

UGANDA LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION
Country Report 2006-2008
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Introduction

During the period under review (2006-2008) the Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA) has made tremendous strides in partnerships with stakeholders in regard to promoting information literacy; advancement of LIS profession; public dialogue; and other fronts.

Education and Training:

Training is a key pillar to a strong association. Aware of the strategic importance of training, ULIA has been active not only in providing training opportunities for its members, but also in taking an active interest in Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum at the East African School of Library and Information Science (EASLIS). The effort is paying off as EASLIS and other training institutions are nowadays focusing on skills and competencies required by the job market.

EASLIS introduced a PhD in Information Science program in 2004 and has so far enrolled eight candidates. Several LIS professionals have graduated with Masters Degrees in LIS as well as other disciplines like Information Technology, etc. A Bachelor of Records Management is being introduced this year subject to approval by the National Council for Higher Education. Several short courses are offered to practicing professionals with a view to enhancing skills and best practices in information management.

I am pleased to note that in the last 2 years, the level of awareness and professionalism has grown amongst our members. ULIA members have been contributing to ongoing debates about different issues both on our list serve, in the newspapers and other media. Participation in dialogues and debates of different kinds is a key pillar for building a dynamic professional organization.

Reading Development:

ULIA continued to play a very important role in promoting the development of a reading culture in Uganda. ULIA and the National Library of Uganda played a key role in the Pallisa Book Donation project which won the National Book Trust of Uganda (NABOTU) the IFLA Guust van Wessemael Literacy Prize 2007. Once again in 2008 both ULIA and NLU were involved in follow-up studies of the impact of the Pallisa Book Donation Programme on the beneficiary 50 schools.

ULIA is thankful to the reading promotion grants from NABOTU which have enabled it in the last 2 years to hold reading promotion events in different

districts of Uganda and to train teachers, public librarians and participate in National Book Week celebrations. Last year during the World Book Day celebrations, ULIA organized activities in Pader district. This was a symbolic step to signify support to the community that had started resettling back into their former villages and communities. I believe that ULIA still needs to devise a special programme to offer psycho social support as well as learning support to these communities.

Development of Community Libraries:

The dearth of reading material, together with an urgent desire for access to information, has led to the growth of a new kind of library that is independent of government and comes from local initiatives, combined in some cases with support from abroad. This kind of library is referred to here as a community library: it is often associated with a school, but it is intended to serve the whole community, not just school children, and local leaders are involved in its administration. Examples of such libraries include:

- a) The Caezaria Complex Public Library: Founded in 1999 by Mr Francis Kigobe, who is a farmer and coffee trader in Buikwe county of Mukono District. He provided the building and initial stock of books himself and has since received substantial support from Book Aid International through the National Library of Uganda. It has recently received further support from the British Columbia Library Association and from a Canadian NGO called Under the Reading Tree (see www.underthereadingtree.org).
- b) The Kitengesa Community Library, in Masaka District: Initiated in 1999 as a box of books. It acquired a building and a larger collection in 2002, and has continued to grow since then (see www.kitengesalibrary.org). Its chief sponsors are Mr Emmanuel Mawanda, the founder and director of Kitengesa Comprehensive Secondary School, and Professor Kate Parry of Hunter College of the City of New York, who met Mr Mawanda when doing research on literacy practices in the area. Because of its foreign connections, the library has been in a stronger position than others to raise funds, and the support of foreign donors, combined with the work of able librarians and enthusiastic participation of local library members, has enabled it to grow rapidly.
- c) The Kyabutaika Development Association library: Founded by Mr Frederick Kasozi as a tree-planting project, but it added a library to its activities as a response to the perceived lack of information among the people it was working with. The library is located in Kakooge town in Nakasongola District. Like the Caezaria Library, it has been supplied with books by Book Aid International through the National Library, and it has also developed a collection of books on health and development issues through correspondence with a number of development organizations.
- d) The Lunyole Language Association library: Founded in the 1970s, has a small library in Busolwe in Butaleja District. The library is run entirely

by volunteers, led by Mayenda Jonathan and Hirom Gershom. It has received virtually no outside support, and its collection is very small; but it has been given some technical help by the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

The libraries described here all developed independently of one another in response to a perceived local need. Their different experiences indicate the potential that such institutions have. Most important, however, is what these libraries have in common: they all provide information in the form of reading materials, together with a comfortable place in which to read, and thus they provide a powerful incentive for people to develop and use their literacy skills.

There are other community libraries dotted about Uganda, in Arua, Tororo, Mbarara, Kanungu, and Kabarole Districts, and there is potential for many more. Ugandans who work as professionals in Kampala are often eager to help their home villages, and establishing a library is an affordable and attractive means of doing so. Small-scale foreign donors, too, find such projects irresistibly attractive, especially if they feel a sense of connection with a particular library in a particular place.

It is awareness of this potential, together with knowledge of the successful experience of the libraries described above, that has led to the formation of the Uganda Community Libraries Association.

The Association, known by the acronym UgCLA, was initiated in 2006 as a committee of the National Book Trust of Uganda. Its mission, as defined by that committee, is

to complement the education system of Uganda and promote the development of productive literacy practices by encouraging and supporting the growth of community libraries. It aims to establish and maintain a network of such libraries throughout the country and will cooperate for this purpose with other national organizations that have similar interests, as well as with international organizations that are concerned with the promotion of literacy for development.

The Association received a grant of US\$ 20,000 this year from the American Embassy to organise three workshops and to give out grants of US\$ 1000 to six projects proposed by community libraries. A workshop on proposal writing has already been held and a second one is to be held at the end of July. Thirteen libraries proposed projects and these are currently being assessed before grants are awarded.

There are also organizations, like Under the Reading Tree and Friends of African Village Libraries, that support libraries on a more general basis. With the kind of small-scale support that such communities and organizations can provide, Ugandan community libraries, like the Kitengesa one, will be able to

pay librarians reasonable salaries and to purchase books in response to user demand. Such funds will be needed over a period of years if a reading culture is to take root in this country and the education that people struggle so hard to get is to become effective.

Consultancies in LIS:

LIS professionals have increasingly won bids for Modernization of Libraries; Designing Records Management Systems; Designing and conducting Training Programs, etc. This has been the case with International Institutions (United Nations Agencies, etc); Government Departments; Multinational companies (e.g. Shell, Caltex, etc); Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), etc. Subsequently, LIS professionals compete favorably with other professionals in regard to salary scales, income generating/investment opportunities (other than salaries) and standards of living (general welfare). No wonder, student enrollment levels at EASLIS is over stretching.

New Trends in Libraries:

The increasing awareness of information as a key factor that gives institutions a competitive edge has led to establishment and modernization of Libraries/Resource Centres in Government Departments, CSOs, and Private Sector in general. Private Schools compete in form of well stocked libraries. Delegations from Parliaments in the region have increasingly visited the newly established Parliamentary Library (Uganda) to learn and share experiences in regard to the need/role of library and research services as a key ingredient towards Parliamentary Democracy. In a bid to enhance access to HIV/AIDS information, an HIV/AIDS Resource Centre has been established in Parliament of Uganda; it also serves as the venue for official meetings of the Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS and related matters.

Makerere University Library has made tremendous strides, namely:

- a) Convinced administration to include the Library as one of the priority areas in the 10 year University Strategic Plan 2007/08 – 2017/18.
- b) Convinced administration to lift the ban on recruitment of Librarians. To that effect since last year 27 new Librarians have been recruited.
- c) Emerged the winner of the Carnegie Grant that was competed for by seven Universities in East and West Africa.

Public Policy Dialogue:

I am pleased to report that ULIA continued to be instrumental in this area in the years 2007 and 2008. ULIA was represented at several government and non-government forums where policy issues were discussed. Some of the events included the World Social Forum held in Nairobi in early 2007 where ULIA was represented by 26 professionals. The forum discussed issues pertinent to equity

and social justice some of which have informed ULIA activities and programmes.

The key policy challenge remains the failure by the Ministry of Education and Sports to enact the School Library Development Policy which is still in its draft format.

World Library and Information Congress

The IFLA World Library and Information Congress held in August in Durban, South Africa attracted a very large number of LIS professionals from Uganda. A number of our own members organized pre-conferences, made paper presentations and participated in various professionally enriching events. I would like to thank library leaders from institutions such as Makerere University Library, National Library of Uganda, Parliament of Uganda, Uganda Christian University and others for sponsoring LIS professionals to the conference.

The Future:

On 6th June 2008 ULIA held an Annual General Assembly (AGM) during which new office bearers were elected, namely:

Table: New Executive Committee

Office	Name of Executive	Address
President	Innocent Rugambwa	Parliament of Uganda
Vice President	Constant Okello Obura (DhD.)	EASLIS, Makerere University
General Secretary	Sarah Kaddu	National Library of Uganda
Assistant General Secretary	Dixon Ampumuza -	EASLIS student
Treasurer	Grace Nasiwa-	Makerere University Library
Assistant Treasurer	Samalie Namukasa-	National Library of Uganda
Editor/Publicity Secretary	Richard Senoga	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Regional Representative - Central	Gorreti Kabatangare	Makerere University Library
Regional Representative -	Ongaya Kizito	Gulu University Library

Northern		
Regional Representative - Western	Sadres Twinomugisha	-Bishop Barham University, Kabale
Regional Representative - Eastern	Abdu Karim Isala	Busitema University Library
Committee Member	Lydia Namugeera	Makerere University Library
Committee Member	Maria Nankya	Makerere University Library

We express gratitude to the outgoing executive who have been instrumental in building the profile of ULIA and creating partnerships that have enabled the Association to meet its strategic goals.

Challenges notwithstanding, our task is to carry on the mantle of ULIA building on existing partnerships, exploring new horizons and striving for the best practices.

I wish to thank you colleagues and good luck.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY!

Innocent Rugambwa
PRESIDENT