

SWAZILAND COUNTRY REPORT 1998 - 2000

Mrs D. J. Kunene
Swaziland Library Association

Introduction

This report highlights available library services in Swaziland and the efforts which have been made and some which are under-way to bring forth information for sustainable development.

Libraries have been widely recognized as essential elements for social, political and technological advancement. Libraries have been widely recognized as essential elements for social, political and technological advancement - traditionally libraries have concentrated on books as a means of information provision whilst this will remain so trends of the 21st Century which are mainly focussed on technological development, coupled with the requirements of information provision which are getting more sophisticated by the day demand that other means of information storage and dissemination are exploited. Briefly this report will indicate how far Swaziland has gone in making library service available and will show some problems which information providers have experienced in the process.

Recent Developments

National Library (Depository)

The National Library is charged with the responsibility to expand the collection and promote the accessibility of research and study materials in Swaziland on a National and centralized basis hence it performs some of the following functions:

- The National Library supplies a national reference service and builds up a relevant reference collection, however, it lacks adequate study facilities and has limited opening hours due to staff and space shortages.
- The National Library aims to serve as a focal point for national and international interlending.

Collection Development

The National Library receives legal deposit on the National imprint in all the varying forms. This responsibility is shared with the University of Swaziland and the National Archives.

Technical Services

The National Library is also charged with the responsibility to ensure option preservation and restoration, as well as reprographic and appropriate storage facilities.

Bibliographic Services

The National Library, University Library and the National Archives with some representatives from other main libraries forms a committee for the compilation and publication of the national bibliography, both retrospective and current. Furthermore, the committee coordinates bibliographic control and bibliographic standards. The Committee has continued to ensure that computerization is done according to bibliographic standards and compatible formats. However it must be noted that the exodus of staff (The Chairman and Secretary) of the above named committee from one of the major institutions has rendered the committee less active. It is hoped that replacements will be made in the near future.

Training

The National Library has been able to organize two workshops on cataloguing and classification which attracted participants from all sectors of the libraries and information profession in an attempt to harmonize the standards in which the Swaziland Union Catalogue should be produced.

Public Libraries

Two main libraries are centred around the major cities (Mbabane and Manzini) and thirteen others are located in the smaller towns around the country. In addition a mobile service operates in outlying areas. There has been a significant increase of membership over the past two years as shown in the following figures:

- Mbabane 6926 an increase of 2,513 members
- Manzini 3,932 and increase of 1,798 members
- Extension Services Division 2,580

Special Libraries

These are available in most government ministries, international, private and Non-Governmental Organizations mainly to serve the needs of their parent organizations. In addition to those mentioned in our last SCECSAL report in 1996, i.e. The British Council, USIS, the Central Bank Swazi Bank UNDA, UNICEF, Tibiyo, Provident Fund, Women's Resource Centre, a Save the Children's Fund STBC and the Attorney Generals Chamber's, a few others have been established. These include the Coordination of the Assembly of the Non-Governmental Organizations and the World Universities Library and Information Centres, the former having indicated an interest to join as an international member of our Association.

Academic Libraries

There were changes in this area. The University Library, the largest academic institution continue to cooperate with the smaller academic Institutions especially in the areas of resource sharing, worthy of note is the fact that the University Library has established a third library in the Campus of the Faculty of Health Sciences - also worthy noting is the fact that the Library (UNISWA) has

successfully accomplished the automation project and has developed its Web site on the Internet. Further developments of the University of Swaziland include the expansion of the Luyengo Library which will now be able to accommodate more students.

School Libraries

Recently, the Swaziland National Library Service and Fundza were invited to a meeting by the Ministry of Education officials to look into the possibility of formulating a policy document for school libraries. The National Library Service is currently in the process of arranging a meeting with all stakeholders to discuss the logistics of formulating this important document which will assist in streamlining support services of the said libraries. The Extension Services division of the National Library Service and Fundza continue to supply books to a number of selected schools. It must be noted that no harmony exists between the two institutions, based on the fact that one is a government department and the other a non-governmental organization.

Information and Legislation

The National Library Bill has since been discussed by Cabinet and is now awaiting enactment by Parliament. The Library Association has been invited to participate with the drafting of the Media Annual Bill which is currently being discussed with all stakeholders. This is perceived as a great stride towards the Association's efforts to project a focussed professional image in the country.

Education and Training

Informal in-service training is offered on an ongoing basis as needs dictate in an effort to improve efficiency and effectiveness in library services provision and national long term training.

A number of officers are sent for further training at all levels. In the past, the National Library Service has concentrated on training officers directly employed by the department and other departments were trained by their respective institutions. Recently discussions were held with the Ministry of Public Service and Information which is concerned with personnel training for all civil servants where it was agreed that a separated training plan should be made for library officers in other government departments. This has since been achieved.

SWALA is continuously upgrading her membership in information technology to keep up with the current trends to this and two workshops were organized in December 1999 and January 2000. Both workshops addressed the programmes currently available in the country: CDS/ISIS and Procite. The workshops drew participants from all types of libraries. The main libraries are now connected to the Internet but an effort to provide Internet service to users is still being made. Hopefully, before the end of the year the public will have the facility made available to them. Libraries and information centres continue to make a concerted effort to provide information on health and AIDS. Some of our library staff are involved in the educational campaign on HIV/AIDS.

His Majesty King Mswati III has also declared HIV/AIDS as a national disaster and a Task Team has since been formed to assist in aggressive campaigns to educate and bring to the awareness of the citizens of Swaziland how they can avoid infection and if already infected how they can lead a

quality life style in spite of the infection. It is gratifying to note that amongst the task forces that have been set to teach in the campaigning libraries and information centres are represented.

In conclusion, SWALA recognizes the usefulness of libraries and information centres and the impact of information technology in information provision. However, there is still need to embark on aggressive campaigns to get policy makers to notice our existence; hence recognizing us as one of priority areas when the national cake is being sliced.