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Institutional Change in the Ugandan Library Sector: the establishment of the National Library of Uganda

The establishment of the National Library of Uganda has had a major effect on the library sector in Uganda, but much remains to be done.

Joacim Hansson and Jane Kawalya

INTRODUCTION

When describing the development of national libraries, Goodrum (1980, p. 392) distinguishes three phases, or "generations". The first of these developed in the 15th century, primarily in Europe. Most national libraries grew out of existing collections, for instance university libraries and royal libraries. During the 16th and 17th centuries they were established as the central library institution in their respective countries. Collections grew primarily through the legal requirement to deposit all publications, for instance in Sweden from 1667, which was established through agreements between the libraries and printing houses. Other ways of acquiring valuable documents and collections included war booty.

The second generation of national libraries dates from 1800-post Napoleonic to the World War II period. With a departure point in the first generation model, they limited themselves to accumulating the history and accomplishments of the nation in printed forms; Canada and Australia are examples of this generation. Still today much effort is put into defining the national and local identities of countries through their national libraries, for instance through digitization of local cultural heritage collections (Dalbello, 2004).

The third generation of national libraries has mainly arisen in Africa and Latin America. They have renewed the concept of the national library by not focussing on vast collection building alone, but are to be seen mainly as 'headquarters' for networks of libraries and other information-intense institutions. They are an expression of emergent nationalism in the wake of a series of types of national institution such as national archives, national theatres, or national museums. Examples of

countries where this development is evident today are Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Different aspects of what a national library should be and should do came under consideration in Uganda already in the 1960s. The development of the new National Library was long awaited, but swiftly inaugurated in 2003. Uganda had never before had a national library in any proper sense; instead, the tasks of such an institution were distributed through different parts of the library sector, primarily the Makerere University Library, which in the 1990s grew to become one of the most central library institutions in the whole of Eastern Africa (Sicherman, 2005, p. 312)

The aim of this article is to describe and discuss the developments in the Ugandan library sector which have led to the establishment of the National Library of Uganda (NLU). The focus will be on the actual historical development from the mid-1960s until the passing by Parliament of the National Library of Uganda Act in 2003. Further, the article discusses the consequences for institutional relations within the Ugandan library sector which are due to the establishment of NLU.

HISTORY OF THE UGANDA LIBRARY SECTOR

The history of libraries in East Africa, like that of Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, is comparatively short. Unlike the European experience, the centrality of libraries to African development has not been fully exploited. This may be due to the fact that Africa had a late start in the development of its economic potential, and its limited resources are largely invested in the industrial and agricultural sectors in order to quickly produce material goods (Ilomo, 1985, p. 98).

Few libraries were established in East Africa before the World War II. Those which existed were small, with no professional librarians and catered mostly for European civil servants, their families and Asians. Public libraries like those in the United States, the United Kingdom or the Scandinavian countries were

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

non-existent. There were libraries financed, maintained and operated by non-Africans – by 1923 the Uganda Society Library provided services for the expatriates in Entebbe, who at that time were almost the only people literate in English. (Kigongo-Bukenya, 1990, p. 131; Ikoja-Odongo, 2004 p. 170).

Uganda's *Ten-Year Development Plan, 1946–56*, emphasized social services including lending libraries, but the project was abandoned because of poor initial planning and under-funding (Kigongo-Bukenya, 1990, p.131). Library services in Uganda started in 1948, when the East African Literature Bureau (EALB) was set up with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, and branches in Kampala, Uganda, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Its responsibilities included publishing books in the vernacular languages and providing a public library lending service. Library services comprised branches in gazetted towns, circulating book-boxes loaned to subscribing institutions and postal loan services to subscribing individuals.

In 1960, S.W. Hockey was entrusted with the duty of working with library committees in each East African country to appraise the library services offered and initiate further development (Hockey, 1960). He recommended that:

Central or national library services should be set up, which from its headquarters in the capital city should be for the establishment, maintenance and development of library services. They were to be under the control of statutory Library Boards which were to be given wider powers (Hockey, 1971, p.165).

The libraries of the EALB were to be absorbed into the new national libraries. Uganda adopted the Public Libraries Board Act in 1964 and the Public Libraries Board (PLB) was established under the Ministry of Culture and Community Development in 1965. The PLB was in charge of eleven branch libraries, book-box mobiles and postal services.

Development Plans

Development of library services in Uganda was one of the projects under the *Second Five-Year Development Plan, 1966/67–1970/1971* (Government of Uganda, 1969, p.146). Under this plan, government allocated UGX 1.5 million for capital development for libraries. The immediate aim was to have a library service in each district supplemented by mobile library services.

The government requested the Board to prepare estimates and sketch plans for the proposed library development. Plans were made for building, equipping furnishing and stocking the Uganda National Library and headquarters in Kampala, four regional libraries and sixteen branch libraries in the major towns in the country. Kampala Public Library was to be improved and extended and the implementation plan was to be in phases. Unfortunately, there were no funds to implement the plan. However, the Board went further and opened five more branch libraries, extended book box services to some hospitals and major prison services, and started operating mobile library services to eastern and western Uganda with government funds.

The plan for library development was again included in the *Third Five-Year Development Plan, 1971/72–1975/76* (Government of Uganda, 1973 p. 373). Funds were again not provided for its implementation, so the Board encouraged local initiative to raise funds through fundraising campaigns. The construction of the Teso Library building was started during the period under local initiative and the government came in to support the project with funding. Similarly, Tororo Public Library building was extended and by 1976, 21 branch libraries were opened. The Government included the plan in the Action Program 1977/78–1979/80 and libraries were restocked.

The Public Libraries Board Commissions of Inquiry

Efforts to build up the national library headquarters failed, since the project was inadequately staffed. Another failure was the omission of a generous training scheme for personnel administering the library services. One can state that Uganda made a 'faulty start'; the first chief librarian was inexperienced and had no political base, something which counteracted his professional activities and subsequently led to his dismissal. With the only qualified librarian dismissed, a non-professional was appointed and there was no proper planning and running of services. Instead of starting by consolidating the central library (headquarters) to enable technical processing, administration of service and staff training, more branches were opened and a mobile service was put in place to provide library services to as many people as possible. This was a far greater responsibility than the financial and personnel resources could maintain. The result was the mushrooming of branches all over the country, inconsistency, poor library accommodation,

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

furniture, equipment and books. The many problems posed to government in the organization of public library services were confirmed by the number of commissions and committees of inquiry set up to examine them.

The Nabeta Committee Report 1968

A commission of inquiry was appointed in 1967 under the chairmanship of T.T.T. Nabeta, whose terms of reference were:

to make a survey of the existing state of the library services and to assess information about local plans for library development from local committees and report to the Board with the recommendations for the future development. (Matogo, 1975, p. 309).

In their report the committee observed that there was very little demand for reading for pleasure both in rural and urban areas, which was attributed to the obvious scarcity of reading materials suitable to the library users. Most of the readers in rural areas were school children, teachers and a few others engaged in private study. This also applied to the urban centres with the exception that readership was better, more educated and sophisticated; there was confusion in most local authorities concerning the responsibility for providing the library services in their respective areas. Most of them were ignorant of the Public Libraries Act, 1964 and they maintained that they had little or nothing to do with the service that was the sole responsibility of the Public Libraries Board (Nabeta, 1968).

The committee recommended the establishment of well organized, well stocked and properly manned public library services to cope adequately with the rapidly increasing reading needs resulting from the fast expanding educational facilities. It also emphasized the consolidation of existing services, as this would keep alive actual demands, avoid disruption of readers' programmes while encouraging gradual, orderly development and enhancing public confidence in the Board. Further, the recommendation encouraged more active participation from the local authorities by providing initial library accommodation, erecting library buildings, and employing suitable library assistants for future training by the Board. Finally, the committee suggested provision of literature for school children and teachers and, gradually, for other reading interests and development of regional libraries

in order to reduce costs and minimize delays from central administration. Finally, liaisons between the Board and school libraries and the appointment of a School Libraries Inspector to cooperate with the Board and the East African School of Librarianship at Makerere University in the elementary training of teacher librarians should be made (Nabeta, 1968; Kigongo-Bukenya, 1971).

The Board embarked on a policy of reducing service units by closing branches which were poorly stocked, badly accommodated and inefficiently managed. The failure of the commission proved what was already known: that the solutions of Board's problems did not lie in conducting inquiries, the solution would have been the appointment of a director after the enactment of the Public Libraries Board Act 1964. There was no hope for a take-off until a director was appointed (Matogo, 1975 p. 310).

The Nekyon Committee, 1969

As the Nabeta report did not provide solutions to the PLB problems, a one-man committee was appointed in October 1969 "to inquire into the administration and financial affairs of the Public Library service", and to establish whether the Board was discharging its duties as laid out by the Public Libraries Board Act, 1964. Nekyon recommended: the appointment of a director with administrative ability and experience; to merge the post of Chairman of the Board with that of the Director; increase library personnel in the branches; purchase more books and put up functional library buildings; local authorities to be more actively involved in the provision of library services in their respective areas; retention and increase of mobile library services in the four regions; improvement of postal library services and extension of book-box services to all community centres; an annual book grant; and the Board to endeavour to raise funds through loans, donations and establishing bookshops in all the towns; the Board membership to include one representative from the four regions. (Nekyon, 1969). Just like the Nabeta report, no action was taken by the government.

The Kent Report, 1970

A UNESCO expert meeting on national planning of documentation and library services in Africa was held

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

in Kampala 7–15 July 1970 and among the participants was C.D. Kent, a Unesco consultant from Canada, who had been requested by the Uganda government to:

make a study of the present state of the library and documentation services of the country and evaluate the future needs, draw up a plan for the development of national documentation and library services with short, medium and long range objectives, including statistical data and cost estimates for the target period; submit a brief final report upon completion of mission including the findings motioned above along with concrete recommendations for rapid implementation (Kent, 1970).

His report was more theoretical than practical, although it contained valuable information; however, it lacked sufficient data to be accepted as a basic development model. He had suggested the separate creation of national, parliamentary, public, school and special libraries. The meeting agreed on a unitary or simple integrated form of library development. A working group was formed to prepare guidelines, which included; re-examination of the 1964 legislation to facilitate the creation of a national system of libraries; the need to expand staff training at the East African School of Librarianship, Makerere University; to try and solve the difficulties in respect of library development, namely: lack of planning and coordination, fragmentation of existing resources, shortage of qualified personnel, absence of a national 'information pool' to facilitate the internal and external dissemination of information, the slow development of publishing and the shortage of literature in vernacular languages. (Matogo, 1975, p. 313).

General frustration was expressed in one study:

all said, there is a Board and an administration both enthusiastic and forward looking: the thinking and planning has been made but all have reached a dead end because of unconcerned library authorities who do not fight library development plans, and as a result funding is inadequate (Kigongo-Bukenya, 1985 p. 79).

Decline of Library Services

The already bad situation worsened when Idi Amin took over power by a coup in 1971. Funds for books, mainly from the British Council, the United States

Information Agency and UNESCO, ceased due to the hostile political situation. Many qualified and experienced staff and expatriates fled the country.

Kawesa summarized the situation as follows:

In 1973, a dark period began for libraries. There was an exodus of traditional users of existing libraries of all sorts – Asians, academicians, research fellows and associates. A shortage of foreign exchange and a lack of general appreciation of the role of libraries in the priorities of funding authorities moreover meant that a considerable number of periodical subscriptions could not be renewed. For example, Makerere University Library had more than 2,000 exchange partners and regular donors mainly in the USA and the UK, but exchange agreements were cancelled as libraries in Uganda failed to reciprocate. Library budgets dwindled and developments almost came to a stand-still (1993, p. 824).

In 1979, during the liberation war between Uganda and Tanzania, the Arua, Masaka and Mbarara branch libraries were destroyed and in other public libraries books were looted or destroyed.

From the 1960s the various governments in Uganda have paid lip-service to library development; their policies were not matched with the release of funds to implement library plans. This may be due to the absence of political leaders like Nkwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who got personally involved in library development (Kigongo-Bukenya, 1990, p. 137). Most of the funding for libraries is from external donors, which has drawbacks because of political uncertainties. Efforts were made to rehabilitate these libraries during the rule of the Uganda Liberation Front (UNLF) government and this was continued during the early period of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government. Mbarara and Masaka public libraries were reopened. Kabarole and Jinja public library buildings were rehabilitated; and more stock was acquired from development partners for all libraries.

LEGAL DEPOSIT LAWS

One of the most important features of a national library is its ability to collect materials printed and distributed in the country as well as material about the country printed abroad and even in foreign languages. In Uganda this depository practice was first formulated

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

as a task for the largest library in the country, the Makerere University Library, by an Act of Parliament, the Makerere University College (Deposit Library) Act, 1964 (Government of Uganda, 1965).

Makerere University College was founded in 1922 as a technical college. In 1949 it became a college of higher education affiliated to the University of London. With the establishment of East Africa in 1963, the period of the special relation with the University of London came to an end and the independent University of East Africa was instituted. The constituents of the University of East Africa were University College, Makerere, University College, Nairobi and University College, Dar es Salaam. Makerere University is the oldest and largest institution of higher learning in East Africa; it was established as a separate university in 1970. (Lwanga, 1971, p. 131) Under the Makerere University College (Deposit Library) Act of 1964, the library built over the years a large and unique East African collection. Thus by the very nature of its content and organization, and in the absence of a well developed public library service or national library, the Makerere Library was obliged to take on the responsibilities of a national reference library. This involved collecting materials published within the country and materials about the country published elsewhere.

The main objective of the Makerere University College (Deposit Library) Act, 1964 is to collect and preserve the literature on Uganda. The Act required every publisher of every book published in Uganda to deposit a copy of his work at his own expense with the librarian of Makerere University; this act also applied to authors in Uganda who have published their books about Uganda outside of Uganda (Government of Uganda, 1965, p. 2561).

At that time, there was no institution in Uganda, let alone in East Africa, which produced a comprehensive national bibliography. A 'Uganda Bibliography' section appeared for the first time in the *Makerere University College Library Bulletin and Accessions List*, no.65, January–February 1965. The bibliography included government publications, books about Uganda and those on Uganda but published outside the country.

In 1987, the Makerere University Library, Africana/Special Collections Section started to produce the *Uganda National Bibliography*. The Act can today be regarded as somewhat outdated as it does not cover, for instance, non-book materials such as audio materials, visual materials or photographs. Only publishers are

obliged to deposit the documents, and this tends to exclude printers and authors. The penalty for non-compliance is a meagre fine and is therefore largely ignored by the publishers. On top of this, the Act does not provide a proper framework for an infrastructural solution for the systematic collection of documents (Kawalya, 1995: p.111). The *Uganda National Bibliography* was irregular, and not comprehensive because of the weak legal deposit Act and the failure of the publishers to deposit their books. Most of the documents listed in the bibliography are Makerere University publications and mainly theses and dissertations. There was also lack of space, lack of transport to collect the documents, limited storage, staff and funds to publish the bibliography; only a few copies were produced and these were distributed mostly outside Uganda and only the East African School of Librarianship received copies. In general the *Uganda National Bibliography* was inaccessible for most people. It eventually ceased publication in 1998 (Kawalya, 1995, p. 114).

The Deposit Library and Documentation Centre Act of 1969 is administered by the Institute of Public Administration (now known as the Uganda Management Institute) and its main objective is to support documentation and information dissemination in the country. It is empowered to collect public documents from government departments and local authorities; however it also collects publications from publishers (Government of Uganda, 1970). It produces the *Library Bulletin and Accessions List* (a type of national bibliography); this is regular (annual), although not comprehensive enough because of the weak legal deposit act (Kawalya, 1995, p. 117). It is distributed to government departments and publishers.

THE NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (NATIS)

The Intergovernmental Conference on the Planning of National Documentation, Library and Archives Infrastructures, held in Paris from 23–27 September 1974 (UNESCO, 1975) was the result of the authorization given to the Director General by the 17th Session of UNESCO General conference, 1972 to "... promote the planning of documentation, library and archives services as an integral part of the national communication infrastructure in support of development" (UNESCO, 1975, p. 4). Concerned with the planning of overall national documentation, library and archives services, it was asked to generalize the findings of UNESCO regional expert meetings on planning and

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

of other meetings of experts, and to set out general guidelines for planning policy and methodology as well as to formulate recommendations for the preparation of national plans (Kaungamno, 1985 p. 264). In this connection, it approved objectives related to the setting up of NATIS in all countries and in particular on: a national information policy, establishing a legislative framework, planning the organizational structure, Universal Bibliographic Control, and personnel. (UNESCO, 1976).

Uganda, like other countries in Africa, tried to formulate an information policy as it had realized the importance of organized information in the economic development of the country, and tried at various stages to implement UNESCO's recommendations to establish a national information system.

In March 1990, the East African School of Librarianship (EASL) with the sponsorship of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) organized a seminar on the 'Development of a National Information and Documentation Network for Uganda', whose aim was to give participants an opportunity to hold detailed discussions and give views on the strategies for achieving a workable information policy.

During the seminar, A. Nakkazi (1990) the commissioner for UNESCO in Uganda, made an introduction statement on the NATIS project. In 1974, following the UNESCO Conference on the Planning of Library, Documentation and Archives Structures, held in Paris, the National Steering Committee was created and charged with the responsibility of assessing the possibilities of setting up an integrated national information system for Uganda. No further action was taken although the committee presented a cabinet memo seeking cabinet approval for establishing such a structure to aid in development programs, the reason being that the government was diverted to the fast raging war between Uganda and Tanzania and subsequent civil wars. In 1986, following the UNESCO director's invitation to member states to consider designating a government agency as national focal point, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government appointed the National Information Agency Advisory Committee (NIAAC) to: advise government on the establishment of an integrated National Information System (NATIS); draw up a suitable structure for coordination of the activities of NATIS and; prepare proposals to be presented to donor agencies for funding.

A request to UNESCO by NIAAC for technical assistance to assess the information system status in the

country was approved and a consultant visited Uganda in 1987. A national seminar was held with the aim of discussing the methodology of establishing NATIS. The seminar drafted a proposal policy guideline on information systems and services; made a structure for the national information policy and coordinating agency and recommended an appropriate institutional framework for NATIS to be set up in the office of the Prime Minister.

In her outline of the structure of the NATIS, Nakkazi (1990) proposed the following; An Interministerial Council consisting of representatives for the relevant ministers which would formulate policy guidelines and set standards and norms of operation; an Executive Directorate, which would carry out coordination and other functions; and an Advisory Group of technical information experts from different disciplines, whose main function would be to advise the Interministerial Council on technical matters relating to information plans, strategies and programs in the entire country. She suggested that the Agency coordinated NATIS activities; established policy guidelines in information related matters; set standards and norms to facilitate information exchange and transfer; and trained and developed professional practitioners.

The NATIS proposal was submitted to the cabinet. It was approved and an interim Director of NATIS was appointed. A bill was presented to the National Resistance Council – the Uganda legislative body – to give NATIS the legal backing in order to function properly, but this did not materialize.

For the first time, the future looked promising, and it was hoped that an organized and integrated information system would be established, which would implement UNESCO's recommendations. NATIS intended to create networks, for example of agriculture libraries and health libraries. This would have filled in the vacuum of a national library and NATIS would coordinate, advise, promote and solicit funding to help these library networks. UNESCO funded this project through the Ministry of Public Service and Cabinet Affairs but funds were misappropriated and so the project could not take off.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF UGANDA ACT, 2003

Instead of fulfilling the intentions of the UNESCO initiatives, the discussions within the Ugandan library sector were directed towards the possibility of finding political support for the establishment of a national

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

library based on experiences from other countries and following the movement within the sector itself to establish control over and coordination of the different kinds of libraries. First and foremost, focus was put on the coordination of public library activities in all parts of the country, which after the decentralization in the late 1990s had become a matter of urgency. Political legitimizing of the initiative went smoothly, and although it had been a long and winding road to get there, the final process of getting political support from Parliament went through swiftly, due to the great care made in presentations by representatives of the library profession.

The Act itself stipulates the establishment of the National Library of Uganda, the depositing and preservation of publications, the setting up of an information referral service and library coordination and to provide for other related matters. The tasks of the new library that were formulated were many and quite diverse in scope. The Act states them as follows:

- (a) to develop national policies on public libraries
- (b) to provide to local government standards, advice, norms, work manuals and guidelines in respect of public library buildings, staffing, stock and information processing, storage and retrieval
- (c) to inspect and ensure that public libraries conform to national policies, guidelines and standards
- (d) to provide technical, professional and advisory services in the field of librarianship to Government departments, local governments and the public sector
- (e) to carry out research in the field of library and information provision and disseminate results to government, local governments and the public
- (f) to design and carry out pilot projects in new areas of library and information provision and disseminate results to local governments and other organizations
- (g) to carry out and coordinate staff development programmes for people working in libraries and information services
- (h) to support and promote adult literacy and education through the identification and stocking of post-literacy reading materials
- (i) to support the setting up of rural community libraries
- (j) to promote the habit and culture of reading through reading campaigns and book exhibitions

- (k) to carry out advocacy at the local and international level in matters relating to libraries
- (l) to acquire and organize for use, a comprehensive collection of library materials published in Uganda, by Ugandans, and on Uganda
- (m) to act as a depository for national and foreign governments' publications as well as for the United Nations and other international organizations for purposes of promoting research and scholarship and for the preservation of published national culture and intellectual output
- (n) to compile and publish a national bibliography of books published in Uganda as a means of promoting the awareness of the availability of these books and encouraging the sale of these books in the country and abroad
- (o) in collaboration with publishers in Uganda to carry out the cataloguing of books before they are published so as to ease the processing of these books by various libraries
- (p) to establish and maintain a National Union Catalogue of holdings or major libraries in the country and to provide information and referral services, including specialized information services, at the national and international level
- (q) to allocate International Standard Book Numbers and International Standard Serial Numbers to publishers in Uganda
- (r) to act as the agency for national and international lending and exchange of library materials
- (s) to act as a national agency for national, regional and international information systems
- (t) to create electronic databases in areas of national interest
- (u) to acquire at a fee, from any person or institution, any manuscript or literature that may be considered to be of interest to the country
- (v) to carry out any other functions that may promote the above objectives.

The Act requires that every publisher of a book or document in Uganda shall at his/her cost deposit three copies of the book or document or one copy of a videogram or film and ten copies in the case of any Government publication with the National Library. Any person who contravenes this commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding ten currency points or to imprisonment not exceeding six months or both (Government of Uganda, 2003, p. 5).

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

Defining Problems

Even though the political process preceding the implementation of the National Library Act was relatively swift, it was, like the previous Makerere University College (Deposit Library) Act 1964, and National Library and Documentation Centre Act 1969, formulated in what can be described as a policy vacuum. Uganda does not have a national information policy which could place the various tasks of the national library within a wider frame of political initiatives or intentions. As a consequence the Act can be seen not just as a creative innovation of the library infrastructure of Uganda, but to an equal degree as an indirect formulation of the gap between political ambition and the practicalities of implementation created by the current lack of policy anchorage. Some of the tasks can be seen as more or less random or included in the Act without any coherent thought behind them. An example of this is (c) above: "to inspect and ensure that public libraries conform to national policy guidelines and standards". Due to lack of sufficient political and administrative context, the National Library has no authority to discipline staff or put the guidelines and standards into practice. Due to administrative inconsistency when it comes to the patronage of the different libraries of the country certain tasks are difficult to implement. This is especially true for the following tasks: (d) "to provide technical, professional and advisory services in the field of librarianship, government departments, local governments and public sector"; and (g) "to carry out and coordinate staff development programs for people working in libraries and information services". Public libraries are under the Ministry of Local Government while the National Library is under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, so this makes it difficult to implement these functions. It has proved to be very difficult for the National Library to provide professional and advisory services for public libraries in the countryside, and at the same time to coordinate staff development for established libraries such as Makerere University Library. The National Library of Uganda is by law obliged to collect non-book materials such as videograms and films, but this cannot be done because of lack of storage and preservation facilities.

The publishers have to deposit copies of their printed production to three different depository libraries, namely the National Library of Uganda, Makerere University Library and the Uganda Management

Institute. Some publishers deposit only one copy of expensive books. Others are ignorant of the law, an ignorance which cannot be blamed on the publishers alone, but on the fact that there is no real mechanism for the National Library to enforce the Act. The National Library has a shortage of funds, staff and space and it is operating in the environment of better-resourced libraries such as Makerere University Library with little hope of exercising the functions listed in the legislation. The fact that both the Uganda Management Institute and Makerere University Library are significantly bigger and more established, both nationally and internationally, makes the situation very interesting.

When the National Library of Uganda NLU was put in place, Makerere University Library formally ceased to collect and publish the *Uganda National Bibliography*, a task which was handed over to the National Library. Although still a recipient of legal deposits, Makerere is now concentrating on serving its clientele, the students, staff and researchers of the university in order "... to meet the study, teaching, research and outreach information needs for sustainable national and regional development" (Makerere University Library, 2007). Makerere University library contributed most of the documents which are submitted as legal deposits to the National Library, many of which are theses and dissertations. This is clearly visible in the *National Bibliography of Uganda*, Volume One, 2005.

In addition to the national bibliography, the National Library and Documentation Centre at the Uganda Management Institute is still collecting national imprint and publishing the *Accessions List*. However, some publishers, especially the new ones, are ignorant about the Makerere University College (Legal Deposit) Act 1964 and the National Library and Documentation Centre Act 1969 which stipulates this role for the library (Government of Uganda, 1970). They are only aware of the National Library of Uganda, where they deposit their documents. The National Library and Documentation Centre continues to publish the *Library Accessions List* annually, the latest being for 2005, which is sent online to the publishers and government departments, but not to the major libraries of the country.

The question on how to redirect patterns of power due to experience and size from one part of the library system is not just an issue of practicalities, but one which should be subjected to research as well. In addition to the legal deposit issue, another issue, which was supposed to be a prime subject of development

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

through the establishment of the National Library, was the coordination of public library activities in all parts of Uganda. This task has proven difficult since the public library system is catered for by different districts.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF UGANDA AND THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

With the enactment of the Local Government Act No. 1 of 1997, the Public Libraries Board was no longer responsible for establishing, equipping, managing and maintaining public libraries in Uganda (Government of Uganda, 1997). The urban (or rural) district authorities are now responsible for the public libraries and the handing over process took place between 1998 and 2000.

Most staff working in the public libraries today are not qualified. They learnt librarianship in a sort of informal apprentice system. Today however, the District Librarian must have a Master's degree in Library and Information Science (or, in some cases, a Bachelor of LIS depending on the library's size and the nature of its undertakings). Local governments have included the public libraries in the district structure although different districts place their public libraries under different departments. For example: Masaka Public Library is under the Community Development Department, Kampala Public Library is under the Education and Sports Department, while Hoima Public Library is directly under the Town Clerk. Some public libraries like Mbale, Teso and Tororo have library committees at the district level. On a national administrative level the National Library of Uganda itself is placed under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development while the public libraries, for which the National Library sets standards, offers technical support and supervision, are placed under the Ministry of Local Government.

Most local authorities welcomed the responsibility of running public libraries in 1997 as it provided them with a sense of ownership. On the other hand, some local authorities feared that, with limited funds, public libraries would die and that however good the intentions were, there would be no reasonable chance for – in many cases – administratively inexperienced and underfinanced local officials to maintain any form of quality in the services provided.

When discussing the relation between the National Library and the public libraries, it is important to note

that although we clearly see the National Library as an example of Goodrum's "third generation" of national libraries, there is no organic relation between the two parts of the Ugandan library sector. Their roles do, in certain aspects, go in separate directions. The mission of the National Library is to "collect, preserve and disseminate Uganda's documented intellectual and cultural heritage, provide professional leadership in library and information delivery and promote a reading culture" (National Library of Uganda, 2007). These various obligations have very little to do with each other. The promotion of a reading culture in a country with 56 local languages recognized by the Uganda Constitution (Government of Uganda, 1995) and with 32 percent illiteracy is a great challenge (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2005, p. 13). Especially in the rural areas, the culture is oral, and the work of the libraries therefore has to be directed towards a fundamental change of culture, which is not necessarily welcomed by citizens in the villages out in the countryside. In establishing this new culture the building of an institutional infrastructure is required, and the National Library has helped local governments through the procurement of reading materials, Internet connectivity and the construction of public library buildings.

Examples of projects and initiatives forming the basis of this institutionalization of a 'new' public library service provision all over Uganda are numerous, and here we would just like to mention a few, to give a picture of the character of the different activities. In the financial year 2005/06, NLU procured 21,796 books worth UGX 657,085,950 (approximately USD 362,000) from Book Aid International (BAI) (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2005, p. 77). These books were distributed to public libraries and community libraries in over 30 towns. In the town of Zigoti (Mubende district) the National Library offered reading materials to midwives and traditional birth attendants. It assisted Soroti Local Government Council in completing an office block and the children's wing of the Teso Public Library building, which had stood still since 1968 due to political turmoil. With the assistance of the American Embassy, the National Library provided Internet connectivity to libraries in Kabarole, Mbale and Kampala. The National Library and the National Book Trust of Uganda (NABOTU) funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), organizes National Book Week festivals in 24 public libraries, primarily in the rural areas. The National Library has been leading and participating in reading

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

promotion campaigns and community reading-tents, and has donated children's books to primary schools in various districts. This last effort has significantly improved the quality of primary school education and reading culture (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2005, p. 76).

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the establishment of the National Library of Uganda has had an effect on the Ugandan library sector in a major way. At the same time, it is easy to establish that the initiatives that form the basis for the political legitimacy of the National Library Act from 2003 have in no way made any substantial efforts to adjust other parts of the library system to conjoin with this new institution. Questions of power distribution, along with numerous practical problems that have to be solved both in the long run and on a daily basis, still stand unanswered. The challenges that were faced by library services in Uganda during the early 1960s still linger on at the beginning of the 21st century. To be concrete, these challenges include:

- lack of functional library buildings and space
- lack of qualified staff
- lack of government commitment and support
- lack of funding
- lack of reading culture
- absence of library policy
- inadequate and irrelevant library materials.

Despite the above challenges, and despite the fact that most districts in the country still lack public libraries, the government has taken a number of initiatives for the benefit of the population, of which the establishment of a new national library is only one. Others that can be mentioned are the establishment of the Functional Adult Literacy Programme to reduce illiteracy and a universal primary education so that every Ugandan child gets an opportunity to go to school.

The future of library services in Uganda leaves no time for rest. Much can be said of what is needed to be done. There is no doubt that a dramatic re-institutionalization of the library sector cannot stop at the establishment of a new national library, but it has to be developed through a combination of several steps and initiatives. LIS research can be of help, not only through what is already known of transitions in library services in other countries, but also through its abilities to combine research issues in ways which

can be beneficial to the present library development in Uganda. Issues that might be suggested as a basis for future research, as well as political implementation, are the construction of functional library buildings, the sensitizing of the public about library services, the formulation of a library policy for Uganda, and the sensitizing of publishers about the importance of depositing their books with the National Library. Further related issues of the utmost importance are, among others, to encourage publishers to publish in local languages, putting into consideration the government policy which states that in the year 2007 all children from primary 1 to 4 (Age 6–9) should be able to study in their local languages.

Note

1. This study is part of a research project on the development of the National Library of Uganda financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA/sarec). It is carried out in cooperation between the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, the University College of Borås and Makerere University Library with the East African School of Library and Information Science, Makerere University, Kampala.

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Abstract

This article is part of a larger research project focussing on institutional change in the Ugandan library sector from the 1960s up until today, with special focus on the development of the National Library of Uganda. The article is based primarily on official publications such as different legislation passed by the Ugandan Parliament on library issues and on documentation reporting on various initiatives and projects aiming at building a functioning library and information infrastructure in Uganda during the last four decades. Findings show that initiatives have been regularly neglected at the political levels, both nationally and locally. The founding of the National Library of Uganda has affected the Ugandan library system in a major way and the country is now better equipped to face some of the challenges created by the requirements of the global information society and by high levels of illiteracy, especially in the rural areas. The article pinpoints some of these challenges and suggests further action on both professional and political levels.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE UGANDAN LIBRARY SECTOR

Keywords: national libraries; public libraries; political aspects; National Library of Uganda

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MORE ON NATIONAL LIBRARIES IN UGANDA

The “library, archives and museum” trinity: a professional challenge with particular reference to the knowledge society and to Uganda

Magara, Elisam *Innovation*, no. 31, pp. 76–97, Dec 2005.

The trinity of “library, archives and museum” constitutes a part of people’s lives and reflects the diversity of people’s languages and cultures in the knowledge society. Despite the colonial influence, Uganda has preserved its natural and cultural heritage in terms of social tradition and documentary heritage with little emphasis on integrating the functions of libraries, archives and museums. A survey was conducted of selected institutions involved in the collection, storage, preservation and promotion of natural, historical and cultural documentary heritage. The data was obtained through interviews with key persons selected purposively from those institutions; attending the consultative meetings organised by the National Library of Uganda; and reviewing literature about the subject. Findings indicate that there is lack of a strategy in co-ordinating functions. Although various efforts have focused on preservation of natural, historical and cultural heritage, there is no central strategy for integration. It remains a professional challenge to Uganda to address the issues of space, funding, expertise, preservation, co-ordination, government intervention, publicity and accessibility, and to ensure a culture of access to information. That is why a co-ordinated strategy for the recruitment, training, and sensitising of Ugandan professionals is required. (Author abstract)

Bridging the digital divide in Sub-Saharan Africa: the rural challenge in Uganda

Kasusse, Michael. *International Information and Library Review*; 37 (3) Sep 2005, pp. 147–158.

A study was conducted in 2002/2003 to investigate and assess the strategies of bridging the digital divide in Uganda. Data were collected qualitatively using semi-structured interviews. The study focused in depth on a relatively small sample of people concerned with the digital divide. Data was analysed using the grounded theory approach. Three categories of players in the digital divide emerged from the data, namely information workers, business entrepreneurs and policy makers. Finally the concept that emerged from the analysis pointed directly to the information workers, which suggests that the National Library and other information centres are valuable in bridging the digital divide in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some implications of the study areas for further research are highlighted. (Original abstract)

Uganda Digital Bookmobile hits the road

COMLA Bulletin; (3) May 2004, pp. 1, 3.

The Digital Bookmobile is a joint project of Anywhere Books, USA, and the National Library of Uganda, which aims to use a mobile library to put 5,000 books into schools, homes and libraries in rural Uganda. The project is funded by the World Bank’s InfoDev group and involves four wheel drive van equipped with a PC, Hewlett Packard laser printer, a paper cutter and a hot melt glue binding machine. The bookmobile is driven to schools in rural villages where the books are printed on an on demand basis. The books come from the public domain collections on the Internet Archive, which contains over 30,000 public domain works.

(Selected by the Editor from *Library and Information Science Abstracts*)