

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 26/09/2007</p> <p><i>Ipsissima Verba: The Future of Newspaper Preservation In an Age of Epidemic URLitis</i></p> <p>Dorothy C. Woodson Curator, African Collection Yale University Library New Haven, CT., USA 06520 dorothy.woodson@yale.edu</p>
Meeting:	103 Newspapers
Simultaneous Interpretation:	No
<p>WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 73RD IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL 19-23 August 2007, Durban, South Africa http://www.ifla.org/iv/ifla73/index.htm</p>	

Abstract:

African newspapers are among the most permanent and enduring publications recording political events on the continent. Although these materials are notoriously difficult to collect and preserve, they are all-the-more vital if the historical record of Africa is to survive. As library budgets become increasingly inadequate, similarly increasing pressure is being placed on librarians to cancel expensive print editions of newspapers in favor of relying on internet access, whether free or provided by commercial aggregators. No doubt this is cost- and space-effective in the short run, but an unavoidable consequence is that a major primary source—the print newspaper (for electronic access is only partial) is threatened with slow extinction. The Africana Librarians Council (ALC) of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), Cooperative Africana Microform Program (CAMP), formed a sub-committee to examine this dilemma.

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) is a consortium of North American research libraries that promotes the preservation of resources for future generations of scholars. At present, overall holdings amount to 5 million volumes of newspapers, periodicals, monographs, dissertations, archival and manuscript material, government reports, etc. Collecting global newspapers was an original part of CRL’s mission and remains so to this day. CRL has numerous regional programs, such as, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and so forth.

The Cooperative Africana Microform Program (CAMP) is one of the original regional programs and is now 50 years old and counting. Beginning modestly with the preservation filming of 57 titles, CAMP presently holds partial or complete runs of

approximately 1,350 newspapers in microform from Africa (North Africa included). No stronger a rationale for continuing to collect print titles for future preservation is the fact that newspapers have represented from 40% to 60 % of all materials loaned by CAMP over the past 5 years.

Several years ago, CAMP created an online union list of African newspapers held by member institutions. AFRINUL, as it is called, is designed primarily as a tool for librarians, and will continue to increase in value when information is included from all member institutions. What might be the most important outcome of AFRINUL, however, will be a more accurate determination of which African titles are *not* being collected so that appropriate steps can be taken to remedy this.

While AFRINUL is a grass-roots project, the International Coalition on Newspapers (ICON), also based at CRL, provides a free database of MARC-based bibliographical information on newspapers worldwide from records that have been amassed from major national and international bibliographic utilities. ICON has preserved several important titles from Africa, such as the *Eritrean Daily News* (Asmara), and *Il Quotidiano Eritreo* (UK-Italian occupation). Current newspapers are not listed, however, and for this reason it is imperative to encourage and maintain the development of AFRINUL.

Recognizing that economic realities are forcing many institutions to cancel print in favor of newspaper websites or from less-than-satisfactory aggregators, the Africana Librarians Council (ALC) established a CAMP sub-committee in 2006 to deal with this issue. The committee consisted of representatives from major US libraries (Library of Congress, Center for Research Libraries, Yale, Stanford, Harvard, and Northwestern Universities) all of whom have invested considerable resources over the years in newspaper subscriptions, maintenance, storage, and preservation, and who feel keenly this commitment to preserving the present for the future is one of our paramount responsibilities.

The first charge to the committee included gathering and evaluating information about the availability of newspapers for microfilming. Examples include CAMP member institutions, holdings at the Library of Congress-Nairobi Office, and the Library of Congress itself, as well as libraries and archives in Africa and Europe. Additional charges included coordinating the planning and follow-through by having CAMP establish priorities for preservation, promoting AFRINUL as a tool for sharing information about African newspaper holdings, and planning for the cooperative acquisition of African newspapers among CAMP members. We also agreed to notify CAMP members of any cancellations of print newspapers, to avoid canceling last copy print subscriptions – in the United States anyway.

To this end, the committee embarked on a survey to determine what current titles our institutions are receiving and which institutions, if any, are doing any filming. What was envisioned as an easy task has turned out to be an exercise in frustration as many of us have discovered, or been reminded, of how inadequate our library records are. And, most institutions have abandoned filming for the time being, due in large part to a severe

shortage of machine parts. The majority of us have been assuming that other institutions would pick up the slack (just as most of us tend to assume that other institutions have larger budgets. . .).

An interesting, and unforeseen, outcome of this survey has been the revelation that not many of us have been paying close enough attention to our current subscriptions and were therefore unable to coordinate our information effectively or to readily determine whether all issues of a title have been received. We have been spending years and countless staff hours creating a database of our institutional holdings of African newspapers, only to find that none of us has reliable, accurate holdings information for current titles, thereby compromising the value of AFRINUL. Nonetheless, since the data-gathering stage is nearing completion, we can report some *tentative* findings from our initial survey:

Most importantly, the Library of Congress Overseas Office in Nairobi is currently filming nearly 90 titles from sub-Saharan Africa, while CAMP members presently subscribe to or otherwise receive 273 different African newspapers. Of the 273, 63 are provided by the LC-Nairobi Office, leaving 210 discrete titles received from other sources/suppliers. At present, CAMP members are regularly filming about 10 newspapers in addition to the 90 being filmed by LC-Nairobi. Perhaps the most interesting figure to emerge from the survey is the total number of unique titles (again excluding the Library of Congress) – 123 -- being collected currently by CAMP members. In addition, we have learned that no one is collecting any newspapers from Guinéa-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, various of the island countries, and that, for many countries, the collecting is intermittent and sporadic, despite best efforts.

Regrettably, it is apparent that no proportionality exists between size or significance of a particular country and the number of titles that we are collectively receiving from any given country. In part this is the result of accidents in the ability to acquire materials relatively effectively, and in part to the absence of any sensible resource-sharing initiatives, which would help spread coverage. One urgent task for the near future is the implementation of coordinative plans that place long-term access above local curricular needs and parochial concerns. Until this happens, coverage of Africa-based newspapers, however impressive the numbers, will remain fitful and unnecessarily sporadic.

As mentioned earlier, economic realities combined with technology are placing most of us who continue to collect print newspapers between the proverbial rock and hard place. Moreover, we are frequently asked by astonished funding entities *why* we are collecting print papers in this age of widespread internet availability. We respond that we are not collecting for their current awareness value, but for dependable preservation purposes (and, of course, to support curricular needs). We point out on these occasions that persistent access to electronic data as provided by newspaper publishers and commercial aggregators is far from guaranteed—that we are not yet able to preserve today's technology with any confidence. The software/hardware is as fugitive as the so-called

“moving wall” of coverage, not to mention the myriad ownership issues, or indeed the breadth and depth of coverage provided by aggregators.

Several years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its decision in the case of *Tasini vs. The New York Times* ruling that newspaper publishers could not use freelance authors’ work in their online commercial databases. The case has had tremendous implications for libraries, publishers, aggregators, and indeed, writers. As a result of this ruling, the *New York Times* had to remove over 100,000 articles from its electronic versions. Interestingly enough, the Supreme Court decision does not include microform versions. Beyond this legal contretemps, users of such commercial databases cannot be sure whether they have in front of them the *ipsissima verba* of the original complete with illustrations, photographs, letters, wire-service, etc.

In view of these uncongenial realities, it is vital that we maintain print subscriptions to those newspapers which are not being preserved either in microfilm or by harvesting the internet by either libraries or publishers. A/The major problem heretofore has been identifying those current titles and deciding who will maintain the subscription and who will be responsible for the preservation of the title. The initiatives mentioned above are designed precisely to allow this to happen.

This is not to discount the value of digitization in these cases. Obviously the digital provides functionality not allowed for in film, such as free text searching. Furthermore, digitization of retrospective/historical titles is providing access to countless heretofore partly or completely inaccessible newspapers. Each, however, falls short of perfection and depends on the criteria brought to it.

In this regard, I must note that many publishers are not archiving their digital versions, assuming that the commercial aggregators Lexis/Nexis, NewsBank, etc. will take care of this responsibility, even though these aggregators do not consider themselves to be responsible for preservation either. These entities have never had to think about preservation as an intellectual responsibility and there is certainly no evidence that they have begun to do so. Africana librarians would argue that it is incumbent on publishers to individually/independently create some sort of preservation archive; if they do not, long-term access to these primary resources will not exist.

In closing, let me just list several considerations that will need addressing all along the way.

- Since space considerations will be a problem in all repositories forevermore, any solution(s) must be comprehensive, yet efficient and sustainable in the long term.
- This means carefully orchestrated inter-institutional cooperation, encompassing the repositories and archives in the former colonial and colonized nations, and the creation of a grand inventory *cum* union list, particularly for current and continuing publications, as soon as possible. This cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often.

- Details such as digital standards must be worked out beforehand and adhered to afterward.
- Preference/priority should obviously be given to materials for which only one copy is being collected, or is known to exist, or for titles whose physical condition warrants immediate attention.
- Preservation must take precedence over access, despite objections that may arise.

CAMP Newspaper Committee Survey Results

Current titles (excluding South Africa) received in print by institution:

Boston University	9
Columbia	8
Cornell	9
Harvard	41
Indiana University	10
Kansas University	7
Library of Congress	169
Michigan State	26
Northwestern University	149
Ohio University	0
Princeton University	2
Stanford University	67
U.C.Berkeley	9
U.C.Los Angeles	51
University of Florida	10
University of Illinois	0
University of Iowa	0
University of Michigan	0
University of Pennsylvania	3
University of Wisconsin	9
Yale	24

PRELIMINARY NUMBER OF CURRENT PRINT SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS
COLLECTED BY U.S. INSTITUTIONS (as reported by institution, August 2007)
[Number of titles by Country, excluding South Africa]

ANGOLA	1
BENIN	5
BOTSWANA	6
BURKINA FASO	2
CAMEROON	10
CAPE VERDE	1
CENTRAL AFRI. REP.	1
CHAD	1
COMOROS	0
CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE	3
CONGO (D.R.)	44
COTE D'IVOIRE	2
DJIBOUTI	1
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	1
ERITREA	1
ETHIOPIA	5
GABON	1
GAMBIA	2
GHANA	9
GUINEA	3
GUINEA-BISSAU	0
KENYA	14
LESOTHO	13
LIBERIA	20
MADAGASCAR	8

MALAWI	6
MALI	21
MAURITANIA	1
MAURITIUS	10
MOZAMBIQUE	3
NAMIBIA	8
NIGER	2
NIGERIA	20
REUNION	3
RWANDA	2
SAINT HELENA	0
SAO TOME & PRINCIPE	0
SENEGAL	3
SEYCHELLES	2
SIERRA LEONE	8
SUDAN	2
SWAZILAND	5
TANZANIA	16
TOGO	7
UGANDA	4
ZAMBIA	4
ZIMBABWE	6

TOTAL	273