS; practices such as allowing or sending staff to further their studies; and various continuous education initiatives have improved the quality and motivation of staff and consequently improved the library services. This needs to be enhanced.

Challenges will be discussed in a later section.

PROVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN WEST AFRICA

In West Africa, Ghana (formerly referred to as the Gold Coast) and Nigeria were taken as the case studies.

Provision of Public Library Services in Ghana

The provision of public libraries in Ghana since 1951 is particularly associated with E. J. A. Evans for the fifteen years between 1951 and 1966. Other factors that contributed towards the provision of libraries, particularly public libraries, include the pioneering work of Bishop Anglionby, who was responsible for the early promotion of reading among Ghanaians (Cornelius, 1972); the British Council initiative, which helped lay the foundation for national library services (Dawuona-Hammond, 1963); considerable literacy; Ghana's healthy economic state, which assured the availability of capital and recurrent funds for library development; the

need for public libraries by people seeking lifelong education, or by those who did not secure places in Universities, but were eager to pursue higher studies through private means; the UNESCO Seminar at Ibadan, 1953, during which issues regarding the organization and operation of public library services, selection and acquisition of suitable books, staff training, legislation, staff training, etc. were agreed upon; the progressive and supportive policy of Kwameh Nkrumah; the enthusiasm and hard work of the library staff; and a far-sighted and supportive Ghanaian Library Board.

The Act that established the Ghana (Gold Coast) Library Services Board was passed in 1949 and became operational in January 1950. It was one of the first library acts in Africa, and many countries took it as a model. The functions of the Act were to establish, maintain, equip and manage libraries in Ghana. At first the Act was interpreted to embrace all types of libraries. The ambiguity was settled in 1969/70 when a new act set up the Ghana Library Board and mandated it to establish, manage and maintain public libraries. Purposeful library buildings were constructed starting around 1953. Additionally, a postal library service for teachers, a mobile library service and branch libraries were started. With the support of government subvention and grants from town councils or local authorities, the Ghana Library Board services grew to include 18 branches, the Accra Central Library, three children's libraries in Accra, and regional libraries, all offering the services expected of public libraries.

In a nutshell, today public libraries provided by the Ghana Library Board comprise of the Headquarters, which advocates policy and carries out the administration of the whole system, provides central support and economic services, and also provides public library services over a wide geographic area to meet local needs (Almena, 1994). The Ghana Library Board now boasts ten administrative units in ten regions, and 43 service points for adults and 49 centers for children.

New Developments

The poor performance of public libraries in Ghana forced the Ministry of Education to set up a Community Libraries Project in order to improve the standard of education of pupils in the country. There are six such community libraries in Accra. The libraries are expected to serve the various communities, not only school children. Unfortunately, these services are facing problems similar to those of public libraries (discussed later, with new initiatives in a separate section).

Non-governmental organizations are making efforts to establish libraries for the public, particularly school children. One such NGO is the Ghana Book Trust, established by the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) in Ottawa, Canada. It has assisted by establishing libraries, providing books, and training library assistants throughout the country.

Provision of Public Libraries in Nigeria

The first public library in Nigeria was established in 1932 in Lagos via the financial assistance of the Carnegie Co-operation of New York and the Lagos Book Club**.** It was a subscription library**.** The colonial government did not take any active part in establishing public libraries in Nigeria. For example, on April 12th 1940, the colonial government objected to the Carnegie grant on the premise that it was of no practical value to Nigerians because African reading interests were limited.

The actual send off for public library development in Nigeria was UNESCO's initiative (with Nigerian governmental support), when the country hosted the Ibadan Seminar in 1953. The seminar focused on the development of public libraries in Africa. As already explained in the introduction, the Ibadan Seminar was instrumental in envisioning the nature, functions, pre- requisites and services of the public library. In fact, a public library was established at Enugu as a model to be emulated by the rest of Africa. Public library developments reflected the decisions made during the Ibadan Seminar. Some of these were national legislation, centralized services, free public library services, library services for all, stock embracing all manner of opinions, public funding, etc. Many librarians and administrators flocked to Enugu to see the model public library in action, and learnt much on how to establish public libraries in their own countries.

Ojo-Igbinoba (1995) stated that public libraries in Nigeria were primarily established by government to provide viable and relevant information to the entire public. Public libraries therefore are involved in the acquisition, selection, organization, and dissemination of information in the form of printed and non-printed materials for effective use. Patrons of the public library cut across all walks of life and include illiterates, pensioners, the disabled, children, adults, adolescents, farmers, etc. The public library is the main avenue through which the overall information resources in various areas of knowledge are made freely available to all members of society, irrespective of age, sex, race, educational level, or political and religious inclination.

Prior to the civil war, Nigeria's public library development was one of the best in Africa. It is unfortunate that the civil war had retrogressive impact on the Enugu Model Public Library and general public library development in Nigeria, as infrastructure, stock, staff and services were disrupted. Since then, public library development has never been the same. But all is not lost, because recent research showed commendable public library development, as explained below.

The study (Adebimpe, 1980) showed that 4 Public libraries were established between 1971 and 1975; 10 between 1976 and 1980; and 6 between 1981 and 1985. All these were established according to UNESCO's objectives. The study further revealed that despite the belief that Nigerians are not habitual readers; Nigerians were found to read if the libraries provided them with materials that are relevant to their needs. Another online source (http://emeraldinsight.com/InsightiewContent

Servelet?Filename=Published/Emera, retrieved 11/12/2007) established that public libraries in Nigeria are performing below expectation in terms of meeting their objectives. Virtually all the public libraries are poorly stocked and lack modern ICTs such as the Internet, and computer networks and communications.

Today, few public libraries operate in urban areas, and those that do have inadequate facilities. Mobile libraries, nicknamed public libraries on wheels, no longer pry isolated locations to supply public library services; and the postal library and book box services have been disbanded.

In view of the above, the following are recommended:

1. The Nigerian government should establish public libraries in various rural and urban communities
2. Public libraries should be adequately funded by government to ensure viable stocks, thereby enhancing services
3. Mobile library services should be re-energized in order to ensure effective public library service delivery to all parts of the country
4. There should be adequate and effective information technologies in all the various public libraries. Public libraries should be fully computerized, networked and have Internet access
5. Public libraries should embark on political and health awareness programs

New Developments

In order to instigate new trends in public library provision in Nigeria the following should be considered:

1. Needs assessment, because in order to scientifically establish the structure of a society, the information needs of this society and the ensuing services required to meet these information needs must be identified.
2. The creation of an administrative and managerial structure that delivers library and information services to where the majority of people are – the rural areas – so that the services are easily accessible.
3. The repackaging of library and information services in brands that are easily accessible, affordable and consumable (considering literacy levels, standards and affordability)
4. Enhancement of education and the training of information professionals to equip them with the appropriate language, marketing and PRO skills. This would allow them to penetrate rural areas where library and information services are badly needed
5. Ensuring that there are enough funds to run and maintain the services. Donor dependency should be substituted with adequate government funding

and/or the information professionals' fund generating initiatives, e.g. fund-raising or the sale of services and facilities at an affordable rate.

Provision of Public Libraries in Central Africa

Zambia was chosen as a case study in the provision of public libraries in Central Africa.The formal advent of public libraries in Zambia is associated with colonialism in the then Northern Rhodesia. However, history records that before colonialism, cultural traditions and beliefs of the various Zambian ethnic groups were preserved through memory, and reported from generation to generation. However, what is not certain is the degree of effective distortion, exaggeration or understatement contributing towards the authenticity of oral transactions overtime, and thus towards oral preservation and communication.

The shift from traditional (oral) to the written (reading and writing) mode of preservation and communication was ushered in with the arrival of missionaries, who introduced Western education. The first Missionary, David Livingstone, introduced the "tin-truck" portable library. It operated in Zambia between 1853 and 1873.

The Livingstone Subscription Library was established in 1908. A number of such libraries sprang up in the 1920's, but access was restricted to only the elite and rich in society, mainly the colonialists. Another landmark in the provision of public libraries was the establishment of the Northern Rhodesia Publications Bureau in 1947, which introduced a countrywide book box service scheme. In 1960, the Joint Publications Bureau received grant-aid from the Ford Foundation towards the development of a countrywide Public Library Service. In 1962 the Northern Rhodesia Library Service was established and subsequently became the Zambia Library Service (ZLS), which took over the responsibility of public library provision, among other functions.

ZLS is largely a rural library network providing a broad range of reading services, including agricultural information to support local farming, the mainstay of Zambia's economy.

New Developments

Currently, the public library services network comprises of the Headquarters based in Lusaka, 6 provincial libraries in the rural provinces and 18 branch libraries.

Some provincial libraries and branch libraries double as Centers of the National Library and Cultural Centers for the blind and provide Braille books, talking books and weekly news recorded on cassettes.

The Zambia Library Services also runs reading tent events, which take place throughout the year and fill in gaps wherever there are no library buildings.

In view of the level of illiteracy still found in Zambia, the concept of community information services has been implemented. This consists of the provision of information through alternative strategies, such as films, music, dance, drama, posters, and meetings, which diverge from the textual approach. This has afforded

useful information to the rural and urban poor still living under the scourge of illiteracy and its implications.

Another service run by the ZLS is the school library service, which has set up over 1,000 library centers. The community holds responsibility for these centers, while the Zambia Library Services provides stock and trains the staff who work in them. These centers are often placed in schools, although others are located in refugee camps, forest stations and prisons

The training of teachers in Teacher Training Colleges and teachers already in the field is also carried out in order to ensure that teachers perpetuate the reading habit amongst their pupils/students (http://www.bookaid.org/cms.cgi/ste/whatwedo/countries/-zambia.htm).

Other information initiatives being implemented for the public include:

1. Improving ICT availability in rural areas and providing the assistance of United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
2. Developing the isolated information centers established by NGOs. These are targeted at professionals in various fields, such as: gender or the disadvantaged (for example, the visually handicapped).
3. The supply – by government ministries in conjunction with information providers – of information services through posters, films, leaflets etc.

Problems

Zambia Library Service is plagued with a litany of problems characteristic of National Library Services in Africa, including the lack of an institutionalized regular nationwide budget, made worse by the declining economy; the lack of functional library buildings; a shortage of educated and trained information professionals; a poor publishing and trade industry; ineffective government support; and dwindling international support. As Professor Lundu (2002) "Council libraries (public libraries) have lacked vision, leadership and funding and have depended heavily on donors …"

The solutions to these problems are discussed in a later section.

Provision of Public Libraries in South Africa

Public libraries in South Africa were first introduced by the British colonizers. It is, therefore, small wonder that the libraries adopted the practices of the colonizing country. Judging by developments in the 1950s, public libraries were unevenly distributed, and access to them was granted based on racial lines, which meant that they were restricted to serving white people. It was only in the 1980s that libraries were opened to other South Africans.

Before 1994, the provision of public libraries was regarded as the responsibility of the local authorities, but governance and funding were complicated by the involvement of both provincial and municipal authorities. There were ten autonomous or non-affiliated public libraries in the city centers of Cape Town, Durban, East London, Germanton, Johannesburg, Pietermarizberg, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, Roodepoort, and Springs. These derived their funding from municipal rates and revenues and were not attached to any provincial library services.

On the other hand, affiliated libraries were administered jointly by their local authority and the province to provide library materials mainly to the white population. The type of assistance rendered included financial grants, information resources, infrastructural support and professional service. The local authorities were responsible for the recruitment of human resources and for communication. Problems with public library provision during this period ranged from geographical and economical factors, to illiteracy, ignorance about public libraries and the lack of suitable reading material.

The 1980s saw the emergence of resource centers in South Africa as an alternative to the traditional public library. The resource centers became focal community centers that provided relevant information for study and other purposes. They were accommodated in single or multiple rooms where books, periodicals, newspapers and other information sources were kept and made available to the users. The demise of the resource center was as a result of dynamic changes in society and in economics, and resource centers were eventually integrated into public libraries.

After 1994, three surveys were commissioned to examine the state of public library provision and make appropriate recommendations. These were the Arts and Task Group (ACTAG, 1995), The Public and Community Libraries Inventory of South Africa (PaCLISA) – (Van Helden and Lor, 2002) and a survey by The Center of the Book (PICC, 2005), which focused on the public/community library sector.

The ACTAG made several recommendations, including that public libraries should be funded from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to cater for literacy programs and materials, the promotion of a reading culture, and also the work for the disadvantaged, children and the youth.

The findings of PaCLISA indicated that public libraries were still serving the educated and the middle class, who are a small minority of the general public. Furthermore, in 2004 the number of libraries was not proportional to the population in the provinces. For example, Kwazulu-Natal with bigger population had 164 libraries, which was far less than 516 and 307 in the smaller provinces of Gauteng and Western Cape respectively.

The PICC report highlighted the challenges facing libraries, such as funding, change, alignment, governance, human resources, high illiteracy, poverty and unemployment (Nassimeni and May, 2006). Witbooi (2006), Leach (1998), and Aitcheson (2006) confirmed these challenges.

The biggest announcement came in 2005, when the South African Government pledged R 1,000,000,000, over three years for public library development provided that comprehensive research was carried out on the number and size of libraries in each municipality, the user statistics, human resources, the collections, and the demographics of each municipality.

Jacaranda Intellectual Property Business Consultants won the tender to develop a funding model for public and community libraries. Consequently, the following three recommendations were made, which have been turning points in the development of public and community libraries in South Africa:

1. Funding for the 2007/8 fiscal year is made available as a conditional grant to ensure that it is used for the intended purpose
2. R 15 million – 30 million gets allocated to each province, distributed from the total of R 2000 million.
3. Each province is provided with some direction on how to spend its allocation based on its unique circumstances, such as demographics, size and geographic area, separating structure, etc. (KPMG and Jacaranda, 2006)

These positive initiatives of central and provincial governments, together with the participation of communities and service providers and the goodwill of individuals, signal that book lovers, readers and concerned citizens are all joining hands to resurrect our public libraries. Amid all the doom and gloom, there does seem to be hope for the South African public library sector (Witbooi, 2007).

There are encouraging developments already in existence to testify to this. For example, The Western Cape Library Service boasts of being the most comprehensive library service in South Africa. It has a total of 305 library centers serving a population of 4, 465, 600 million people, with new facilities and upgrading in the pipeline for three district projects (The Western Cape Library Service, 2006).

Challenges Faced in The Provision of Public Libraries

Fifty-four years have elapsed since the launch of guidelines for model public library service provision at the Ibadan Seminar in 1953. Africa still struggles to meet the objectives of these guidelines. Challenges in this context are examined. This is not to disregard the remarkable standard of public library provision achieved in some countries in Africa.

Kay Raseroka (1997) pointed out that clearly, "*the general public library service conditions in Africa are in a depressed state*". This can be attributed to many factors, including: dependency on donor funds – inadequate in most cases and irreplaceable when terminated – which affect stock development and lead to uncompetitive staff salaries; unsatisfactory infrastructure development and maintenance; insensitivity towards local needs due to centralized services that often do not consult the grassroots population and consequently provide the wrong ser-

vices, which adults ignore but students sometimes embrace; lack of habitual readers – most read to achieve a purpose and no longer read when they are successful; and low literacy rates that create dependency on oral or other alternative sources of information. Furthermore, information professionals are sometimes not only inadequate in quantity, but are also short in quality, to the extent that they lack the vision, commitment and creativity necessary to provide services that entice new users and keep regular users interested.

Diana Rosenberg (2004) puts it bluntly:

> "The early promise of libraries has not been fulfilled in Africa. Buildings and other facilities have not been maintained, shelves are either empty or full of out-of-date and irrelevant materials, and the percentage of the population using the services is negligible. This is more or less true, albeit at differing levels in different countries, for all libraries in the public sector, whether academic, public or special"

Another major problem already highlighted is the dependency on donor funding or material donations. These are totally inadequate since they are no longer an alternative to a substantial institutional budget for public library service provision.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle is whether public library users, both current and potential, are really convinced that the public library can make a difference in their lives. Does my illiterate brother down in the remote rural village of Sakabusolo know what difference using a public library would make to his health or that it may result in more wealth? It is, after all, not possible for one to reach the peak of a mountain without knowing the fundamentals of mountaineering.

Another burning question is whether the powers that be are committed to public library provision and view it as a corner stone to community development. Are libraries politically rewarding? Would a local politician be voted to Parliament on the premise that he/she would build a library as opposed to a hospital or school in the constituency?

To conclude, it is generally important to take action on the following in order to ensure faster and better provision of public libraries in Africa:

1. Explain the role of the public library in community development to the general population
2. Conduct research into what users need so that the appropriate services are provided
3. Alleviate illiteracy and create demand for public library use
4. Produce appropriate public library materials in adequate quantity and quality
5. Governments should pay more than lip-service commitment to funding and do all that is necessary for the development of library services (including library service legislation)

6. Prioritizing the education and training of information professionals as in any other professional association
7. Sharing experiences with those countries whose libraries and public libraries have succeeded in uplifting communities

Into the Future:
New Initiatives for the Provision of Public Libraries

Many now fear that the provision of public libraries failed to deliver what was expected. For example, it is clear that information poverty still haunts many of our communities. The term "information poverty" is used to describe the lack of the most basic survival information. The original concept and philosophy behind public libraries was to stop the spread of this scourge. The public library was meant to be the people's university, a source of knowledge that enabled the public to graduate from ignorance with the help of free (barrier-less) information facilities. The section that follows touches on new initiatives that intend to play a more realistic and meaningful role in providing information to the community.

Community libraries

Community libraries were conceived to provide survival information to the community; the kind of information necessary for full and equal participation in society. The Library Association (1980) defined community information services as:

> "Services which assist individuals or groups with daily problem-solving and with participation to the democratic process. The service concentrates on the needs of those who do not have easy access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights".

Alemna (1995) explains that the rationale of community libraries lies in their essentially different sense of social purpose. They differ from traditional libraries in that they are proactive about their sense of social purpose. The primary stimulus is humanitarian, and its outcome is social intervention in support of positive prejudice.

Various studies (Obayade, 1984; Mchombu, 1984; and Durant, 1985; in Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya respectively) have shown that rural people need information for their development in areas such as health, occupation, water supply, electricity, roads, education, religion and recreation. One immediate question arises: why have public libraries failed to supply such information to communities? One reason is that the public library is perceived as an organization for the elite, catering for fully literate members who can utilize all the reading materials in the library. Some staff members are also perceived as elitists – many of them are culturally disoriented and may not effectively communicate with the rural folk. Fur-

thermore, much of the information resources in these libraries do not meet the real community's needs. Above all, the nature of the building, furniture and equipment is often imposing, and the community therefore perceives the entire enterprise as prohibitively expensive. The community library is a solution because it is conceived, born and nurtured by the community, and therefore naturally reflects the nature and interests of the community in its library services. It is also affordable and focused on providing relevant materials to the community, which controls and manages it.

Kay Raseroka (1997) believes that such initiatives are a radical departure from the traditional mould of librarianship, and notes that despite being gradually introduced, initiatives such as community libraries are steadily gaining momentum.

Rural Libraries and Resource Development Programme (RLRDP)

In Zimbabwe, the Rural Libraries and Resource Development Programme (RLRDP) uses drama, song and dance to disseminate information, substituting reading, lending and literacy support services. The RLRDP has formed alliances with existing community grassroots' groups, and non-governmental and government information programs.

The Village Reading Rooms programme (VRRP) – Botswana

This is another such initiative, although arguably not very successful. To date, the initiative has shown that it requires commitment from all its partners and a shared vision based on the good of the community it serves.

The Camel Library Service (CLS)

In Kenya, the Camel Library Service (CLS) is another classic example. This is a form of mobile community service that uses the Camel transport system. The Kenya National Library Services adopted the strategy of community participation and involvement to encourage local ownership. Community involvement and participation was enhanced through the formation of Local Committees that incorporate village elders, community opinion leaders and other local experts, and this has greatly contributed towards the success of the project (http://www.knls.or.ke/history.htm).

The National Book Festival

The National Library of Uganda (NLU) is responsible for organizing up-country activities together with its partners – the local governments, NGOs, Trusts, etc. NLU organizes the National Book Festival, bringing together all the stakeholders in the Publishing and Book Industry under the Umbrella of the National Book Trust of Uganda. Various activities for primary pupils, secondary school students, women's groups, young adults and adult learners take place. Activities include reading marathons, book descriptions, story telling, book exhibitions and talks related to reading and literacy, among others. Such initiatives change perceptions

about opportunities for development, and also cultivate a new culture intent on clarifying the needs of the community, thus rendering services sustainable.

Multipurpose Telecenters and Libraries

In 1997 the then Public Libraries Board, now the National Library of Uganda, in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Research Center, (IDRC), the British Council, the Ugandan Government and the Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO established the Nakaseke Multipurpose Telecenters and Libraries. The goal of the project was to stimulate rural development by facilitating access to information, learning resources and facilities, and ICTs, and also improving medical services through telemedicine. Reports from the field indicate that the telecenters are not being optimally used. Factors that could be causing this level of use range from lack of local literature, to computer phobia, poor funding, high maintenance costs, cultural taboos and power shading, among others. Similar developments have been witnessed in Mayuge, Kasangati and Buwama, etc, in Uganda.

CONCLUSION

Modern public library provision in Africa can be pinned down to the beginnings of philanthropy and colonialism on the continent. The former inadvertently spread literacy through reading and writing and initiated the need for storage, cataloguing etc., while the latter brought with it a culture in which libraries were a course of habit. Following the Second World War, UNESCO came to play a major role in establishing public libraries in Africa. Public library provision in Africa has reached different levels of development based on the level of commitment, government support, legislation, staff, and public response, among other concerns. Unfortunately, public library provision has declined to worrisome proportions in some countries. This is mainly due to the alien and elitist nature of the public library; the failure of the public library to identify community needs and therefore offer relevant services; inappropriate information materials; poor or inadequate staff; and the lack of committed institutional budgets, which creates dependency on donor funds. New initiatives, such as Reading Tents, multipurpose telecenters and villages libraries – Uganda; the Village Reading Rooms Programme (VRRP) – Botswana; Rural Libraries and Resource Development Programme (RLRDP) – Zimbabwe; and the Camel Library Service (CLS) in Kenya have been initiated, and there is hope that the involvement of communities will generate support and commitment to information service provision, leading to the development of more meaningful information services in Africa.

Internationally, initiatives such as the 2002 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) and New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) are also hoping to catalyze the utilization of information within African communities.

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