Libraries are repositories of recorded knowledge. They perform informational, recreational, research, cultural, educational and conservational functions, all of which contribute greatly to a country's development. In this paper, the writer looks at the general state of libraries in Ghana in relation to the provision of education. An assessment is made of the various types of libraries in the country - school, academic, public and special, and their contributions to the educational advancement of the country. The role of the Government in library development is also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The scholarship of any society determines the character of its libraries and defines the services that they can render to that society. Some delineation of literacy in the Ghanaian context is therefore needed in order to address oneself to the problem of an exploring relationship between education and library development.

The reading population of Ghana may be divided into three groups: the new literate, the semi-literate and the literate. The literate, predominantly having post-secondary school training, read to develop and improve their mind. They tend to satisfy their own wide-based reading needs once materials are provided. The new literate, essentially the non-reader graduates of adult literacy classes, use reading skills for survival - for example, to read posted notices and letters. The largest group is the semi-literate who have got average education to some extent, but not advanced. The importance of school and public libraries in Ghana cannot therefore be over-emphasised.

FORMAL EDUCATION

The earliest contacts of Ghana with western education were through the coastal forts erected by the European trading nations. A number of these contained a school but few of such schools achieved any prominence. It was not until the arrival of the Christian missionaries to the then Gold Coast that formal education actually started. The Catholic missionaries established a school in 1572 in a fort at Elmina, and continued to provide classes for children until the fort was seized by the Dutch in 1637. There were no further Catholic schools until Catholic fathers re-entered Elmina in 1880. Other schools were established by the Danes at Christianborg Castle, and by the English at Cape Coast.

The colonial government became interested in formal education during the nineteenth century, as they had need of clerks and administrators for the expanding economy. From the middle of the 19th century, therefore, various legislations were passed dealing with the question of education such as the Education Ordinance 1887. [1]

After the attainment of self-government in 1957, the responsibility for directing educational development passed from the civil service to the newly formed Ministry of Education. It was at this time that the Accelerated Development Plan for Education was drawn up. [2] One of the aims of the new government was the provision of basic education for every child of school-going age.

The Accelerated Development Plan placed emphasis on primary and secondary schools. A lot of these were established and a large number of such schools were transferred to local authorities. The educational system covered a ten-year elementary education, seven years of secondary school education and three or four years of university education.

Ghana, therefore, achieved its political independence with an educational system patterned on the British system. This type of education was elitist, largely theoretical and literary. Vocational education was not encouraged, and was in fact scorned.

Libraries in this type of educational system were ill-equipped. Except in well established government and mission schools, there was
a total absence of school libraries. Learning was by rote, memorisation, and students were prepared solely for examinations. The dropout rates at both primary and secondary schools were very high and these drop-outs had no marketable skills to make them employable. Many therefore relapsed into illiteracy, and many others constituted a social menace.

NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICY

A new policy on education has been introduced into the country with effect from September 1987. This system is structurally and quantitatively different from the previous one built upon the colonial conceptions and design. It tries to avoid the pitfalls of the previous educational system by providing vocation oriented programmes for the children.

At the primary level, education is to be broad-based, and is aimed at inculcating permanent and functional literacy in mother tongue and any other Ghanaian languages. The junior secondary school, the most revolutionary aspect of the new educational system, is to be academic and pre-vocational. Subjects taught here will enable the children to acquire new knowledge and develop skills to make them respect the dignity of labour. Any drop-out at the end of the junior secondary education will have acquired some marketable skills that would make him employable.

The senior secondary school is for those who are able and willing to complete the six year secondary education. It has both academic and vocational courses, but largely in preparation for higher education. A successful completion then opens up an avenue into any of the third cycle institutions.

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LIBRARIES

The new educational system places more responsibility on the student for his own education, as against the former system which tended to rely more on the teacher. This means that there is a greater use of books in the new system than the old system. There is thus the need for more books and more libraries, for each individual according to his own intellectual capacity.

The system also relies more on individual abilities, initiatives and expertise. It places more stress on practical training. This is why it is expected that school and college libraries in Ghana should be adequately developed to meet the needs and expectations of the students. The library plays a similar role in the school curriculum just as science laboratories or language laboratories. The only difference perhaps is the fact that while a science or language laboratory is specific in its functions, the library has an unlimited jurisdiction in the field of knowledge.

Unfortunately, school and college libraries are the least developed and most neglected among libraries in Ghana. Most of the primary and secondary schools in Ghana do not have any libraries in the real sense. When existing facilities and services of school libraries in Ghana are observed, "It would appear that they are more collections of materials in space with very little equipment for students to use."[3] A survey by I.K. Antwi[4] showed that no serious and systematic efforts have been made to provide relevant and effective libraries in the training colleges in Ghana. The libraries lack among other things, "suitable accommodation, equipment, furniture, competent staff and financial support. The book stock is also inadequate, irrelevant, un-coordinated and outdated."[5] There is therefore a need for regular examination of the operations of the school and college libraries with a view to keeping them up-to-date with the changing functions of school libraries worldwide.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ghana has a Library Board which was established in 1960, whose functions include the establishment, managing, equipping and maintaining public libraries in the country. This service began very well with the establishments of libraries in all the regional capitals and most of the districts in the country. There is also a school libraries division which provided library services to the secondary schools in the country. However, economic constraints have limited the activities of the Library Board. The mobile library services to the rural areas have been discontinued because all the vehicles have broken down. There is also the problem of staff. Most of the regional and district libraries are manned by non-professional staff, and this has affected the services of the public libraries.
An attempt by the Library Board to house all its regional libraries in suitable buildings and provide libraries in all the districts in the country to be manned by professionals did not come to fruition. [6] Many areas in the country do not therefore have public libraries.

With the introduction of the new educational system, the trend is now towards day schools as against boarding schools. In the circumstance, the public libraries have to be developed to cope with the large influx of day students into the libraries. The public library has rightly been described as "the university of the masses". An improvement in the system will therefore go a long way to provide "support services" for the new educational system, since most of our day students are faced with various inconveniences at home such as lack of electricity, noise, overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions. Such environments do not encourage reading, and a good public library system becomes essential.

The public libraries should therefore be brought closer to the people. Services should be extended to village and street corners through the use of the book mobiles. Obsolete materials in these libraries should also be updated and there should be well planned hours of services. What is needed most in the urban centres are large reading rooms for the users. When the services are extended to the rural people, meticulous care should be taken in programme planning and material selection. The staff who are involved in this type of service should be dedicated to the task. [7] It is a paradox that though most of the population of Ghana is concentrated in the rural areas, public library services are concentrated in the urban centres. Libraries can help in adult education programmes through various services to these people.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

There are three universities in Ghana at present. These are in Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast. The oldest and largest is the university of Ghana which was established in 1948. Apart from the universities, there are five Diploma awarding institutions known as Advanced or Specialist Colleges of Education. Three of these are based in Winneba, one in Ajumako and the other in Kumasi. These were established to produce teachers for the second cycle institutions.

All these institutions have libraries, with the University of Ghana Library, better known as the Balme Library having the most extensive collection. Although these libraries make considerable effort to build up their collections, they face various constraints. These constraints include financial and space limitations. Due to foreign exchange limitations, the Balme Library at the University of Ghana for example is "not comprehensive in its collection." [8] The same may be said of the other academic libraries. These libraries rely mainly on donations from agencies, publishers and other libraries overseas.

The primary objective of these libraries is to satisfy the instructional and research requirements of the students and faculty. The range and diversification of information needs of both the students and the faculty are reflected in the variety and depth of the library collections. Alex Kwapong, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, once described a university library as "the heart, if not aorta, of any university, and its academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness, therefore, closely depend on the state of health and excellence of its library which is indeed its life blood. An inert and moribund library invariably means an inert and moribund University." [9]

If the existing conditions of our academic libraries is not improved as a matter of urgency, then we may end up with moribund universities. Although the manpower situation has improved considerably with the return of many of the professional librarians, there is still the problem of inadequate and outdated bookstock which contributes very little to teaching and research in these institutions.

There is also the problem of space. The Balme Library should have moved into new buildings two years ago. Incidentally, the foundations have not even been laid for these buildings. University of Cape Coast Library should have moved into its permanent new buildings by now. Although a start has been made here, progress on the building is rather slow. The same situation applies to the extensions to the Library of the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.

Universities being places of academic research and enlightenment, it is always essential that up to date facilities are provided in their libraries. Facilities such as computers are not found in any of the University Libraries in Ghana. Paradoxically, mini-computers can be
found in offices of some lecturers and administrators! There is therefore an urgent need to improve the present state of our academic libraries if we are not to be left behind in this technological age.

SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Special libraries are usually found in business and industrial establishments, government departments, and universities; they are maintained by professional associations and learned societies and research institutes. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R.) which co-ordinates all the research institutes in the country, has a Central Reference and Research Library, which was established in 1964. The library has the responsibility for collecting, storing, retrieving and disseminating scientific and technical literature relevant to research in progress in the various institutes under the Council. It also co-ordinates library activities within the Council's eight Institute Libraries.

Apart from the C.S.I.R. group of libraries, the Research Library on African Affairs is another important special library. Originally known as the George Padmore Library, it was founded in 1961 and mandated to collect, process and disseminate recorded literature, history and culture of the whole of Africa. It also performs the functions of a National Library, since Ghana has no officially designated National Library.

There are also libraries in government agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Defence and Interior; the Parliament House, High Court, the Export Promotion Council, and Professional bodies such as the Banks and the Accountants Association.

As in the case of the Academic Libraries, these libraries are also faced with the problems of funding and space. Research libraries are known for their speed, up-to-dateness and precision in providing information to their users. However, economic constraints have rendered the special libraries in Ghana ineffective. Their materials are mostly donated by foreign agencies and organisations, and so most of the stock is often of little or no use to researchers. Lacking adequate library services, researchers in these institutions are often frustrated and have to depend on their own private libraries or those of their professional colleagues, however meager they may be.

Most of these libraries were started in temporary buildings which now appear unsuitable for the purpose. New buildings or extensions to older ones are often difficult to undertake. An example is the new building to house the Central Reference and Research Library of the C.S.I.R. which was started in earnest, but has come to a standstill owing to financial constraints.

Staff has also been a problem with special libraries in Ghana. According to Oddoye[10], most special libraries in the country have been content with only one professional staff, with the possible exception of the Ghana Export Promotion Council which has maintained two professionals for a considerable length of time. Faced with these problems, the special libraries find it increasingly difficult to perform the functions for which they were set up.

CONCLUSION

At present, Ghana has the highest educational level in West Africa. It also has the longest history of free primary education in Africa. Compared to other black African countries, Ghana is better off in library developments. Of all West African Countries, Ghana is also the best equipped in retrospective bibliographies. [11]. It is surprising therefore that the first library school in West Africa was set up in Ghana in 1944.

However, our libraries are gradually deteriorating and something must be done immediately to save the situation from total collapse. If planners of the new policy on education expect it to succeed, then adequate provision should be made for library services in the country. It is rather unfortunate that scant attention is paid to libraries when a new educational curriculum is planned. What we often forget is that no system of education can be successfully executed without libraries. An unalloyed appreciation by the government of the fact that library and information services are vital to cultural, social, economic, political and industrial development of the country, is the essential first step towards library development in Ghana. Adequate funds and physical facilities should be provided to the various types of libraries in the country.

It may be pertinent at this stage to appeal to the Government to establish a National Library in the country. The absence of this
library has created a big vacuum in the development of libraries in Ghana. The Ghana Library Association should therefore continue its efforts to get the government to establish this important library in the country.

In modern times, the relationship between education and libraries has been stressed, and there is a cry for the provision of libraries in all educational institutions from primary to university levels. Libraries should be seen as an integral part of the educational system, and no new educational system should be planned without adequate provision for libraries. Libraries and education must develop on the same lines as without one, there will be little use for the other.

ERRATA

In June 1988 issue of Annals the title of the article on page 58 should read as "LANGUAGE AND INDEXING LANGUAGE : NALIMOV AND GARDIN REVISITED".