

BOTSWANA COUNTRY REPORT 1998 - 2000

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Introduction

The past two years after SCECSAL 13 held, in 1998 in Kenya, have not been easy as participation in the activities of the Botswana Library Association (BLA) continued to be very low. However the BLA Executive Committee has made some attempt to address this problem. The action taken merged well with Resolution 5 from SCECSAL 13 on Education, Training and Research.

Workshops

The Executive Committee organized two workshops for BLA members during the past two years.

The first workshop was entitled: Professional Development: Taking BLA into the next Millennium. The objectives of the workshop were to enhance the professional image of BLA, to allow members to know their rights and privileges and to equip members with skills required for effective presentation at workshops and conferences. Attendance was very impressive since the workshop coincided with the Botswana National Library Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Executive Committee has drawn up an action item from the workshop's recommendations which will be handed over to the next Committee. One of the action items, Draft Code of Ethics is well under way and a draft will be discussed during the forthcoming BLA Annual General Meeting.

The second workshop was on Advocacy. The workshop was organized by BLA in conjunction with staff of the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy in Gaborone. Donna Switzer, a United States Information Service Resource Officer based in Pretoria was the facilitator. Attendance was quite impressive, as the workshop had attracted a cross section of participants from library and information institutions in Gaborone. There was a general feeling among participants that they would hence understand the role advocacy plays in their profession, and be in a position to take issues up and make a case. As a follow up to this workshop, the BLA Executive Committee aims to hold a short workshop on advocacy during its AGM to ensure that library and information specialist who did not attend the full workshop derive some benefit from it.

Activities

- The BLA took part in the discussion of the document of the just approved Parliament Copyright Act.
- The BLA Chairperson with the Director of the Botswana National Library Service (BNLS), Director of the University of Botswana Library Services (UBLS) and Head of Department Library and Information Studies participated in preparing for the Gates

Library Foundation meeting to discuss ways that the Gates Library Foundation Programme can benefit Botswana in Internet provision and training of rural community library personnel in IT skills. It was unfortunate that the attempt was not a success.

- A BLA participant attended an IFLA sponsored workshop on Information and Communication Technologies for Rural Secondary Schools, held in Harare December 1999.

Challenges

- It is envisaged that in future each Executive Committee should have a theme for their term of office and plan activities around the theme.
- The BLA Executive Committee is at its final stages of drafting the Code of Ethics, which is long overdue. This will be discussed during the AGM this year.
- BLA intends to play a leading role in the issue of advocacy in the development of the information infrastructure to enhance information access and availability.