LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANSHIP IN SWAZILAND

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According to the 1976 census the population of the country was 522,512. With an estimated 3 per cent annual growth rate, the population in 1977 was approximately 540,000. Almost 90 per cent of the population is made up of Swazis, some 6 percent non-Swazi Africans, 2 percent European and the rest of various racial groups. English is the official language of the country.

1. LIBRARIES

Recognition of books and libraries as essential elements in the educational process is a recent development in the African continent. The present study is based on author's foreign assignment for library service in Swaziland. Library situation in the country would show that there are a good number of libraries in the country in various stages of development ranging from the well-organised National Library Service down to the rudimentary libraries like those of CODEC (Cooperative Development Centre) and SEDCO (Small Enterprises Development Corporation) that are being managed by non professionals or clerks.

There are mainly three major types of libraries in the country. These are the Swaziland National Library Service (hereafter called SNLS), the University College of Swaziland (called UCS) Library and groups of special libraries, like the (Swaziland Institute of Management of Public Administration) SIMPA Library, together with a number of smaller Ministry or departmental libraries in different developmental stages.

1.1 Swaziland National Library Service(SNLS) is the largest library in the country that gives a nation-wide double purpose service. The SNLS performs the functions of a public library, as well as, some functions of a national library. Like most English speaking African countries, this service was established after the independence with the help of the British Council and the British Ministry for Overseas Development.
which provided funds for building the National Library building, as well as for purchase of books, furniture and equipment. The SNLS had its first director appointed in 1971 with head-quarter located in Manzini, and branch libraries at Siteki, Mhlume, Malkern, Ngwazi, Mankanyane, Pigg's Peak, Big Bend, Hlatikulu, Nhlanzile, Bhunu and Tshaneni.

The SNLS is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Local Administration and is housed near the Manzini Civic Centre in a single storey building having good ventilation and lighting systems. The building plan for the library allows ample scope for future physical expansion without in any way interrupting the library services. The National Library building provides for the following:

(i) Adult reference service, (ii) the children's lending/reference service, (iii) school library service (iv) office for the Director, SNLS, (v) technical processing section (vi) staff welfare facilities, e.g. staff-room, toilet etc. The Library offers its users reading/reference and lending facilities. The main reading room of the SNLS has a seating capacity for about 70 readers.

The Library had a collection of over 55,800 volumes, including fiction and children's collection, and subscribed to 155 periodical titles at the beginning of 1974. There were special collections on Swaziland material (about 300 publications) and librarianship. The SNLS and in fact most of the country's libraries use Dewey Decimal Classification. The number of registered borrowers in 1974 in the SNLS Manzini stood at 3016 and in the branch libraries and mobile library was 5100 approximately. The SNLS has established inter-library loan arrangements both with the State Library Pretoria (Republic of South Africa) and the British Library Lending Division (BLLD) in the U.K. One large mobile unit (book mobile) and two smaller vans of the SNLS served 28 secondary schools and loaned about 16000 books in 1973-74. The Library had an annual recurrent budget of Rs.600,000 for 1974-75. Future plans for the development of the SNLS include, among other things, the recruitment and training of more qualified staff, constructing a library building in Mbabane, establishing a branch library at Kwaluseni, the extension of mobile and school library services and physical expansion of the existing library buildings including the headquarter in order to increase the seating and shelving capacities of libraries. Presently the SNLS is carrying out only two of the many fundamental functions of a national library viz. it acts as a depository of the nation's literature output and also plans and coordinates inter-library lending. It should, however, strive to take upon itself other essential functions of a national library, in future plans e.g. publication of the national bibliography and union catalogues, exchange centre for duplicates and lead the professional training and expertise in library techniques in the country. On the public library aspect of the SNLS, the latter should expand its activities to include adult literacy programme in collaboration with the Sebanta National Institute and library extension activities, such as story-hours and club activities which can contribute towards the development of effective communication through speech among children by the use of audio-visual aids. International agencies like UNESCO, SIDA etc could be approached to provide consultative services in this connection.

1.2 University College of Swaziland (UCS) Library Kwaluseni:

Next in order of size and importance follows the UCS library that was built at Kwaluseni in 1974. Earlier in 1971, the University of Botswana, Lesotho & Swaziland started functioning on the Agricultural College campus at Luyengo. The UCS Library "is the administrative centre for the campus libraries in Swaziland which include the Luyengo Library, Malkern Agricultural Research Station Library, Lowveld Agricultural Research Station Library and the Nhlangano Experimental Farm Research Station Library". The UCS Library is housed in a newly constructed three-storey air-conditioned building which is functional and has the advantage of proper lighting and ventilation.

The total library collection in 1974 was 22450 volumes with annual subscription of 615 periodicals titles in the UCS library and other branch libraries. The breakup of the collection is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Vols.</th>
<th>No. of periodical titles</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kwaluseni</td>
<td>12000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luyengo</td>
<td>8500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malkern</td>
<td>1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowveld</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22450</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The scope of the collection includes generalia in and subjects covered by the curriculum of various university faculties and departments. Dewey Decimal Classification system is used to classify the collection. The number of users including staff members and external borrowers was 360 and nearly 8200 volumes were borrowed in 1973-74. The UCS Library had a staff of 12 members including five graduates.
and others with varying professional or semi-professional qualifications. The lending service of the UCS Library has been extended in South Africa. The university staff also avails of the special facility available with the UCS Library for photocopying service for journals available in the BLLD in the UK. The library has reprographic aids, such as photocopying machine, microfilm reader/printer and microfiche reader which are vital for the document supply service. The UCS Library has had the privilege to publish the first ever Swaziland National Bibliography, 1973-76, with the assistance of the State Library, Pretoria. The library also brings out 'Notes for readers', monthly accessions list and annual reports. The library's book budget has increased three times since the inception of the library in 1971-72. The recurrent estimate for this purpose was Rs. 60,000 in 1974.

1.3 Agricultural Libraries:

1.3 The Luyengo Campus: of the University of Swaziland where the Swaziland College of Agriculture is located is about 16 miles from Kwaluseni campus. The Luyengo Library is housed in a separate building and is having a collection of over 6000 volumes in the field of agriculture. There is a seating capacity for 50-55 readers in the library which acts as a depository for the FAO publications.

1.3.2 The Malkern Research Station is the most important of the three Agricultural Research Stations affiliated to the Swaziland College of Agriculture. The library with a collection of over 1650 volumes and 126 periodical titles, besides miscellaneous reports and special publications of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux and the FAO, is housed in a two-room building and serves the readers from Malkern and Luyengo.

1.3.3 Lowfeld Agricultural Research Station at Big Bend has a small library with about 400 volumes and 68 periodical titles and miscellaneous reports on agriculture published in the neighbouring South Africa, the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux and the FAO. The library is used by a small number of staff members.

1.4 Special Libraries

1.4.1 SIMPA Library: Formerly known as the Staff Training Institute Library, the current Swaziland Institute of Management & Public Administration (SIMPA) Library aims to specialize in collecting, organizing and disseminating administrative information which usually appears in the form of pamphlets and reports surveys, case-studies and similar other publications generally known as government publications. The library is housed in single big room having a collection of over 6000 volumes and subscribing to about 100 periodical titles in fields like Social Sciences, Management, Public Administration, etc. The library is used by all civil servants, trainees in the Institute and the Institute Staff. The library is managed by two qualified library assistants and has exchange relations for publications with similar institutions in other African countries.

1.4.2 SCOT Library: Swaziland College of Technology Library is housed in a newly constructed spacious building which has good provision for light and ventilation. The library has a collection of over 7000 volumes and subscribes to about 100 periodicals titles in all technical subjects. The total number of readers including staff stood at approximately 600 in 1975. The library is managed by two qualified library assistants.

1.4.3 William Pitcher Training College Library: The Training college has the objective to train teachers for various schools in the country. The library is housed in a single building and has a collection of over 10,000 volumes and 10 periodicals titles in the field of Education, Fiction and 'Africana'. The 300 users of the library are mainly the students and staff of the college. There is no qualified librarian to manage the library.

1.4.4 Sebenta National Institute Library: The library has reading material in some local African languages and has about 500 volumes, which are mainly literacy publications in addition to booklets, charts, posters and other useful audio-visual material to support the National Adult Literacy Programme. The library is looked after by a non-professional staff member.

1.5 Government Libraries: These are meant to play an important part in the flow of administrative information by collecting relevant published data and often restricted materials for the specialist personnel employed in the civil service.

1.5.1 Economic-statistics Library: The Department of Economic Planning & Statistics of the Ministry of Finance has a staff of over 300 civil servants who are the users of the library. The library was established in 1967 and has a collection of about 3000 volumes and subscribes to about 50 periodical titles besides numerous reports and special publications of the U.N., the World Bank, IMF, OECD etc. in fields such as Economics, Trade Statistics and Demography. The library is managed by a qualified library assistant.
1.5.2. MONAS (Monetary Authority of Swaziland) Library: The Research Department of the Monetary Authority of Swaziland has maintained a small library with a specialized collection of reprints, reports, journals and books on monetary aspect and trade. The library is maintaining a specialized press-clipping service and works in close cooperation with the Economic-statistics Library. The library is managed by a non-professional staff member.

1.5.3. Department of Geology Library: This library has a collection of over 3000 volumes and an equal number of reports and volumes of periodical titles in fields such as Geology, Mining, Engineering and Geochemistry etc. The library is used by civil servants of the Department and is managed by a qualified library assistant.

1.5.4. Ministry of Works Library: This library aims at specializing in collection of publications in Building Technology, Architecture, Hydrology, Transportation Technology and Civil Aviation. There is a collection of 2000 publications, miscellaneous reports and periodical titles yet to be properly organized. The library is managed by a qualified library assistant.

1.5.5. Ministry of Agriculture Library: The library has been established quite recently with the aim of specializing in the collection of Agricultural Sciences and Coordinating with other agricultural libraries for the purpose of bibliographical control and dissemination of information in Agriculture. The library is having about 400 volumes and an equal number of reports and periodical titles in Agriculture and is managed by a qualified library assistant.

1.5.6. CODEC Library: This library is affiliated to the Cooperative Development Centre (Ezulwini) under the Ministry of Agriculture. The library has a stock of about 3000 books, over 100 periodical titles and reports in the field of cooperative movement. The library was established with Swedish aid and is managed by a non-professional staff member.

1.5.7. Attorney General's Library: The library is used by the staff in the Attorney General's office in the Ministry of Justice and possesses a collection of over 3000 volumes and about 15 periodical titles in the field of law. The library is looked after by a non-professional staff member.

1.5.8. SEDCO (Small Enterprises Development Corporation) Library: This library has a small collection of books, reports and journals in commerce, small businesses and industry and is used by the staff of the SEDCO and the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The library is looked after by a non-professional staff member.

2. LIBRARY DEVELOPMENTS AND PROBLEMS

Libraries in Swaziland have been held in a very low profile in relation to other essential services and hence the status of librarians in the country is rather low. There had been practically no planning of libraries before the country got her independence from the British in 1968. The importance of libraries and information came to be gradually recognized only with the establishment of the SNLS, the UCS library and a few other libraries, but the country has not granted them significant support because the educationists and top administrators in the country seem to be unaware of the role of the library as an effective instrument for education and decision-making. Hence the library has hardly any place in the national educational programme. This is evident from the fact that the importance of school libraries in the country is not fully recognized. Unless this is done, there will be total lack of library awareness and vital importance of libraries and information for educational effort would remain only at the instructional level and would certainly lack the cultural element which is so important for education. Another characteristic observation about library development in Swaziland has been the greater degree of dependence on foreign aid for capital and recurrent library expenditure and the undue reliance upon the expatriate professionals for establishing and running of libraries.

The existing libraries are not all doing well for these reasons alongwith a number of other basic problems which are mentioned below:

i) The absence of a central/national body or a national library/information board generally responsible for planning and co-ordinating the developmental activities in the field of librarianship and information sciences. Such a national body would assist the government to formulate a proper national library/information policy covering such important aspects as the education and training of library personnel, setting guidelines for policy regarding acquisition, technical processing, bibliographical control and availability of publications in different libraries of the country.

ii) There is a lack of qualified library personnel in libraries and this is responsible for the deplorable state of affairs in most of them. The authorities are contented with appointing clerks or book-keepers, rather than
qualified personnel, to manage libraries. The national body, if and when formed, would do better to give priority to the task of working out manpower requirements of various libraries at various levels for the next few years.

iii) The absence of any professional association at national level that would enhance the status of the profession, as well as, promote the library services in the country. This would facilitate proper staff development and attract talented people to the profession.

iv) The libraries are very much affected from the point of acquisition of library material due to the poor performance of the publishing and book-selling industry in the country, since the latter happens to be a landlocked country. This results in long delays in receiving publications. The exchange arrangements are also slow to work and are cumbersome. In this context the concept of Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) with its benefits is the practical need for adoption.

2.1 Some developments

A recent important development in the field of libraries is the publication of the King's order-in-council No 3(1978) being the copyright (Amendment) order 1978, which confers the legal deposit status upon the library of the UCS, the National Library and the SNLS. The order requires every publisher in the country to deliver one copy of every book coming out of his press to each of the enumerated libraries with effect from 14th April 1978.

2.2 Another landmark in the library development of Swaziland took place when a seminar was organized in August 1979 jointly by the host Government and the CRIT (Coordinating Centre for Regional Information Training -- a joint programme of the Kenya National Academy for Advancement of Arts and Science and the German Foundation for International Development) The seminar recommended the setting up of a National Information Board and a network of Information Service in the Government hierarchy besides spelling out the need for a 'National Information Policy' as follows:

1) That the importance of information for scientific, technological, economic and educational development be recognised.

2) That an Advisory Committee be set up by the Prime Minister to investigate present information services and to recommend future government policy on information serves.

3) That in the immediate future the government should commit itself financially to all those libraries and information services already in existence.

4) That in the immediate future the government should commit itself to an urgent and extensive programme of professional librarianship and information science training.

5) In order to ensure that those personnel already in the profession, at all levels, remain there suitable conditions of service and career structure be established.

6) That in order to avoid duplication of resources, there should be a free flow of information between the various information centres throughout the country.

7) That legislation to promote and protect information and information services be drawn up by government as and when necessary.

8) That all Information Centres be adequately manned by fully qualified staff assisted by trained sub professionals.

3. CONCLUSION

Library and information development is a necessary investment, since without this it is not possible to get full benefit from a vastly greater investment by the government in education, research, social and economic development programmes of the country.

It is time that any plan adopted for the library and information development in the country in the next developmental plan should be taken as a pilot project with well-defined parameters and a time-table should be established for its execution with special consideration to the education and training of library personnel as well as users. It should, however, be flexible and responsive to change with the changing needs and priorities of the country. Information is an essential commodity and the 'information resources centre' which may be taken to be the 'library' of today has to change its outlook and methods to make the information flow easy and fruitful for users. The library user depends on the resources of a good library not only for his special field of interest but his general enlightenment to the treasure of knowledge.

Government supported libraries and information centres generally owe their existence to national interests and priorities which produce a resultant surge in governmental spending, yet when these priorities lose their national appeal,
the libraries may lose much of their financial support thus creating numerous problems for librarians. But it must not be forgotten that "the cost, in terms of financial support, of material provisions in these libraries has to be counted and so also the ultimate cost to the nation in ignoring them."

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