Libraries in Africa in the Past

The preservation of books over a long period was possible in ancient times only if they were collected and removed in some way from the hands of men and simultaneously protected from the ravages of insects and mildew. The efforts of men to kill.

The oldest books in the world are those which have been found in Africa - in Egypt. The 'Instruction of Ke' -gemmi' was written before 3998 B.C. (when King Heuni died) and the 'Instruction of Ptah-Hotep' was written about 3550 B.C. The single papyrus, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris on which both works were written, was probably stolen from a tomb by an Egyptian labourer employed on excavating the burial ground at Thebes, who sold his "Loot" to the French archeologist M. Prissed.
As there have been books for 6000 years in Egypt, it is not surprising that the first libraries in Africa were those of that country. The earliest books, however in the form of papyrus rolls were not gathered in to large libraries but were used by individual scholars, priests, and kings to advance their personal knowledge and power.

The greatest and most famous of all libraries before the invention of printing were the libraries of the Ptolemies of Alexandria. Alexandria was founded on the site of a small finishing village by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. immediately after his conquest of Egypt.

In 48 B.C., when Julius Caesar arrived in Egypt, the Alexandrian library had 700,000 rolls and much of the collection had already survived for 2½ centuries. Cleopatra took Caesar to visit the library, which was a show piece of the city, and when she saw his greed to possess some of the priceless items of the collection, she pressed them on him as gifts until the library was depleted of some of its greatest treasurers.

The destruction of the library is generally said to have taken place shortly after 646 A.D. when Muslim armies

under the command of Amrbin al-Asal Sahmi entered Alexandria by Assault.

Following the Islamic conquest Egypt had other libraries in Cairo. Caliph Abu-Mansur-al-Aziz collected a library which occupied 40 rooms; it had 18000 theological works and included 2400 copies of the Koran.

Even in Roman times there had been at least one library in North Africa outside Egypt. This was at Thamugadi (now Tiengad), the town established by the Romans in 100 A.D. on the lower slopes of the Aures Mountains in what is now Algeria.

After the Romans, after the Muslim conquerors, after the Christians in the Wadi Natrun, there is a long hiatus in the library history of Africa. Research among Arabic books and manuscripts could probably add information concerning at least, the period up to the end of the twelfth century, but if it has been done, the results do not seem to be available in European languages.

H. Curtis Wright has written a scholarly account of the historical origins of libraries in ancient Greece in his book entitled "The oral Antecedents of Greek Librarianship". His concern was to depict the emergence of the library movement during the transition of a culture from an oral to a written tradition.²

Historians of library development in Africa have unanimously substituted Aristotle for the colonizer who is erroneously considered the rightful pioneer of librarianship. It is true that as in most proliterat Societies, "book reading" in Africa used to have a magico-religious significance. It was after the arrival of the white man that "restricted" literacy began to give way to gradual secularization of literacy. So much like lipsticks, toothpaste, and motorcars, libraries and formal education featured among the various cultural artifacts imported from the mother-country into "the heart of darkness" in order to enlighten, civilize, and westernize Africans.

But any systematic account of African libraries as tangible entities, will go back into the womb of history. Writing on the existence of both books, and libraries in West Africa, Goody explains the phenomena of Islamic literacy in the pre-colonial societies of Northern Ghana. These societies, he declares, had untidy clusters of buts which although attracted little or no attention, from contemporary travellers nevertheless contained, and still do, libraries of books, some of local origin but mostly emanating from North Africa and beyond.

Africa was, in terms of graphic records, a tabularasa prior to colonisation. The evidence of reinforce this contention becomes all the more categorical and conclusive if the vision extends beyond West Africa towards the East. It is significant to note, for example, that the author of the earliest known East African history, 'KITAB AL SULWA FI AKHBAR KULWA'. The Book of Consolation of the History of Kulwa, was born in 1499 and began writing probably around 1520 or 1530. Similarly, the earliest known historical work of West African authorship by Mahmud Ka' t8 of Timbuctoo commenced in 1519.

In the sixteenth century, literacy was as "restricted" in Africa as it was in the Western World.

Thus, as far back as the eighteenth century, local histories were available in Arabic in parts of West Africa. Ivor Wilks narrates what indeed is a veritable example of the graphic, as opposed to the oral antecedents of African librarianship.

From medieval Islam with its libraries where professional scribes patiently and endlessly copied manuscripts from Persia, where library shelves were sometimes of carved and decorated wood, where lighting after the evening call to prayer was provided by

6. Ibid.
disastrous olive-oil lamps and lethal candles with bare flames, where readers if they were lucky sat cross-legged on soft carpets - from a civilization based on the Koran and the Camel, one passes directly into Africa of the nineteenth century. Quite apart from the countries north of desert, the coastal areas of Africa were already known by 1800 to the nations of Europe, that were to prove the major colonizing powers and the establishment of libraries was sometimes an educational or cultural efflorescence, and sometimes a necessary ingredient of the new colonization.

The custodial function of all keepers of the collection is an essential aspect of modern librarianship whose origins stretch backwards into the days when Aristotle inaugurated, through his pioneering establishment of the great research collection for the Lyceum about 335 B.C., what has now become the great tradition of Western scholarship and libraries. The African forerunner of modern librarianship also had a unique and interesting system for the appointment or replacement of the "bare-foot" librarians. For whenever a custodian dies, a rung is stirred into a pot of rice and whoever receives it in his portion, then assumes charge of the manuscript. But since a 'librarian' so chosen may be illiterate in Arabic, a scholar is also appointed as "Secretary" to the text.

All African libraries of today emphasize the
custodial function as if the preservation of resources is the raison d'etre of librarianship. In several African and other so-called developing areas, it is not uncommon to expect the librarian to replace lost items in the collection with personal money. What is needed, however, is an intermediary between the "illiterate Africans and the store of knowledge, often in exotic tongues."

But it was primarily through the contributions of Europeans, among them the colonial administrators and missionaries pre- and post-colonial, the United States Information Agency, and the Carnegie Corporations of New York, that definitive efforts were launched to build libraries in the modern sense of the word. Through such efforts one of the first libraries in Africa South of the Sahara, that of the present Research and Documentation Centre for Senegal at St. Louis, was founded in 1849. 6

The Bibliothèque nationale d'Alger was created in 1835; throughout the nineteenth century it remained a very modest library, moving from one unsatisfactory location to another until it was accommodated in the architecturally impressive but otherwise unsuitable palace of the Dey d'Alger.

Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone was founded in 1827. The development of its library, again, was modest until the mid-twentieth century and its books suffered greatly from insect attack.

The library of the Bibliothèque du centre de recherches et de documentation du Sénégal, at St. Louis was started in 1837, the library of the University of Liberia in 1862 the library of the University of Algiers in 1879.

The greatest development, as might be expected was in Egypt, where a national library, a municipal library, and an important cluster of special libraries were founded in the 19th century.

The first agricultural library in tropical Africa was established at Zambia in Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1899. The island of Zanzibar had set the example in 1890. Nyasaland - or the British Central African administration - also had a subscription library in 1896 (Members paid 10/6 (£1.18) per year) and a reading room was opened in 1897. Mango Hospital, Kampala Uganda, had a medical library in 1897.

South Africa had a library as early as 1818, when the South African Public Library, Cape Town, was established as the result of a proclamation by the Governor of
the Cape Colony, Lord Charles Somerset in which it was stipulated that "a charge of one six dollar on every case of wine passing through the Cape Town market should be devoted to the unkeep of a free public library for the citizens."

By 1874 there were 39 such libraries and by 1896, 96 in the Cape Province alone.

The first formal library school program in West Africa which began in Accra, Ghana, as early as 1945 withered away after a year because there was at that time "no real demand for libraries."

In the area of formal education, teaching Africans to read and write on a comparatively massive level and in the interest of secularizing literacy, as opposed to the "restricted literacy" of pre-colonial times, was also the monopoly of the newcomers. The situation in Nigeria when it obtained formal independence in 1960, is an objective general picture in an African context:

In 1960, 96% of the schools in Nigeria were mission-operated schools, many of them were supported or assisted by government funds, but they were mission schools. It is the missionaries who taught African to read and write, and thereby supplied government clerks and their own catechists, and ultimately the national leaders, the national businessmen.

CURRENT TRENDS

'Twentieth century has been an age of miracle for mankind, an era of the full bloom of human ingenuity; the flowering of man's intellectual, scientific, technical and cultural activities, which have been sustained throughout the preceding ages.' In the area of libraries and librarianship many diverse factors have contributed to its enormous growth. Increased local and popular interest, general and official recognition of the importance of libraries in the educational, cultural and social life of a modern democratic society led to this growth. The democratic ideal of equal opportunity of education and provision of 'books for all' extended the establishment of libraries at all levels. The demand on library service has increased in the modern period and large libraries with millions of volumes and being set up throughout the world. In addition to the largeness, variety of libraries are organised - the public, national, governmental, academic research technical, special as well as children.

The early decades of the twentieth century were characterised by the expansion of library service in United States, Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries. There has been growth of all established libraries specially the Public and Academic libraries.

Though public library system, as it obtains in the
Innovation in Africa, the unknown. Different sorts have actually done enormous good to those who wanted to be benefited by them. Immediately on achieving independence African countries started on a vast programme of economic educational and industrial development. With all this, however, the development of libraries and librarianship in these countries has often been uneven. It has been pointed out that the seed of library system is in the soil. The careful fostering and nurture by the authorities and the sympathy and sincerity of the people has helped the seedling to grow up in healthy and unfettered atmosphere to a huge tree. During the last two decades, African countries have achieved the establishment of National Libraries, a UNESCO sponsored public library project at Ibadan, Nigeria, National Bibliographies, Documentation Centres, and large number of University and special libraries, in Library Science Schools, and publications on library science, including professional journals. Africa, however, needs an over-all development programme for libraries of all kinds of library schools and of the profession of librarianship itself.

LIBRARY LEGISLATION

The phenomenon of establishing library services based on national law is of recent past in the African West, has been a recent innovation in Africa, the existence of libraries of different sorts were not unknown. It has actually done enormous good to those who wanted to be benefited by them. Immediately on achieving independence African countries started on a vast programme of economic educational and industrial development. With all this, however, the development of libraries and librarianship in these countries have often been uneven. It has been pointed out that the seed of library system is in the soil. The careful fostering and nurture by the authorities and the sympathy and sincerity of the people has helped the seedling to grow up in healthy and unfettered atmosphere to a huge tree. During the last two decades, African countries have achieved the establishment of National Libraries, a UNESCO sponsored public library project at Ibadan, Nigeria, National Bibliographies, Documentation Centres, and large number of University and special libraries, in Library Science Schools, and publications on library science, including professional journals. Africa, however, needs an over-all development programme for libraries of all kinds of library schools and of the profession of librarianship itself.

LIBRARY LEGISLATION

The phenomenon of establishing library services based on national law is of recent past in the African
history of public librarianship. The first black Africa state to do so was Ghana (then a British Colony known as the Gold Coast) which promulgated a Library Board Ordinance that became effective in 1950. The Board was given the status of "body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal....(able) to sue and sued..... hold, manage and dispose of real and personal property..... (and) to enter into such contracts as may be necessary and expedient." The functions of the Board were numerated as "to establish, equip, manage and maintain libraries..... to take all such steps as may be necessary to carry out such duties." Later, in 1970, the Ordinance was amended introducing among other things, a new obligation for the Board to "establish in each region of Ghana a regional advisory committee..... to advise on the development of Library services at the regional level; to encourage the use of existing Library Services in the region; and to discharge any other duties that may from time to time be assigned ...."

EAST AFRICA

The pioneering Ghana Library Law gained widespread acceptance over the continent and was, because of its simpli city, subsequently adopted by many African States as a model for library legislation. In East Africa,
Tanganyika (now Tanzania) passed in 1963 an "Act to Establish the Tanganyika Library Services Board and to provide for matters incidental thereto and connected therewith." The main function was stated as to

"promote, establish, equip, manage maintain and develop libraries in Tanganyika?"

The Public Libraries Act - an act to provide for the establishment of a Public Libraries Board and other purposes connected therewith - was enacted by the Parliament of Uganda in 1964. It provided for setting up a body corporate and of perpetual succession to establish, equip, manage and maintain libraries in Uganda. The Act which ensured the permanence of Library services guaranteed the financial support and efficient administration. It spelled out the composition, functions and responsibilities of the Board. The provision of funds for the library service was to come from grants by the Parliaments and books of accounts to be audited by the Controller and Auditor General of Uganda for submission to the Minister.

The Minister of Culture and Community Development was given the powers for the appointment of the Public Libraries Board the first of which he announced on 10th November 1964. Nine members including 4 regional representatives, one City Council representative and 4 others were appointed. The existing library services
established by the East African Literature Bureau and managed directly by the Ministry of Culture and Community Development were transferred to the Public Libraries Board. These included 11 branch libraries, a postal library serving and a book box service which was operating from Kampala, serving the depository centres in schools, clubs and other institutions, and survey of the library needs of the country was soon conducted by the first Director of Public Libraries, who found that Uganda needed public libraries to help the social, political and economic development. More branch libraries and increased points of Mobile Library Services were introduced. Very soon it was realised that it could not be possible to run the expanded network without sufficient trained personnel and other supporting staff. This was followed by the appointment of a Commission to look into the problems of library services. The Commission found that the library services which had spread all over the country had created a lot of interest in libraries. The library was made responsible for selection, purchase and processing of the library material, compilation and maintenance of union catalogue strengthening of reference material and provision of reference and information service. Every year, the Board sponsors candidates for Library Assistants Certificate Course and Diploma in Librarianship Course. The Board has also trained
post-graduate librarians. During the early and mid-1970s the Public Libraries Board came across some serious problems. The mobile library service which was started for Eastern and Central Zone with 2 library Vans in November 1968 was stopped in 1972 as a result of the break of vehicles. The Postal Delivery Service still continues for the benefit of those living in remote areas. The postal charges both ways are paid by the Public Library Board through business reply coupons. The Book Box Service consists of extending long term loan up to a maximum of 12 months, of a portable book box fitted with shelves containing 150-200 books. These books can be exchanged as often as required throughout the year.

The Board was maintaining 20 branch libraries, four of which namely Masaka, Mbarara, Entebbe and Arua were destroyed in 1979 during the war which removed the military government and today 18 branch libraries are in operation.

Since its constitution the Public Libraries Board had made serious efforts to provide wide library service to Ugandans although it has come across numerous problems and difficulties. The participation of the local authority in running the branch libraries has been one of the most important achievements of the Board.

Kenya was the last of three states to enact a
Library Law. The Kenya National Library Service Board Act came into force in 1965 and aims to

"Promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain and develop libraries in Kenya".

In the three countries, each Board is body corporate and enjoys the status of a para-government organisation.

The East African Library Laws were enacted in the spirit of UNESCO Manifesto. This manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the Public Library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and understanding between people and between nations.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

A democratic institution for education, culture and information.

The public library is a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in universal education as a continuing and life long process, in the appreciation of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture.

The public library is the principal means whereby the record of man's thoughts and ideas, and the expression

of his creative imagination are made freely available to all.

The public library is concerned with the refreshment of man's spirit by the provision of books for relaxation and pleasure with assistance to the student, and with provision of up-to-date technical, scientific and sociological information.

The public library should be established under the clear mandate of law, so framed as to ensure nation wide provision of public library service. Organized co-operation between libraries is essential so that total national resources should be fully used and be at the service of any reader.

It should be maintained wholly from public funds, and no direct charge should be made to any one for its services.

To fulfil its purposes, the public library must be readily accessible, and its doors open for free and equal use by all members of the community regardless of race, colour, nationality, age, sex, religion, language, status or educational attainment.

RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The public library must offer to adults and children the opportunity to keep in touch with their times,
to educate themselves continuously and keep abreast of progress in the sciences and arts.

Its contents should be a living demonstration of the evolution of knowledge and culture, constantly reviewed, kept up to date and attractively presented. In this way it will help people from their own opinions and develop their creative and critical capacities and powers of appreciation. The public library is concerned with the communication of information and ideas, whatever the form in which these may be expressed.

Since the printed word has been for centuries the accepted medium for the communication of knowledge, ideas and information, books, periodicals newspapers remain the most important resources of public libraries.

But science has created new forms of record and these will become an increasing part of the public library's stock, including print in reduced form for compact storage and transport, films, slides, gramophone records, audio and video tapes for adults and children, with the necessary equipment for individual use and for cultural activities.

The total collection should include material on all subjects, to satisfy all tastes at differing educational and cultural standards.

All languages used by a community should be represented, and there should be books of world importance
in their original languages.

The public library building should be centrally situated, accessible to the physically handicapped, and open at times convenient to the user. The building and its furnishings should be attractive, informal and welcoming, and direct access by readers to the shelves is essential.

The public library is a natural cultural centre for the community, bringing together as it does people of similar interests. Space and equipment are therefore necessary for exhibitions, discussions, lectures, musical performances and films, both for adults and children.

Branch libraries and mobile libraries should be provided in rural and suburban areas.

Trained and competent staff in adequate numbers are vital to select and organize resources and assist users. Special training will be required for many activities such as work with children and handicapped, and audio-visual materials, and the organization of cultural activities.

USE BY CHILDREN

It is in early life that a taste for books and the habit of using libraries and their resources are most easily acquired. The public library has therefore, a
particular duty to provide opportunity for the informal and other material by children. Special collections and, if possible, separate areas should be provided for them. The children's library can then become a lively stimulating place, in which activities of various kinds will be a source of cultural inspiration.

USE BY STUDENTS

Students of all ages must be able to rely on the public library to supplement the facilities provided by their academic institutions. Those pursuing individual studies may be entirely dependent on the public library to meet their needs for books and information.

THE HANDICAPPED READER

There is an increasing concern with the welfare of the elderly and all handicapped people, problems of loveliness, and mental and physical handicaps of all kinds, can be alleviated in many ways by the public library.

Improved means of access, provision of mechanical reading aids, books in large print and recorded on tape, service in hospitals and institutions, and personal service to the home are some of the ways in which the public library can extend its services to those who need
THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE COMMUNITY

The public library should be active and positive in its outlook, demonstrating the value of its services and encouraging their use.

It should link itself with other educational, social and cultural institutions, including schools, adult education groups, leisure activity groups and with those concerned with the promotion of the arts.

It should be watchful for the emergence of new needs and interests in the community, such as the establishment of groups with special reading requirements and new leisure interests to be represented in the library's collections and activities.

In strict legal terms the Uganda Library Board has no power over libraries other than public ones. It cannot for example, consider establishing national library, a school library programme or government departmental libraries. In contrast, the Kenyan and Tanganyikan boards were initially given very wide powers.

The current thinking about library development, especially in the developing countries, is that all national library resources should be co-ordinated and developed by an all embracing natural information
infrastructure. This idea culminated in the National Information Systems (NATIS) concept which was promulgated at the Intergovernmental Conference on the Planning of Overall National Documentations, Library and Archives Infrastructures, held in Paris from 23-27 September 1974.

The Uganda Library Board has of late started negotiations in order to ensure integrated library services in the spirit of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Secondly, the Chief Executives of these libraries are designated differently. In Uganda and in the United Republic of Tanzania, they are termed 'directors', whereas their Kenyan counterpart is the 'Chief Librarian'. It may be argued that a director's post appears more prestigious compared with that of a Chief Librarian, and therefore on the job market may attract better qualified candidates.

Finally, in accordance with the Enugu Seminar recommendations, the library Act should state clearly which government ministry is responsible for the service. On this issue, it is only the Tanganyika Library Services Board Act 1963 which gives a statement, thus: "The Minister" means the 'Minister' for the time being responsible for education. On the contrary, the Ugandan Act merely says that 'Minister means Minister to whom responsibility under this Act is assigned. The Kenyan Act id equally vague. As a result, library services in Kenya were first administered by the Ministry of National
Resources (which included game parks, forests and fisheries), and are currently administered by the Ministry of Social Services and Co-operations.

In 1975, a new Act was passed by the Tanzanian Government extending the powers of the Library Services Board even further. This is manifest in the new definition given to the 'public library', thus: ... any library to which a member of the public has or is permitted to have access; whether on payment of any fee, or by virtue of his being a member of any community club association or institution. 10

WEST AFRICA

The importance of legislation to the development of library and information services in the West African sub-region has long been recognised. Indeed, as early as 1953 the Unesco-sponsored seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa (the Ibadan Seminars) advocated the adoption of appropriate legislation to ensure a service that had a well-defined administrative set-up and adequate financial support the Seminar resolved that only legislation could define the functions of the providing authority, create conditions, in which it might fulfil those

functions and ensure development. At the time of the Seminar only the Ghana Library Board had been established by an Act of Parliament and was in fact, the first public library service in tropical Africa to be established by legislation. Since then however, other national libraries and information services in the sub-region have also been established by legislation.

PROVISION OF A NATIONAL SERVICE

The intention of library legislation should be the provision of library and information services which would result in every citizen having access to a full range of services.

The Acts which established the Library Boards of Ghana (1950), Sierra Leone (1959), and The Gambia (1976) meet the recommended legislative provision in that they made the Boards responsible for the establishment, equipment, management and maintenance of public library services in their respective countries. The Boards were also empowered (within the limits of the Acts) to take steps that would enable them to carry out their duties. All three Boards are responsible to their central

government, through their ministries of education. Each of them provides a national service and had a mandate to be responsible for any branches of the services in any part of the country.

Nigeria, on the other hand has never had a national or unified public library service. Under the former system of administration, each of the three regions was responsible for the provision of library and information services within its own region. Of the three the Eastern region had the most articulate public library policy, and had a service that was established by legislation in 1955. The Western and Northern regions had nothing as well-defined as that of the Eastern region with the division of Nigeria into nineteen States, the responsibility for the provision of public library services has fallen on the separate state governments. Whatever co-ordination exists at the national level is effected through the National Library which was established by legislation in 1964.

With a service that dates back to 1926, Liberia has the oldest public library system in the sub-region. However, there is no legal backing for the service, which was at one time under the Ministry of Education but is now under the Centre for National Documents and Research Agency. In 1967 a Unesco Consultant was invited by the Liberian government to help formulate a development plan
for the country's library services. The consultant recommended the establishment of a "Library Board of the Republic of Liberia" by legislation in order to give the national public library service a legal backing. But this recommendation has as yet not been implemented.

A NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING BODY

The legislative requirement for a national body calls for the recognition of the fact that all publicly provided libraries contribute to a pattern of library and information service. Each sector (e.g. special libraries, school and college libraries, academic libraries, etc.) will need its own programme of planning and development. But to create a truly national library co-ordinating body should be created by legislation to plan the development of the service as a whole.

Only Ghana and Liberia have national co-ordinating bodies but neither of which was established by legislation. The co-ordinating body for Ghana is the National Committee for information and documentation which grew out of the Ghana (UNISIST National Committee. The UNISIST Committee was formed in 1975 by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the national focal point for UNISIST, to plan and implement the UNISIST recommendations. In 1980, its composition and functions were broadened to
assume a national character and was redesignated the National Committee for Information and Documentation.

The body charged with the co-ordination of library archives and documentation services in Liberia is the Centre for National Documents and Records Agency. The Centre was established in 1978 out of the personal interest of the late President Tolbert in the reorganisation of the Liberian records and archives. The Centre has embarked on a training scheme as part of its manpower development programme and has also been organising short courses in archive administration. It has no legislative backing.

The Gambia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone have no national co-ordinating bodies. In the case of Nigeria, however, proposals in the establishment of a National Advisory Council on Library and Information Services have been made but the response of the Federal Government has been that the National Library should perform the functions of the proposed Advisory Council for the time being.

In Sierra Leone, an education review report of 1976 recommended the establishment of "a national co-ordinated system which would be responsible for the development of libraries, archives, documentation and museums." The
documentation, which was addressed to the Ministry of Education, remains unimplemented. The 1976 document is useful and should not be abandoned.

In the absence of a developed professional body in The Gambia, the advocacy for the establishment of a coordinating body becomes the responsibility of the Gambia National Library which in any case, has been providing professional leadership in the country. The library and information services in The Gambia may at the moment be at their initial stages of development, the establishment of such a body in these early stages would ensure the coordinated growth and development of the services.

LEGAL DEPOSIT AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

All three East African Countries (Kenya, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) have legal deposit Acts ensuring the majority of publication produced in the region are collected. None of the Acts dates back further than twenty years. The Makerere University college (Depository) Act of 1958 is the oldest and covers Uganda.

Makerere University College Deposit Library Act - an act to make provision for the deposit and preservation of copies and books printed and published in Uganda. This Act made it legal obligation for publishers or authors of books in Uganda to deposit a copy of every publications,
within the month after the date of publication, with Makerere University College Library. It also provided for delivery of the copy of the book to the minister concerned if a written demand was made within 3 months after the publication of the book. In case of failure on the part of the publisher to comply with the provision of the Act the publisher was made liable on conviction to a fine of Shs 100/- and/or delivery of the publication in respect of which the conviction was recorded, or to pay to the Librarian Makerere University College or to the Minister or to both as the case may be, the value of such book.

The spirit behind the Deposit Library Act was to ensure collection and preservation of all material published in Uganda and ultimately to achieve an effective control of national bibliography policy. The project to compile Uganda bibliography was started in 1965 and a "Uganda Bibliography" section appeared in the Makerere University College Library Bulletin and Accession List No. 55 January-February 1965. The bibliography included material received under legal deposit law and other books published about Uganda outside the country. Unfortunately during mid 1970s the Library Bulletin was suspended and the National Bibliography could not be continued. The Albert Cook Library of the Medical School which collects medical literature published in the country as well as the
medical literature on Uganda published elsewhere had been publishing on monthly basis the "East African Medical Bibliography. Due to the problems of the 1970s the bibliography has been suspended. In fact the enthusiasm to implement the provisions of the Deposit Library Act could not be maintained due to the practical problems and loop-holes of the legislation itself, and more seriously due to the political problems of the country as a result of the change over to military government.

Ten years after the enactment of the Makerere University College Deposit Library Act, the Parliament of Uganda passed another legislation - "the Deposit Library and Documentation Center Act, 1969". The Act provided for the establishment of a Deposit Library and Documentation Centre under the administration of Institute of Public Administration. It was made a legal obligation for the publishers of the books published in Uganda or any other person ordinarily resident in Uganda who may be author of a book published outside, to deliver at their own expenses a copy of the book to the Depository Library and Documentation Centre within one month of the release of the publication. The failure to comply with the provisions of this act was made an offence liable to conviction and a fine of Shs. 100/-. The "Book" was defined as "every part of the division of the book, Newspaper, periodical,
magazine, review, gazette, pamphlet, sheet of letter press, sheet of music, map, plan, chart separately published", not very different from the Makerere Depository Law.

As it appears, the spirit behind the Deposit Library and Documentation Center Act was to collect, preserve and organise all material published in Uganda or produced by residents of Uganda under our exclusive roof. Although Makerere University College Library had been collecting this material under the provisions of a similar act. The minister responsible indicated when introducing the Deposit Library and Documentation Centre is one of the institutions at our disposal for improving upon the knowledge and skill of public officers. The minister went ahead to suggest that the Center would be responsible for centralising all documents of historical and political importance, particularly relating to the operation of the public service of government. It would record catalogue index and store all documents under correct conditions. It would publish articles, provide a list of documents available and do research. It would encourage local authorities and other bodies to deposit their record for publication and for safe keeping. It would stimulate the general public to a greater awareness of our history and activities of our government... Much of our efforts must be directed towards gathering material on Uganda and making this
available to public officers so that they can know how other parts of the nations with which they are not primarily concerned operate.... We must increase our knowledge of our own country amongst all our people." The minister went on to suggest that, "one of the intentions of establishing the Deposit Library and Documentation Centre is to make facts available so that we may reduce the possibility of Uganda being spoiled by uninformed writing."

The deposit library function on the part of Makerere University College Library was in fact an additional function on top of its primary responsibility as the academic library to cater for the basic requirements of the students and staff of Makerere University College. The newly established Documentation Center has certain advantages of being primarily responsible for deposit library functions and being directly under the government. International assistance could easily be obtained for the smooth functioning and further development of the Center. The Common Wealth Secretariat took the land in providing a documentation expert who unfortunately could not stay for more than two months because of the personal problems. In 1975 a replacement was obtained from UNDP which assigned a documentation specialist. Further United Nations Development Programme assistance came for the training of a Ugandan Staff who was sent to the United States in 1976. The German Foundation for International Development
provided a bursary for the training of another Ugandan who was trained in India. In 1975 the Documentation Center organised the collection of all published material from government departments, parastatal bodies and East African Community Research Institutes by personal visits. The working of this scheme was made easy by the assistance from the UNDP. The Center succeeded in convincing the district teams and planning committees to deposit their proceedings regularly with the Center but soon after the U.N. assistance was over, the Center could not continue its policy of personal visits for the collection of materials.

The Center started in 1976 a programme of indexing of the district teams and planning committees minutes. This index was found extremely useful by the government. Unfortunately, this scheme was suspended in 1979. The Center started publication of the index of the "Voice of Uganda" the English daily newspaper published from Kampala and the "Uganda Weekly News." It was a very interesting and useful activity which again had to be suspended due to problems of staff and finance. An attempt was made to compile a Uganda Public Administration Bibliography but again, like at Makerere the exercise had to be suspended. Inspite of all these problems which in fact have their origin in the general economic problems of the country,
the Center has developed a rich collection of reports, newspapers, periodicals, monographs, maps and individual papers which have a great research value.

The Kenya Books and Newspapers Ordinance No. 27 dates from 1960, while the Tanganyika Deposit of Books Act was passed in 1962.

The recommended requirement is that legislation for library and information services should provide the legal deposit and for participation in international library co-operation. The participation should include the observance of international exchange agreements and the co-ordination of relevant national bibliographic standards with international standards. Legislation for legal deposit is closely linked with the concept of Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC).

UBC envisages a system whereby each country undertakes the responsibility of recording the publications produced in that country and ensuring that those bibliographic records are made to conform with internationally accepted and acceptable standards. The principle is that the standardised comprehensive bibliographical record of each publication should be made once and for all in its country of origin. This should be undertaken by a

national bibliographical agency and the record must be applicable to both manual and mechanical systems. In order to achieve UBC, each country should have

(a) a national bibliographical agency or centre;

(b) a national bibliography (which is a basic tool); and

(c) an effective legal deposit arrangement (which allows for the comprehensive acquisition of the national output of published material from which the national bibliography will be produced).

All the countries in Anglophone West Africa, with the exception of Liberia, satisfy the three basic requirements to a greater or lesser degree. Liberia has the National Public Library as its national bibliographical centre. It, however, has no legal deposit laws, and neither does the bibliographical centre publish a national bibliography. The role of the National Public Library as the national bibliographical centre can therefore only be a nominal one.

In The Gambia, the deposit law is invested in the Gambia National Library Act 31 of 1976, by which the Gambia Library Board was established, made the National Library (which is actually a national public library) a depository library for Gambian publications. From the publication received, the National Library annually publishes the 'National Bibliography of The Gambia; the first issue was published in 1978.
### ENACTED by the Parliament of The Gambia.

## PART I—PRELIMINARY

1. **This Act** may be cited as *The Gambia Library Board Act, 1976* and shall come into operation upon such date or dates as the Minister may, by Order appoint.

2. In this Act unless the context otherwise requires:
   - "the Board" means the Gambia Library Board established by this Act;
   - "Chairman" means the Chairman of the Board;
   - "Chief Librarian" means the Head of the Library Services;
   - "member of the Board" includes the Chairman;
   - "Minister" means Minister for the time being charged with the responsibility for Library Services;
   - "library" means The Gambia National Library Services established and maintained by the Board; any branch thereof in any part of the country and any other library under the control and maintenance of the Board.

## PART II—ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSTITUTION

3. (1) There shall be established a Board to be known as The Gambia Library Board.

   (2) The Board shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and shall have power to sue and be sued in its corporate name and to acquire, hold and dispose all movable and immovable property.

   (3) The Board shall consist of a Chairman to be appointed by the Minister who shall hold office for a period of not more than three years and the following:

   - (a) a representative of the Ministry of Education;
   - (b) a representative of the Department of Education;
   - (c) a representative of the Department of Information and Broadcasting;
   - (d) Chief Librarian ex-officio;
   - (e) a representative of creative arts;
   - (f) two members appointed by the Minister;
   - (g) a representative of The Gambia Teachers Union.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishement of The Gambia Library Board</th>
<th>Date of commencement</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Gambia Library Board Act, 1976</td>
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Ghana's Deposit Law, the Book and Newspaper Registration Act of 1961 (Act 73), as amended in 1963 (Act 193), makes the Ghana Library Board, the Registrar-General, the Library of the University of Ghana (Legon), as well as the libraries of the University of Science and Technology (Kumasi), the University of Cape Coast, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (Accra), depositories for Ghana's publications. Ghana as yet has no national library although several efforts have been made in the past to establish one. The Research Library on African Affairs, which is a wing of the Ghana Library Board, has meanwhile been performing the functions of a national bibliographical centre. The Research Library is a depository through the Ghana Library Board and has been publishing the 'Ghana National Bibliography' since 1965. Formerly a bi-monthly publication with annual compilations, the 'National Bibliography' is now published annually.

As the only country with a national library, the national bibliographical centre of Nigeria is also the only centre that is set up in a national library. The National Library of Nigeria assumed that role with the promulgation of the National Library Degree of 1970 (Decree No. 29) which repealed the National Library Act (Act 6) of 1914. The Decree made the National Library the national depository library and also made it
responsible for the production of a national bibliography. The National Library has therefore been producing the 'National Bibliography of Nigeria' since 1970.

In Sierra Leone, the Publications (Amendment Act of 1962 makes it mandatory for every publisher to deposit three copies of each book published in Sierra Leone with the Sierra Leone Library Board. One of the three copies is to be sent to the British Museums and one to the University of Sierra Leone Library. The Sierra Leone Library Board retains the third. Since 1962, the Board has been producing the annual 'Sierra Leone Publications' which lists publications received under the Legal Deposit arrangement.

Because of the undeveloped state of the book industry in the developing countries, government publications, in most cases, constitute the largest proportion of the developing countries' publications output. Ghana is no exception to this. But Ghana's Act (The Book and Newspaper Registration Act) excludes this class of publications from the deposit arrangement. The Act states categorically that, "this part shall not apply to books printed by the Government Printer for on on behalf of the Government, except as directed by the Minister." The Gambian and Sierra Leonean Acts do not make any special mention of government publications; the assumption
therefore is that they are not excluded by the Acts. The Nigerian Decree, on the other hand, states specifically that "... where any printed matter... is published by or on behalf of any department of government of the Federation or a State, it shall be the duty of the official in charge of the department to deliver forthwith to the Director for the purposes of the National Library...." The Gambian Act, requires that two copies of published material should be deposited with the Chief Librarian of the Gambia Library Board but does not specify the time within which the order should be compiled with. This provides an avenue for evasion of the law. And neither is there any clause indicating penalty for non-compliance with the law. Ghana and Sierra Leone have penalty clauses for non-compliance. But it is the Nigerian Decree which provides that "if a publisher fails to comply with any provision of subsection (1) or (2) above, he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £ 50. Not only that the court may additionally order him to deliver three copies of the publication in question to the Director of the publication in question to the Director of the National Library or pay him the value of those copies.

The statistics on the next page are based on the national bibliographies in the sub-region and given an indication of the coverage of the bibliographies as well
### Coverage and Currency of National Bibliographies of English-Speaking West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year Covered by Bibliography and Date of Publication (in brackets)</th>
<th>Percentage of Entries with Imprint of Current Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Entries with Imprint of Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Gambia</td>
<td>1978(1979)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1972(1974)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1977/78(1979)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Libera has no national bibliography.
as the currency of the cited items. As it is seen, only the national bibliographies of Ghana and Nigeria contained entries more than 50% of which were current (Ghana 74%, Nigeria 53%). In the Gambian national bibliography 37% of the entries were current while for Sierra Leone the figure was only 22%. The rather low percentages of currency of the entries could well be a reflection of the ineffectiveness of the deposit laws. Ghana's high 74% currency rate may be because that issue of the national bibliography took two years to produce.

In addition to the comprehensiveness of coverage, the promptness with which publications are listed in a national bibliography. However, the frequency of the national bibliography may also be determined by the size of the national literary output. With the exception of the Nigerian national bibliography which is produced monthly, the others are all produced annually. The relative frequency of the 'National Bibliography of Nigeria' may in part be due to the greater number of Nigerian publications. The estimates are that Nigeria produces some 1300 titles a year, while Ghana produces about 230.13 'The National Bibliography of The Gambia' for 1978 contained 114 items, while 'Sierra Leone Publications' contained 90.

The important factor which may effect speed of

production is shortage of qualified staff to produce the bibliographies. This is a perennial problem facing most library and information services in the developing countries, and from which the West African sub-region can claim no exemption. Currently, the Gambian National Library, has only two professionally qualified librarians, the whole of the Sierra Leone Library Board has eleven, and the Research Library on African Affairs, the defacto national library of Ghana, has five.

Thus legislation has given due consideration to the library needs of the general public as well as the research personnel. The encouraging policy has been made to support the information requirements of the planners and decision makers in the government. The academic community at Makerere University in Uganda has been given the opportunity to make use of the deposit library provision within the University system itself. But the story of the library scene in the light of the legislation cannot be separated from the political developments of the country. The laws were being implemented with sincere enthusiasm when in January 1971 the elected government was replaced by the Military government. The academic activities in general were adversely affected due to ambiguous policy of the government on such issues. Later a ban on importation of foreign publications and vigorous
censorship on local publications discouraged the library and information activities. Towards the end of 1970s the struggle to overthrow the Military rule involved long period of liberation was and later the problem of resettlement after the fall of the Military regime in 1979, did not allow the quick reinstatement of library and information services.

But Legislation for Library and Information Services in Anglophone West Africa shows a pattern of uneven development. There is on the one hand, Liberia which has no legislative support of any kind for its services, and Nigeria on the other hand, which has a comparatively well-developed legislative system.

IMPACT OF MODERN LIBRARIES ON SOCIETY

Library service is a social and intellectual phenomena which depends upon the awareness of the people regarding the utility of library services. Factors like the educated and awakened masses, industrial development and cultural hunger create social pressure for the changing dimensions of libraries and their services in any country.

Libraries have been an integral part of the social framework from the very beginning. Their value as communication centres has been recognized in social progress, but till recent times library tools and techniques and
procedures have been very slow and pragmatically confined to the service of selected readers. The traditional techniques did not prove dynamic enough for enlightening the masses. Today libraries are no longer limited to accumulating materials for a select group of readers, but are engaged actively in making the resources available by a large portion of society in the least possible time. Besides, traditional forms of documents audiovisual aids and other new media have emerged to communicate ideas more effectively. Researchers and new approaches in science and technology have forced the libraries to make use of these communication tools and techniques for new innovations and greater use of the society.

Libraries bear great responsibility in communicating information and stimulating interest in users through book exhibitions, display methods, guides and handbooks in order to promote the use of libraries. Seminars study circles, group discussions, symposia and intellectual concerts are other sources of activity which may be useful in disseminating information and broadcasting the mental horizons of library users. UNESCO seminar on public library development for Africa in Ibadan in 1953 was the first step to promote the use of libraries in the country.

Some libraries are making use of new media of communication along with other varieties of aids of learning and training.
Research and specialization demand much more dependence upon the free flow of information, pertinent to a particular field of study. Such information embodied in documents on various subjects can be transmitted through libraries, which have a vast amount of information collection. Use of these collections promote the learning and understanding by the users.

Free communication is essential for the preservation of a free society. It is a means towards the end of a strong and stable social setup libraries contain recorded documents. They are no more storehouses of the ideas of generations of scholars but they serve as powerhouses for further generating fresh ideas library is a social agency charged with the responsibility of serving the information needs of the society. Therefore, libraries exist and function for the society. Libraries fulfil the expectations of the society through a series of operations and functions:

(i) Acquiring, assembling, arranging preserving and servicing book and non-book materials to promote learning and reading;

(ii) Providing service to the community as an authentic information centre;

(iii) Offering ample opportunities for all round development of all grades of human beings, continuously; and

(iv) Ensuring freedom of thought and expression for social growth.

The traditional concept of a library as a depository
of books and manuscripts has radically changed with the new media of recorded information. Today library is a communication Centre possessing a wide range of materials and is often termed as 'Resource Material Centre'. In addition to conventional forms of documents, manuscripts, books, periodicals, pamphlets, report and other traditional forms of printed matter, new types of documents are also found in them. They may be referred to as non-conventional forms of documents. These include maps, charts, micro documents, slides, phonograph records, tapes etc. The well equipped libraries serve as an effective communication centre leading to social and individual progress.

In responding to social needs, the written or printed word is considered the most effective means of communication. The document is part of man's process of human communication and the library is a means of extending the use of the document and making it accessible to readers at all levels, in all circumstances. Among the existing forms of documents the book is the most familiar form. It plays an important role in recreation, teaching and research. Inspite of the invention of many other media of mass communication, the book with its age old simplicity still remains the major medium of free and frequent communication, most effective and excellent instrument of learning, preserving and communicating ideas. Books are indispensable tools in education of people at
various levels. In recognition of the important role of books it is said that the 'civilization is more dependent upon the printed word than ever before. The spirit of freedom embodied in the pages of many great books has been a continuous source of inspiration for men. Books have played a great role in awakening the millions of people suffering severally under the shadow of slavery, tyranny, imperialism and dictatorship to get united and live as a free nation.

Man's ingenuity never fails him, with the 'information explosion' he invented new media of communication and means of control of vastly increased output of information in order to facilitate the task of information retrieval system in the Institute for Agricultural Research Library, Ahmadu Bello University, and of an information retrieval system in the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture Library in Ibadan is an example. New information is directly related to the users requirements in and outside the education centre. In the last two decades there has been a revolutionary change in educational set-up. The libraries have so far been book depositories and people could feel satisfied with the information available in them. The role of the libraries was then passive in the information dissemination. The introduction of non-book materials has considerably replaced the traditional
patterns of learning and teaching especially in higher education and vocational guidance. A wide range of visual and audiovisual aids and techniques have come into vogue and are further developing rapidly. The application of new media in the advancement of education has been fully recognised throughout the world.

The new media require mechanised means for conveying information. The shape, style and storage of these media are different from those of books and periodicals and require special handling and technical treatment. The exposition of these media is fast and their impact far-reaching. The University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos Libraries have mechanized photocharging system, whereas Ahmadu Bello University, University of Ibadan and University of Jos Libraries are linked with Telex systems which facilitate the transmission and receipt of information for inter library loan purposes; and the University of Ibadan Library microfilms Nigerian newspapers.

Culture is closely related to social life. It is passed from generation to generation either, through personal contacts or through recorded knowledge. Thus, the culture of the ages treasured and conserved in recorded documents neither dies nor diminishes unless the recorded documents or their store-houses-libraries are destroyed. At some juncture, assimilation of two or more cultures give birth to new concepts, beliefs and modes of life.
enabling the members of a society to learn the new ways of life.

In a cultural revolution communication is indispensable. Books and libraries are the most powerful means of communication. Libraries contain manuscripts, books, periodicals etc. In the pages of books are recorded the achievements of life, experiences of the departed and the thoughts of saints and scholars, scientists, educationists, artists, poets and philosophers. Books are a part of life. These embodied thoughts carry pieces of poetry, drama, legends and epics, traditions, the history and philosophy, religion and mythology. These also carry discoveries, inventions, innovations and expositions from the research centres. The society as a whole or region of it or an era all are found embodied in the pages of documents. Thomas Carlyle has rightly observed that 'all that mankind has done, though gained or been, it is lying as in magic preservation of books'.

Libraries have rendered a magnificent service to human race by establishing contacts for the cultures. Libraries have been in existence since early times and these have served as a source of information from generation to generation. On account of the limitations of the resources of recording, the scholarship remained individualistic for a long period. The clientele of the libraries was sparse, mostly belonging to the upper strata.
of the community. Libraries worked as source of inspiration, education, learning and scholarship for the people engaged in developing the cultures.

Emergence of the printing press, growth of science and technology followed by improved media of communication led to the Industrial Revolution. The traditions of antiquarian individualistic research was replaced by team research in series. It greatly influenced the concepts of culture, depending more and more on libraries. This historical change in the field of research shaped the different kinds of libraries to meet the specialized needs of the users. Progress in science and technology has caused considerable change and deterioration in the traditional cultural values.

BRITISH COUNCIL LIBRARIES

In English-speaking West Africa, the British Council established its office and library for the promotion of British Culture and English language in that area. In Nigeria first it was founded in 1947 in Enugu. Then it was followed by two more libraries on each at Kano and Kaduna. In Gambia, The British Council Library was established at Banjul, the Capital, as early as 1946. In Ghana, it was established in 1949 at Accra. It was followed by another library at Kumasi in 1950 while in Sierra Leone.
The British Council Library was established in Freetown in 1945.

In East Africa, Ethiopia has British Council Library at Addis Ababa and its branch is Asmara. In Kenya, it was established first in Nairobi in 1948 which was followed by two more libraries each at Kioumu and Mombasa in 1952 and in 1951 respectively. In Uganda and Tanzania, these libraries are established at Kampala and Dar-es-Salaam respectively. In addition to these libraries, the British Council maintains hundreds of British Council 'Text Book Centres' stationed at various colleges and university libraries in the country. Though these collections, British text books are made available to university and college teachers and students. In English speaking West Africa, the British Council found very favourable atmosphere to develop its library services. Africa had then recently become independent, there were no good libraries. The independence had also awakened and enlightened the young people, who were eager for higher education and advanced technical training. They needed suitable literature which they could find easily in these libraries. Besides these factors, the love for English language and culture among the elite of the society created an atmosphere in which the British Council libraries could flourish. British Council libraries provide good and prompt library
services with open access. Exhibition of books and photographic materials are also organised frequently. The motto of all British Council libraries is the propagation of British culture and thought. The British Council libraries "not only supply books and periodicals on loan, but provide the users on request, with reading lists and bibliographies pertaining to various subjects of studies."

**USIS LIBRARIES**

United States Information Service Libraries were also being established at the same time. In West Africa the first USIS Library was established in 1947 in Monrovia in Liberia. This was followed by another libraries each at Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano (Nigeria); Accra, Kumasi (Ghana); Dakar (Senegal); Freetown (Sierra Leone); Lome (Togo).

In East Africa USIS libraries were established in Addis Ababa in 1949 and its branches at Adi-Ugri, Dessie, Gondar, Jimma, Lekemte and Makalle. In Kenya, it was established in 1949 in Nairobi. This was followed by other libraries at Kampala and Dar-es-Salaam. Like British Council Libraries, USIS libraries are equally popular amongst the teachers, students, researchers and scholars and citizens of the places where these libraries are situated. With their good and up-to-date collections, open access facilities, neat and clean air-conditioned atmosphere,
prompt reference services, cheerful and helping staff, these libraries have won appreciation in all circles including the government officers. The purpose of USIS libraries is to propagate the American literature, thought and policies. These libraries provide loan and bibliographical services. Exhibitions are also organized from time to time.

Thus these libraries effect the society in general.