



## Namibia National Bibliography: Strides and Challenges

by

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National Library of Namibia

### Introduction

### Historical Background of Namibia National Library

1926	Established as Legislative Assembly Library
1965	Incorporated into South West Africa Library Service
1981	Legislative Assembly Library closed
1984	Re-opened as Estorff Reference Library
1994	Became National Library of Namibia

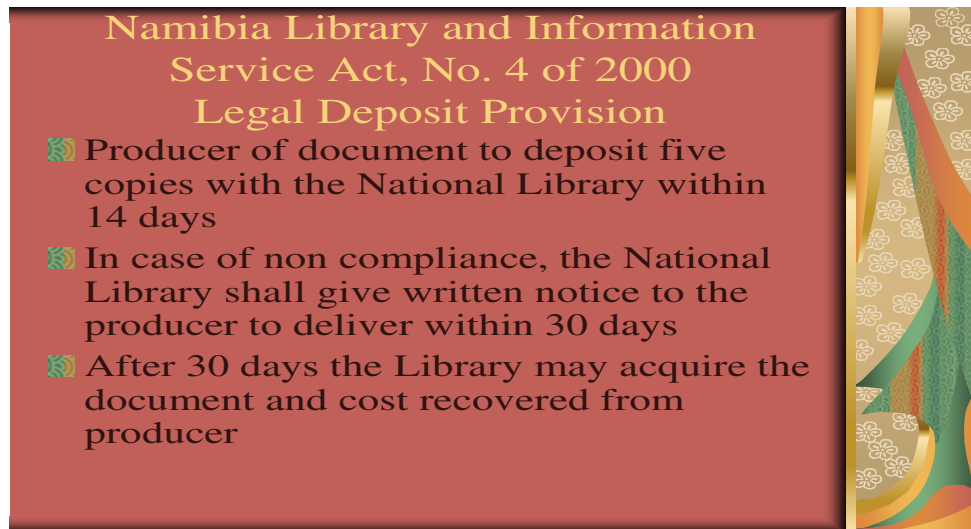
The existence of the National Library of Namibia dates back to 1926<sup>1</sup> when it was established as the Legislative Assembly Library. In 1965 it was incorporated into the newly established South West Africa (SWA) Library Service. In 1981 the Legislative Assembly Library was closed and re-opened in 1984 as the Estorff Reference Library.

In 1990 following Namibia's attainment of independence, the library was placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport with the intention of developing a national library. The Estorff Reference Library officially became the National Library of Namibia with effect from 1 April 1994.

The National Library of Namibia along with the Educational Library Services, Community Library Services, Ministerial Library Services and the National Archives of Namibia constitute the Directorate of Library and Archives Services which falls under the Ministry of Education. The National Library is the national bibliographic agency and currently has by law legal deposit obligations under the Namibia Library and Information Service Act No. 4 of 2000.

### **The Namibia Library and Information Service Act, No. 4 of 2000**

The Act has provision for legal deposit which covers all media produced in Namibia. Under this Act the National Library of Namibia is mandated to collect and keep permanently five copies of any document published in Namibia. The term document in



this context include textual, graphic, visual, auditory or other intelligible format stored through any medium.

The Act stipulates<sup>2</sup> that a producer should deposit a document within 14 days or an extended period as the Minister of Education may allow. Where a producer fails to comply, the National Library shall give written notice to that producer requiring him or her to deliver the legal deposit within 30 days of receiving the notice. If at the end of the 30 days the producer has not delivered the legal deposit as requested the National Library may acquire the legal deposit and thereafter recover the cost from the producer. Looking at these provisions one may infer that legal deposit regulations in Namibia are fairly effective.

Before this Act was passed the National Library collected documents under the Patents, Designs, Trade Marks and Copyright Amendment Ordinance, No. 10 of 1951<sup>3</sup> which stipulated that publishers of every book should deliver free of charge within one month of publication three copies to the Colonial Administration and one copy to the authority having the control of the Windhoek Public Library.

## **Namibia National Bibliography**

### ***Strides***

The first successful compilation of the Namibia National Bibliography (NNB) which was in three volumes covering the years 1971 to 1979 was independently compiled by Eckhard Strohmeier and published in 1978, 1979 and 1981 by Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

In 1994, under the sponsorship of the American Library Association Library Fellows Programme and the United States Information Service, an American, Barbara Bell, Spent nine months in Namibia to set international standards for a national bibliography, upgrade the AACR2 records in the Namibian Literature database NAMLIT using the CD/ISIS software, allocate classification numbers and train staff to compile subsequent issues of the bibliography.

## Strides

1978	Covered period from 1971 to 1975
1979	Covered period from 1976 to 1977
1981	Covered period from 1978 to 1979
1996	Covered period from 1990 to 1992
1999	Covered period from 1993 to 1995
2002	Covered period from 1996 to 1998 (All the above in print version)
2007	1990 to 1998 made available online (2005 and 2006 to be included soon)

Following the standards set, in 1996 the NNB covering the period 1990 to 1992 was published. In 1999 the NNB covering the period 1993 to 1995 was published and that covering the period 1996 to 1998 was published in 2002. All the above mentioned publications were in print form. However, these volumes have now been made available on our website [www.nln.gov.na](http://www.nln.gov.na). The records for the period between 1999 and 2004 have not yet been updated to meet international standards and hence are not included in the online NNB. Records for 2006 are still being updated. The intended publication frequency is yearly but due to staff constraints it has not been possible to publish the NNB as intended. All records which have not been updated to NNB standards for the years not mentioned above are nevertheless available on NAMLIT which is also accessible online.

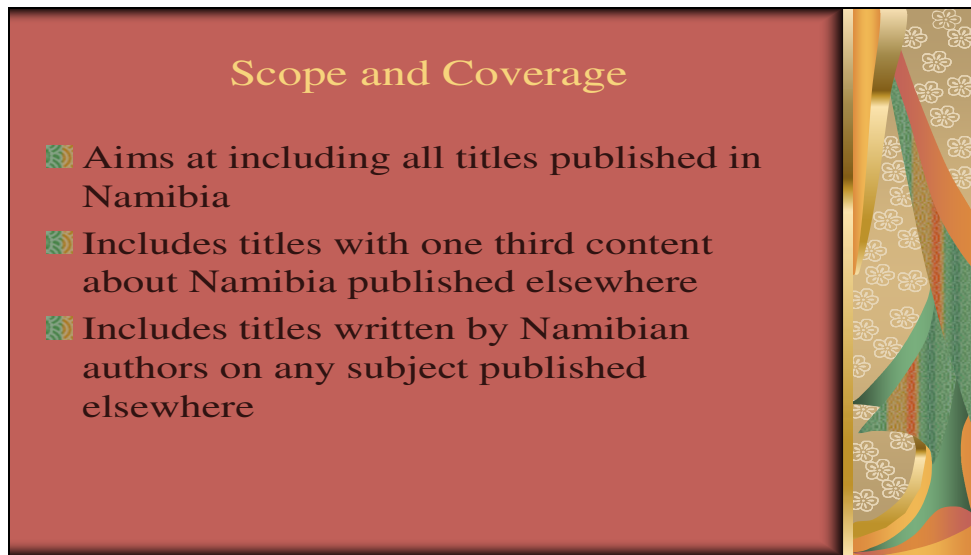
At present records for the 2005 publications have been updated to NNB entries from (NAMLIT) and will be made available online. The NAMLIT database is based on the Unesco software using the UNIMARC format. There is a local area network with several workstations administered by a central server being used by the National Library and National Archives both housed in the same building.

NAMLIT was started in 1986 at Bremen University<sup>4</sup> as a union catalogue listing all materials published in/or related to Namibia housed in 80 European libraries and at the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka. In 1989 the project moved to Namibia and in 1990 the holdings of the Estorff Reference Library were added. Initially NAMLIT was compiled using the LIDOS software and in 1994 the database was converted to CDS/ISIS. The database is a comprehensive union catalogue of all Namibian related documents including newspapers, videos, cassettes, periodicals, periodical articles, books, grey literature, conference papers and research reports. At present there are more than 62 000 entries on NAMLIT.

The National Library of Namibia is the national International Standard Book Number (ISBN) Agency for Namibia. The Library issues ISBNs to all publishers, maintains a register of all prefixes allocated and publisher addresses. It thus provides ISBN and publisher information to the International ISBN Agency for their world directory. This enhances the capacity of the library to keep track of new publications in terms of monographs thereby making bibliographic information available for the compilation of the NNB

### ***Scope and coverage***

The NNB aims to include a complete list of titles published in the Republic of Namibia during the period covered and received by the National Library of Namibia in accordance



with the provision for legal deposit as stipulated in the Namibia Library and Information Service Act, No. 4 of 2000.

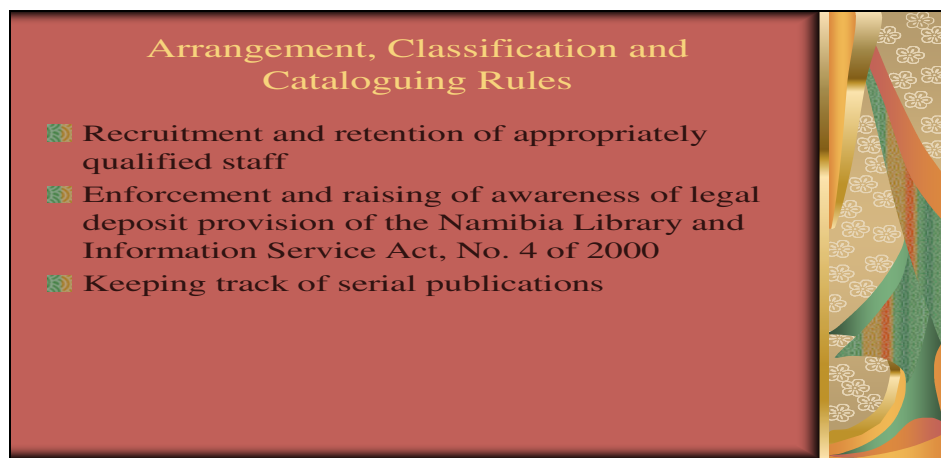
The scope of the NNB includes monographs, official publications, government publications, published and unpublished theses and dissertations, published and selected unpublished conference proceedings, translations, atlases, IGO and NGO publications produced in Namibia, maps, pamphlets of five pages or more, audio-visual materials, exhibition catalogues, and first issues, title or corporate body changes and cessations of newspapers and periodicals during the period covered. Collections from other specialized libraries in the country are checked for titles published in Namibia during the period covered.

Also included are titles about Namibia published elsewhere which include significant Namibian content (approximately one third content), and publications on any subject written by Namibians but published elsewhere. These are set apart from the national imprint by an asterisk (\*) after the national bibliography number. Titles which were omitted from the previous issues are included in the current one.

Not included are analytical entries (articles in serials or monographs), acts, bills, pamphlets of less than five pages, press releases, unpublished speeches and interviews, duplicated materials with a limited distribution, single sheet newsletters and duplicated material taken from books or other sources, book reprints or printings from the edition (unless it is the only copy owned by the National Library of Namibia), calendars, programmes, advertising/ trade literature with product information only, colouring books, stamps, photo-stories, sales catalogues (except those with information on a subject of bibliographic interest), preliminary survey reports and drafts of titles previously covered in the NNB.

### ***Arrangement, classification and cataloguing rules***

The arrangement of the NNB is by Dewey Decimal Classification Schedules, edition 22.



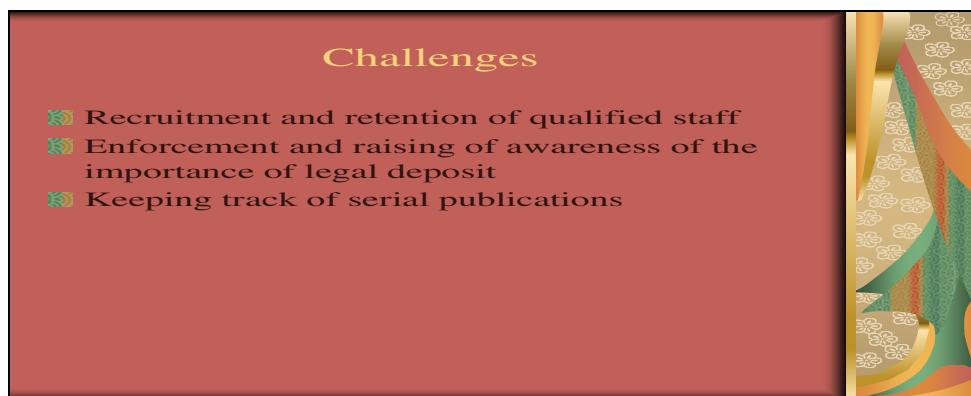
Cataloguing is according to the Anglo- American Cataloguing Rules, second edition. The entries are catalogued to level three standards giving full bibliographic details. For assigning subject headings the Library of Congress Subject Headings, edition 20 is used. Most records are originally catalogued although a few titles may be copied from the Library of Congress, Southern African Bibliographic Network (SABINET) or Online Cataloguing Library Centre (OCLC).

Entries are given in the original language of the publication. Literature written in indigenous languages are given a three letter code after the Dewey Decimal Classification number. In case of parallel entries the English form of the main entry is given priority.

### ***Challenges***

As it can be seen from the attempts made, the compilation of the NNB has been faced with a number of challenges. The major challenge has been in the area of staff recruitment and retention with several factors at play. In her paper presented at the Section on Bibliography Open Session, 61<sup>st</sup> IFLA Council and General Conference in 1995, Barbara Bell states the following and I quote.<sup>5</sup>

“There is a shortage of trained librarians in Namibia; those who are trained move on quickly to better paying positions. Staff mobility has left its mark. The



cataloguer, whom I was to train for national bibliographic procedures, left three months after I arrived. It was not until a month before my departure, when it was apparent that this position was not going to be filled soon, that another member was assigned to national bibliographic project. The national bibliography is now in the very capable hands of Louise Hansmann, the editor of NNB”

Indeed there is a serious shortage of trained and experienced librarians in Namibia. The few trained librarians are oftenly not ready to render their services in government organizations and hence opt to serve in the private sector or academic institutions at tertiary level where salaries and other conditions of service are more competitive and attractive. The few, who however join the government, do so only as a last resort and use the government job as a stepping stone or a ground for gaining experience while awaiting better opportunities to come their way. It is sad to note that Ms. Hansmann mentioned above also left to take up a position in an academic institution. Currently, the national bibliographic project is in the hands of two foreign nationals, myself and Antonia Lusakalalu, engaged on a two year contract basis and whose renewal is not guaranteed although negotiable. As a matter of fact the National library as a whole is seriously understaffed oftenly subjecting the few trained staff to various other responsibilities for positions that are vacant.

I wish to reiterate the seriousness of staff problems at the National Library of Namibia by citing Namhila and Hillebrecht<sup>6</sup> who attribute the untimely publication of the NNB to staff constraints and point out that its usefulness to the book trade is consequently greatly reduced.

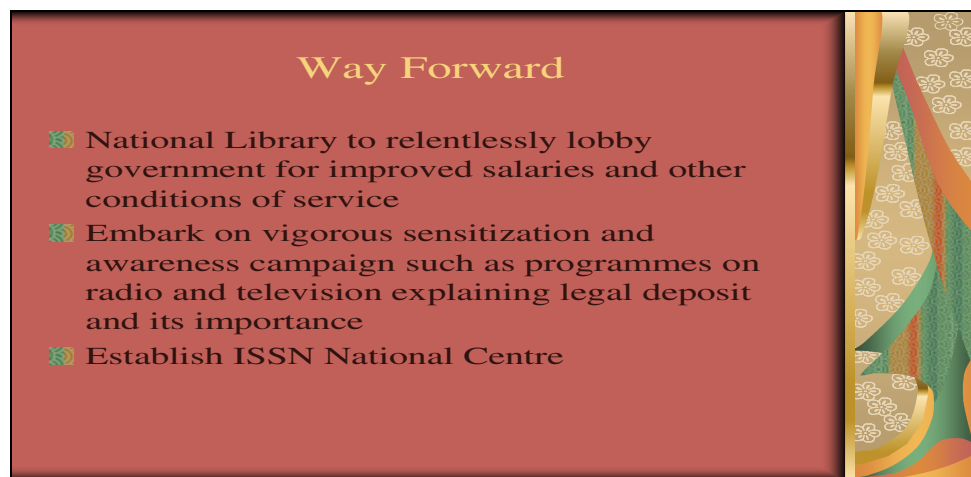
The extent of the problem of library staff recruitment and retention seems not to be fully appreciated or construed by the relevant government authorities with regard to the negative effects on national development as consequences of lack or inadequate trained librarians. This is clearly evidenced by the discrepancies in salaries for personnel on the same level in terms of positions and qualifications. For instance, in the Ministry of Education a senior education officer with a first degree earns a higher salary than a senior librarian also with a first degree when both work for the same ministry in the same government of the same country.

Another challenge has been the enforcement and the raising of awareness of the legal deposit provision of the Namibia Library and Information Service Act. Although the passing of the Act has empowered the National Library to collect all publications produced in the country, we still have difficulties with some publishers especially government ministries and agencies. Some publishers are ignorant of their obligation as stipulated by the Act to deposit copies of every publication they produce. This fact was also observed by Barbara Bell when at one time during her visit to Namibia she discovered that the Ministry of Education under which the National Library is located was not sending library copies of their publications.<sup>7</sup>

The tracing of serial publications has been difficult since the National Library of Namibia is not a member of the International ISSN Organisation and hence is not the ISSN National Centre. It only facilitates the allocation of ISSNs by the ISSN office in Paris to publishers of periodicals in Namibia and consequently encountering difficulties to keep track of all the periodicals being published in the country as publishers are not obliged to contact the NLN before publication of their periodicals.

Expansion of capacity in terms of ICT infrastructure such storage servers to accommodate computer files and software, e-books, e-journals and other electronic documents is also a challenge. Although legal deposit regulations under the Namibia Library and Information Service Act cover these materials as well, the National library has, at the moment, no capacity to systematically contain these items. Concomitant with the foregoing is the issue of appropriate ICT skills. The majority of the staff members do not have the necessary ICT skills to handle new challenges that emerge with the management of electronic information.

## WAY FORWARD



The NNB is such an important tool that records the country's publishing output; promotes awareness of the nation's cultural heritage and appreciation of the arts; makes available information needed by decision makers to create an appropriate framework for sustainable social and economic development; and provides the nation's technical and environmental data for research and innovation. It also contributes to universal



bibliographic control. Therefore, it is imperative that measures are taken to ensure the timely compilation and production of the NNB.

It is recommended:

- That the National Library through the Directorate of Library and Archives Services relentlessly lobby the government for improved salaries and other conditions of service for librarians in order to attract and retain qualified and experienced personnel.
- That it embarks on vigorous sensitization and awareness campaign aimed at bringing to light the existence of the legal deposit provision of the Library and Information Act. For instance putting in place periodical programmes on both radio and television explaining the Act with emphasis on the legal deposit provision will constantly inform and remind publishers as well as the general public of the importance and necessity of depositing publications with the National Library
- That the National Library establishes the ISSN National Agency soon in order to curtail present procedures of requesting for ISSNs from International Agency in Paris which often result in unnecessary delays.
- That the National Library's plans for the expansion of capacity of ICT infrastructure and skills are implemented as soon as possible for it to sustain the availability of its online NNB.

## NOTES

1. Johan Loubser, "The State of Bibliographic Control in Namibia" in Reuben and Naomi Musiker (eds.), *Proceedings of the Seminar on Accessing Information Resources in Southern Africa: National and Sub-regional Bibliographic Control*, 11-13 September 1996, Pretoria: State Library, 1999, p. 44-49
2. Namibia, Ministry of Education, *Namibia Library and Information Service Act, 2000* (No. 4 of 2000): Legal Deposit, Windhoek, Government Gazette, 2290 (79), p. 8-9
3. South West Africa, *The Laws of South West Africa, 1951, Union Legislation Affecting South west Africa and Proclamations, Ordinances and Principal Government Notices issued in South West Africa during 1951: Patents, Designs, Trade Marks and Copyright Amendment Ordinance, 1951* (No. 10 of 1951), [Windhoek], [1952], p. 200
4. Op cit., Johan Loubser
5. Barbara Bell, "The Making of the Namibia National Bibliography" in *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April/ June 1996, p. 31-33



6. Ellen Namhila and Werner Hillebrecht, "The Book Chain in Namibia" in Roger Stringer ed., *The Book Chain in Anglophone Africa: a Survey and Directory*, London: INASP, 2002, p. 56-61
7. Op cit., Barbara Bell