

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 04/06/2007</p> <p>The factors which influenced the establishment and development of libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p>R.H.I.S. Ranasinghe University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka</p>
Meeting:	144 Library History
Simultaneous Interpretation:	No
<p style="text-align: center;"> 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>	

The aim of this paper is to explore the most favourable factors which influenced the establishment and development of various kinds of libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is a general review which covers the span of time from the colonial times to 1960's.

Sub-Saharan Africa consists of 47 countries. These countries could be categorized as, Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa and almost all of them had prevailed under the colonial administration of France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Spain and Portugal.

With regard to the establishment and development of libraries, some common influential factors can be seen in these countries according to the governing countries. While the countries under the British government in West Africa called as Anglophone Africa show evidence of British influence, the countries under the French government called as francophone Africa had been influenced by some common facts. All colonies gained independent states between 1950 s and 1970 s.

The introduction of formal education in the colonial countries could be cited as the crucial factor that caused the establishment of libraries. Education systems were inaugurated in these countries by the colonial governments and the missionaries. While the governments aim was to train the personnel needed for the administration of the countries, objective of the missionaries was propagating the religion. A first primary

school was opened in 1658 by the Dutch East India Company for the children of slaves brought to the Cape (Kesting 1980, 151). Missionaries pioneered education in some countries. An example is the Democratic Republic of Congo. The majority of schools here were established by missions, especially, Catholic missions (Vranex 1971,607). In Gold coast, the missionaries played a more important role than the state in the matter of spreading the education. They considered education as an important strategy for the teaching and spreading of their religion. The English church mission opened a regular school in Cape Coast in 1751. Presbyterian mission too opened schools. The other churches mainly the Catholics, the Wesley (now Methodist), the Bremen missions opened a few grammar schools along the coast. Presbyterian, Methodists and Roman Catholics opened teacher training colleges as well. They embarked on Sunday school education, as well as classes for illiterate adults to enable them to read the Bible (Osei - Bonsu 1988, 224-225).

The literate population, that emerged as the result of education, needed to improve their education further. Not only the local educated people but also the people who returned to the country with foreign education and those that came from the ruling countries as administration officers and traders needed to improve their skills and professions. Therefore the educated people formed literary societies and social clubs. These societies and clubs had collections of books from which members could borrow. As Kimble states, the first reading room was formed by Try company in Cape Coast, Ghana in 1860 (Kimble 1963,146). According to Kesting, the private book collection of Joachim Nikolaus Von Dessin's eventually became the basis of the first library in South Africa (Kesting 1980, 167).

Gradually this society, club and private libraries became subscription libraries. In order to develop collections and for the maintenance work, members had to pay certain amount of money. Some of the subscription libraries were founded directly by the authorities.

Some colonial governors paid more attention to setting up of public libraries instead of subscription libraries. For instance, in the proclamation issued by the British Governor of the Cape in 1818 he specified that proceeds of the wine production should be used for the formation of a public library. Later the authorities discontinued this proclamation in 1829, after that people had to subscribe to use the library (Kesting 1980, 168). However in 1874 situation changed with the promulgation of the Molteno Regulations. The colonial secretary of Cape colony John Molteno's order was to encourage the provision and development of libraries in the smaller towns by means of an annual government grant. A condition was that the public libraries should permit the public to use them free of charge. (Plumbe 1968,124-125).

With the setting up of subscription and free libraries, scarcity of books specially, in vernacular languages posed a severe problem in Sub-Saharan libraries. To address this problem the missionaries pioneered the task of printing reading materials in vernacular languages. Missionary printing press was set up for the speedy printing of religious books in the local languages in Gold Coast in 1740s (Osei-Bonsu 1988, 226). To fulfil the increasing demands of literate people, gradually, printing of books commenced in Sub-Saharan countries. It is interesting to state that the South African Public Library, which was founded in 1818, became the copyright library in 1873 (Kesting 1980,170). As a regional service, the East African Literature Bureau was formed in 1948 with the main aims of publishing suitable reading materials for East Africa and encouraging original writing by the indigenous population(Sait 1972, 324).

It is evident that some government libraries were set up in the 19th century in some African countries upon the necessity of colonial governments. Just a few examples. There were number of special libraries existed in South Africa as industrial and research institutions (Kestings 1980, 169). In Ghana the libraries of Education Department, Agriculture Department and the Secretary for Native Affairs were set up in the later part of 19th century (Osei-Bonsu 1988, 222) In Nyasiland (now Malawi) the first agriculture library in tropical Africa was set up in 1899 and a medical library in Uganda was set up in 1897 at Mongo Hospital, Kampala (Plumbe 1968,124).

In the origin and development of libraries in Sub Saharan African countries were benefited by various international and national organizations which contributed in different ways such as planning, funding and staff training.

Unesco entry to public library development in African countries began in 1949 with the publication of "The Public Library Manifesto" (Unesco 1949). Its main objective was to popularize and publicize the public libraries through out the world, which is one of the most important documents prepared by Unesco to fulfil its objectives. It states "As a democratic institution, operated by the people for the people, the public library should beopen for the free use on equal terms to all members of the community, regardless of occupation, creed, class or race" (Unesco 1949, 242).

Unesco played a major role to eradicate illiteracy, by initiating various steps in Sub-Saharan countries, since its inception in 1946. Unesco with UNDP initiated Experimental World Literacy Programme arranging mass literary programmes such as adult literary courses. Its literacy campaign cites libraries as one of the effective methods of eliminating illiteracy. Persons, who never enjoyed the privilege of attending school and who cannot read are identified as illiterates (Unesco 1970, 11-17).

In the mid 60's a Unesco added a new dimension to the literacy movement by the introduction of 'Functional Literacy' concept. Unesco identified this term thus

"Functional literacy work should be taken to mean any literacy operation conceived as a component of economic and social development projects" (Kibirige 1977,57). To eradicate illiteracy Unesco sponsored some functional literacy projects in African countries. eg. Tanzanian project in 1968 (Kibirige 1977, 64).

Unesco promoted the concept of the 'National Information System' (NATIS) to derive maximum benefits from information. This system encouraged the formation of overall information policies and the establishment of appropriate information infrastructures and networks at national levels (Kibirige 1977, 50).

Unesco conducted several conferences in the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its entry into library development in West Africa began in 1953, with its seminar on public libraries development in Africa held in Ibaden, Nigeria. The report of this seminar which influenced the creation of African library services, states that the public library should support programmes of adult and fundamental education, provide effective services for children and young people, and promote reading for pleasure and recreation. It also laid stress on the necessity for the production of reading materials at low cost and recommended library schools to provide full-scale professional training. Unesco has played a considerable part in promoting it (Gardner 1966, 212-213).

Subsequent to the Ibaden seminar Unesco started a pilot library project in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria in 1957-1958. It provided expert assistance and financial assistance for the purchase of initial stock of books and a book mobile (Gardner 1966, 213).

Another regional seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa was held in Enugu in 1962. Main recommendations of the seminar were; planning a national library service, drafting legislations and the co-ordination of library associations and co-operation of libraries and library training (Gardner 1966, 215).

Unesco paid attention to develop school libraries too. Its role in school library development in Africa commenced in 1966 with the agreement signed with the Federal Government of Nigeria for the establishment of a pilot project on school libraries in Logos, Nigeria. Under this agreement Unesco provided expert assistance, one fellowship in school library work, financial assistance for books and equipments (Bonny 1966, 71).

British Council also made significant contributions to the library development in British colonies by way of appointing library specialists, conducting conferences, making grants, donating books, giving scholarships etc.

Colonial Library Development Programme (CLDP) was introduced to East African British Colonies by British Council in 1959 and its objectives were to providing a

measure of financial help towards the capital cost of the library development and training the staff to enable them to initiate or develop library services (Matogo 1975, 299).

British Council appointed Sidney Hocky as the Libraries Development Organizer for the governments of East Africa in 1950, specially for Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. In his report he recommended the setting up of a national library system, administrated by statutory bodies. It also insisted the national library system that should consist of national central libraries in the capital cities, provincial or regional libraries, district libraries, small libraries and bookmobiles (Sturges 2001, 41).

Carnegie Corporation was one of the national organizations which helped the library development. It supported South Africa in modern library development since 1928. It contributed this country by financial aid to implement the main recommendations of the National Conference on library affairs in 1928 (Kesting 1980, 171-172).

Later Carnegie Corporation paid attention to West Africa. It appointed a committee to report on the development and expansion of library facilities in West Africa. In keeping with the recommendations of the report, it made a grant of £ 6,250 for the development of a public and a mobile library service and to build Accra town library with a branch to serve the patients and staff of the Korle-Bu Hospital in Coast. However in 1942 it decided not to allocate further grants for library development on account of the war conditions (Osei-Bonsu 1988, 223).

Carnegie corporation gave financial assistance to set up a National free Library Service in Southern Rhodesia (Now Zimbabwe) in 1943 on the request made by the Dugald Nivan, Librarian of Bulawayo Public Library (Sturges 2000, 39).

Rockefeller foundation also contributed to East Africa in the development of library training. Under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller foundation, a conference on library training was held in Nairobi in 1963. It helped the school of Librarianship, Makerere University, Kampala with a tutor and funds for secretary assistance until December 1965 (Sait 1972, 329).

Setting up of National Library Boards by the governments can be considered as a one of the favourable factors in developing library services and it showed the enthusiasm of the governments in this regard as an essential element in the national development.

The influence of Gold Coast Library Board Ordinance of 1949 and setting up of Gold Coast Library Board in 1950 may, no doubt, have provided a model for other countries to design their library boards. Gold Coast Library Board was set up with Evlyn Evens, British Council Librarian as the Chief Librarian. The main duties of the Board

was to establish, equip, manage and maintain libraries and to take all such steps as may be necessary to carry out such duty (Evans 1964,38). The countries of Sierra Leone, Tanganyika and Kenya set up their Library Boards in 1959, 1963, 1965 respectively. According to Paul Struggles in a relatively short period, the National Library Service approach was dominant concept in the region (Sturges 2001, 39-41).

These Boards gradually developed specific services, which were appropriate to African circumstances. Primarily they concentrated first on public library services. With the aim of developing public libraries, straight away, Public Library Board was established in Uganda by Public Library Board Act 1964, to establish, equip, manage and maintain public libraries in Uganda (Motogo 1975, 303). Institution of the National Library Advisory Council was set up in South Africa in 1962, by which the main emphasis was laid on the national cooperation (Kesting 1980, 173).

Provision of training facilities for library personnel, both local and abroad, are considered as one of the favourable factors which influenced library development in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the early years, African librarians were trained within the libraries that employed them, by the expatriates who came from Britain. Usually the new librarians were trained first as assistants, and out of them few were sent to Britain on British Council scholarships (Sturges 2001, 45).

Subsequently colonial countries needed to have its own library school in order to meet its manpower needs in the area of librarianship appropriate to African needs. South African Library Association (SALA) pioneered the training courses for librarianship from 1933 in South Africa (Kesting 1980,231). As a joint venture of three colonial governments of Gold Coast (Now Ghana) Nigeria and Sierra Leon, the first library school in the West Africa was set up in association with the British Council, in the Gold Coast in 1944. But the course of study was discontinued after one year, as there was no definite prospect of employment for the enrolled students. After that Ghana Library school was set up in 1961 but in 1965 it was absorbed by the University of Ghana, as the department of Library Studies (Osei-Bonsu 1988, 230-232). East African school of librarianship was founded in Kampala, Uganda in 1963 to serve the needs of the East African countries with the assistance of Unesco (Sait 1972, 328). As the results of the Unesco conference on Public Library Development in Africa held in Nigeria in 1953, national schools were started for the librarians in Accra, Ibadan and Dakar. Obi states that the Institute of Librarianship, University of Ibadan opened in 1960 as the full-scale professional library school in tropical Africa (Obi 1982,20). By the end of 1960's the courses for librarianship had been commenced by thirteen South African universities (Kesting 1980,231-232).

National and Regional Library Associations which were formed by the professionals of the field also played major role in developing librarianship. South African Library Association (SALA) was established in 1930 as the first library Association in Sub-Saharan countries. Its membership was originally open to all persons interested in the welfare of library and information service in South Africa (Kesting 1980, 222). As a Regional Library Association the first West African Library Association (WALA) was founded in 1954 out of the Unesco conference on Public Library Development in West Africa held in Nigeria in 1953 (Obi 1982, 9). As the number of trained librarians working in West Africa increased, WALA broke up into the National Associations in 1962. The Nigerian Library Association and the Ghana Library Association were created in 1962. (Obi 1982, 18-25). Eastern African Library Association (EALA) was founded in 1957, but which was later dissolved.

Conclusion

It is clear that the origin and development of libraries in Sub-Saharan African countries were influenced by the attitudes of its governing countries. As Matare (1977, 1) puts it "Historically libraries in Africa have been influenced by colonial powers. The libraries of the colonial era existed primarily to facilitate the provision of educational entertainment and recreational needs of the European settler population and to acculturate the Africans." To a considerable extent they were influenced by the international and national organizations which contributed in planning, financing and staff training. All the favourable factors which we discussed above, finally depended on the economic social and political environment of the country.

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