

“Libraries and the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption” takes up some of the big issues and major challenges facing the world: the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and the reduction of it, and corruption and its counterpart transparency. The articles explore the role and responsibilities of libraries and information services, and how they can contribute to this fight. In regard to all three themes, authors call our attention to the need to identify new responsibilities and values for the library profession.

The IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report 2006 tries to answer the question of why libraries and information services should place stronger emphasis on issues concerning the condition and constraint of the environment in which they are operating, and by doing so recognize their social responsibilities and their role as advocates of intellectual freedom and equal participation in an inclusive information and knowledge society. This year's report clearly demonstrates the need for libraries' active involvement and support in the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption.

IFLA/FAIFE THEME REPORT 2006

Libraries and the Fight against HIV/AIDS, Poverty, and Corruption



www.ifla.org/FAIFE/index.htm

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IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report

2006

IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report

**Libraries and the Fight against
HIV/AIDS, Poverty, and Corruption**

Editors: Susanne Seidelin
& Thomas Skov Jensen

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The IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report 2006: “*Libraries and the fight against HIV/AIDS, Poverty, and Corruption*” addresses three major subjects: Access to information for the poor and the role of libraries in the reduction of poverty; the elimination of corruption and the equitable provision of public services; and the distribution of HIV/AIDS information through libraries and other information services. The report has been initiated by the IFLA/FAIFE Committee and developed by the IFLA/FAIFE Office in cooperation with colleagues from Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, Latin America and Eastern Europe who debate the challenges and opportunities in their respective countries and regions.

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Susanne Seidelin and Paul Sturges
June 2006

Preface

Poverty, HIV/AIDS, corruption and libraries

Alex Byrne
President of IFLA

“Libraries change lives!” is one of our heartfelt and often proclaimed slogans. And, indeed, we regularly see the lives of our libraries’ clients transformed through our work. We observe the young child who begins to read, gradually extending her or his horizons with growing confidence, the student who masters the skills of accessing digital and printed information, elderly citizens who find new worlds to experience in their retirement, and many others who benefit from our collections and services.

But do we engage with the big issues which change peoples’ lives or compromise them from the outset? Do our libraries do anything to alleviate the crushing burden of poverty from which it is so difficult to extricate oneself? Do we contribute to the campaign to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS? Do we have any role in preventing corruption?

I have heard colleagues say that ‘this is not librarianship, it is social work’. They have objected strongly to any suggestion that libraries should engage with these enormous societal challenges and the others facing our world. Their view is that libraries and information serv-

ices should just provide information without bias and leave it to the public and the political process to handle societal issues. As they state, our skills lie in information organisation, management and access and that, by applying those skills as best we can, we satisfy our professional responsibilities while enabling others to pursue their campaigns, well informed because of our work.

There is some merit in this argument. Our professional skills do lie in information organisation, management and access and we do have a duty to apply them without bias, without ‘fear or favour’, so that our clients - whether they be within organisations or spread across communities - will be enabled to pursue their interests and responsibilities. We would fail in our professional duty if we did not make available all relevant information to the extent that our resources allow. We would fail if we provided access only to the information that the client ‘wanted to hear’ when planning a development which might entail environmental damage, for example. Thus in providing full and unbiased access to information, we take a stand, a stand in favour of truth and justice and the human right to know.

In taking that stand, we become activists for human rights, principally in our core area of the right to know but extending into the related areas of health, education and government because they all vitally depend on open access to information. We recognise that we live in an unequal world, in a world in which opportunities are differentiated by wealth, language, culture, nationality - often by the accidents of birth and upbringing. In that unequal world, access to information can be liberating. It can truly change lives by opening windows and doors and thereby providing opportunities for those willing and able to grasp them. This is where these issues become questions of freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, become issues for IFLA/FAIFE. It is not 'social work' but fulfilment of our duty to provide the fullest possible access to information without bias which takes us to engage with these issues because, by providing that information access, we enable people to take action on the important issues for their societies. By doing our best to ensure that access, we work to reduce inequality.

Few issues - except environmental degradation - are more important at the beginning of this new century than poverty, HIV/AIDS and corruption. Poverty divides our world between countries and continents and within nations. It condemns some people, and especially women and children, to shortened lives with limited choices, poor health and vulnerability to exploitation. The scourge of HIV/AIDS likewise causes inequality even among sufferers where those in rich communities can fight with retroviral drugs while those without that support sadly watch their partners, children and even grandparents face mis-

erable deaths. Their communities virtually cease to function as those of working age are taken. Similarly, the social virus of corruption spreads through communities, granting advantage to those with great or little power and disabling those who are vulnerable. It has proved extremely difficult to eradicate because it re-emerges in different guises through changes of regime and even political systems - as we have seen in recent years in some former communist nations.

The 2006 edition of the IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report deals with these three big issues. It recognises their crucial importance to global society and explores how libraries and information services can engage with them to the benefit of society. It addresses the provision of access to information by the poor and the role of libraries in the reduction of poverty, the elimination of corruption and the related question of the equitable provision of public services, and the role of libraries and other information services in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information. The papers in the Theme Report discuss these issues across communities and continents and demonstrate how libraries and information services can and do contribute to addressing these millennial issues.

The excellent ideas and work of colleagues reported in the papers is inspirational in showing the work of colleagues and suggesting actions that we might take in our professional practice. They challenge us to review our practice and see how we can contribute to making the world more equal by facilitating access to information. They encourage us to demonstrate how libraries indeed change lives!

Introduction

Information is “an essential part of a nation’s resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights”.

(UNESCO working document 1974)

Susanne Seidelin & Paul Sturges

The IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report 2006 “*Libraries and the Fight against HIV/AIDS, Poverty and Corruption*” takes up some of the big issues and major challenges facing the world: the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and the reduction of it, and corruption and its counterpoint transparency. The articles explore the role and responsibilities of libraries and information services, and how they can contribute to this fight.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals address the HIV/AIDS pandemic: “*Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other disease*” (Goal 8). Libraries and information services have the potential to become important co-actors in the combat against the pandemic; and by safeguarding free and equitable access to information about HIV/AIDS they help people better understand the disease and make informed decisions regarding prevention and treatment. They can also help overcome religious and cultural barriers that may hinder free information access in some communities. Recognizing this role, HIV/AIDS has been identified as a special issue for the international library community in the run up the 2007 IFLA

World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) in Durban, South Africa. Also the FAIFE programme at the WLIC in Seoul in 2006 will focus on the pandemic and the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information.

In 2005, FAIFE began to systematically collect information on how libraries address this responsibility, and how they make partnerships with community centres and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The initial findings are published in the 2005 *IFLA/FAIFE World Report*, and we will continue to monitor and follow up in future reports. Libraries are making laudable efforts to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and provide information about the pandemic in many parts of the world, although in many countries libraries and information services are still to engage in this important area. Thus 43 of out 82 countries (52%) indicated that they engage in programmes that raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, and libraries in 28 countries have provided HIV/AIDS information to members of their local community unable to read. The World Report 2005 also showed that libraries most active with regard to the provision

of HIV/AIDS information and involvement in programmes with other information units and organizations are found in the regions most affected by the pandemic.

In this year's Theme Report, we once again turn to the regions most affected by HIV/AIDS. Colleagues from these regions report on their professional considerations, activities and the specific challenges libraries are facing concerning the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information to marginalized groups in rural areas.

As Kendra Albright states in her contribution to this report, *"Information is the most crucial weapon in the war against HIV/AIDS and serves as the only vaccine to prevent the spread of the disease."*

The population in rural areas is also the focus of debate when the authors discuss how library services can contribute to the elimination of poverty. In both cases they advocate cooperation between libraries and local community centres, be it Tele-centres or any other local resource centres, and the building of strong partnerships and networks with local authorities and NGOs as some of the focus points for library activities. Authors also highlight the role of libraries and information services supporting education and initiatives that further literacy; an example of how the international library community can contribute to this process is the adoption of IFLA/UNESCO manifestos on school and public libraries in South America, as described by Marcia Rosetto.

As stated by Celso Musino,
"information and the use of it, either via informa-

tion units or ICTs - specifically the Internet, do not tackle primary needs such as: food, health, and housing. Information does, however, help people engage in economic activities, and development of a better life for individuals, families, local communities, municipalities, institutions, nations and the population worldwide."

In his contribution Dennis Ocholla discusses the role of tele-centres and the use of information technologies for the dissemination of information to the information deprived rural communities, once described by the World Bank as *"a powerful engine of rural development and a preferred instrument in the fight against poverty."* In South Africa, however, these centres is reported to have been unsuccessful probably due to *"the misconception that ICTs would answer all social ills relating to information access, leading to focus on technology rather than building human and social capital, and governmental top-down approaches in dealing with social problems."*

However, authors seem to agree that Internet accessibility is an important factor in the provision of information that meets the needs of library users; but the Internet is not the sole answer to information needs - especially in areas with a high concentration of illiterate people and in communities primarily based on oral communication and tradition, and with a varying degree of electricity supply. Wireless communications should therefore be exploited, as Ocholla recommends. Gulati and Riley discuss the huge costs of implementing ICTs in developing countries, and the inability of large numbers of people to afford hardware and make use of software. They refer to critics that have pointed out,

“the rural poor need proper nutrition and health care more than they do laptops and Internet connectivity. Yet, to allow the “digital divide” between those with Internet access and those who do not to grow unchecked, without billions of humans attempting to “catch up” with the “digerati,” seems unconscionable.”

Gulati and Riley conclude their discussion on ICTs, “the library seems to be the ideal provider of ICT; not as its primary service, but as a part of its mission, to provide information. In concert with the government and not-for-profit institutions, libraries seem to be a natural fit with ICTs.”

In regard to all three themes of this report, authors call attention to the need to identify new responsibilities and values for the library profession. Thus Gulati and Riley advocate the need for libraries to be better equipped to serve local communities,

“librarians must realise that, unlike in the past, the library can no longer serve their former role as simple collection-oriented repositories of written material that, in turn, is maintained as passively available for traditional users of their services. Especially in the rural areas, where large proportions of the citizens are non-literate; a library that serves readers exclusively will be of very limited utility to the residents”.

Another example is the role of libraries concerning the elimination of corruption and equitable provision of public information as a mean to advance open and transparent governance and democracy. “*Libraries should develop a culture of transparency built on solid democratic principles and actions; a culture that not only oppose but rejects corruption*”, as Oscar Maya

Corzo points out in his article.

Transparency is a term that is comparatively little used by the information professions themselves and yet it encapsulates a great deal of the rationale behind the provision of good information systems, be they libraries, archives, databases, or reporting and monitoring systems. The term is used in conjunction with a range of related and complementary terms such as scrutiny, accountability, audit, disclosure, and it has considerable elements in common with freedom of access to information. Statements on transparency frequently start by citing the same Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that can be seen as the basic rationale behind the activities of the information professions such as the IFLA/FAIFE Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

What transparency (and Article 19) means in terms of a establishing a polity in which corruption will not thrive tends to take a number of specific forms but some of the main elements of public transparency are: Open government and public scrutiny; freedom of information laws; protection of public interest disclosure; financial accountability and auditing; investigative journalism; and civil sector campaigning.

In the IFLA/FAIFE World Report 2005 Barbara M. Jones discussed the issues of freedom of information

laws in her article *Freedom of Information Legislation, Libraries, and the Global Flow of Information*. Jones establishes a connection between human rights laws and freedom of information laws which help to affirm and insist on a continued focus on fundamental principles such as *Article 19*. Furthermore, she points out that freedom of information legislation is also “a key component in the global flow of information and the provision of excellent library service.” (IFLA/FAIFE World Report 2005:21)

The Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action, adopted at IFLA’s

Pre-conference prior to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia 2005, addresses some of the topics discussed in this report:

“Libraries and information services contribute to the sound operation of the inclusive Information Society.”

[...]

“They help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights impartially and by opposing any form of censorship.”

“The unique role of libraries and information services is that they respond to the particular questions and needs of individuals. This complements the general transmission of knowledge by the media, for example, and makes libraries and information services vital to a democratic and open Information Society. Libraries are essential for a well informed citizenry and transparent governance, as well as for the take-up of e-government.”

“They also build capacity by promoting information literacy and providing support and training for effective use of information resources, including Information and Communication Technologies. This is especially critical in promoting the development agenda because human resources are central to economic progress. In these ways libraries contribute significantly to addressing the digital divide and the information inequality that results from it. They help to make the Millennium Development Goals a reality, including reduction of poverty. They will do more with quite modest investments. The value of the return is at least 4-6 times the investment.” [...]

The Theme Report 2006 tries to answer the question of why libraries and information services should place stronger emphasis on issues concerning the condition and constraint of the environment in which they are operating worldwide, and by doing so recognize their social responsibilities and the role they can play in the support of intellectual freedom and equal participation in an inclusive information and knowledge society. This year’s report clearly demonstrates the need for libraries’ active involvement and support in the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption; we hope this report will be considered an important contribution to the discussion.

We would welcome comments and contributions to the debate on FAIFE discussion list at <http://infoserv.inist.fr/wwsympa.fcgi/info/faife-l> or faife@ifla.org

Information accessibility by the marginalized communities in South Africa and the role of libraries

Dennis N. Ocholla

— Region: Africa

Introduction

This paper discusses the nature and levels of information access by communities deprived of information in South Africa, and the role libraries play in supporting information access to these communities. Definitions of marginalized communities and information access are provided. Furthermore, the paper describes the library system in South Africa and examines its role, activities, programmes and services. In doing so, it highlights on the manner in which libraries are resourced and managed, and discusses the challenges and opportunities they face. The paper acknowledges that South Africa has strong library services, and a high information access capacity, comparatively better than those in other African countries in terms of management, resource support and distribution. However, it still lacks the capacity to provide effective information to marginalised communities.

Ethnic groups

The South African population is estimated at 48 million, with a female to male population ratio of 50.5:49.5. This population constitutes an established diverse society whose major population groups are 76 % black/African, 13 % white, 9 % coloured and 2 % Indian/Asian. Its white population is mostly Afrikaans (people of Dutch origin), followed by persons of British origin. Within this subset, there also exist smaller groups such as German, French, Jewish, Italian and Portuguese speakers among others.

South Africa's black population consists of nine major ethnic groups, these being Zulu (the largest), Xhosa, South Sotho, North Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Ndebele, Swazi, and Tsonga. Following this, the South African Constitution permits the use of 11 official languages, which include: isiZulu (22.4%), isiXhosa (17.5%), Afrikaans (15.1%), Sepedi (9.8%), English (9.1%), isiNdebele (1.5%), Setswana (7.2%), Sesotho (6.9%), Xitsonga (4.2%), isiSwati (2.6%), and Tshivenda (1.7%) (Republic of South Africa, Department of

Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2003). Another 2% speak other languages. Yet despite this linguistic diversity, English and Afrikaans are still preferred mediums of communication within official work environments and documentation. The dominance of these minority languages can be directly attributed to South Africa's well documented history, seeing as how it was governed by Apartheid in the period leading up to 1994. This shameful period is characterized by repression, racial discrimination and the gross violation of human rights, creating a large number of politically, economically and socially deprived communities whose plight is still being addressed today.

Marginalized groups

Of the 31.3 million (76.7%) historically marginalized Blacks, only 13, 6 million presently reside in urban areas, whilst 17.8 million (57%) live in non-urban areas (Survey of the IT industry and related jobs and skills in South Africa 1999: 21). A speech by the former Minister of Education 2001, cited by Nassimbeni and May reveals that,

“3.5 million adults over the age of 16 have never attended school; another 2.5 million adults... have lost their earlier ability to read or write. That makes essentially 6 million South Africans who are essentially barred from the written word, from the whole universe of information and imagination that books hold; and also from the more functional everyday empowerment that written languages gives - for employment, for travel and to be a responsible citizen” (Speech by the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal in Nassimbeni and May 2006:13).

The marginalized communities may be grouped together in many ways. Five ways of categorizing this community were once defined by Ocholla (Ocholla 1998) for an IFLA Social Responsibilities Discussion Group concept paper in Amsterdam (see also Kagan 1999) as follows:

“the economically disadvantaged populations of developing countries; rural people who are often geographically isolated as a result of lack of transport and communication systems; those marginalized/ disadvantaged by cultural and social poverty, such as the illiterate, the elderly, women, and children; those who are discriminated against by race, ethnicity, creed and religion; and finally, the physically disabled.”

A large portion of the South African population is economically deprived, geographically isolated, and culturally and socially marginalized. An additional number also fall within the fourth and fifth categories of this definition. An extension of this definition is also provided by Ocholla (Ocholla 2002:2) on conceptions of diversity in a library and information science (LIS) workplace.

As stipulated in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “*everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and share in scientific advancement and its benefits*” (United Nations, 1948). This declaration is further qualified in a working document issued at the 1974 UNESCO Conference, where it was recognised that information is “*an essential part of a nation's resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights*”. This author once observed (Ocholla 1998) that accessibility and availability of information for mass

delivery pose a major challenge to, and responsibility, for modern societies that increasingly consume post-industrial products and services. The poor, the illiterate and rural communities that also require and consume these products and services, are the most affected with regard to information oriented materials. These communities are vulnerable to cultural discourses that influence exploitation and use, and promote alienation and servitude.

Whose social responsibility is it to provide these communities with information?

In spite of all the social ills that reduce information access and exploitation, disadvantaged communities are expected to bring up decent families, consume modern products and services, provide labour for sprawling modern economies and their custodians, whilst simultaneously understanding and standing for their rights and responsibilities, and being custodians of ethics values that breed humility and homogeneity. The demand put on these unfortunate people is both incomprehensible and insurmountable.

This begs the question, whose social responsibility is it to provide these communities with information? And can libraries and other information systems and services within a country as well as outside adequately intervene? We are informed by Paul Sturges and Richard Neil, in a book that, I call a masterpiece on libraries and information in Africa, with the following narrative,

“Travel in Africa, especially by bus, can be a disconcerting experience for the first time traveller or the unwary tourist. Trustworthy time-tables don't exist and the bus will usually not leave until it is

full, which may lead to a wait of an hour or more before the journey actually commences. Even then, several detours, delays and unscheduled stops along the way will usually occur, adding even more time to the journey. Despite the inconvenience, the delay in a sense serves a useful purpose as it enables Africa's own information system to function properly. In the constant talk and close interpersonal contact can be witnessed a highly complex information system at work. Its contents cover a wide range of topics from the current market price for chickens to the prospect of Dan Quayle becoming the next president of the United States. Almost untouched by the technical complexities and expense of computer technology, or even by the diverse messages conveyed by books, Africa possesses a rich and adaptable mode of information transfer in the social and psychological make up of the people themselves”.(Sturges and Neil 1990:7).

In concluding their remarks, the authors are of the opinion that to see information in Africa as only represented by one or both of the extremes of poverty and wealth would be inadequate. There is an enormous richness in African oral traditions. However, oral traditions are constantly overwhelmed by modern lifestyles that increasingly depend on western gadgets such as cell phones to be found in the most remote communities with neither running water nor electricity. This is the paradox that one of the leading political scientists in Africa, Ali Mazrui, warns us about. In his cautionary note on adapting to western culture he expresses his pessimism thus,

“Africa as a whole borrowed the wrong things from the West - even the wrong components of capitalism. We borrowed the profit motive but not the

entrepreneurial spirit. We borrowed the acquisitive appetites of capitalism but not the creative risk-taking. We are at home with Western gadgets but are bewildered by Western workshops. We wear the wristwatch but refuse to watch it for the culture of punctuality. We have learnt to parade in display, but not necessarily the West's techniques of production" (Mazrui, 1990:5)

This intriguing analogy can be developed further. We are thrilled with the information service capacities of modern information systems but apathetic with regard to their development and maintenance.

Although people may have similar reasons for accessing information, the nature and levels of information needs vary. Studies have shown that people access information for various reasons, among them leisure, curiosity, uncertainty, challenges facing the individual or group, practical use, gratification, diversion/escapism, networking, comparison and enlightenment. Information can be accessed in many ways. Most studies (e.g. Jiyane and Ocholla 2004) on the marginalized communities, such as the economically deprived rural women in South Africa, shows that they prefer information from sources familiar to them, such as colleagues, neighbours, relatives and friends as attested to in most studies. Thus, the concept of knowledge sharing through 'community of practice' functions fairly well in this environment. Therefore, this perhaps explains why modern technologies that share methods of information access with those of marginalized communities in aspects such as proximity and oral delivery, such as wireless technology both old (e.g. radio) and new (e.g. mobile phones), are increasingly popular sources of information. The

mobile phone enables people to send and receive messages at close proximity anytime, which is one of the reasons why it has gained tremendous success in South Africa, and with more content on board, we are likely to see it play a prominent role in reaching marginalized communities, as witnessed by this author, in rural areas in Africa. Libraries have existed longer than emerging technologies in Africa and the rest of the World. Unfortunately, libraries have not been able to reach communities deprived of information largely because they were not designed for these communities, and until now, lack sensitivity toward the information requirements of these groups, regardless of how much they try.

The role of libraries

Although the roles of libraries are well documented and widely known, they will vary according to the nature and type of library. Roles could be influenced by:

- territorial distribution such as province, state, county, district, municipality, town/city, and region
- location of the library e.g. rural and urban
- ownership e.g. governmental or private
- user category e.g. libraries serving the general public or special user groups (workers or employees of an industry or private company) researchers, academics/faculty, the physically disabled, school learners, pupils, or tertiary institution students
- governance e.g. central/main and branch library systems or centralized and decentralized systems
- place or status of the library in a country, for example national libraries
- subject scope and manner of information collec-

tion (law, agriculture, medicine, music); the mode of operation (stationery vs. mobile)

- demographic characteristics of the users, e.g. adults or children
- social and physical status of the users: patients, prisoners, minorities, the disabled
- nature of the organization (parliamentary, research, business and technical)
- scope of the collection: general or special, among others (Ocholla 1993:23).

Essentially, the library's role is to inform, entertain, enlighten, educate, empower and equip individuals and communities with tools enabling better life orientation, enabling communities to recognize their rights and responsibilities in society, and fulfil their social roles both knowingly and responsibly. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the roles of libraries vary. Hence, the roles of school libraries as outlined in the School Library Manifesto are to provide,

“information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens” (IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto 2006).

There mission is,

“supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum; developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives; offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, im-

agination and enjoyment; supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluating and using information, regardless of form, format or medium, including sensitivity to the modes of communication within the community; providing access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions; organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity; working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school; proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy; promoting reading and the resources and services of the school library to the whole school community and beyond.”

The role of public libraries is articulated in the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto in the following influential way,

“The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women” (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994).

The key mission of public libraries as outlined in the manifesto is,

“creating and strengthening reading habits in chil-

dren from an early age; supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels; providing opportunities for personal creative development; stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people; promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations; providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts; fostering intercultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity; supporting the oral tradition; ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information; providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups; facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills and supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary.” (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994)

The roles and missions of libraries as articulated are not always fulfilled by the existing libraries. Worse still, they are irrelevant to communities where libraries do not reach most people.

The library system in South Africa

South Africa has one of the largest, and fastest, growing information sectors in Africa. Reporting on information sources, systems and services in South Africa, Mostert (2005:55-61) provides an informative view on information access capacity and potential in the publishing and printing industry, library and information centres, archive and record centres, museums, NGOs, embassies, commercial database industries, mass media (press and broadcasting), Internet

resources and the Tele-Density. She rightly concludes that in comparison to other African countries, South Africa is endowed with a large and wealthy collection of information sources, systems and services for accessing information.

The South African main library system can be grouped according to five main categories, namely: public libraries that are managed but not necessarily owned by the Metropolitan and Provincial Authorities; the National Library with a main library in Pretoria and a branch library in Cape Town; school libraries; academic libraries; and special libraries such as parliamentary library systems. However libraries, like other information centres, systems and services in the country, as described by Mostert, have largely neglected deprived communities either intentionally through desensitised handling of the community's information requirements, or unintentionally through having desire, but lacking the means of delivery.

In recent years, significant debates and research reports dwell widely on libraries with general information on day-to-day activities, and the developments of libraries reported in LIASA-in-Touch. This paper will not dwell on the activities and services of the parliamentary libraries in South Africa (Mostert 2005, Mostert and Ocholla 2005) nor the Academic/HEIs libraries some of whose activities and services more recently are reported by Vedsman (2002), Darries (2004), Somi and De Jager (2005) among others, as these libraries mainly service the information requirements of communities supplied with adequate resources. However, it has been observed that information literacy, a fundamental requirement for life

long learning, has become a crucial element within tertiary/academic institutions that increasingly admit students from marginalized environments. These students do not know how to access, explore and use information systems effectively (De Jager and Nassimbeni 2003, Underwood 2002, Somi and De Jager 2005).

The Public and Community Libraries Inventory of South Africa (PaCLISA)

Public library development has received significant attention from a number of authors (van Helden and Lor 2002; Lor, van Helden and Bothma 2005; De Jager and Nassimbeni 2005, Hart 2004, Fredericks and Mvumelo 2003, Nassimbeni and May 2006 etc.). Of interest to this paper is a recent initiative by the Print Industries and Cluster Group (PICC) and the National Library of South Africa (see Van Helden and Lor 2002; Lor, van Helden and Bothma 2005), in 2002, to provide a, “*comprehensive and informative inventory of South African public/community libraries, the Public and Community Libraries Inventory of South Africa (PaCLISA)*” (Lor, Van Helden and Bothma 2005:269). As outlined by Van Helden and Lor (2002)

“the aim and objectives of PaCLISA project was to create an inventory of the public /community libraries in South Africa, quantifying major parameters including the physical distribution of libraries, library statistics (numbers of books, circulation of library materials, staff, services, etc.), and the population served by the libraries”.

The two authors qualify that as an “inventory”, the focus of the project was to enumerate and describe the library entities and not analyze the trends or per-

formance of library services. The main objectives of the project, according to van Helden and Lor, were to:

- obtain reliable and up to date data about each library
- create a database containing data about all the libraries
- map the location of the libraries according to geographical context
- obtain demographic information of the areas served by these libraries
- obtain market information on book and print purchasing by libraries
- produce a directory of public and community libraries

Lor, van Helden and Bothma (2005:269) note that, “*plotting the physical location and hence spatial distribution of the public and community libraries in a geographical information system (GIS) was a key dimension of the project*”. Although it is recognised (Lor, van Helden and Bothma 2005) that the PaCLISA project has not achieved its objectives, as data collection proved cumbersome, preliminary information obtained from van Helden and Lor (2002) and the GIS indicate that the distribution of the 1295 public libraries in the country are still largely concentrated in wealthy information environments.

Library service to marginalized communities

Historically marginalized communities which form the bulk of the information poor, and deprived communities are left out. Immediately following 1994, there was rapid growth of public libraries in previously marginalized areas. However, this momentum slowed for unknown reasons to this author

even though insufficient resources are cited among the main reasons. The success of the distribution of public libraries to all parts of the country particularly to the marginalized areas, in my view, would create a model to be emulated in other parts of Africa. Equally important studies focus on the publication of books in indigenous South African languages and their availability and use in public libraries (Fredricks and Mvumelo 2003). The two authors raise genuine concern over literacy and information access to deprived communities and the role and impact of public libraries in a country constitutionally expected to enable information access in all eleven languages. Publishing houses and libraries in South Africa mostly provide information materials in English and Afrikaans, and publications in indigenous languages constitute less than 1% of the collection of sampled public libraries in the Western Cape.

Taking libraries to the people

Further concerns surround issues of adult education in South African public libraries (Nassimbeni and May 2006). The failure of adult education [close to 77% of the 589 public libraries sampled by Nassimbeni and May (Nassimbeni and May 2006:14), is a major challenge to “taking libraries to the people” and “libraries: partners in learning, nation building and development”. The former was the conference theme of Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) in 2005, while the latter is the theme in 2006. A recent report on public libraries in Africa compiled by Issak (Isaak 2002) that provided an ontological account of trends, issues and problems of public librarianship in a significant part of Africa (10 Anglophone countries) echoed poor services,

declining budgets, lack of resources, outdated materials, lack of planning, inadequate knowledge of the information needs of the users and poverty and also blamed western model of public library system on the poor performance of the libraries.

Although South African public library services were relatively far better than those of the other nine countries in the survey, several authors in this collected work, suggested provision of alternative services such as community information services, impact assessment of public library services, government commitment, improvement in the professional commitment of librarians and provision of resources to be essential areas of focus.

School libraries

School library development has received strong coverage, particularly the absence of National School Library Policy guidelines (Le Roux 2002) despite the existence of several drafts (e.g. South Africa Department of Education 2001, 2002). The contradiction alluded to in these debates is the departure of the South African Education system - from the traditional education dispensation to outcomes based education (OBE), which is a resource-based and learner-centred learning paradigm - in the absence of school libraries to support the learning policy, as only 19.8 % of South African Schools have school libraries. (School Library Policy- Directorate of Education Library Information and Technology Services 2003:8)

Hence, school learners from deprived communities have been compelled to obtain library services from scarce, urban centric and overburdened public

libraries (Hart 2004). There is hope that the recently launched School Library Policy by the Department of Education and Culture (School Library Policy- Directorate of Education Library Information and Technology Services 2003), in the words of the Minister of Education KwaZulu of Natal, “provides a framework for planning, development and evaluation of schools in the province” and in doing so, focuses on redress and equity in resource provision to schools, and recognises the importance of school libraries. It is unfortunate that while school libraries are regarded important for addressing yet another marginalized community, the children, the majority of the school children in the deep rural areas of the country, have no access to libraries of any kind.

Community libraries

Prior to 1994, efforts to reach deprived communities were made by setting up community libraries that were intended to be non-elitist and service friendly (Mostert 1998; Mostert and Vermeulen 1998). Some of these libraries were later absorbed by new public library systems either under metropolitan or provincial (South Africa has nine provinces) library authorities. The community libraries did not fulfil their intended function (e.g. library by, for and of the community), largely because their design had more to do with fulfilling the ideological needs of the time or, strongly put, was a mere lip service, than with promoting information access to the marginalized.

A recent attempt to provide information to deprived communities was through Tele- Centres (Snyman and Snyman 2003) that Snyman and Snyman (2003:96), citing Benjamin et al, “refers to the practice of estab-

lishing centres as information resources and communication nodes in disadvantaged rural areas to meet the telecommunications and information needs of the members of such communities”. This grandiose “South African government’s initiative to use ICT for the dissemination of information to the information deprived rural communities by establishing Tele-Centres in the rural areas”, that was once described by the World Bank (Snyman and Snyman 2003:97) as “a powerful engine of rural development and a preferred instrument in the fight against poverty” is reported by the two authors to have been unsuccessful. Snyman and Snyman (2003:105) associate this failure with the misconception that ICTs would answer all social ills relating to information access, leading to focus on technology rather than building human and social capital, and governmental top-down approaches in dealing with social problems. More specifically, major problems have been associated with poor management, lack of trained service providers, and insufficient preparation of the community or service beneficiaries and stakeholders when launching ideas.

Activities, programmes and services

Activities are events that libraries organise in order to fulfil their roles and functions effectively. Such activities can be encapsulated under either specific or broad areas or programmes. Thus, programmes focus on areas of library activity. Services in this context are specific to information provision or dissemination activities and functions. In essence, no library may function without activities, but can operate without programmes.

At national level, library activities and programmes

in South Africa are largely organised by the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) (<http://www.liasa.org.za>). Notable LIASA activities and programmes are the: LIASA annual conference, LIASA advocacy, LIASA publications (e.g LIASA Online, LIASA -in- Touch, South African Journal of Libraries and Information Sciences-SAJLIS), Continuing Education and Professional Development (LIASA Programme), LIASA Library Week and LIASA Partnership. Some of these activities are conducted in all nine provinces and their constituent libraries. For example, the following activities were scheduled by LIASA in 2005 and 2006 respectively (see <http://www.liasa.org.za/activities/calendar2005.php>)

Calendar of Events 2006	
March 13 - 18	March: SA Library Week 2006
April 10 - 12	UKZN & LIASA Mini-Conference, Howard College Campus, UKZN
May 16 - 17	4 th Southern African Library Acquisitions Conference, CSIR International Convention Centre, Pretoria
May 31	Deadline for nominations: Librarian of the Year Award for 2006
June 14	WCHELIG Winter Colloquium 2006, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, (Bellville campus)
September 25 - 29	9 th Annual LIASA Conference, Saint George Hotel, Pretoria

Calendar of Events 2005	
January 26 - 29	Executive Committee meeting, CICD orientation for Representative Council & Representative Council Business meeting
March 12	Launch of SA Library Week, Kliptown
March 14 - 18	South African Library Week (Theme: Libraries: Opening the doors of learning and Culture to all)

April 2	International Children's Book Day
April 23	World Book Day
August 14 - 19	World Library and Information Congress/IFLA Conference, Oslo, Norway
September 8	International Literacy Day
September 5 - 9	Readathon Week
September 26 - 30	8 th LIASA Annual Conference, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga (Theme: "Taking Libraries to the People")
October 24	International School Libraries Day

Challenges and opportunities

Are public libraries truly fulfilling their mission, if most of the 1295 identified in South Africa are located in urban areas, mainly serving the city's affluent communities? (Van Helden and Lor 2002, Lor, Van Helden and Bothma 2005; De Jager and Nassimbeni 2004). Is library information content sensitive to the information needs of the community they are serving, considering the language of library documents is almost entirely in English or Afrikaans (Fredericks and Mvunelo 2003) and this information in turn is overwhelmingly provided in print format? Would the full completion of the PaCLISA project or related mapping and auditing activities for the performance indicators, that according to De Jager and Nassimbeni (2005:40) include, "*input measures-staff, materials, funds; process measures; output measures-products, services, activities, circulation, reference queries, interlibrary loans; outcome measures-take-up of services, user satisfaction*", of public library systems in the country help to measure the level and extent of information accessibility to deprived communities?

As was established, only 19.8% of South African schools have libraries and most of the schools with libraries are located in urban areas. In addition, a large number of the existing school libraries are under resourced and poorly managed. For instance, the absence of a functional school library policy means that there are no standards and no regulatory mechanism to ensure that these libraries function properly. This is an extremely painful situation. This scenario invites several questions. Will a school library policy help to deliver information to the marginalized schools and children as policies alone do not deliver the services required? Do the purpose and mission of school libraries, as referred to in the IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto, prove meaningful if less than 80% of schools do not have libraries?

One way of enabling libraries to reach the people, the marginalized and the information poor, to concur with the Nassimbeni and May (2006), is to support adult education through libraries particularly in Africa as the figures provided by Nassimbeni and May (2006:17) show high pass rate among those who participated in adult education. Secondly, information literacy seems to feature strongly as an essential tool for equipping learners for life long learning and reducing information poverty. So far, information literacy has been popularised in tertiary institutions rightly so to reach out to students coming from information poor environments some of who access libraries and the Internet for the first time in their lives. This social intervention should be considered in all libraries in the country as suggested by Underwood (2002). The PACLISA project is another challenge. Ideally without knowledge of the performance indicators that are succinctly discussed by De

Jager and Nassimbeni (2003) in libraries, it becomes difficult to determine how well libraries perform and how they reach the marginalized communities. Thirdly, this author finds it extremely painful that the Tele-Centres initiative that has been widely applauded internationally (Snyman and Synman 2003) has not been successful in South Africa. This could be another challenge to be overcome. Finally, the community library concept discussed by Mostert and Vermuelen (1998) in the context of South Africa seem to be a viable idea for information delivery to the information poor within a public library platform. This author strongly concur with Rosenberg that.

“Originating from the initiative of a group from the community or an aid agency, their birth is followed by a year or two of rapid growth and a good deal of local publicity and attention. This is followed by a period of slow decline, accompanied by theft, the departure of the initiators, loss of interest among staff and users - the library still exists but signs of life are barely discernible. Sometimes this period continues indefinitely, but often a final stage is reached when all remaining books are removed, stolen, or damaged beyond repair and the premises and staff are allocated to another activity” (Rosenberg in Mostert 2001: Lack of sustained effort to find an alternative library framework)“.

This, however, does not suggest that community libraries or information resource centres are irrelevant. Mchombu (Mchombu 2004) passionately argues as to how they should work in his chapters on the content of information and knowledge in community resource centres, information sharing and processing.

He illustrates how community information resource centres can be kept alive, and presents four interesting case studies and lessons learned from the grass-roots' setting up of community information resource centres.

Conclusion

There is no doubt in my mind that information access to deprived communities in South Africa is feasible. South Africa is endowed with a strong economy, extensive information sources, systems and services; has one of the fastest growing information and communication technology infrastructures in Africa; and has excellent higher education institutions and sensitivity to transformation, redress and equity. The professional association, the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), is the largest and arguably fastest growing library and information association in the region of Africa. There is tangible interest displayed by government to support library and information development with policies, legislations and management structures. The library and information research community is also very vibrant, meaning that the country has the potential to transform the challenges discussed into opportunities. Doors should be wide open, as they have been in the past 12 years in government and civil society, to discuss, plan, implement and evaluate social interventions and enable libraries to deliver information to poor and marginalized communities.

It is worth singling out projects and activities surrounding information literacy, adult education, community information services within public libraries, school and public libraries services, and ICT access

and the use of wireless technology, which require urgent initiative and development. These should coincide with poverty alleviation and a general literacy campaign. Suffice to say that a new model for information access to marginalized and deprived persons should be considered within the outlined framework. Unfortunately as of now, South Africa does not have a tested model of information access to the poor communities to be emulated by others as it has done in other areas such as in the political arena. However, the rapid and extensive access and use of wireless technology particularly the mobile phone by most communities in the country is a success factor that could be explored.

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Information vaccine: HIV/AIDS and libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa

Kendra Albright

— Region: Africa

Introduction

There is no known cure for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Information is the most crucial weapon in the war against HIV/AIDS and serves as the only vaccine to prevent the spread of the disease. In Sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS threatens to decimate entire societies. Women and youth are the greatest at risk to be affected by the disease in Sub-Saharan Africa, with most new infections occurring in young adults between the ages of 15 and 24. To combat the disease, formal Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) policies have been designed to make information widely available and raise awareness about prevention efforts. Libraries and information professionals stand to be key participants in this fight against HIV/AIDS, yet libraries are not perceived to be important components in the prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission. This article examines the role of libraries and information professionals in HIV/AIDS information dissemination and other activities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The number of people living with HIV/AIDS continues to increase and the disease has become a global pandemic. Currently, there is no cure for the disease, which kills millions every year. Sub-Saharan Africa¹ is the hardest hit region of the world, with 10% of the world's population but over 60% of the total number of HIV/AIDS cases (UNAIDS 2004d). This translates into a total number of 2.2 million deaths in Africa (over 75% of the world's total) from AIDS-related illnesses in 2004 (UNAIDS, 2004d). From its initial discovery in the Rakai District of Southern Uganda in 1982, the number of people infected and affected by the disease has risen dramatically. Women and youth are those most affected by the disease in Sub-Saharan Africa, with most new infections occurring in young adults between the ages of 15 and 24. Young women are at the greatest risk of contracting the disease. Further, the total number of orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2004 reached an astounding 34 million. According to the United Nations (AIDS Orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa, nd),

“Eight out of every 10 children in the world whose parents have died of AIDS live in sub-Saharan

Africa. During the last decade, the proportion of children who are orphaned as a result of AIDS rose from 3.5% to 32% and will continue to increase exponentially as the disease spreads unchecked.”

Not only is AIDS decimating populations throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, it is having a devastating affect across all sectors of society. For example, education is suffering due to the loss of teachers to AIDS. Furthermore, AIDS has reversed or halted the economic progress in many countries that had just begun to improve since their independence.

Despite this devastation, some countries have successfully reversed the prevalence of AIDS. Uganda, for example, has lowered the estimated HIV/AIDS infection rates from 18.5% in 1995 to under 5% in 2003 (UNAIDS, 2004a). Uganda’s success has been attributed to several factors. Early public acknowledgement of and political commitment to the AIDS epidemic, spearheaded by President Yoweri Museveni in 1992, provided impetus for mobilising communities against transmission of the virus. The efforts of government, combined with a multi-sectoral approach across all segments of society, also contributed to the raising of awareness. Uganda developed formal policies which focus on information as a means of prevention. A formal Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategy was developed for the multi-sectoral dissemination of information from numerous partners including libraries, educational institutions, government, and non-governmental organisations (Albright and Kawooya 2005). The IEC strategy included the ABC model (Abstinence, Be Faithful, and Condoms) that has also been credited with reducing HIV prevalence rates. Uganda’s approach has been

largely successful because of the widespread message of AIDS throughout society.

Other countries have adopted similar policies to promote widespread dissemination of HIV/AIDS information. By raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and the availability of HIV/AIDS related services, the people in Sub-Saharan Africa have more knowledge about how to prevent the spread of the disease, thus slowing the rate of transmission.

Libraries, in Sub-Saharan Africa, have a central role to play in the implementation of IEC policies through information dissemination and related activities. Their role, however, is constrained by a number of factors which impede their involvement in IEC activities. These constraints must be examined and understood within the context of the societies they serve in order to fully exploit their contribution to the prevention of HIV/AIDS. This paper will describe current IEC activities conducted by libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly those that target pre-adolescents and adolescents, and identify barriers to service. The paper will also identify common practices that appear to work well within selected Sub-Saharan nations that could be replicated in other African countries. A summary of observed patterns and trends found in the literature will be presented.

HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa

The incidence of Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has lead to a global pandemic. The poorest countries of the world (i.e., those in Sub-Saharan Africa), have the greatest incidence of HIV/AIDS; yet

they have the fewest resources to combat the disease. Almost two-thirds of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the world are found in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2004b). Seventy-four percent of all deaths that occur from AIDS worldwide are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet Sub-Saharan Africa only accounts for 10% of the world's population. At the end of 2004, 25.4 million people living in Sub-Saharan Africa had HIV/AIDS out of the total 39.4 million worldwide (Figure 1).

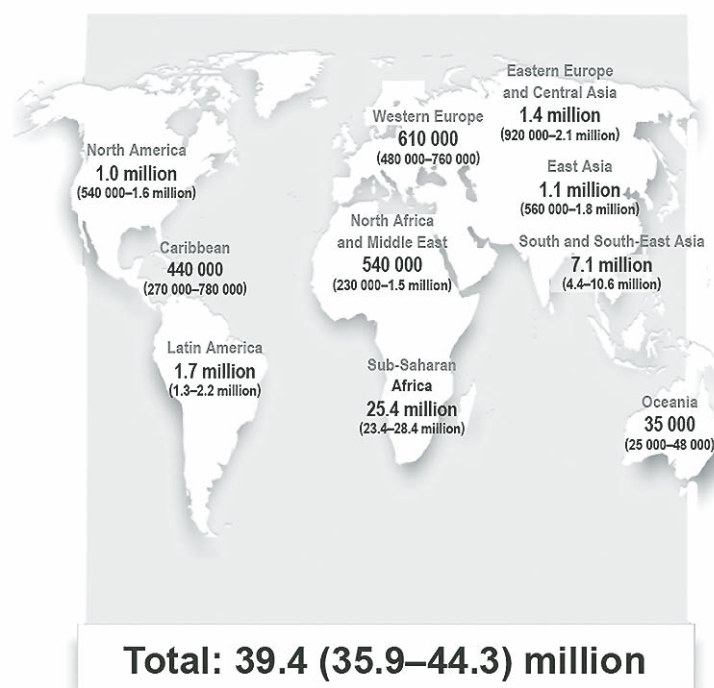


Figure 1: Adults and Children Estimated To Be Living With HIV/AIDS, End 2004 (Source: UNAIDS Epidemic Update 2004a)

In East Africa, there appears to be a pattern of gradual decline. Despite the decline, however, the number of deaths from AIDS increases dramatically each year and each year brings many new infections. In West and Central Africa, prevalence rates have changed very little, hovering around 5% or below. There are exceptions, however, (e.g., Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire) with rates of 10% or higher among pregnant women at antenatal clinic sites. Southern Africa is experiencing similar rates around 10%. Angola, however, has lower rates holding steady at around 5% (UNAIDS 2004a).

Women are more likely to be infected than men and account for 57% of people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS 2004c). Women are more likely to be infected at an earlier age because the age of sexual debut for women is earlier (Green 2003). This is most pronounced among young people, aged 15-24 years (UNAIDS 2004c).

Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa

The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identifies four major types of libraries in Africa (International Federation of Library Associations 2003). These include National, Education, School, and Public libraries. In 1999, there were 1,129 libraries in total in Africa (International Federation of Library Associations 2003). Of these, nearly 800 were public libraries.

UNESCO defines a national library as, “Libraries which, irrespective of their title, are responsible for acquiring and conserving copies of all significant publications published in the country and functioning as a ‘deposit’ library, either by law or under other arrangements. They will also normally perform some of the following functions: produce a national bibliography; hold and keep up to date a large and representative collection of foreign literature including books about the country; act as a national bibliographical information centre; compile union catalogues; publish the retrospective national bibliography. Libraries which may be called ‘national’ but whose functions do not correspond to the above definition should not be placed in the ‘national libraries’ category.” (UNESCO 1970).

Kawooya (2005) defines national libraries as large governmental funded institutions made available to the public. Bengé (1970) further suggests that the purpose of a national library is to serve as a depository to preserve all materials produced in a given country or about a country. According to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA 2003), there were 15 national libraries in Africa in 2001 according to UNESCO data.

Education libraries can be defined as institutions, which primarily serve “*students and teachers in universities and other institutions of education at the third level*” (UNESCO 1970). Education libraries are also frequently available to the general public. There were approximately 266 education libraries in Africa in 2001 (IFLA 2003).

School libraries are libraries that serve students and school teachers “*below the level of education at the third level*” (UNESCO 1970). Like education libraries, they are also frequently open to the general public. In 2001, there were 51 school libraries in Africa (IFLA 2003).

Public libraries “*serve the population of a community or region free of charge or for a nominal fee*” (UNESCO 1970). Often known as “popular” libraries, they serve the general public as well as particular segments of users including children, military personnel, hospital patients, prisoners, and employees. Public libraries are typically funded by the local, district/provincial, or national government.

The majority of African library staff work in education libraries followed by public, national, and school libraries (Table 1). This suggests a serious shortage of school library staff.

Total	Education	Public	National	School
10,236	5,403	4,396	348	89

Table 1: Total Library Staff in Africa² in 2001 by type of library:
http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis/wsis-stats4pub_v.pdf

There is also a similar shortage of school librarians in the United States, with school library staff accounting for 15% of the total library staff nationwide (Somerville 1998). In Africa, the number of school library staff account for even less than 1% of the total library staff, further suggesting the serious need for school librarians. This is particularly important for HIV/AIDS information dissemination, where school-

aged youth are the highest risk groups and for which prevention efforts must be targeted. There is a similar shortage of library staff to serve children in the public libraries in Africa. In Uganda, for example, there is one children's librarian in the entire country (Barongo 2004; Setuwa 2005).

In terms of collections, African libraries collectively hold over 53 million items of traditional library media. These include 5 million books, 14,000 microforms, nearly 3.9 million audiovisual materials, and 8.9 million "other" types of materials (IFLA 2003). Compared to the worldwide total of 29 billion traditional library media, Africa's library collections account for a mere 0.02% of the total world collections.

Libraries in the Sub-Saharan Context

UNESCO defines a library as,

"any organized collection of printed books and periodicals or of any other graphic or audio-visual materials, and the services of a staff to provide and facilitate the use of such materials as are required to meet the informational, research, educational or recreational needs of its users" (UNESCO 1970).

But in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, libraries do not fit neatly into this definition. Africa has unique characteristics of society and culture including oral tradition, print illiteracy, and scarce resources. Libraries, in the UNESCO definition, are often limited in their usefulness. Coupled with a limited awareness and understanding of the information needs of people of Sub-Saharan Africa societies, libraries, in the UNESCO sense, are few and far between.

That does not mean, however, that Sub-Saharan African societies are information-illiterate; they have well-developed systems of information transmission that fall outside the scope of a traditional library. Information is frequently exchanged through informal channels, from one person to another, often in the village, marketplace, or transportation centres (Sturges and Neill 1997). Mchombu (1992) suggests that an African will often go to the marketplace or other location (e.g., mosques, health centres) for informal information exchange.

The use of oral tradition is a common means of information transmission. Story, song, and poetry are often used to deliver messages. Specially designated persons within the pre-colonial African society, often poets or griots, were assigned the primary responsibility for information dissemination (Benge 1996). Therefore, the question can be raised whether libraries are necessary in Africa at all (Amadi 1981).

There are other problems with existing libraries regarding HIV/AIDS information. Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa have historically had difficulties understanding the information needs of their societies. Needs analysis is a common failing of libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa in general. Adimorah notes:

"The public libraries still lack the interest or capacity for carrying out an analysis of the community, isolating its needs and satisfying them. They are yet to make a real commitment to the free flow of information, harnessing and providing ready access to information on rural development that would change the social circumstances of the rural poor." (Adimorah 1984:25)

Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa were developed based upon the British model. The emphasis is more on the collection and services, rather than on the individual needs of their users. Because resources are scarce, libraries interpret information needs to support the justification needed to maintain the library. Sturges and Neill (1998) observe that when libraries attempt to understand the users' needs, they do so by asking leading questions that support their own needs, rather than identifying the actual needs of those interviewed. They suggest that if more appropriate questions were asked, libraries would discover that users' needs are "seldom library needs, which is what many investigators have been seeking" (Sturges and Neill 1998:50). According to Bengé, public libraries in Africa should be "more closely geared to African realities" (Bengé 1996:171).

Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa also have limited resources in terms of funding, resources, and staff. Funding is also scarce because of the poor perception of libraries in these countries. Libraries are not seen as vital to the solution of critical problems such as the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, libraries cannot compete for government funding with something that appears more critical such as agriculture or health care.

The lack of national policy to direct library participation in HIV/AIDS information also exacerbates the problems for libraries. Without guidance and support from national, district/provincial, and local government, funding remains constricted, staffing shortages continue, and poor perceptions of the library is the result. Financial assets are a particular problem for academic libraries, as universities typically contribute

less than 1% of their budgets to their libraries (Sturges and Neill 1997). This translates into shortages of both materials and skilled staff.

Library materials are also scarce. Acquisitions are expensive, particularly from foreign publishers. Book donations from other countries, while well intentioned, often result in materials that are out of date or outside the scope of African collections and can incur additional costs for discarding the materials. This is not just a matter of funding, however. Few materials have been developed specifically for Sub-Saharan societies and are culturally appropriate. Most foreign publishers are unwilling to invest in African publishing because of the limited market for African works (Sturges and Neill 1997).

As a result, many informational materials on HIV/AIDS that are distributed in Sub-Saharan Africa do not originate there and may not be as culturally appropriate or effective as those that could be developed by Africans. In addition, printing costs are very high (e.g., paper, coloured prints, reproduction) and often render materials too expensive for many libraries to afford.

While libraries, as defined by UNESCO, may not be commonplace in Sub-Saharan Africa, record numbers of information professionals are graduating from Library and Information Science (LIS) programmes throughout the continent. These professionals work in libraries and in community information centres; resource centres; documentation centres and other information agencies, both standalone and as part of a parent organisation.

Because the notion of a 'library' differs in the African context, and because information flows are different within the oral traditions of African society, variations in where and how HIV/AIDS information is disseminated are accommodated through alternative constructions. Despite the variation in what information organisations are called, they share certain common traits.

For example, Mchombu (2002) identifies four key functions of a resource centre:

- gathering data and information
- acquiring and processing information materials
- sharing and disseminating information; and
- mobilizing the community

The collection of local community information in addition to local and international data can be combined to reveal trends and patterns within the community. Information staff can share this information with local community leaders in order to facilitate change.

Information and HIV/AIDS

Information is vital to prevent the spread of the disease. UNESCO (Communication, Information and AIDS, nd) observes that without a cure or vaccination available to curb the spread of the virus, "*communication and information can help to fight HIV/AIDS by changing young people's behaviour through preventive education schemes.*" Common strategies used to promote behaviour change are information, education, and communication (IEC) programmes designed to educate and raise awareness about HIV/AIDS (Batambuze 2003). According to UNAIDS (1999),

IEC programmes promote behavioural change and help people avoid behaviours that could lead to HIV infection.

Several types of information are needed to promote behaviour change. Information about the disease itself is necessary to help people understand its causes through sexual transmission, mother-to-child transmission, intravenous drug use, and other methods of transmission. With proper knowledge, people can take necessary steps to prevent the disease or to seek treatment. It is also important to have information about how to care for those infected with HIV or AIDS. Community-wide knowledge of local available resources, nutritional information, testing and counselling, and social and financial support, will help raise awareness and make sure that necessary and vital information reaches everyone within the local community. Information also helps to fight the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. Relevant and accurate information helps to reduce fears, increase awareness and compassion, and change behaviours leading to increased risk of exposure to HIV and infection.

Library Activities in HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa³

Despite the recognised importance of information in the fight against AIDS, libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa are not considered to play an important role. IEC programmes that are becoming more common throughout Sub-Saharan Africa are not directly linked with libraries in any formal way. There is a lack of national HIV/AIDS policy that directs and supports library participation in HIV/AIDS information activities (Batambuze 2003). This is further

compounded by regional variations in library participation in HIV/AIDS information activities. Variations in level of services will be found, even within the same country, depending upon local, district/provincial, and national conditions. For example, in Uganda, school libraries lag behind other types of libraries in the provision of HIV/AIDS information (Batambuze 2003). Mostert (2001) suggests that problems for libraries stem from their outdated colonial model, lack of professional training, lack of inter-agency cooperation, and deficiencies in conducting needs analyses.

Batambuze (2003) proposes that libraries should take a strong lead in the provision of HIV/AIDS information dissemination and its activities, particularly for activities targeting children and young adults. But the difference between information activities of non-library organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa and those of libraries also depends upon how libraries are construed. UNESCO's definition of a library is constrained within the Sub-Saharan context and thus restricts the way in which libraries are engaged in HIV/AIDS information activities. If that definition is expanded to incorporate information and documentation centres, community centres, resource centres, and library associations, specific examples of information activities can more easily be identified.

Libraries serve not only as an information clearing-house on HIV/AIDS but also local community needs. This approach is reflected in the rise of community centres, youth centres, documentation centres, multipurpose telecenters, resource centres, and other similar centres. Not just a collection of resources, these centres also serve as a central point for their

communities where local forums and meetings can be held.

Resource centres are one common, unique form of library within the Sub-Saharan context and should be considered as a *library*. Their role in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information and activities is unique to their local culture. As such, resource centres have the responsibility for specific tasks. They must acquire and process information materials. Multiple formats should be included in the collection such as books, videos, audio materials, pamphlets, brochures, reports, fact sheets, etc. Topical materials should include research and statistical data, IEC, and other government materials available on HIV/AIDS. Materials selection should take into account the types of literacy in their users, especially the oral tradition. Information that is current and accurate is vital to the users of the resource centre. Efforts should be made to verify the source of materials for authoritative-ness and timeliness. Materials should also be available in the local language(s) of the users and should be translated if necessary. Mchombu reports that information is better portrayed through a "*pictorial, story board and poster format*" in order to capture the cultural aspects of materials that are appropriate for local users (Mchombu 2004:95). Mchombu also suggests that information can be disseminated to users through either a "*push process*", where information is provided to many people without their participation, or a "*pull process*", where information is delivered to users on demand (Mchombu 2004:95). Advertising campaigns and drama are best delivered via push delivery where lectures and talks are best delivered on demand. Resource centres may also choose to create their own HIV/AIDS materials for use in their local

communities. Story boards, posters, translations into a local language, booklets compiled from newspaper clippings, and recordings of radio and television programmes are but a few examples of locally created materials that can be housed in a resource centre (Mchombu 2004:97).

Increased community knowledge about HIV/AIDS is only successful if the community embraces and launches effective HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. Therefore, the resource centre needs to mobilise the community. In order to accomplish this, everyone in the community must be educated about HIV/AIDS and participate in its solution. There must also be an emotional investment on the part of everyone in the community if the programme is to be successful (Mchombu 2004). Local community efforts must also be coordinated with national and international efforts, organisations, and policies.

Mchombu (2004) suggests that the resource centre should be part of a community centre or library. Space is often limited so resource centres should display their materials on a table top or in a formal display. HIV/AIDS messages can be posted on a notice board for posting information about relevant events in the community. If a resource centre is part of a faith community (i.e., within a church or mosque), the resource centre needs to reflect the values and beliefs of its parent organisation. Information on abstinence and faithfulness may reflect a broader view of family planning and appropriate behaviour between married adults. If the resource centre is part of a larger organisation, its *“focus on information provision activities should promote the whole range of HIV prevention strategies of abstinence, faithfulness,*

and condom use, as well as family planning and how to deal with infections” (Mchombu 2004:100). If the resource centre is a standalone facility, Mchombu (2004) suggests that it is helpful to create a committee or forum to help advice and guide the centre’s activities. The committee can assist with acquiring necessary resources including a display table, audiocassette tape player, etc.

Despite their limitations, resource centres, and other library variations, participate in HIV/AIDS information activities in a variety of ways. Educational institutions and youth organisations have become involved in getting HIV/AIDS information to the youth population. For example, HIV/AIDS information is commonly integrated into the school curriculum. Head teachers of primary and secondary schools have been directed by the President’s office in Uganda to talk with their students about HIV/AIDS at least once a week (Batambuze 2003). Like educational institutions, libraries have similarly integrated HIV/AIDS educational information into their general services. HIV/AIDS ‘corners’ are commonly found in many public and school libraries. These provide pamphlets, ephemeral materials, and other materials for children and allow them the opportunity to talk about HIV/AIDS through guided discussion sessions with peers, referred to as peer education. Unfortunately, the materials often tend to get lost in large collections (Baffour-Awuah 2004). Matoksi (nd) further suggests that public and school libraries should have daily discussions about HIV/AIDS in the HIV/AIDS ‘corners’.

Libraries also disseminate information through a variety of media, including drama, poetry, singing and dancing. This is particularly useful in societies with

a high rate of print illiteracy, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Albright and Kawooya (2005) found that radio and drama are the two most widely used formats for the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information in Uganda. These are culturally appropriate and particularly effective, given the oral literacy of Sub-Saharan societies. Other formats should also be considered and utilised under appropriate conditions. For example, the use of fiction can facilitate the interest of children and young adults in HIV/AIDS information. Basic reading programmes that integrate HIV/AIDS information are common in libraries and can be very effective. Working with local communities on reading addresses issues of both print literacy and raising HIV/AIDS awareness.

There is also a need for materials to be available in the local languages. Despite official languages of English, French, and Portuguese, many indigenous languages and dialects are spoken throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Without the necessary translations, even the best information is useless. Libraries can take a role in offering this service.

Peer education is one of the most common methods for disseminating HIV/AIDS information. It is a particularly effective method for disseminating HIV/AIDS information to young people. Libraries can utilise volunteers from their local communities and train them to provide peer education services.

Recommendations

Three specific recommendations are presented, based on the reported activities of libraries involved in HIV/AIDS information dissemination in Sub-Saharan

Africa. These include: 1) the role of partnerships; 2) the scope of libraries; and 3) the emergence of a new identity for libraries and information professionals. Together they create an opportunity for an expanded role of libraries within Sub-Saharan Africa in becoming a vital component to combating the spread of HIV/AIDS.

First, it is recommended that partnerships between libraries and other sources of HIV/AIDS information activities be established. Despite the poor perception of libraries, the value of information in HIV/AIDS prevention is well recognised and is increasingly at the centre of policy and funding practices. Partnerships, therefore, could be made with educational institutions and communication organisations. Partnerships with educational institutions could speed up the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS related information activities for both organisations. They could be stronger together than either one separately. Partnerships with communication organisations, especially radio, could be strengthened in the targeting of programmes for children and youth. Kawooya (2005) suggests that libraries could partner with radio stations to offer on air readings of appropriate HIV/AIDS materials. Charles Batambuze, Chair of the Uganda National Library Association, suggests,

“I think that libraries have had a limited and sometimes an indirect role in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information. For example communication experts who develop radio and other mass media messages for the general public get their facts by undertaking research in a library of some kind” (Batambuze May 31 2005).

Second, the scope of libraries could be expanded to

include information sources and services outside the role of UNESCO-type traditional libraries. By offering broader, more flexible programmes, library services can be better designed to meet the unique needs of the societies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, libraries can serve as community centres to address issues of HIV/AIDS as well as other issues including healthcare in general, agriculture, women and children, and other local information needs. Libraries can also utilise a broader approach to dissemination including radio and mobile libraries.

Likewise they can take a leadership role in using ICTs for sharing digital materials. Graduates of LIS programmes are uniquely qualified to serve as the interface between technology and local communities. Information professionals are also uniquely qualified to understand the needs of the local community, particularly those of children and young adults regarding HIV/AIDS information. This includes both the format of information targeting these vulnerable groups, but also the understanding of effective ways to make information accessible and interesting to assist children and young adults in making good decisions about their own sexual behaviour. This also includes the development and production of information products and services appropriate to the local community, including language, delivery, and selection of materials.

The third recommendation centres on the emergence of a new identity for African libraries, librarians, and information professionals. There is an opportunity for information professionals to take a strong lead in the dissemination activities of HIV/AIDS information, thereby strengthening their image and value to

society. Dr. Robert Ikoja-Odongo, Senior Lecturer at Makerere University's East African School of Library and Information Science suggests, "*African librarians can be tuned to making HIV/AIDS information available or become conduits for that information when they are given a little orientation to it*" (Ikoja-Odongo July 22 2005). It is important to note that there are efforts underway to facilitate the development of a unique African LIS identity. Plans are in development to establish a consortium of East African library and information science programmes that will allow for resource sharing, faculty and student exchange, and collective buying practices. The East African School of Library and Information Science at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda announced the creation of a doctoral programme in 2005 and had four students in its initial cohort (Kigongo-Bukenya 2005). In addition, there is increasing demand for graduates of LIS programmes, particularly at the Bachelor's level, since it is considered to be the professional degree.

Conclusion

Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa are in a difficult position. There is a gap between the perceived importance of information in combating HIV/AIDS and the poor perception of libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The formal IEC strategies common throughout Sub-Saharan Africa are not formally linked to libraries or information/documentation centres. Libraries, therefore, do not assume an important role in IEC activities often sanctioned and funded by national and local governments.⁴ The library and information professional community has raised concerns about this lack of involvement. As Moshoeshe (2005), Act-

ing University Librarian at the University of Lesotho, observed,

“We have noted with concern that substantial studies on HIV/AIDS profusely continue, yet with no significant involvement of Libraries or Librarians. Let me hasten to suggest that, ideally, any research team should have a librarian in it. Why? She/he would ensure that relevant information stored in [a] formal collection is used. As well, the final reports would be deposited. At [the] present moment, it is likely that some externally-funded research output is never acquired within the country.”

There is, however, ample opportunity for library and information professionals to take a stronger lead in HIV/AIDS information activities. There is also an opportunity to create a stronger perception of the LIS profession, in some ways to actually establish the LIS profession in Sub-Saharan Africa for the first time. By taking a lead in HIV/AIDS information efforts, LIS professionals have a unique opportunity to establish and build their visibility, contribution, and establishment as a recognised, respected profession. Mchombu asserts, “library and information services cannot sit on the fence when their nations young people are being decimated “by the enemy from within who strikes silently and in darkness” (2002).

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa⁵

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Republic of the, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi,

Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan⁶, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Notes

- 1 Sub-Saharan Africa includes the countries listed above
- 2 Includes the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Reunion, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, and Uganda.
- 3 For specific examples of library activities in HIV/AIDS information dissemination in Sub-Saharan Africa, see www.nclis.gov, which was compiled by this author.
- 4 See, for example, Antwi, Phyllis M. and P.A. Oppong Yaa. “Ghana’s Attempts at Managing the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: A Review of Efforts.” Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies Working Paper Series on HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: Sex, Gender and Policy, Vol. 13 (6), July 2003.
- 5 Sub-Saharan Africa includes the countries listed United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2004d).
- 6 Sudan was not included in the UNAIDS list but is included in this paper.

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India's public libraries: poised to meet the needs of the poor?

Anjali Gulati & John M. Riley

— Region: Asia

Introduction

India is a multilingual and multi-cultural society with more than one billion people, belonging to various religions, speaking diverse languages, from different social, cultural and economic levels. With 28 states, 7 centrally administered Union Territories, 18 major languages and 1,600 dialects, the task of providing “education for all” and consequently “books for all” is daunting. A large part of the country's population is rural and constitutes 74.3% of population, living in about 600,000 villages. Even after 59 years of independence, there are huge gaps in the basic infrastructure and requirements in the Rural India. More than 200,000 villages are without paved roads; 217,000 with water quality problems; 30,000 where there is no power supply; 23,000 do not have telephone connectivity; and more than 80% of the rural population do not have toilet facilities; Thousands of rural schools are without proper building facilities. There is a long list of basic requirements which are to be given priority depending upon the availability of resources. The pace of development has

been patchy, segmented, imbalanced and lopsided. In spite of every government allocating huge resources to rural areas in their respective budgets, planned strategies to counter poverty in every Five-Year Plan, yet the present scenario is far from satisfactory. The benefits have not percolated from the cities to the grassroots. The failure of trickle-down principles, and lopsided development at all levels, has blocked the reach of basic amenities to the majority of Indians.

On the other hand, urban India has made handsome gains in many areas. Excessive urbanization has added to the woes of the people of urban India in terms of congestion, a polluted environment, shortages of space, mushrooming growth of slums and vehicular traffic; yet the facilities in terms of infrastructure, opportunities of jobs, and materialism have lured many villagers to migrate in hope of a better life. A host of socio-economic problems are on the rise as a result. (Jatana and Khosla 2003)

Among the many efforts to bring about improvements in the Indian peoples' livelihoods, one of the

oldest, and universally heralded, is the library. Information is recognized as vital to all development efforts and, as libraries exist as providers of information, they are an essential resource for all societies and all citizens; public libraries, especially, are intended to serve the information needs of the poor. Of course, this is virtually universally recognized; even so, the number and quality of public libraries in many countries - and India is no exception - are woefully inadequate for the mission.

Public libraries: origins

The existence of libraries in India dates back to Indus Valley Civilisation, The ancient, medieval and modern rulers have consciously developed public libraries in India. For example, Muslim rulers were patrons of education, literature and libraries. Humayun was a lover of books and it is said that he converted a pleasure house in "purana-Quila" in Delhi into a library. Another ruler, Akbar maintained an 'Imperial Library' and Mulla Pir Muhammad was his Librarian. The books in his library were classified and catalogued according to a scheme developed by them. He encouraged translations and illustration of manuscripts. Successive rulers, Jahangir is said to have maintained a personal library which moved with him wherever he went and Aurangzeb also encouraged libraries and Islamic learning.

The concept of public libraries originated in Europe, and reached India during the British rule. Although many countries were in the race of establishing public libraries, Britain passed the first public library law in 1850, through which services were entrusted to the local governments. This Act was followed by Elemen-

tary Education Act of 1870, which gave rise to the modern system of public education in Britain. The British government took the responsibility of public education in India at the same time. The Christian missionaries, the Arya Samaj, the National Freedom Movement and some voluntary organisations and philanthropists played an important role in the development of public libraries in their respective regions (Ramasamy and Panda 2003). There are about 60,000 public libraries (which include 51,000 at the village level) with the structure as State Central Libraries at the top of a pyramid followed by Regional /Divisional libraries, District Central Libraries, Taluk Libraries, Branch Libraries etc as the lower orders of the hierarchy with village libraries (rural libraries) forming the base and of the pyramid. The rural libraries have been established and maintained in several states through Gram Panchayats, Cooperative Societies, Religious Endowments, Youth organisations and voluntary organisations.

The current situation

At the present, India's public libraries operate under a hodgepodge of state laws, with no coordination. When originally drafted, the Constitution of India, in the Seventh Schedule, delegated jurisdiction over libraries to the individual States, along with education. (Government of India 1996:232) The result of this devolution, giving the responsibility of creating and maintaining their public libraries to the individual states, has resulted in neglect by some, and insufficient attention given by nearly all; the result has been the inadequate provision of information and services for the great majority of Indian citizens. Fewer than half of the states and Union Territories have passed

any legislation regarding this matter, and the content of these policies differs greatly (Ranjith 2004; Bhat-tacharjee 2002; Jambhekar 1995).

There is currently no national policy on public libraries in India, although many attempts have been made at promulgating one, and the need for a comprehensive library policy is stressed; a number of scholars and government figures have called for a uniform system of public libraries under the aegis of the national government (see Jambhekar 1995; Nair 2000).

Despite this shortcoming, the Government of India (GoI) has taken a number of steps to improve the status of libraries, including the following:

- In 1972, the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), an autonomous body within the central government's Department of Culture, was created. The Foundation provides matching funds for the purchases of furniture and books, organising conferences, and for mobile library services in rural areas. As in other topics on the State List, the Foundation appears to be a way by which the GoI can share some jurisdiction with the individual states, without contravening the federalist mandate of the State List (see Riley 2002:150).
- Specifically regarding rural libraries, the Union Ministry of Rural Development made an ambitious plan to set up 100,000 community centres in every Panchayat, and also earmarked 6-8% of the annual budget of Rs. INR 30,000 crore¹ for the establishment and maintenance of Rural Library and Community Resource Centres (RLCRCs) during the Eighth Five-year Plan (1992-1997). The idea of RLCRC is not merely to provide library service to villagers, but to support and promote their

development and raise their standard of living (see Kaula 2000).

- The B.P Singh Report of the working group of Libraries and Information Services of the planning Commission for the 9th Plan (1997-2002), has deeply deplored the stalemate in public library sector. According to the working group of the commission there were only 54, 845 libraries and the expenditure on these libraries during the 7th Plan was a mere 205 crores (see Deshpande and Hungund 2001).
- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) issued the following notification in August 1994:

“The Government plans to set up village libraries to make up for the dearth of reading material for neo-literates. A sum of Rupees one crore has been earmarked for about 500 libraries which will be started this year on a pilot basis. The cost of each library to be located in selected middle and high schools is expected to be around Rs. 20,000.”

This decision was announced by HRD Minister at a meeting of the Parliament Consultative Committee. He said that, while there had been substantial growth in literacy in rural India, an absence of public libraries and bookshops provided neo-literates with little access to reading material. Thus, libraries under the scheme will have a modest collection of 300-400 books, 3 or 4 library journals and one local newspaper. (Kaula 2000)

- The Committee on National Policy on Library and Information System (NAPLIS) submitted a National policy document to the HRD Minister,

New Delhi on 30 May 1986. The Policy document had recommended that “*the main thrust in this area [public libraries] should go to rural libraries*”. A village or village cluster with adequate population should have a Community Library which will serve as an Information Centre. The community library should also focus on adult education, and make adequate audio-visual aids available to attract non-literate villagers. Libraries for special groups should be built in areas of tribal concentration or of minority communities to protect and develop their distinctive cultures. The document also recommended, “*that the Rural Library should be made available in each village under Minimum Needs Programme by 2000 AD.*” Thus a Rural Library should come up as an integral part of the Community Centre and the centre should be managed by Gram Panchayat (see Kaula 2000; Venkatappaiah 1998).

- In a series of Five-Year Plans, the Planning Commission addressed the management and expansion of public libraries. The plans, which are central to the economic planning of the country (India was established as a socialist democracy), have been published on a regular basis since 1951. In the earlier plans, little emphasis was placed on libraries. Since the Fifth Plan (1974-79), though, there has been an increased emphasis on libraries, especially in regard to literacy, continuing education, and rural development (Jambhekar 1995:12-14).
- Adding the 73rd Amendment to its Constitution has been potentially the most important act by the GoI in regard to libraries as a support for rural development. Thus was the culmination of an

ongoing effort to devolve political power to the village and local area, via the revitalisation of an ancient (but neglected in modern India) form of self-government called panchayats.² The rationale for the passage of the 73rd Amendment, according to Chaudhuri (2005:3), stems from the perception that, despite the powers mandated them many of the individual states have been largely inactive in administering their responsibilities. “[G]iven the diversity in their traditional trajectories and current sociopolitical and economic situations, across the states there has been tremendous variation in the design, scope, and extent of devolution to local governments.”

What the amendment accomplished, in effect, was twofold: first, to give the states a constitutional basis for their own autonomous planning, in a number of specific areas, including libraries (something that had not previously been articulated in the constitution); and, by extension, the power to - at the discretion of the individual state - devolve local planning and governments to their panchayats. As has been the experience, states which had previously fostered the existence and functions of their panchayats continue to do so; others who ignored, under funded, or openly challenged the validity of their panchayats, continue to do so (for one egregious example, see Sainath 2004).

As a result, the number of, condition, and provision of public libraries in individual states varies widely. As the Appendix indicates, some states have only a handful of public libraries; others, thousands, including rural libraries. Even in states with substantial numbers, though, their density is far below the stand-

ards set by IFLA (Bhattacharjee 2002), which indicate that there should be no fewer than one library for every 3,000 people thus India needs, according to this standard more than 3,30,000 public library units. At best, the ratio of libraries to citizens is several tens of thousands to one (see Census of India 2001) far higher than reasonably called for.

As alluded to previously, the disparity in the number of libraries in the different states can be attributed largely to the lack of any uniformity in the state governments' attention to their needs. Of the 28 states and 7 Union Territories, only 11 have passed library legislation, and even in these cases, there is no uniformity as to the kind of library system to be established in the state; as a result, the status of libraries in (and among) the states varies greatly. Kalia (1993:1) writes that a few states that have enacted legislation which established a hierarchical, bureaucratic form of state management, as well as an degree of integration between individual institutions; libraries in these states are in much better condition than those in which individual libraries are operated by voluntary organisations or are associated with public schools, and little or no integration exists.

The most notable exception to these systems is the state of Kerala. The unique feature of the state's system is that libraries are governed by two separate government departments, operating in parallel. The State Central Library, which is the apex body of the state's library system, operates as a separate department; there is also a Kerala State Library Council, "*more or less a Department of Public Libraries*" (Bhattacharjee 2002:4), which is under the control of the Department of Higher Education. It is instructive

that Kerala has developed an unusually high literacy rate in comparison to the other Indian states; in his book *People's Library Movement*, Nair (2000) attributes this unusually high literacy rate, in part, to the existence of public libraries.³ The widespread construction of village libraries in the state was initiated early in the 20th century, as a part of the Independence movement.

The vast majority of India's public libraries are clearly substandard; to describe many as functioning libraries would be an exaggeration. As Patel and Kumar (2001:104) write,

"A large majority of them are so-called libraries, being mere reading rooms that provide a few newspapers and magazines, with a small collection of outdated books, and are open for only a few hours. The quality of services leaves much to be desired. The book supplies are largely inadequate and there is a severe lack of qualified personnel. [...] Rural areas have been neglected compared with urban areas. In addition, the needs of special groups like children, the blind, the elderly, prisoners, and so on have been largely neglected."

Moreover, in many libraries, including those in the cities, the use of information technology is limited to photocopy machines, themselves dependent on availability of electricity (and, it is commonplace for even urban areas to be without electric current for a part of almost every day). Facilities and operating hardware are, in many cases, ramshackle. In most states, and nationwide, there are no consortia, networks, or other forms of integration among individual libraries.

This piecemeal, largely uncoordinated, agglomeration

of institutions does not serve the rural poor of India well; there are continual pleas for increasing resources for operations, personnel, and acquisitions. In the effort to provide needed information to the majority of India's citizens, there is clearly an enormous need to improve the status of existing libraries, and create thousands of new libraries (and train more thousands of would-be librarians) in service of the rural poor.

It is evident that public libraries in India today are neither numerous enough, nor oriented, toward serving the needs of its population en masse. What are some of the ways in which the libraries, and especially rural libraries, can adapt in order to better serve the population?

Much needs to be done

The need for more libraries, and for adequate funding, is a basic and perennial call, even in rich nations. However, it is not enough to just increase the number of libraries in the country, if they are not prepared to serve the needs of the public; much more must be done if India's public libraries are to serve as a significant factor in India's education and development. The first, and most basic (and overarching) necessity, will be to impress upon the individual states the necessity of promulgating and implementing a practical and workable public information policy. Many examples of model legislation have been forwarded for decades, including a number of efforts made by the eminent Indian librarian and scholar, S.R. Ranganathan (see Ranganathan 1950). Unfortunately, though, too many Indian states have not adopted information policies, and no state in India currently has sufficient numbers of public libraries to adequately

serve all its citizens, urban or rural (see Ghosh 2005). Absent such legislation, the RRRLF serves as a means for the GoI to participate in the creation and operation of libraries throughout the country. To date, this has been the most successful effort at expanding the number of public libraries in India.

As fundamental as the need to create and operate new libraries, existing institutions must address themselves to the needs of their local citizenry if they are to remain relevant institutions in the future. This will require a number of adaptations and changes. The following is a partial list that policy makers and librarians might consider.

- First, librarians must realise that, unlike in the past, the library can no longer serve their former role as simple collection-oriented repositories of written material that, in turn, is maintained as passively available for traditional users of their services. Especially in the rural areas, where large proportions of the citizens are non-literate; a library that serves readers exclusively will be of very limited utility to the residents (as Ochai (1995:166) points out, where the majority of the people are non-literate, the library "*has never been a popular source of information*").
- Next, identifying their users and their needs is crucial. Communities consist of unique combinations of people of varying ages, gender, social class, levels of literacy, and other attributes; librarians, in order to serve all (or, at least, a significant proportions of) their constituents, must first identify their target populations and their information needs, and endeavour to serve those needs.
- It is important that libraries take a far more active role than just passive repositories of books. As

Correa et al. (1997:33) write,
 “The link between information and its practical application is reinforced when a resource centre also is a venue for community activities. These may take the form of training, e.g. literacy, non-formal education, tailoring or dress-making, or of recreation, drama or dance. The provision of information becomes integral to the community.”

This was, according to Nair (2000), the single most important factor in the success of Kerala’s library movement.

- Sharing resources and networking with other institutions can be especially helpful to make information more widely available. No single public library in India is likely to have the resources needed by all of its users; by establishing a system by which books and other sources of information can be reciprocally shared, individual libraries can be better contain their costs, while better serving their users.
- Developing library professionals for competence in the new environment is a must. Information can be transferred to rural users in a number of formats, not through print media alone. Visual and audio formats are effective and popular forms of information media in many areas, and are especially useful for non-literates. As Correa et al. (1997) point out, in places where illiteracy rates are high, printed mater is generally unsuitable; the most effective media are those which incorporate traditional means of communication (including theatre, songs, and group discussions).

One new promising medium for the provision of information, Information and Communication

Technology (ICT), is being highly touted in India and other developing countries as a means to accelerate rural development and government.

ICT in the India’s public libraries

ICT is hardly a novel concept; books, radio, television are all technological means by which we exchange information. Since the recent advent of the micro-computer and the Internet, however, the means by which we communicate with each other has advanced seemingly immeasurably. The transfer of all manner of communication, which used to require days, now occurs at the speed of light; moreover, access to the means by which information was transacted, which used to be the domain of a select few, is becoming readily available to society at large.

It is for these reasons that the idea of ICT, and especially in relation to global development (under the title of Information Communication for Development, or ICT4D) has been embraced by many (including many of the globe’s largest and most influential development organisations), who see it as a way of accelerating the “development” process, or even lifting entire populations and economies to the status of the wealthy industrialised nations, bypassing (or, according to the term currently in vogue, “leapfrogging”) the steps by which the latter reached their current socioeconomic status. India, as the home to one of the world’s most advanced computing and engineering sectors, is at the forefront of many such efforts; state and national governments, private concerns, and civil society are all involved in extending what they see as the promise of rapid development to their rural areas, as well as the cities.

The idea of an information system that can reach the most remote and marginalized populations of the world's poorest nations has captured the imagination of proponents worldwide⁴; information and communications technology (ICT), the electronic means of capturing, processing, storing, and communication, has been touted as the latest in a long history of panaceas that will help those without the most basic resources of the modern world to improve their livelihoods. The idea of ICT4D, is based primarily on the extension of the Internet (although other forms of ICT exist).

What makes the Internet appear to be superior to other forms of information exchange, and a vital tool for development? According to Gómez and Ospina (2001), the Internet is a "network of exchange", which allows "many-to-many" communication (whereas other forms of ICTs, such as telephony, are essentially "one-to-one" technologies - despite the existence of teleconferencing - and radio and television are seen as "one-to-many" forms of communication) and, therefore, has the potential to promote (or inhibit) the nature of interactions in the public sphere. This, in itself, has the capability of significantly altering human relations; however, the proponents of ICT4D envision a more ambitious role for the new technologies.

The unmet promises of ICT4D

Despite the demise of the mechanistic prescriptions of the early industry-led development and modernisation theories, Western-based paradigms of international development continue to stress the connection between communication and development, contesting that the lack of communications infrastructures

within many less developed countries (LDCs) is a major impediment to their advancement. It is no surprise that this line of thought has informed current development thought; the use of ICTs has been seen as a "silver bullet," (see Edwards and Hulme 1996) which by its very nature will enable developing countries to overcome the need to go through decades of industrialisation, and social upheaval and adjustment to achieve developed-country status.

Practice, however, has not borne out these expectations. According to Richard Heeks (2003), a multinational study of IT efforts in LDCs, only about 15 % actually succeed.

Given the huge cost of introducing ICTs in developing countries, the irrelevance that has been seen over the past several years in its application, and the inability of large numbers of people to,

- afford the hardware
- make use of the software
- trust the content that has been designed and written by people who have little or no knowledge of the circumstances of the users, can one justify further experimentation with ICT4D?

Only anecdotal references exist as to its efficacy; very few empirical studies have been conducted, so there is little understanding of what works and what does not. Critics of ICT4D (including no less than Microsoft chairman Bill Gates) point out that the rural poor need proper nutrition and health care more than they do laptops and Internet connectivity. Yet, to allow the "digital divide" between those with Internet access and those who do not (what Sukumaran (2001) calls the "digital chasm") to grow unchecked, without

billions of humans attempting to “catch up” with the “digerati,” seems unconscionable (for more on this in the specific Indian context, see Keniston 2003).

So, how to overcome this? Several suggestions are:

- focusing on the needs of the individual community of users, and providing relevant information in a manner that is recognizable and understandable by all;
- making all ICTs as user-friendly as possible (using local languages as much as possible, and alternative, non-text-based approaches for the non-literate users);
- insuring that access is not denied the poorest, lowest-caste, elderly, handicapped, et cetera, and;
- maintaining costs of usage that are not beyond the means of the poorest.

The last two considerations are directly pertinent to the issue of access by both the urban and rural poor; how do we make ICT available to all citizens? As mentioned above, the idea of telecenters, locations where individuals can pay a small fee to gain access to the Internet, is widespread, not only in developing countries, but globally. In the early years of the Internet, it seemed sufficient to simply supply the hardware necessary to connect to the Internet, and the rest would follow. This simplistic notion, as many other naive misconceptions that have accompanied the development sector, has been a disaster. The relevant question at this point is: who shall be in charge of operating the telecenters? There are two schools of thought: the private sector, which would operate telecenters (as well as cyber cafés and other forms of access), or the government and other public institutions.

Those who favour private operation of telecenters do so primarily on the grounds of profit: that telecenters be treated as a market. Lahiri (1996) holds that governments provide notoriously poor services, and a market-driven approach would inevitably provide better service and products than the public sector.

The for-profit approach is clearly superior in some cases, but the logic underlying business - that the bottom line is profit - is inappropriate in the case of public goods, of which information certainly is one. Businesses are not committed to long-term service; if an enterprise is not a money-maker, there is no incentive and no requirement to continue the service. On the other hand, public service is just that: it is premised on equality in access by all members of the public, and has the commitment to provide that service; even in the face of opposition. Libraries have had a continuing presence in communities worldwide for thousands of years, and their continuing presence is not seriously questioned.

After all is said and done, the library seems to be the ideal provider of ICT; not as its primary service, but as a part of its mission, to provide information. In concert with the government and not-for-profit institutions, libraries seem to be a natural fit with ICTs. Indeed, a number of developing countries, including Venezuela, Cuba, Ghana, Uganda, and Colombia have all coordinated the provision of Internet access with their public libraries. According to Dagron (2001), “The wave of making telecentres profitable in the short term is pushing many of them to become commercial ventures, and it subscribes to the same neo-liberal thinking that aims to privatise the health and education systems, liberating the State

of its main responsibilities toward the well-being of the population. Soon we will be evaluating public libraries in terms of “sustainability”, not in terms of the cultural and educational service that public libraries are set to provide. [...] I believe that telecentres should be a modern version of public libraries, with an additional outreach communication component that transforms the former individual relationship between the library and the user, into a collective process involving the community. One of the main thrusts of libraries and telecentres is to open the world of information and knowledge to the communities, with the advantage that telecentres can tailor the information to community needs. From the point of view of sustainability, community telecentres should be treated as public libraries.”

Conclusion

As this paper has indicated, there is a real shortcoming in the number and quality of information-providing institutions and the services they provide for India's poor. Especially in a world in which information is becoming more widely available, and in which access to relevant information is seen as vital to human development, it appears more important than ever that India puts extra efforts into creating a system of information provision that will help its citizens, and especially the poor who most desperately need it. Currently, India's public libraries have fallen short of this goal.

While the need for public libraries is nationwide, emphases should be placed on the following:

- primary education

- continuing education
- extension and social outreach
- villages and rural areas

Public libraries are considered crucial to the education of the Indian people, and should be given a higher priority than they currently receive. They should be developed as Community Information Centres and given the importance they so richly deserve.

Libraries have long had the responsibility of providing information to the general public, whether poor or rich. They have also shown their value to society through a long history, their continuing presence in their communities, and the constant efforts on their behalf. It seems logical that as they adapt to a rapidly changing world, that the public libraries of India will continue to provide all of India's people their information needs.

Notes

1 One crore is equal to 10 million; one lakh, 100 thousand.

2 Panchayats are a traditional form of local self-government that flourished in portions of pre-British India, and a number of efforts have been made on the part of the Government of India (GoI) to revive an effective system. It was not until the passage of the 73rd Amendment, however, that the panchayats got a measure of real political power.

3 It is reported that, in recent years, the high literacy rate in the state boasted by many (and heralded as over 90 per cent) has been declining. Basheer (2002) attributes this to a change of state government during the middle of a literacy campaign; the new government, which supplanted the previous, socialist, government, bureaucratized the program, ignoring the grassroots campaign that had fostered the gains (see also Nair 2000).

4 It is hardly happenstance that the idea behind the functions of public libraries, which have existed for centuries - if not millennia - coincides exactly with that of IT; it appears that there is little difference in the goals, but only the level and sophistication of the technologies. (the authors)

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Health information services in public libraries in Japan

Yasuyo Inoue

— Region: Asia

HIV/AIDS in Japan

Since 1988, the Japanese government has been strongly recommended to take initiatives that safeguard the provision of information about HIV/AIDS and HIV testing. Japan passed a bill in 1988 concerning HIV testing and a bill regarding the health care of HIV/AIDS patients in 2003; and has established *The Committee on AIDS of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare*. The Committee holds a meeting every three months and reports on the current number of patients and the situation in general, including reports from representatives of each of the municipal governments. The number of new HIV/AIDS cases reported in 2005 was 1,199, an increase of 34 cases compared to 2004. Total number of new HIV cases in 2005 was 832 with a distribution of 741 Japanese citizens and 91 citizens from other countries; and the number of new AIDS cases was 367 with a distribution of 302 Japanese citizens and 65 citizens from other countries.¹

Compared to the total number of the Japanese population of about 128 million (2005), the number of HIV/AIDS patients is still very small. However, while the number of AIDS cases has slightly decreased, it should be noted that Japan, compared to other developed countries, is the only nation that shows an increase in the number of people contracting HIV. Thus a recent increase of HIV cases (72%) is shown in Japanese males in their twenties and thirties. The number of Chlamydia infected patients is increasing too. Cumulated numbers of HIV/AIDS cases are shown in Figure 1 below.²

Figure 1: Quarterly report by the Committee on AIDS, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (The cumulated total number by April 28, 2006)

Diagnosis	infection route	Japanese			Foreigners			Total		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
HIV infected patients	Sexual contagion with opposite sex	1,375	438	1,813	273	687	960	1,648	1,125	2,773
	Sexual contagion with same sex*	2,924	1	2,925	198	0	198	3,122	1	3,123
	Abuse of intravenous injection of drugs	17	1	18	17	2	19	34	3	37
	Mother-to-child infection	13	7	20	4	7	11	17	14	31
	others**	78	28	106	20	14	34	98	42	140
	unknown	472	60	532	270	486	756	742	546	1,288
	Total (HIV)	4,879	535	5,414	782	1,196	1,978	5,661	1,731	7,392
AIDS patients	Sexual contagion opposite sex	1,085	129	1,214	203	143	346	1,288	272	1,560
	Sexual contagion same sex*	899	1	900	82	2	84	981	3	984
	Abuse of intravenous injection of drugs	9	2	11	17	0	17	26	2	28
	Mother-to-child infection	9	3	12	1	4	5	10	7	17
	others**	59	12	71	16	8	24	75	20	95
	unknown	528	52	580	263	117	380	791	169	960
	Total (AIDS)	2,589	199	2,788	582	274	856	3,171	473	3,644
Carriers by blood coagulant***		1,417	18	1,435	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	1,417	18	1,435

* including bi-sexual contagion : ** several infection routes , caused by blood transfusion through blood coagulant made of HIV/AIDS infected blood
Source: http://api-net.jfap.or.jp/mhw/survey/05nenpo/hyo_02.pdf

Most of the cases were caused by sexual intercourse (88.0%), and with regard to cases of Japanese men having sexual contact with other men the number has increased among the age groups, 15-24 years old (97.8%) and 25-34 years old (76.4%). For the age group 50 years and older, the distribution with regards to routes of infection for heterosexuals and

bi-sexual is almost identical (heterosexual transmission 36.3% and male-to-male sexual transmission 34.1%).

The percentage of HIV/AIDS patients that have either contracted the disease via injections as drug users (IDU) or via mother to child infection (MTC) is un-

der 2%. Although only seven cases of IDU were reported, the number has increased by two compared to 2004. It is to be assumed that the number of non-reported HIV/AIDS cases is four times higher than the number of reported cases, thus the actual number of HIV/AIDS patients in Japan may likely be more than 40,000.

Compared with other Asian nations, China also appears to have a recent increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases. This is explained by the lack of information provision to rural areas and in this regard China is no exception to other areas in the region. Transmission of knowledge and dissemination of information about SARS and other sanitary diseases to the rural areas of Asia are required not only to secure the life and health conditions of people but also of economic reasons.

Since HIV/AIDS cases was first reported to the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare (now the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) the number has increased and the causes of infection now provides a more complex picture. *The Act on Prevention from AIDS* (Act #49, 1988 rev.1996⁴ and *the Act on Prevention from Infectious Diseases and Medical Care of those patients* (Act #145, 2003) resolve that the government informs the community about the disease. Further, the two acts require municipalities to inform their local community about HIV/AIDS and other infectious

Figure 2; World statistics, 2003: HIV/AIDS (by 1,000)³

Area/Country	HIV/AIDS infected patients (under 49 years old)				Patients/total population: 15-49 yrs (%)	death by AIDS (under 49 yrs)
	Total	15-49 years	female	under 15 years		
world	37,800.0	35,700.0	17,000.0	2,100.0	1.1	2,900.0
East Asia	900.0	900.0	200.0	7.7	0.1	44.0
Japan	12.0	12.0	2.9		<0.1	<0.5
China	840.0	830.0	190.0		0.1	44.0
East-South Asia	6,500.0	6,300.0	1,800.0	160.0	0.6	460.0
Indonesia	110.0	110.0	15.0		0.1	2.4
Thailand	570.0	560.0	200.0	12.0	1.5	58.0
Nepal	61.0	60.0	16.0		0.5	3.1
Vietnam	220.0	200.0	65.0		0.4	2.0
Malaysia	52.0	51.0	8.5		0.4	2.0
Cambodia	170.0	170.0	51.0		0.1	15.0
Myanmar	330.0	320.0	97.0	7.6	1.2	20.0
North America	1,000.0	990.0	250.0	11.0	0.6	16.0
Caribbean nations	430.0	200.0	200.0	22.0	2.3	35.0
Latin America	1,600.0	1,600.0	560.0	25.0	0.6	84.0
West Europe	580.0	570.0	150.0	6.2	0.3	6.0

Source: <http://www.sta.go.jp/data/sekai/zuhyou/1403.xls>; UNAIDS: 2004 Report on the global AIDS epidemic: <http://www.unadis.org> 2004.7.

diseases and to provide status reports to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Although the two acts are part of the whole health policies package of Japan, some people take a critical stand to the government's priorities: the financial support of HIV/AIDS is prioritised over other health care issues and the budget increased although the number of HIV/AIDS cases is lower than for example the number of suicide cases (almost 30,000 every year).⁵

Another example of the government's priorities is the annual HIV/AIDS test week. Within the terms of the two acts, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare offers medical checks and HIV/AIDS consulting every year from June 1 to 7, and inform about the disease through broadcasting and other media. It should be noted though that the number of people who take the test has decreased.

As has been established, most HIV/AIDS cases are caused by sexual intercourses, but sex education for young people is not yet common in schools. Within the Tokyo metropolitan area for example, some elementary and secondary schools have tried to arrange classes. However, some parents and conservative groups opposed strongly to the idea and some of the local Committees on Education banned textbooks and other teaching materials. Teaching birth control to teenagers, including safe sex with condom, is still being strongly protested by parents and members of the elder generation. The very thought of instructing teenagers in the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS is a psychological burden for many elderly people - not of religious reasons but of reasons based on the canon idea of the Asian culture. Information about the use of condoms is not widespread

within the gay community either although more gay people are "coming out" in Japan. Teenage girls' prostitution called "En'kou" has grown over the last two decades and may likely accelerate the number of sexual transferred diseases.

Health information services at public libraries

There is a call in the Japanese society for different information materials not only about HIV/AIDS but also about SARS, Bird-Flu, BSE, Asbestosis and other diseases. Direct dissemination of such information is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare through local municipal health centres. However, the Medical and Health Insurance system in Japan is challenged, the number of elderly people is growing while the birth rate at the same time is decreasing. This situation causes instability with regard to the social security pension, and furthermore a growing sensitivity to personal health problems is seen in Japan.

Recently, Japanese public libraries established clients' health information services - that are the provision of medical and health information, including HIV/AIDS. Already in 1961, the Japanese Library Association published guidelines on reference services. Below are some interesting examples of guidelines that have affected the work of library professionals (Guidelines on Reference Work, Japan Library Association, 1961):

- “7. Do not accept inquiries which are regarded defamatory or damaging to people's life and possessions, or are causing direct bad influences in society
8. Do not answer inquiries related to the topics listed below; and be very careful if you choose to

- provide materials; rather refer to other professional institutions or professionals in each case:
- a. medical and health advice
 - b. legal advice
 - c. personal advice
 - d. inquires related to supposition or expectations of the future”

These old guidelines have affected reference work; thus health information services of public libraries have been hesitant and limited to traditional and “safe” inquiries. However, with the growth of HIV/AIDS and other new infectious diseases and of people’s anxieties over their future health condition, more libraries feel an obligation to provide health information. According to the survey in 2004⁶ on basic health information services at public libraries, 78.2% of the public libraries recognise the need for the provision of health information. The information resources at public libraries vary, and the use of databases is not yet widespread. Although most public libraries take circulation data and are counting reference inquiries, they do not analyse the content of inquiries. Basically, recognition of reference works is rare and so is analysis of inquiries, including medical/health information, among library professionals at public libraries who are not all qualified librarians. The survey showed that only 18.8% of the libraries answered that they observed the regulations to provide health information, and less than 50% had a staff manual on reference works.

While most libraries struggle to provide information on users’ demands, some prefecture libraries have already started health information services, for example, the Tokyo Metropolitan Library⁷ and Tottori

Prefectural Library⁸. They provide basic health information which refers to professional medical information centres in their community rather than current infectious diseases. Tokyo Metropolitan Library holds a special collection of books about how people struggle to fight their diseases and unhealthy state. The number of suicides in Japan is rather high, and one of the main reasons for committing suicide is bad health conditions. Therefore, libraries try to support people who have a tendency to become depressed by providing information - primarily printed materials.

Issues for the future

The survey⁹ also asked library staffs what, in their opinion, is required to disseminate health information at public libraries. Most librarians referred to the insufficiency of current, accurate, on demand, and user-friendly medical/health information of their collections as a barrier. Further to this the costs of improvement of services including databases are comparatively expensive.

Many commercial information materials aim to sell commodities or advertise herbal medicine/ folk remedies sometimes produced according to the knowledge of undesirable therapeutic cults. Librarians feel the need to evaluate the reliability of those materials. Librarians or library staffs without any academic background or experience in health care and medicine find it very difficult to select materials/ information. They are worried about the high-risks of providing wrong information to their users and of the possible bad effects this can cause. Also many inquiries may possibly relate to user privacy, therefore librarians and other library staffs are unsure about

their role as providers of health information. Not only librarians trained in the dissemination of health information are required for this service but also the appointment of full-time specialists. This model would help safeguard that public libraries can provide adequate health information to the public.

Special libraries such as hospital libraries and patients' libraries offer a wide range of health information to medical staffs and patients, they also serve the public¹⁰. However, there is a public demand for

including the provision of health information in the tasks of public libraries. This demand concerns not only health information on physical diseases like HIV/AIDS, SARS, Bird-Flu, BSE and other worldwide rapidly spread infections but also mental health care information about diseases and daily life.

The differences between rich and poor is not huge in Japan, but higher health expenditures and an increase in user payments make people hesitate to go to hospitals or medical centres (Figure 3).

Figure 3; Health: Expenditure, services, and use

	Health expenditure					Health expenditure per capita \$ 2002	Physicians Per 1,000 people		Hospital beds per 1,000 people	
	Total % of GDP 2002	public % of GDP 2002	public % of total 2002	out of pocket % of private 2002	external resources % of total 2002		1990	2004	1990	1995-2002
Low income	5.5	1.5	27.8	95.8	3.9	29.4	..	0.4
Middle income	6.0	3.0	49.4	82.7	0.5	109.1	1.6	1.7	3.6	3.7
Lower middle income	6.0	2.7	45.4	82.1	0.6	84.0	1.6	1.6	3.5	3.8
Upper middle income	6.0	3.4	57.6	84.1	0.5	309.8	1.7	1.8	3.8	3.4
Low & middle income	5.9	2.7	46.2	85.7	1.1	74.6	1.3	1.1	3.1	..
High income	11.1	6.6	63.3	36.6	0.0	3039.3	2.4	3.8	7.9	7.4
East Asia & Pacific	5.2	1.9	37.8	94.8	0.5	62.9	1.2	1.3	2.3	2.5
Japan	7.9	6.5	81.7	89.8	0.0	2476.0	1.7	2.0	16.0	16.5

Source: World Bank, 2005 World Development Indicators. Table 2.14 Health: expenditure, services, and use. <http://devdata.worldbank.org>

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5 In 2005, the number of suicides cases amounted 32,552 - an increase of 227 cases (0.7%) compared to the 2004 data. Among them 72.3% was men of which 47.3% were unemployed (15,409 persons). Main reasons were: health troubles (14,145 persons;

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The role of libraries in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information in Trinidad and Tobago

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Introduction

The AIDS pandemic represents one of the most life-altering public health issues of the twenty first century. Doubt and suspicion about its origin have arguably affected the emphasis placed on the determination of a cure, and the approach taken to seeking treatment; and also contributed to the generally negative attitude towards the illness. Like many other countries and regions globally, the Caribbean Region has been affected by HIV/AIDS. Regional and local governments and institutions have responded with policies and strategies aimed at mitigating the pandemic and at providing information about prevention and control.

A major regional initiative, The Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS 2002-2006¹ reports that in most of the Caribbean, the level of information on HIV/AIDS is high. It is noted that at country level, the various national HIV/AIDS programmes have produced information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns that have resulted

in raising the level of awareness about the condition. A wide number of partnering agencies and bodies contributed to this achievement including national governments, regional and international agencies, such as Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), UNAIDS: The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and its co-sponsors, and various non-governmental bodies working throughout the region.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the central strategy is the Five-year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan,² which is co-coordinated at the highest level by the Trinidad and Tobago National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC), under the aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister. The NACC performs a coordinating, monitoring and advisory role in respect of the national expanded response to HIV/AIDS.³ It is in this expanded response that many key partners across the various sectors within our country are engaged, including our Government Ministries as well as Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and other interest groups (Appendix 1).

This paper examines the distribution of HIV/AIDS information in Trinidad and Tobago through the work of selected key agents and explores the availability of information for distribution, dissemination mechanisms and practices, and the contribution of libraries to this effort. The paper also highlights the efforts of the National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC), The University of the West Indies HIV/AIDS Response Programme (UWIHARP), the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Caribbean AIDS Telecommunications and Information Network (CATIN), which is part of the dissemination initiative of the Special Programme on Sexually Transmitted Infection (SPSTI) of the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC).

In the library and information arena, we focus on the role of the public library services through the services offered by the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS). We also focus on libraries which offer services to hospitals in the public sector, on the UWI Medical Sciences Library (MSL) that supports the academic programmes of the UWI Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS), and on The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Virtual Health Library (TTVHL). In order to provide a sense of the environment in which library and information centres operate, the HIV/AIDS response in the Caribbean Region and in Trinidad and Tobago is described.

Background

HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean and in Trinidad and Tobago

The islands of the Caribbean constitute a geopolitical

region that is noted for its inviting tropical climate, scenic natural beauty, multicultural people, music, industry and natural resources. Because of the small size of the region and the proximity of the islands, historically, people have moved within and throughout the islands with a freedom and a sense of ease that have contributed to the economic development of the region and the cultural diversity of the peoples. Trinidad and Tobago is a twin island state lying at the southernmost tip of the chain of Caribbean islands. The development of the Caribbean is threatened by the spread of HIV/AIDS, but with the emergence of the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS in February 2001, the region has intensified its response to this challenge. As a member nation within the region, Trinidad and Tobago is equally challenged to address the pandemic. The five-year national HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan January 2004 - December 2008 is a comprehensive plan that provides a framework for action towards the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS

This is an initiative developed within the region with the objective of supporting national efforts to prevent and control the HIV epidemic and to mitigate its consequences at national levels. Highly representative of institutions and personnel in the Caribbean, the initiative is coordinated under the leadership of CARICOM and comprises a number of regional bodies, governments, national programme managers, donors, UN agencies and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS has developed a Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS 2002-2006. This

strategic framework offers the region a multi-sectoral expanded response for reducing the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS, by addressing common opportunities and challenges specific to the region and also identifying priority areas for action.

Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean

The Regional Strategic Framework reports that the Caribbean is heavily affected by HIV/AIDS. AIDS is already the leading cause of death in the 15-44 year age group. With an overall prevalence of approximately 2.11% among adults, the Caribbean is the hardest hit region in the world outside Sub-Saharan Africa. It is also reported that the UNAIDS estimates that close to 360,000 people in the region are living with the virus and some put this figure at 500,000. Further to this, of the 21 countries that make up the Caribbean, there are nine most affected in the region and both the regional totals of reported cases and the estimates of actual cases disguise a wide variation in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the region (See 1).

Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago

It is reported that HIV/AIDS was first diagnosed in Trinidad and Tobago in 1983, and since that time over 9,000 cases of HIV have been reported to the National Surveillance Unit with roughly 3,500 as reported cases of AIDS, as at April 2001. Of the eight counties that divide Trinidad, data as at March 2001 showed that the St George County in the north, and the island of Tobago had the highest number of reported HIV cases. At present, it can be said that all regions in both Trinidad and Tobago have been progressively affected. As obtains for the rest of the

Caribbean, it is estimated that the actual number of persons living with HIV is much higher. It is reported that in 2002, CAREC estimated that the prevalence rate for 2001 was 1.2 % of the population. With respect to women, it is also reported that the infection rate has increased significantly moving from 0% in 1983 to 37% in 2000, and that 82% of reported HIV infected women fall within the age group 15 to 45 years. High HIV/AIDS prevalence rates have also been reported for the high-risk groups such as Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), commercial sex workers and drug users (See 2).

Information distribution: mechanisms and practices - key agents

The National AIDS Coordinating Committee

Central strategy: The central strategy is the Five-year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, which is co-coordinated at the highest level by the NACC, under the aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister. This Committee provides access to reliable and up to date information, which is available in print, multimedia and electronic formats. To achieve its communication objectives, a National HIV/AIDS Communication Plan has been developed.

Information Education and Communication: The Communication Plan was developed with a broad range of stakeholders including NGOs, communication officers from key Government Ministries (the GIS), persons living with HIV and AIDS, PAHO, and representatives from the Island of Tobago. The key objectives are to:

- increase the population's knowledge regarding

access to treatment, care and support, and HIV prevention

- increase the number of persons seeking voluntary counselling and testing
- decrease HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

A number of strategies are employed to meet these objectives including the use of mass media such as newspapers, television and radio ads, quarterly reports, and a website. This website is hosted within a popular local web hosting service that provides links and contact information for local sources. Other information disseminated via the website includes video clips, music clips, and media spots, a quiz and frequently asked questions (FAQ) as well as public service announcements on responsible approaches to sexual activity. IEC materials such as the red ribbon pins, brochures and other giveaways bearing positive HIV prevention messages are also distributed.

Collaborative efforts: The NACC puts emphasis on collaborative efforts. For example, on World AIDS Day 2005, the keynote activity was an interfaith service in Tobago as part of the drive to focus the HIV and AIDS response increasingly on Tobago. This was a collaborative effort between the NACC, the Tobago House of Assembly, UNAIDS, and the membership of Tobago NGOs of the Trinidad and Tobago HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Inter-Religious Organization of Trinidad and Tobago (IRO).

Stigma and discrimination: With regard to specific strategies for decreasing stigma and discrimination, drama and edutainment strategies are employed. The NACC reports on a campaign to reduce stigma and

discrimination against those living with HIV and AIDS through the use of a Life Histories exhibition which highlights persons who have chosen to share their true life stories of what it actually feels like to live with AIDS, and some of the discriminatory actions they are forced to endure on a daily basis. This project was undertaken in collaboration with UNAIDS.

Partnerships in education: The NACC has reported on a partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Secondary Schools Drama Association (SSDA). This took the form of a Playwriting Workshop on HIV and AIDS. The stated objectives of this outreach activity were to:

- mobilise the educational community of school children, particularly secondary schools, to increase awareness, attitudes, and behaviour change through participation
- utilise the arts, particularly drama, as the vehicle for communicating strong and serious messages on HIV and AIDS.

Campaigns - Trinidad Carnival: In keeping with the mandate of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2004-2008, the NACC's carnival campaigns have been structured to specifically target the nation's youth. The campaigns are implemented throughout Trinidad and Tobago, with the theme: "What's Your Position" (WYP). The theme seeks to actively engage young people to respond to the HIV epidemic by answering this question and in return asking it of others. Several safe responses are offered, which focus on the ABC plus prevention messages: A-Abstain; B-Be Faithful; C-Condomize; D-Do get tested; E-Educate yourself. "What's Your Position" is used in

press and television advertisements, street banners, pennants, Disc Jockey and truck banners, bandannas, pouches and T-shirts. The message is further promoted through popular local artistes who have been commissioned to appeal to youth in particular.

Tobago Fest: Tobago Fest, which is held in September, on the island of Tobago comprises activities that are similar to Trinidad Carnival but on a smaller scale. The NACC has partnered with the Tobago Youth Council, the National Carnival Bandleaders Association (NCBA), and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) to distribute NACC/WYP/Red Ribbon T-shirts and IEC material with HIV prevention messages at all events. In 2005, banners were placed at Market Square (the main venue for public activities in Scarborough, Tobago) and on music trucks, which carried HIV prevention messages.

The University of the West Indies HIV/AIDS Response Programme (UWIHARP)

The University of the West Indies: UWI is a multi-campus university, the first campus of which was established in 1948 at Mona, Jamaica. Two additional campuses were subsequently established at St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago (1960) and Cave Hill, Barbados (1962). Today, the University of the West Indies comprises 3 main campuses and delivers programmes in thirteen other Caribbean states in the English-speaking Caribbean. The University of the West Indies has published a policy document on HIV/AIDS. This policy is widely available to the University Community and is disseminated through the UWI website.

Response programme: In August 2001, the UWIHARP was established. UWIHARP is an accelerated institutional response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic across the entire University - on the campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago as well as in the extramural centres. The objectives of the UWIHARP are accomplished through the effort of a multidisciplinary group. These efforts are dedicated to using the expertise of the University to work with other committed partners in combating HIV/AIDS and in mitigating its impact. In introducing the concept of UWIHARP to the campuses, focus groups and other stakeholders' meetings were held with the various faculties and with groups across the campuses. This had the effect of raising awareness about the condition as well as giving interested persons an opportunity to engage in the work required for the University's response.

Strategies: Membership of UWIHARP includes staff and students from across the region, and volunteerism is encouraged. The focus of UWIHARP's work is both internal and external, and includes workplace policies, campus driven activities, as well as curriculum reform to strengthen the knowledge and human resource base available to the Region. Particular areas of focus, with the support of the Strengthening the Institutional Response to HIV/AIDS/STI in the Caribbean (SIRHASC) project, have included Health Economics, Communication, Behavioural Sciences, Medicine, Nursing and Public Health. Conference themes have included curricular reform, behavioural change and education as a catalyst for combating HIV/AIDS. The main strategy for curricular reform has been to infuse HIV/AIDS into existing course offerings. The strategy for supporting prevention is

evident in the commitment to sensitising students, and to a comprehensive regime of voluntary counselling and testing. Collections of HIV/AIDS resource materials were purchased for libraries on the three campuses. At the St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago, The Health Economics Unit has done excellent work on the economic impact of HIV/AIDS.

Dissemination of information: UWIHARP distributes information via conferences and meetings, focus groups, and participation in international conferences. Papers published by academics have also been captured in other databases including the CATIN database, which includes papers and abstracts on the research done and presented at the Caribbean Health Research Council (CHRC) annual scientific meetings. UWIHARP maintains a website which disseminates information on its mission, goals and educational plan. It also maintains an archive of presentations from its conferences and links to other regional agencies. Information is also disseminated by planned campus activities, for example, seminars and intensified distribution of information on World AIDS Day and at other appropriate fora.

Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Health

Mission and programmes: The mission of the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Health (MOH) is to promote wellness and provide quality health care in an affordable, efficient, equitable and sustainable manner. The Ministry embarked on a programme of health sector reform in 1997 and has since introduced a number of programmes and projects to improve the health status of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. One of the many special programmes that have been intro-

duced is the National AIDS Programme (NAP). Two important divisions, the Health Education Division and the Community Health Division engage in outreach activities in educating the public in HIV/AIDS information. In outlining the approach to the challenge of HIV/AIDS, the Ministry has reported that it is attacking the AIDS problem in a holistic manner.

RAPPORT - Youth arm of NAP: The Ministry promotes peer education and counselling programmes aimed at both youths and parents, enhancing the capabilities of the NAP to respond to programme demands; and encourages religious groups, the private sector and NGOs to participate in the national response. The youth arm of the NAP is called RAPPORT. The watchwords are: Responsible, Adaptable, Positive, Progressive, Original, Reliable, Tenacious. RAPPORT provides three drop-in centres in Port of Spain, Arima and San Fernando and disseminates HIV/AIDS information as part of its education and communication strategy. Members disseminate information at training centres, churches and schools. The facilitators at RAPPORT also engage in peer education. Upon request, they attend PTA meetings where they conduct interactive sessions for parents and children. These sessions include dramatic performances and distribution of reading materials. Other activities include the preparation of display booths which are provided at family days and sports days, and which are staffed by resource persons who are prepared to provide information in discussion and on a one to one basis.

Involvement of Health Centres: Primary Health Care is a major aspect of the new health sector reform programme, and it is reported that the Ministry of

Health is of the view that the establishment of an efficient primary health care system is the key to real improvement in the nation's health services. From the perspective of access to information, the network of healthcare facilities can be viewed as an effective vehicle for the distribution of HIV/AIDS materials. At many health centres there are health promotion activities. Regular displays are mounted on topical issues, and HIV/AIDS posters are generally highlighted. These health centres supply brochures, pamphlets and other materials to the medical library services for distribution.

The Caribbean AIDS Telecommunications and Information Network (CATIN)/ CAREC

Specialised services: Specialised health libraries in Trinidad and Tobago include the Documentation Centre of the Port of Spain office of the Pan American Health Organisation/World Health Organisation, and the information and library services of the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC). The Caribbean AIDS Telecommunications and Information Network (CATIN) is part of the dissemination initiative of SPSTI, which is a CAREC programme. A resource centre which is attached to the SPSTI forms part of the CATIN network. CATIN takes advantage of the characteristics of the Internet to make the dissemination of information more immediate and its system capabilities are being upgraded to promote interactivity as well. For the moment, however, information is also sent by direct mail to national and regional organisations on demand or in outreach mode. The focus is on partnerships with the national community and with the media. Accordingly, sensitisation of media professionals and training of journalists to

more accurately and responsibly cover the pandemic is also a part of the communication strategy of SPSTI.

Partnership with the media: Collaboration with the media is valued for both dissemination of information, and for partnerships in addressing and advocating for action on issues relating to HIV/AIDS prevention and control. As an example of partnership in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information, it is noted that a popular booklet of frequently asked questions on HIV/AIDS which was developed by SPSTI was distributed by one of the country's leading newspapers as part of its contribution to providing information on World AIDS Day a few years ago. This publication represents one of several products developed by CAREC/SPSTI to provide information and guidelines for dealing with the epidemic. The newspaper included the booklet as part of its value added service to its readers, circulating approximately 60,000 copies to the national community. The response was so resounding that both the NACC and the NAP had to reprint several thousands to satisfy the demand. Other initiatives have included radio and television programmes that have been done in collaboration with the national television system and other broadcast houses.

Workshops: Complementing the information and communication strategy of SPSTI are several workshops. Participants from the media community and other sectors involved in HIV/AIDS prevention are targeted. One of these, for instance, was a workshop attended by 34 participants from the labour sector, NGOs, legal profession and government representatives. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together participants in the fields of law, labour, pub-

lic policy, information and public health to discuss aspects of stigma and discriminatory acts against persons living with HIV and AIDS. The primary objectives were to promote a better understanding of the factors that lead to stigma and discrimination and their effects on PLWHA, and to utilize the health promotion approach to ensure that the key dimensions of stigma and discrimination were addressed.

Information distribution: mechanisms and practices - libraries

Libraries and librarians are potentially valuable collaborators in HIV/AIDS information, education and communication projects and should champion and demonstrate the role of information as a catalyst for change. There is evidence that in Trinidad and Tobago, libraries have taken some steps towards a proactive stance, in becoming sensitive to the needs of this clientele, creating partnerships and undertaking collaborative roles in the distribution of information about the pandemic.

In order to gauge the perceptions of library staff regarding the availability of services on HIV/AIDS, input was solicited from library staff at selected libraries. The information collected was guided by a brief questionnaire and discussion which sought responses regarding facilities and services, the depth of the collection, strategies for the dissemination of information; and about some key issues such as confidentiality, privacy and the training of staff to provide service to this clientele. Information was sought from NALIS and from local health libraries.

National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS)

The National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) manages all libraries in Trinidad, in the public sector, including public, special and school libraries. In Tobago, a separate department under the aegis of the Tobago House of Assembly coordinates public sector library services. In dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it would be useful to look at the role of the NALIS Public Libraries Division as it services the needs of a wide cross section of the population.

Public Libraries Division - North Region Libraries

Library service to the North Region covers a geographical area from Diego Martin at the western end, to Mayaro on the eastern shore of the island. Included in this area are the capital city, Port of Spain, and a spread of heavily populated urban towns. Parts of this region are reported to have a high incidence of HIV/AIDS, large numbers of young people, and single parent families. Service is offered via a system of branch libraries in the major towns and a book mobile service that is offered to the outlying rural areas. The book mobile service is usually operated alongside community centres, schools, and police stations. A book-drop service is also provided. A new service to the housebound and aged was recently launched and is provided at present in one district, with plans to expand the service to others. It has been reported that in reaching out to the community, staff of the Library Service encounter both PLWHA and their caregivers.

With respect to HIV/AIDS information, library personnel report that the collections are adequate for meeting users' needs, with the collections covering all the priority areas other than materials related to analysis/ programme design/ surveillance/ management and resource mobilization. We have noted that this finding is expected because specialists are more likely to go to the special libraries of NALIS to acquire such information.

The libraries in this region all provide services such as borrowing; reading & reference; access to computers; access to the Internet; printing and photocopying. Staff members are reportedly sensitized as well as trained to deal with HIV/AIDS queries and users, though it is felt that with frequent changes in staff, this function may, on occasion, be overlooked. There is easy access to the HIV/AIDS collection, however on account of scarce resources, branch libraries have limited physical spaces and privacy is not readily afforded in the reading areas. It has been noted however that users - including many secondary level students who have been required to research the topic - are not hesitant about asking for HIV/AIDS information.

There is no charge for registration at the branch libraries. Printing and photocopying are provided as assisted services and attract a small fee. Borrowing and reference queries are both assisted and self-help. Unfortunately, materials that are thought to be vulnerable, e.g. most local works, and topical materials pertaining to issues such as domestic abuse, drug abuse, pregnancy, STDs and HIV/AIDS, may have to be kept in closed access. Lending of these materials is recorded manually.

The branch libraries are also active in outreach services and have distributed pamphlets, brochures and educational materials at the libraries. HIV/AIDS resources are highlighted on the NALIS website which is accessible to the public via the Internet. HIV/AIDS posters are displayed, and workshops and seminars on HIV/AIDS have been hosted. Other services include the distribution of promotional material and the hosting of drama and other cultural presentations depicting HIV/AIDS issues. The administrator responsible for the region has an open disposition to partnering with interest groups to conduct seminars etc. There is a firm drive on the part of all to engage the communities, to target and reach special groups and to support each other. Both the library and community are committed to achieving common goals, such as raising the levels of literacy among young people thought to be at risk, particularly young males.

Public Libraries Division - Port of Spain Libraries

The headquarters for NALIS and the National Library is located in Port of Spain. Three (3) major public libraries operate out of the headquarters and address the reading and reference needs of adults, youth, and children. Because of the location in the densely populated capital, and the beauty and novelty of this new building, the demand for service at these libraries is extremely high.

The Adult Library and the Young Adult Library - The HIV/AIDS collections at both libraries are rated as inadequate, although many of the priority areas are covered, with the exception of prevention of transmission to vulnerable groups, and resource mobili-

zation. It is reported that plans are already in place to increase the collection. In one instance collection development has been informed by the HIV/AIDS title listing prepared by the UWI Medical Sciences Library. There is easy access to the existing HIV/AIDS collections, and there is adequate seating accommodation that affords privacy at the reading carrels.

The libraries are quite modern with state of the art technology thus providing all expected services (borrowing, reading and reference, access to computers, access to Internet, and printing and photocopying). There are no charges for registration, Internet access, prints or photocopying, and the user has options of self-help or staff assistance for services (printing, photocopying, borrowing and reference).

Staff members are not trained or sensitised to deal with HIV/AIDS queries or users, and this has been recognized as an area that needs to be addressed as a priority, because there are many queries on this subject. Regular displays and posters are mounted. Staff members are not individually involved in outreach activities since another department within NALIS assumes responsibility for outreach. The building is well-appointed with seminar rooms, an amphitheatre and an audiovisual centre to accommodate these events.

The Children's Library - HIV/AIDS was not perceived as subject matter for the Children's Library and most of the questions were found to be not applicable. Staff reported that the scope of the collection and the information supplied are related to the demand for particular materials by parents, given the age and nature of the library's clientele. Also, it was noted that the

library attempts to respond to the changing needs of its clientele in the area of collection development. In the past, discussions have been conducted with children and parents at an informal workshop. As part of future plans, staffs are willing to host workshops on a larger scale, facilitated by trained professionals.

Government of Trinidad and Tobago Medical Library Services

A network of libraries comprising the Medical Library Services (MLS) serves the Ministry of Health, the Regional Health Authorities as well as the hospital libraries and health centres in Trinidad. In Tobago, the Healthcare Information Resource Centre (HIRC) a facility of the Tobago Regional Health Authority provides a service for healthcare providers and managers. Within the MLS network, there are significant collections attached to some of the major hospitals throughout Trinidad and smaller collections at additional health facilities. The general and technical administration is centralized at Port of Spain, and this has facilitated service in the smaller locations where staff and other resources are limited. With respect to access to HIV/AIDS information, the collections of the MLS have been described as adequate. These collections cover all the priority areas. The expected range of services is available - borrowing, reading and reference, access to computers, access to the Internet, printing and photocopying - and staff members are sensitized to deal with HIV/AIDS queries and users, but are not trained in dealing with both. Access to the HIV/AIDS collection is easy and user privacy is guaranteed in these libraries. There is no charge for registration and Internet access, but printing and photocopying both carry a charge, although free

prints and photocopies of information are given to members of the public based on the librarians' discretion. All services, printing, photocopying, borrowing and reference, are mediated.

The libraries are all involved in outreach services, such as distribution of pamphlets and brochures, displaying HIV/AIDS posters, and distribution of promotional material, and HIV/AIDS topics are highlighted via the Ministry's website and the TTVHL. The libraries are involved in hosting workshops, seminars and lectures on HIV/AIDS, but not on a regular basis. In the past, the library service has partnered with the Health Education Division in a successful outreach HIV/AIDS display project in the streets of the capital, Port of Spain, as well as partnered with the Community Health Division to give support to a school competition on HIV/AIDS. In the very recent past, the library coordinated a seminar at the Caura Hospital library on STDs, the featured topic being HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Also, at this seminar, library staff assisted with the free distribution of condoms. Further, it is reported that there is a plan to have computers placed in kiosks and networked at Health Centres throughout the island.

Tobago Regional Health Authority: Healthcare Information Resources Centre

The HIRC describes its electronic collection as adequate and covering all priority areas. The usual library services such as borrowing, reading and reference, access to Internet, access to computers, and printing and copying, are available. At the HIRC, the reading area does not offer the user privacy, but staff members are sensitized and trained to deal with

HIV/AIDS queries. They are not, however, sensitized and trained to deal with HIV users. Services - printing, photocopying, borrowing and reference - are assisted, and though there is no charge for Internet access or registration with the library, there are charges for prints and photocopying. The HIRC is not involved with distribution of pamphlets or brochures, or drama and other cultural presentations, but the Centre displays HIV/AIDS posters and highlight HIV/AIDS topics on its website. The Centre is guided by the Freedom of Information Act of Trinidad and Tobago.

UWI Medical Sciences Library

The Medical Sciences Library (MSL) serves the academic programmes of the UWI Faculty of Medical Sciences. This library was opened in 1989 at the same time that teaching commenced at the Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS). The MSL is a member of the UWI St. Augustine Campus Libraries system but is physically located with the FMS and has a strong working relationship with the Faculty. The MSL collection reflects the curricular objectives of the Faculty and also responds to the teaching and research interests. The collection includes electronic resources, books, journals, multimedia materials, vertical files and newspaper clippings. The Library provides information on HIV/AIDS through circulation of materials in the general collection, identification of relevant materials in databases and periodic displays featuring vertical file materials, posters and brochures. The MSL received funding from UWIHARP/SIRHASC programme to improve its collection of HIV/AIDS material and subsequently produced a booklet listing these titles. The booklet, was widely distributed within

the University community, and has been used to guide collection development on the other campuses. Library staff regularly mounts HIV/AIDS-themed displays both within the library and on invitation at conferences. The library responds positively to information request from students for promotional HIV/AIDS materials.

The MSL engaged in a significant partnering activity under the aegis of the UWIHARP/SIRHASC programme. Staff at the MSL observed the need to sensitize information providers about the HIV/AIDS pandemic as well as the strategies required to find the most suitable information for persons requiring such on HIV/AIDS. A training workshop was therefore organized for information professionals. The workshop "*Building the capacity of library and information professionals to support persons affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic*" was held May 11th and 12th, 2004.

The major teaching and learning objectives were to:

- sensitize a core group of library and information personnel to the psychosocial and economic issues regarding HIV/AIDS.
- identify major resources and useful search strategies in the retrieval of information on HIV/AIDS.

The twenty-eight participants were mainly from Trinidad and Tobago and were drawn from academic, public, school and special libraries. Two participants from academic libraries in Barbados and Jamaica respectively attended the workshop. Included in the workshop was a keynote address "*Sensibilities and Sensitivities surrounding STI/HIV diagnosis*" which provided participants with information on the current situation with HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean generally and Trinidad and Tobago in particular. There

was also an interactive session on the psychosocial aspects of HIV/AIDS. In addition, a librarian from the MSL delivered a presentation on best practices in funding information on HIV/AIDS. A display included video presentations, and books on HIV/AIDS were available to the participants. There was opportunity for questions and answers regarding the concerns of participants. In the plenary session, participants shared awareness about information available to the public on HIV/AIDS.

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Virtual Health Library (TTVHL)

This is a recent national initiative, which is sanctioned by the Ministry of Health, and is supported by the PAHO/Centre for Health Sciences Information (BIREME) in Brazil, in collaboration with major stakeholders, NALIS and the MSL. The TTVHL provides access to bibliographic databases of local, regional and international research relating to health issues in Trinidad and Tobago, and is positioned to be the major response to providing consumer health information at the national level including HIV/AIDS information. At present, information on HIV/AIDS is readily available to the public through a prepared subject search, which generates results on the subject. It is planned that a pilot project which places computers in hospitals to enable public access to the VHL will be instituted. This plan has tremendous potential for the distribution of HIV/AIDS information. Medical Librarians in Trinidad and Tobago view this as a welcome initiative to facilitate and plan to promote the TTVHL as a tool for increasing health information literacy.

Recommendations

Libraries and HIV/AIDS - a conceptual framework

The concept of the library is that it should provide accurate and timely information to its users. Library responses include the provision of facilities and services, both traditional and web-based, including websites or specialty portals, fact sheets, clinical reference sources, journals, multimedia materials, information outreach through library research and document delivery.

In responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, libraries and librarians can embrace opportunities to step beyond the traditional roles, engage with various communities of users and become a catalyst for spreading information and knowledge to the wider community. This can be done through hosting events, facilitating seminars on the priority areas, advocating for the inclusion of materials in the collection, using the issues of HIV/AIDS as the subject matter for teaching information literacy skills, and distribution of free literature. Librarians must commit to facilitating the acquisition of knowledge in order to contribute to the conversion of knowledge into the wisdom that is required for behavioural change.

Service to NGO's

One constituency that may present a challenge is the NGO community, many members of which do not have library and information centres and to whom services could be provided as a support mechanism for the national effort. Libraries have been well recognized as educational entities serving large populations

and are thus poised to create outreach services and to assist in the identification of information appropriate to the specific clientele. In this regard, information for teaching and learning designed for the use of different levels of clientele and available in a mix of media materials is warranted.

Strengthening collections and services

With regard to collection management, librarians should advocate for the strengthening of collections. Staff should also be trained to ensure that the necessary skills are present to deal with the information needs of clientele and to deal with HIV/AIDS users. Appropriate facilities and services must be made available to disadvantaged or physically distant groups and populations. Segmenting the response such that there are different resources for clinicians as opposed to patients, as well as support materials for the families of those living with the condition, is an important consideration. Information about coping mechanisms, medical, social, and economic issues must be provided.

Internet resources - health information literacy

There is a great deal of information available in electronic format through the medium of the Internet. If the clientele has the required literacy level to utilise these resources, then the challenge of libraries would be to ensure that the clientele understands the issues of selection of useful information from the wide range that is available: that is, how to search efficiently so that they may retrieve useful and accurate information. The librarian has a teaching and education role, and can facilitate the development of skills

such that information needs are better discerned. In addition, information-seeking behaviour can be improved with appropriate strategies and interventions.

Improving access and dissemination

Due to the current proliferation of information, the major challenge often is in providing access points such that potential users are aware of the availability of the information, and that appropriate information is provided in a format that would make it immediately useful. Libraries can provide links to legitimate organisations, to slide shows, or other multimedia, and could display these for continuous looped viewing. In supplying information on health issues, it is particularly important that the information provided should do no harm to the person requesting or accessing it. Libraries therefore need to provide such information with a proviso that it does not constitute medical advice. In such instances, the library's role is not as producers of information but rather compiler and disseminator.

Privacy

In the dissemination of health information, privacy becomes an important issue since it is likely that persons may wish to access this information without exposing their interest in the subject. The patron may fear that it would be perceived that they might have the disease or condition. This would be especially true of HIV/AIDS since the issue of stigma and discrimination is very much a part of the management of the condition. The library therefore has a particular challenge and responsibility in providing such information in a discreet manner if this is what

is needed. There is a challenge to library staff as well, since they are likely to be working in a context in which sexual behaviour is still discussed with relative unease.

Libraries as stakeholders in the HIV/AIDS research process

Another issue that challenges librarians is that many HIV/AIDS projects do not focus on the issue of dissemination of information, but on research and on medical responses to the issue. Libraries must support the information needs of users involved in research and surveillance and must recognize and champion the concept of information as a facilitating commodity. Librarians should become more proactive in promoting the library as place for dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS as well a major stakeholder in the research process.

Conclusion

What is the library's response to the challenge of disseminating HIV/AIDS information, especially in the context of the goal of 'health information for all by the year 2015'? It has been noted that many of the strategies that are in place for addressing the pandemic include projects for developing or, at least, acquiring appropriate materials for distribution. These projects also tend to focus on alleviation and on communication and not necessarily on the need for dissemination of information through public libraries. In a recent analysis of the role of libraries in HIV/AIDS information dissemination in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is pointed out, that "*a gap appears to exist between the recognition of the importance of*

*information in combating HIV/AIDS and the role of libraries as sources of useful information.*²⁴

We submit that librarians should be minded to position themselves in the forefront of the communication thrust by emphasizing their expertise in the disseminating of information; by advocating for and ensuring easy and accurate retrieval of information; by engaging in meaningful partnerships with, and by empowering the citizenry with enduring health information literacy skills. In Trinidad and Tobago, the existence of a framework for national action towards the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS creates a fertile space for partnerships and for interventions by the library community to assist in scaling up the national response to the pandemic.

Notes

1 CARICOM, Pan-Caribbean Partnership on HIV/AIDS (2002): "The Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS 2002-2006". [Georgetown, Guyana]: CARICOM. Based on an earlier document produced in September 2000 by the Caribbean Task Force on HIV/AIDS. <http://www.pancap.org/documents/pancapstrategicframework.pdf>

2 Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Office of the Prime Minister (2003): Five-Year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan: January, 2004 - December, 2008. [Port-of-Spain, Trinidad]: Office of the Prime Minister

3 The Government has adopted a governance structure which includes among other things:

- (a) Office of the Prime Minister, which has the responsibility for the management and evaluating the results of the response;
 - (b) National AIDS Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee (NACC), which includes the participation of major HIV/AIDS stakeholder groups, such as representatives of relevant public and private institutions, NGOs, PLWA, health care providers, civil society advocates, and international agencies working in the field (such as CAREC/PAHO/WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP);
 - (c) Tobago HIV/AIDS Coordination Office: The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) is responsible for the coordination of National Response and project activities in Tobago;
 - (d) HIV/AIDS Focal Points in Government Ministries and Agencies;
 - (e) Non-governmental, faith-based and community-based organizations which, depending on their comparative advantages, focus on serving the needs of specific target groups. <http://www.planning.gov.tt/media/release.asp?id=3185>
- 4 U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (2005): "The Role of Libraries in HIV/AIDS Information Dissemination in Sub-Saharan Africa." Washington, D.C.: U.S. NCLIS.

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- The Caribbean AIDS Telecommunications and Information Network
<http://catin.org/>
- Ministry of Health: Health Sector Reform Programme of Trinidad and Tobago
<http://www.healthsectorreform.gov.tt/>
- The National Library of Trinidad and Tobago: <http://www.nalis.gov.tt/>
- The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS: <http://www.pancap.org/>
- Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Virtual Health Library: <http://www.vhl.org.tt/html/en/home.html>
- Triniscene.com. what's your position: <http://www.triniscene.com/wyp.php>
- The University of the West Indies Policy on HIV/AIDS:
<http://sta.uwi.edu/media/releases/2006/uwihivpolicy.pdf>
- The University of the West Indies HIV/AIDS Response Programme: <http://uwiharp.uwi.edu/>

APPENDIX I

Selection of organisations involved in treatment, care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago

The following list is based on a document prepared by students of the Faculty of Medical Sciences for an HIV Symposium 2006, and is not exhaustive.

- AIDS Rescue Mission
- CARITAS AIDS Ministries
- Community Action Resources (CARE)
- Cyril Ross Nursery
- Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago
- Friends for Life
- Heart to Heart HIV/AIDS Home Care
- Medical Research Foundation of Trinidad and Tobago
- National AIDS Hotline
- Peer Educators for Sexual Health
- Queen's Park Counselling Centre
- South AIDS Support
- The National AIDS Hotline
- Tobago AIDS Society
- Tobago Oasis Foundation
- Tobago Youth Council
- Toco Foundation
- Trinidad and Tobago Community Advisory Board
- Trinidad and Tobago HIV/AIDS Alliance
- Trinidad and Tobago Midwives Association
- Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society
- Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association

Faith based organisations

- Adventist Layperson in Services and Industries

- Caribbean Conference of Churches
- Faith Revival Ministries

Organisations involved in human rights and advocacy

- Artists Against AIDS
- Advocates for Safe Parenthood Improving Reproductive Equity (ASPIRE)
- Advocates for Youth and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
- Rape Crisis Society
- Trinidad and Tobago Centre for Human Rights Equity and Justice
- Trinidad and Tobago Coalition against Domestic Violence
- Trinidad and Tobago Coalition for the Rights of the Child
- Family First Foundation for Children and Youth at risk
- Caribbean Feminist Research Association
- Women Working for Social Progress

Organisations responsible for programme management and evaluation, prevention and control

- National AIDS Coordinating Committee Secretariat (NACC)
- National AIDS Programme (NAP)
- Rapport (Responsible, Adaptable, Positive, Progressive, Original, Reliable, Tenacious.)

Organisation involved in research and surveillance

- The Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC)

The experience of Cuban libraries in preventing STI/HIV/AIDS

Margarita Pobeá Reyes

Region: Central America and the Caribbean

Introduction

Whenever a general practitioner, an expert, a researcher or any other interested Latin American user asks a librarian about the characteristics of the services rendered by information centres and libraries for the prevention and control of Sexually Transmitted Infections/Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (STI/HIV/AIDS), the answer is that there are many digital products and services that are available on the Internet. This is an encouraging start, but other questions immediately arise: how can you obtain such necessary information? And this same question leads you to another one. Do all the men, women, children and teenagers of this region really have access to those pieces of information?

To answer these questions, one must take into consideration the statistics provided by the reports of some

international institutions regarding the alarming illiteracy figures in Latin America.

In this regard, it must be pointed out that “12% of the population of the countries in this geographical region is illiterate”, that is, 42 million illiterate people live in these territories and also 110 million young people have not been able to finish their elementary education studies. Poverty, gender inequality, lack of access to healthcare services and all sorts of discrimination are factors that, among others, play a key role in human vulnerability to STI/HIV/AIDS¹.

It is well known that over 90% of the global population has no access to the Internet, that nearly 90% of those who visit the Web are living in the developed countries of North America, Europe and Asia and that the Internet is a chimera or a dream for the vast majority of the third world inhabitants.

World Statistics of Internet and Population

Regions	Population (2006 Est.)	% World population	Most recent data about users	% Population	% World use	Growth (2000-2005)
Africa	915,210,928	14.1 %	22,737,500	2.5 %	2.2 %	403.7 %
Asia	3,667,774,066	56.4 %	364,270,713	9.9 %	35.7 %	218.7 %
Europe	807,289,020	12.4 %	290,121,957	35.9 %	28.5 %	176.1 %
Middle East	190,084,161	2.9 %	18,203,500	9.6 %	1.8 %	454.2 %
North America	331,473,276	5.1 %	225,801,428	68.1 %	22.2 %	108.9 %
Latin America/Caribbean	553,908,632	8.5 %	79,033,597	14.3 %	7.8 %	337.4 %
Oceania/Australia	33,956,977	0.5 %	17,690,762	52.9 %	1.8 %	132.2 %
World TOTAL	6,499,697,060	100.0 %	1,018,057,389	15.7 %	100.0 %	182.0 %

Source: Miniwatts Marketing Group

In Latin America, the basic needs of men and women such as eating and quenching thirst, communicating at a distance (through a non-sophisticated telephone set), going to school, and learning how to read and write represent a dream that for most people will never come true.

Such realities make us understand that not all the citizens from this part of the world can get to know the digital products and services available for answering their questions. Neither can they access the Internet to keep abreast of the latest health care programmes that have been created to help HIV/AIDS patients. Also the fact that there are a high number of illiterate people in this region adds to the information problems that deprive people from using ICTs.

The efforts made by relevant bodies to halt the increase of this pandemic have not been completely successful, since its devastating effects continue to have an impact mainly in the groups of males having sex with other males within the 15-24 years age group; and of female and male sex workers, according to data from UNAIDS, a UN programme, and from the annual report of the World Health Organization (WHO). The above-mentioned document states that “*in the year 2005, the rate of infected people in Latin America rose by 1.8 million*”.

Other data that speak for themselves are those of adults and children living with HIV that reached 1.8 million, whereas women living with the disease amounted to 580,000. The figure of new HIV cases in adults and children, which was 200,000, is also mean-

ingful. The HIV prevalence rate in adults is 0.6%, and the number of adult and child deaths from AIDS is set at 66,000.

It is estimated that 0.4% of females and 0.6% of males lived with HIV in 2005. The highest levels of HIV infection are found in men having sex with other men (2% - 28% in different areas) and in female sex workers (0-6.3%). ^{Ref.: 2, 3}

According to Dr Peter Piot's statements, UNAIDS General Director, in the annual report of 2005, "the new data show that the HIV infection rates in adults have decreased in some countries and that behavioural changes to prevent infection - for example, a wider use of condoms, delay in first sexual experience and reduced number of sex partners - have played a decisive role in this decrease".

However, the report points out that HIV transmission tendencies have not ceased to increase and that new and more intensive prevention efforts to slow down the epidemic are needed. ^{Ref.: 3}

Obviously, one of the most effective ways for prevention and promotion is direct work with the population, which is only possible when the health promoters carry out their work in villages, cities, schools, towns, neighbourhoods, slums, etc.

Community-wide work includes comprehensive care by health managers of each community or sector, and is aimed at considering the person as the unit in various aspects of physical, mental and social development, and not just as carriers of disorders or diseases. Community-wide work contributes to prevent health

problems through the promotion and teaching of individual and family self-care and helps to better understand hygienic and care measures that should be taken in relation to various diseases.

On the other hand, this work at the community level allows the population to become aware of the fact that many health problems stem from social, cultural, educational, organisational, economic and other kinds of issues. Therefore, coordination with other sectors and the political willingness of each government are necessary to direct all those initiatives that contribute to improving general living conditions.

This service at the community level is essential to solve health problems, hence the importance of permanent training and education for health promoters as well as for members of the community.

However, responsibility for the improvement, preservation and promotion of healthcare actions should be shared by the social and institutional sectors, and the population itself must be involved in this endeavour so that it can participate in the diagnosis of needs, search of solutions, and implementation and assessment of actions and their follow-up.

The role of Cuban libraries

One of the main priorities of information centres and libraries should be to support the implementation of healthcare programmes set up by governments and ministries for the world anti-AIDS campaign. Libraries participation is essential for the search and location of relevant and reliable information.

Librarians at all levels should use technological advances to extend the scope of their services beyond the library context and meet the users' requirements, but they should also use conventional methods like data collection, taking into account the local environment where they perform their work. This element is fundamental in the case of Latin America where only 7.8% of the population is connected to the Internet. It must be remembered that, according to UN statistics, only 79,033,597 persons in the region have access to the Internet.

Despite its well-trained human resources, Cuba could not access the Web until 1996, a direct result of the US blockade, since the network is dominated by the USA. With poor resources for adequate investments, connecting through satellites at a higher cost and lower speeds, and purchasing state-of-the-art technology at high costs from distant markets, Cuba sets out an alternative development model for Internet use. Cuba favours wide social use of this great advance in the fields of education, science, technology, health, mass media, and culture; and in the development of the most important branches of the national economy. This is a more democratic path to access technology and knowledge in the face of the great inequalities and injustice worldwide.

Cuba has increased computer use in a number of institutions and organizations because this meets the development requirements of the country. At present, Cuba has 377,000 computers available, a 26% increase in relation to 2004, representing 3.4 per 100 inhabitants. This result from the implementation of plans and programmes aimed at extending the application of information and computer technologies by the Cuban

society, as part of the programme called "*Battle of Ideas*" in which the Cuban people are actively involved. ^{Ref.: 4}

Polyclinic libraries and community net works

Taking into account this situation, higher impact products are designed to be at the disposal of everybody. Likewise, efforts are made so that services can be directed towards a reduction of health problems affecting the population and a better understanding of the prevention and control of sexually-transmitted diseases. One example of the above-mentioned is the computer and informatic programme of the network of polyclinic libraries. This is due to the importance of primary care in the Cuban health care model; and these programmes are identified as fundamental for the national scientific-technical information network in the healthcare sector.

The polyclinic libraries provide family physicians with adequate services, facilitating their access to information. This explains the reason why this level was prioritised in terms of automation as soon as the country had better economic and financial conditions to foster these programmes.

It cannot be ignored that the potential of the Internet is enormous but the availability of information in databases and on websites is not enough. It is also required that librarians be part of the multidisciplinary teams in charge of community-wide work, such as family physicians, educators, psychologists, epidemiologists, sexologists and health promoters. All this will allow them to better understand the surrounding problems and even prepare themselves as health promoters and carry out independent work if necessary.

It is true that the introduction of new technologies in the scientific-information sphere has brought about a noticeable increase in the dissemination of products and services that are electronically provided by the Internet. However, we must not forget that there are still a lot of people in this part of the world that do not have access to computers or do not know how to use them. It can not be expected that mere design and fine-tuning of services and/or products by electronic means will provide a solution to the problem of access to information about sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS in particular.

National Centre of Medical Information and BiblioSIDA

The National Centre of Medical Information of the Republic of Cuba is an institution that was created 40 years ago to develop a national network of medical and health libraries. This centre coordinates the work of the information units that make up the National System of Health Scientific and Technical Information in Cuba. The National Medical Library (BMN) is in charge of methodologically leading a network of 838 libraries and information centres at different levels. The centre has encouraged the use of information and communication technologies to accomplish its mission, and since 1992 its network called "*Informed*"^{Ref.: 5} supports the exchange of information and formation of practicing communities in a virtual space. The Virtual Library of Health project integrates information resources and services, and the National Medical Library acts as a node with national coverage.

The mission of the National Medical Library (BMN)

is to assure the provision of scientific-technological information services to the community of professionals who make up the healthcare sector in the country. This will raise the quality of medical assistance, research, management, teaching and the new medical culture, and will facilitate finding solutions that help to manage health problems in Cuba and in other countries.^{Ref.: 6}

The BMN today offers a service called "*BiblioSIDA*", a pilot project of prevention and promotion work in Area #102, located in Vedado, Plaza de la Revolución municipality, City of Havana. This service is aimed at children, teenagers and young people from elementary to junior high schools and to the general public who pay a visit to the institution. Its objective is to encouraging changes in behavioural and attitudinal patterns of these population segments in relation to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

In the first stage, the objectives of the BiblioSIDA service were to keep users updated on topics like:

- Incidence of sexually transmitted diseases in the Cuban population
- Importance of the use of condoms
- Sexuality, including homosexuality and tolerance, and
- Legal aspects of the right of ill people to integrate into the society.

The experts and health promoters from the national and provincial STI/HIV/AIDS centres, the National Centre of Sexual Education (CENESEX), the University of Havana and Menocal Sanatorium in San José de las Lajas municipality were giving their support to this task.

For the second phase, the National Medical Library calls upon all the librarians from polyclinics in the City of Havana to prepare themselves as health promoters, since polyclinics are the basic units of the Cuban healthcare system which, together with family physicians and other professionals, are members of the territorial teams responsible for preventing HIV/AIDS and educating the general population about the characteristics of this disease. Later on, all librarians from the health areas throughout the country will be prepared as health promoters.

Additionally, the BMN carries out activities, to develop a general comprehensive culture of both healthcare workers and the population, which are mainly directed to promote reading in response to the National Reading Promotion Programme. Such activities are included in the extended library services that take printed information to neighbourhoods, schools, and family physicians' offices.

To this end, participatory activities such as presentations of scientific books by the authors, and exhibitions of and debates on scientific videos and films are held. Also, qualified health professionals give lectures and bibliographic bulletins are disseminated.

The National Medical Library intends that both children and adults should have access to information and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health-related services, which will mitigate the risks of infections like HIV/AIDS and of unwanted pregnancies, among other complications. Added to this, is the joint work of the Ministries of Public Health and of Education through mass media that broadcast sev-

eral didactic and recreational programmes to inform the population about the risks and perils of these diseases. Therefore, these topics are widely covered throughout the nation.

Likewise, note the commendable work performed by the 414 public libraries throughout the country, where lectures and talks are given and posters are shown as part of their extended library services. This is linked to the work that the Ministry of Education undertakes by means of its Department of School Health, with over 6000 school libraries and 109 teaching documentation and information centres, and centres for formation and upgrading of the teaching staff.

Similarly, the work of the Federation of University Students, the Federation of Junior and Senior High School Students and the national network of computer clubs (known as JOVEN CLUBS) should be also underlined since they prepare special programmes for young people and adolescents.

Recommendations

Currently, it is not unusual for a librarian to lead a movie debate or a literary talk, or to give a lecture about health topics.

As part of the community, librarians in the health-care sector should be more active in the social development process of individuals. The BiblioSIDA community service is a model to be followed by librarians in the struggle against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Disseminating digital information is one of the vari-

ous ways of preventing and controlling HIV/AIDS. Librarians should contribute alternative ideas to and be involved in this battle; they should be more creative because the conditions are not always the same.

We must be ready to carry out activities according to the particular characteristics of the situation. For example, we can organise games with prizes for those with the best HIV/AIDS knowledge, provide testing, give illustrated talks, and celebrate painting and drawing competitions. Promotion and prevention actions must not be derailed for lack of access to the Internet.

It must be remembered that the Internet is a recent rapidly expanding phenomenon that has extraordinary impact on the development of today's world. It grew up under the myth of democratisation of knowledge, information and technologies worldwide, but in reality, the figures prove that the world is still very far away from accomplishing this objective.

Libraries, institutions, and groups in Latin America and the Third World with either no or limited access to the Internet should offer services at community level with the resources at their disposal. We can help change how children, adolescents, young people and women think about HIV/AIDS, a pandemic that continues to threaten the survival of entire peoples.

Conclusion

It is well known that rich countries have huge material resources but lack the required number of skilled people to meet the increasingly pressing needs of physicians and nurses, with a view to adequately managing HIV/AIDS-infected persons.

It should also be stated that the governments of many of these countries do not possess the political will to better distribute their resources to face this scourge that threatens the very existence of mankind.

Cuba provides highly educated people, including medical and paramedical staff, ready to render service to the peoples and nations that request and need them, as a noble expression of solidarity from the Cuban people.

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Information access for the poor and the role of libraries in the reduction of poverty

Celso M. Musiño

— Region: Latin America

Introduction

To provide an overview of the situation of the general population of Mexico, this article will discuss some basic and recent socio economic statistical information including official statistics on library infrastructure and the use of Communication and Information Technologies (ICTs) - specifically, the use of Internet inside and outside of homes.

Some significant results of a survey on reading habits of the residents of Mexico City Metropolitan Area are included - e.g. citizens' reading habits and preferred places to read compared to their personal income level. This article will also discuss an analysis of national programmes on poverty reduction, and the role of libraries and information professionals in the reduction of poverty. However, in relation to the reduction of poverty in Mexico, there exist no studies analyzing this role. Consequently, there are many challenges to meet, topics to analyze, and research to do to fully measure the possible impact of libraries in the future.

National background

Mexico has an area of 1,964,375 square kilometres; an annual census conducted in 2005 reported a total Mexican population of 103,088,021 of which 52,963,660 are females and 50,124,361 are males. The population is basically located in five of the 31 federal districts: Mexico State (13.7%), Federal District (8.4%), Veracruz (6.8%), Jalisco (6.5%) and Puebla (5.2%). As a whole, the population of the five districts amounts 40.7% of the total population of the country equivalent to 41,954,777 people. (INEGI 2006b) The latest data on population generated by the National Health System report that until 2004 only 47,772,500 individuals had a health insurance which is less than half of the total population.

The Economically Active Population (PEA) or people able to work amounts 75,229,300. In Mexico, it is considered that from the age of 14 residents are able to work in a salaried position - however, only 58.3% of this part of the population is employed, while another 41.7% is unemployed or otherwise inactive. Almost

two thirds of the employees work in the commercial and utilities sector, whereas the remaining one third work in the industrial sector or in the farming,

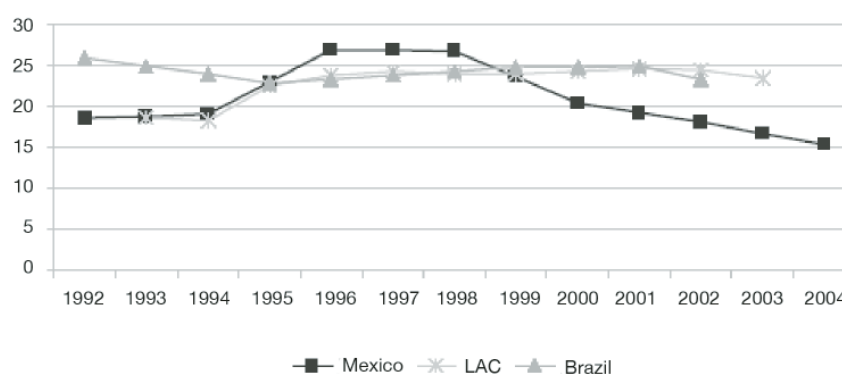
forestry, hunting and fishing sector (Table 1) (INEGI 2006e).

Table 1: 2005 Indicators: Indicators as per the 4th quarters of 2005

Concept	Measure unit	Reference
Population 14 years and over	Thousands	75 229.3
Economically Active Population (PEA)	Percentage of population 14 years and over	58.3
Average schooling of PEA	Years	8.6
Population employed in farming, forestry, hunting and fishing	Percentage of total employed population	15.0
Population employed in the industrial sector	Percentage of total employed population	25.4
Population employed in commercial and utilities sector	Percentage of total employed population	58.9
Subordinated and salaried workers	Percentage of total employed population	64.6
Self-employed workers	Percentage of total employed population	23.4
Population employed earning a minimum of two salaries	Percentage of total employed population	35.5
Population employed not earning a salary	Percentage of total employed population	9.5
Population employed in micro-businesses	Percentage of total employed population	40.7
Not Economically Active Population (PNEA)	Percentage of population 14 years and over	41.7
Minimum general daily salary (January 1, 2006 to present)	Pesos (Currency)	47.05

To further explain the living conditions in Mexico, it should be noted that the minimum salary amounts an average of 4 USD per day. However, the World Bank has estimated that 15 % of the population survives with less than 2 USD per day (Figure 1) (WB 2004: 104)

Figure 1: Share of Population living on less than 2 USD a day



Source: WB staff estimates based on household surveys

Definition of poverty

There seems to be no official definition or uniformed criterion on how to define the concept of poverty, however the World Bank states:

“Poverty has many dimensions such as human abilities - especially the education and health situation - the access to infrastructure, income, vulnerability, and social inclusion. The recognition of those multiple dimensions can be conceived as an imperfect approach to the analysis made by Amartya Sen of the wellbeing in terms of freedom (or ability) of someone to choose their life. It depends on their human skills and their ability to turn them into “beings and doers.” This ability is mainly determined by the economic context - overall, the opportunities of a productive job - and by the political and social context in which people live”. (World Bank 2004: cvi)

This article will not discuss possible definitions, or analyse other categorizations of poverty, moderate poverty, and extreme poverty that might justify or lighten the impact of the term. Hypothetically speaking, if all people on this planet had a free choice they would choose a state of life that safeguard their wellbeing and provide the best life conditions possible. In general terms, this is impossible, and moreover, the special geographical limits such as natural resources and specific regions constitute the different climatic and geopolitical life conditions of mankind.

Basically, poverty relates to the income of people and to the possibility of satisfying their primary needs: food, housing, and health but also the conditions that prepare one for work such as education is of great

importance. Examining the statistics of Mexico, the average education level of the Economically Active Population amounts 8.6 years - a little over the secondary school level. As research of the reasons for poverty in Mexico would imply an analysis of another type, this article will outline the impact of poverty and establish a relation between the use of the information and libraries.

Based on the documentary infrastructure (libraries, documentary centres, archives, bookstores, publishers, and the written press, just to mention some), Meneses identified in 2003 the following relation of negative effects and their impact on poor countries (Meneses 2003):

- Social (unemployment, extreme poverty, social disintegration, violence, impunity)
- Cultural (illiteracy, poor schooling)
- Political (wars, coup d'état, and state crimes)
- Economic (external debt, low income, currency devaluation)
- Morals (corruption, illegal enrichment, censorship)
- Health (epidemics, high infant mortality rate, various diseases).

At present, the following factors affect the possibility of creating a functional infrastructure in Mexico: low generation of jobs, salaries, social security affiliation, access to education, and health conditions. As will be later discussed, this situation affects both the establishing of libraries and the creation of conditions for a wider use of information through Communication and Information Technologies (ICTs) - specifically, access to the Internet as a new platform of work for information professionals and their users.

Table 2 Libraries by type, 1990 - 2005

Year	Libraries	Public	Specialized	School
1990	6 964	3 287	131	3 546
1991	7 142	3 455	130	3 557
1992	8 245	4 263	144	3 838
1993	9 151	4 895	169	4 087
1994	9 728	5 471	174	4 083
1995	9 840	5 521	186	4 133
1996	9 622	5 631	177	3 814
1997	9 970	5 686	184	4 100
1998	10 382	5 737	177	4 468
1999	10 492	5 802	176	4 514
2000	10 841	6 109	175	4 557
2001	11 493	6 263	212	5 018
2002	11 723	6 413	222	5 088
2003	11 952	6 610	224	5 118
2004 ^E	12 215	6 810	224	5 181
2005 ^E	12 542	7 010	231	5 301

NOTE: Reached goals, January - December.
^E Estimated figures

Availability of libraries and access to ICTs

According to official data covering the period 1990-2005, there are 12,542 libraries in Mexico, including public libraries, specialized and school libraries but excluding academic libraries. From 1990-2005 the number of libraries almost doubled from 6,964 in 1990 till 12,542 registered in 2005 - a growth of 5,578 libraries. (Table 2) (INEGa)

In total, the 12,542 libraries hold a collection of 62.2 million volumes (books, periodicals, thesis, documents, technical reports, manuals, records, slides, films, micro-films, maps, globes, and didactic games). A total of 109.800,000 enquiries were registered in 2005. (INEGI^d)

In Mexico, the use of ICTs is not registered as part of library service statistics. Official reports for 2005, however, indicate that the main use of ICTs continues to be ranked as follows: television (92.7%), followed by stationary phones (48.8%) and cell phones (42.0%,

cable TV (19.3%), computers (18.4%), and finally, Internet use (9%) (INEGI^c). Official data do not report on the number of people accessing the Internet outside their homes but Stuart Hamilton (2006) indicates that only 14.3% of the total Mexican population has access to the Internet.

Table 3: Households with ICT equipment by type of equipment, 2001 - 2005

Type	2001 ^a		2002 ^a		2004 ^b		2005 ^c	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Households with computers	2 743 749	11.7	3 742 824	15.2	4 744 184	18.0	4 765 669	18.4
Internet connection	1 440 399	6.1	1 833 504	7.4	2 301 720	8.7	2 318 243	9.0
Television	21 602 234	91.8	23 092 909	93.6	24 131 830	91.7	23 919 829	92.7
Cable TV	3 181 370	13.5	3 785 962	15.3	5 064 252	19.2	4 992 830	19.3
Stationary phones ^d	9 419 825	40.0	11 171 798	45.3	12 614 295	47.9	12 603 633	48.8
Cell phones ^e	ND	NA	ND	NA	9 285 284	35.3	10 843 428	42.0

NOTE: Proportion per total of homes. • ^a Figures for the month of December. • ^b Figures for the month of June.
^c Estimated figures for the month of July. • ^d After 2004, includes homes with cell phones and stationary phones.
^e After 2004, includes homes with stationary phones and cell phones • NA No applicable. • ND No available.
SOURCE: INEGI. National Survey of Availability and Use of Information Technologies in Households.

It should be stated that information and the use of it, either via information units or ICTs - specifically the Internet, do not tackle primary needs such as: food, health, and housing. Information does, however, help people engage in economic activities, and development of a better life for individuals, families, local communities, municipalities, institutions, nations and the population worldwide. In Mexico, though, such results are still to be seen. Neither higher levels of education nor cultural activities are politically prioritised issues on national level. Information programmes are not followed up, and information of the population is not part of the culture of Mexican authorities.

Table 4: Selected indicators: National net of libraries, 1990 - 2005

Year	Number of libraries	Bibliographic collection (Mill. of volumes)	Average registered inquiries
1990	6 964	24.9	89.5
1991	7 142	29.2	102.9
1992	8 245	35.4	109.3
1993	9 151	34.3	123.7
1994	9 728	39.7	127.9
1995	9 840	41.2	116.3
1996	9 622	42.2	124.0
1997	9 970	45.1	123.8
1998	10 382	48.9	119.1
1999	10 492	55.2	116.7
2000	10 841	58.4	117.2
2001	11 493	55.1	123.5
2002	11 723	55.4	132.8
2003	11 952	56.4	134.1
2004 E	12 215	60.6	107.8
2005 E	12 542	62.2	109.8

NOTE: Annual goals, January -December. Includes public, specialized, and school libraries.

E Estimated figures.

SOURCE: PR. Quinto Informe de Gobierno, 2005. Anexo. México, D.F., 2005

Table 4 (INEGI), presents the increase in the number of libraries from 1990 to 2005. To compare with, there was a decline in volumes of the bibliographic collections in 1993 and 2001, 1.1 million volumes and 3.3 million volumes, respectively. Also, a decline in inquiries was registered for the same period, especially the figures of 1995, 1997-1999, and 2004 should be noted.

Studying the structure of the Mexican library system with a total of 12, 542 libraries (5,301 school libraries, 231 specialized, and 7,010 public) it is to be assumed that, for various reasons, public libraries have the more impact on the population: They are larger in number; they are not equally placed within the national territory, and in theory, they offer services for a longer period of time. The extension of opening hours is a decision taken by the authorities on states or municipality level. National statistics on the use of libraries only register visits to libraries and do not include information about the socio economic profile of users, information inquiries, or satisfaction of users. However, a survey on reading habits from 2005 would be a good starting point for further examination. The survey was conducted by the Federal Consumer Comptroller (PROFECO) that is in charge of the General Management of Consumer Studies. The following characteristics of the survey should be noted:

Size of the sample:

- A total of 1,133 people of 17 years and older, representing the general population, and living in Mexico City Metropolitan Area (AMCM) were interviewed

Schedule:

- April 13-21, 2005

Reliability:

- Level of reliability 95%
- Margin of error +-1.8%

The survey does not examine the reading habits of the entire population, it provides, however, a reliable picture of the habits of people living in the Federal District and the nearby municipalities - that is Mexico City Metropolitan Area, which has an overcrowding 20 million residents representing almost a quarter of the total population of the country. The survey, basically, shows results on the use of libraries, how often people read and which type of materials they prefer, and most importantly who, compared to income level, is reading. The results of the survey read as follows (PROFECO 2005):

- People who like to read have a monthly income of \$863 USD (1 USD= 11 pesos)
- People who read more often are between 33 and 47 years old, and 62 years and older.
- The higher the education level, the more people read; covering education level from secondary to post grade.
- The majority of people with a monthly income up to \$370 USD read fewer books by their own initiative.
- The majority of people read at home, only 2% read

in libraries.

- More than 80% of the interviewed had never visited a library.

As stated by Silvia C. Vattimo (2004:1): "*Among the obstacles to foster reading habits is poverty, stopping people of accessing books, schools, and libraries.*"

Analyzing the results of the survey, it must be questioned if the investment in library infrastructure had been sufficient - as has been the case in other parts of the cultural sector; libraries also need to focus on the formation of users. Traditionally, Mexican libraries have copied the model of North American libraries that is characterised by cultural and geographic differences, as well as the economic limitations typical of library systems not subjected to national library legislation. Despite the differences, it is expected that public libraries function as "*the University of the People*," safeguarding equal access opportunities for all. In this regard, libraries have an important role to play to further access to information systems for the poor.

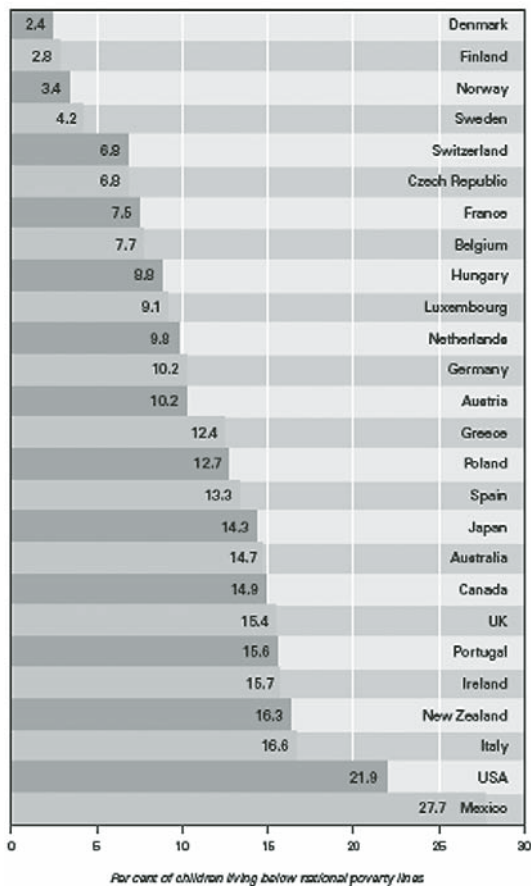
A possible answer to the obligatory question, why do children and young people not visit the library could be that they only consider public libraries as places where one does one's homework. Another explanation could be that the profile of Mexican libraries is different from that stated in the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994: "*The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.*" (IFLA 1994) Moreover, if reading is considered unfamiliar or distant from the immediate context of family or social activities for the major-

ity of the poor, how can we expect access and use of information to become an important factor in the reduction of poverty?

Poverty is not exclusive

There is no concrete evidence suggesting that use

Figure 2: Child Poverty in Rich Countries*



*The bars show the percentage of children living in 'relative' poverty defined as households with an income below 50 % of the national median income. Source: UNICEF (2005): Child Poverty in Rich Countries.

of libraries and access to information through the Internet could reduce poverty in Mexico. Furthermore, figure 2 below suggests that despite well-established infrastructures and investments in resources to further develop these structures, rich countries have not yet reached the stage of total reduction of poverty. In countries such as United States of America, New Zealand, Ireland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, among others, 10 to 20 % of children are still living "in relative poverty" that is below the national poverty level, thus poverty is not exclusive of emergent countries. (Figure 2) (UNICEF 2005)

Opportunities to reduce poverty

No literature exists discussing the participation of libraries to the reduction of poverty in Mexico - this includes literature about the participation of information professionals as individuals, or group, or as subjects of investigations and research by institutions or universities. The official definition of the function of libraries does not go beyond considering libraries as, "All organised collections of documents beyond five hundred titles, including either books or periodicals, graphic materials and audiovisuals that employees offer to customers so they use resources for research, educative, informational, and recreational purposes."

In a wider sense, the state has implemented programmes that "combine conditioned transferences" (of economic resources) so low income households send their children to school and visit health clinics. "Opportunities" is the most representative programme of these transferences (BM 2004: xviii). Another example of supporting the reduction of poverty is subsidies for specific services and food products.

Beyond limited statistic data on the number of libraries and access to data, there exists no national system that provides information or indicators about the situation of libraries and their services. However, in the survey mentioned above, the low effectiveness and impact of access to public libraries - at least among the population in Mexico City Metropolitan Area (AMCM) was documented. Likewise the goal of libraries was tested:

the “*purpose to provide information, materials, and educative, cultural, and recreational activities to all the residents in their community, and offer free services to people from all employment levels and all ages*” (INEGI).

The results of the survey present a very concerning scenario: more than three quarters of the population *have never visited a library*.

As Cháidez states:

“The reduction of poverty is more than a process to find resources, it is also a process of increasing liberties, possibilities of conscious choices, accessibility to information and not only to the use of it but to be able to transform it” (Cháidez 2005). Since no specialized studies exist on poverty and the impact of libraries and access to information, information professionals are challenged to engage in research projects investigating economic investments related to infrastructures, materials and human resources. The results of such projects would provide a platform for a fruitful professional debate on the future role of libraries.

Information professionals must take on a social role, helping users to advance their lives through projects

on participation in the information and knowledge society, and through the building of cognitive networks. It is important and necessary to restate that despite possible improvements of information services, information professionals will not reduce poverty as such. The population of Mexico - and of other countries - must find immediate answers to its primary needs such as food, health, and housing. Indirectly, information professionals can however influence the process by help improving the conditions of the civic, educational, health, and social solidarity sectors.

Furthermore, information professionals must engage in the following activities:

- Influence those in charge of the planning, evaluation, and implementation of national public policies to impact the decision-making processes so libraries become agents of social improvement and economic equity;
- Participate in the implementation of an information system that can generate knowledge about poverty reduction programmes (Videla 2004);
- Increase the political, civic, and institutional sectors’ participating in library circuits (users, librarians, authorities, and government); and,
- Promote reading and the use of information systems amongst library users

Conclusion

Library services and information access through the Internet do not directly reduce poverty. The population of any country requires that in the first place, its primary needs: food, housing, and health be taken care of.

The number of public libraries does not guarantee an increase in visits to libraries. In Mexico, more than three quarters of the population living in Mexico City Metropolitan Area (AMCM) have never visited a library. Therefore, the number of visits to libraries and use of their services in the rest of the country is likely to be on the same level or even below.

People who read the more have an income higher than the formally considered subsistence salary. Young people visit libraries but read less than adults. A possible explanation is the number of distractions and pastimes such as electronic games and audiovisual media - that are at their disposal as well as their economic situation.

The population prefers the use of the following Communication and Information Technologies (TIC's) - ranked according to importance: television, stationary phones, cell phones, cable TV, computers and finally, the Internet which is generally used as an immediate mean of communication and a virtual entertainment space, and more seldom as a knowledge tool.

No national system exists that can measure the efficiency of public library services or the performances of libraries in relation to the different social substratum levels - income, education, cultural, geographic location, gender, and religious participation. Likewise, there are no indicators to measure the satisfaction of library users in relation to reading practices which seems to explain the lack of success of federal programmes such as *Towards a Reading Country* and *Libraries as Classrooms*.

Poverty is not exclusive of emergent countries. Therefore, we must work together and create programmes on how best to use and manage information that can advance productive micro economic processes and the expectations of users with regards to knowledge economy and different working practices.

Information professionals must participate in the decision making process and contribute to development in relation to politics, legislation, national planning, and the implementation of information systems that support the various levels of society.

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Information and transparency in Mexico: A mechanism to control corruption?

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— Region: Latin America

Introduction

Mexico has a privileged position within Latin America; the country is the natural “door” between the Hispanic tradition and the Anglo-Saxon heritage from America. Mexico is the only Spanish speaking nation sharing one of the widest and most conflictive frontiers of the world with the cultural, economic, and politic power of the United States.

This geographic singularity, two countries with levels of economic development not only different but abysmally deep, has formed one of the most conflictive and complex geopolitical scenarios of the world. From a historical point of view, the democratic practices of the United States which were the most advanced in the world did not notably influence the Mexican society. The political peculiarity of the country (a triumphant revolution in 1910, contradictory and paradoxical government regimes, and a regional doubt-proof leadership during most part of the twentieth century), allowed the Mexican govern-

ment to keep a state not in anyway influenced by the politic and social evolution of other nations.

At the end of the last century, the need to integrate Mexican economy within a hemispheric and global content, forced the government to revise its traditionally, closed attitudes and practices. Taboo topics such as transparency of government, corruption and execution of power were never faced by political stratum but were, nevertheless, topics of debate in society and particularly within politically active groups. These topics should have been tackled with urgency. The perception, that a nation’s development and future is only possible if problems - concerning poverty and marginality and their relation with economy, education, and local culture (rural and urban), society and practical policy - are tackled organically (by the state), has been slowly growing. In relation to this, information units and libraries in particular, can play an outstanding and strategic role.

In Mexico, there are a few studies and approaches to the subject; and the relation between democracy,

transparency, corruption, information, and the role of libraries and information services has not been looked at or tackled. This article intends to introduce some assumptions and proposals to foster discussions from the point of view of the library and information science field.

Transparency and corruption - information and government

On the threshold of the 21st century there is hope of improved social welfare. Possible improvements would not only optimize the economic conditions but also change civic, cultural, and politic practices thus enhancing the consolidation of democratic governments founded on transparent and audited processes, and subjected to public control.

To comply with the above premises, we expect to have access to universal, open and democratic (organisation, control, administration) information that can be trusted - access to information that can be employed as one of the tools to fight dishonest public practices, and help build spaces for democratic participation.

The 'Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action' (IFLA 2005:1), includes a phrase related to this purpose: "*Libraries are essential for a well informed citizenry and transparent governance.*" This means that libraries are expected to contribute to the consolidation of citizens and democratic decisions, as well as to transparent governance. In counterpoint to transparency there is opacity, unclear politics, and corruption as the most visible of the three governance practices.

The effects of corruption are described in *Tools to Promote Transparency in Local Governance* (Transparencia Internacional 2004:12-13), corruption:

- "Undermines economic growth by diverting resources to inefficient or unproductive sectors or actors; by reducing income tax and other revenue sources; by increasing the cost of doing business; by reducing the quality of contracted jobs; and by ultimately undermining investors' confidence and contributing to capital flight.
- Undermines poverty reduction efforts as less resources will be made available for social programmes; through poor targeting of social beneficiaries both in terms of the overall effectiveness of services, and the accessibility of services to more citizens on an equitable basis; [...]
- Threatens political stability - particularly through systemic corruption; the loss of public confidence in the rule of law, justice, and governance of institutions can lead to political instability and even civil strife".

It is, however, encouraging to note the growing focus on transparency and democracy around the world today. This is also the case of public debate in Mexico where the costs and impact of all aspects of corruption are discussed: social, economic, political, and cultural. Likewise, the affects of corruption on peoples' lives, the work of institutions, and the actions of government are debated. Such in dept discussions were not seen earlier - except beyond the level of anecdotes, and to express personal or collective frustration.

In general, studies on corruption are a relatively new phenomenon. Social sciences have dedicated much

energy and resources into the study of other topics such as economic cycles, links between natural resources and wealth, and the shortcuts to development, before they engaged in research into the origin of corruption. Until approximately a decade ago, corruption was seen as a delicate and complex issue best to be avoided (Reyes Heróles 2003:9).

During most parts of the 20th century, the Mexican State, relatively successfully, avoided this subject, which has been a historic and structural Achilles' heel within the formation of the nation. However, external pressure forced the state to modify this behaviour. At the end of the century, when globalization and economic commitments (in particular, commercial and financial) forced the government to face its practices and review its schemes for contracts and administrative relations, contacts with bodies such as OECD and the European Union were established, and agreements with NAFTA negotiated.

Parts of these requirements concerned government practises and responsibilities with regard to openness, transparency and access to data without restrictions; thus the regime was to adopt a less obscure use of government processes to create equities and reduce irregular relations with other nations and their economic and political systems (OECD 2004).

An important factor was the commitment to provide use of, and access to information in particular that which origins in governmental institutions. That was an indicative to introduce substantial changes in legislation as well as in federal and state administration structures (Anaya 2005:97-100).

An equally important fact determining the need of transparency is the role of information as a productive factor in society:

”the configuration of modern economy has transformed information into a productive factor, at least for the following reasons. The first directly concerns density of information or knowledge, contents in goods or services. Productivity in work no longer derivates only from the intensity of the use of capital, but in general terms also from information linked to the existent productive process, [...] Another reason for the transformation of information into a productive factor derivates from the decisions to operate markets; thus the price systems are, in reality, information mechanisms.” (Quintana 2006:22)

In Mexico, internal conditions added to the external pressure on the government. Various political and social initiatives resulted in a long and polemic debate that made real changes possible. Former practices related to corruption were abandoned such as the use of discreet power and the use of public property resources. The first step of the process was to safeguard public control of the Federal Electoral Institute in order to reduce public distrust of the electoral process and to hold reliable elections.

Another vital step towards access to information and the creation of a culture of transparency was to pass the Federal Law of Transparency and Access to Governmental Public Information (Presidencia de la República 2002-2003), and to establish the Federal Institute of Access to Information (Presidencia de la República 2002). The objectives of the Institute are to regulate public data, limit the possibility of unjusti-

fied controls, and possible tampering and destruction of information - including information generated by the government.

For years, pressure has been put on the government to implement surveillance mechanisms in the Bank of Mexico (the central bank of the state), and address the definite autonomy of the National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Informatics - a federal body to control economic and geographic information, that is the political strategic data of the country. Recently, it was announced that *Notimex* (the official Mexican news agency) has been appointed the Agency of News from the Mexican State operating as a public, decentralised body with legal personality, own assets, and technical, editorial, and administrative autonomy (Méndez 2006). The overall objective is to build a state that establishes, promote and respect transparent governance so citizens can participate in society in a more active and conclusive way - in short accountability:

“information, justification, and punishment turn accountability into a complex process which can be compared with a big conceptual house that host related ideas such as surveillance, audits, control, and punishment - all pretending to participate in the process of taming power.” (Schedler 2004:13)

In more general terms, Mexico did not significantly delay the implementing of openness and transparency, but neither was the government proactive or took on leadership to advance access to public information. In a regional Latin American context, the legal dispositions of access to information are relatively new. Except for Colombia that already passed an act already in 1888; Panama, Mexico, and Peru devel-

oped access to public information legislation in 2002; followed by the Dominican Republic and Ecuador in 2004 (Ackerman and Sandoval 2004:23).

Prior to the passage of the Federal Law of Transparency and Access to Public Government Information, the federal government ran a National Programme to Fight Corruption and Foster Transparency and Administrative Development 2001-2006 (Comptroller Secretariat 2001). The programme had the following objectives:

- Prevent and eliminate corruption and impunity practices, and promote better quality of public management
- Detect and control corruption practices
- Sanction corruption and impunity practices
- Bring transparency into public management and gain participation from the society; and
- Appropriately administer federal assets

Unfortunately, no information or reports are available regarding the programme and its achievements or failures - or the reasons for its closure. A qualified guess would suggest that the programme was but a temporary project. However, the lack of openness is an excellent example of make-believe between power, practice and the government's wish to implement transparency. Also it stresses the importance of legislation that helps safeguarde the transparency of future programmes and projects. If the goal of the programme was meant to prove that transparency reduces information differences between government and a society more interested in public issues (Vergara 2005:34-35) then the goal was not achieved.

Since the enactment of the Federal Transparency Act,

and until 2005, 28 federal agencies (including the Federal Capital) have passed laws on transparency and access to information. According to “A Comparative Study of Access to Public Information Laws” (IFAI 2005), another 21 agencies have established institutes (9) or commissions (12) on transparency and access to information. It should be mentioned that three states had already enacted laws on this issue before the federal act was passed. Its impact is noticeable and huge efforts have been made to pass local laws in a country where legislative speediness is not the norm: In 2001, only one state had enacted a related law, in 2002 another five, followed by seven more states in 2003, nine in 2004, and another six states in 2005.

A mere superficial reading might lead to encouraging and optimistic conclusions: In only four years, the culture of control and public disposal of data and information seem to be an irreversible reality for the Mexican society. However, generally, federal and local legislation concerns only public federal or state agencies - dependants of the executive power or related to the legislative power. Bodies of justice, a number of military sectors, and private agencies dealing with matters of public interest are excluded. This is in contradiction with the *Theoretical and Methodological Framework of IFAI*:

“[...] the absence of transparency and public scrutiny, the lack of access to information and respect of the private life of people sets up a favourable ground for corruption and abuse of power. To safeguard open access to public information is to transform the exercise of power; and public servants will no longer be protected by inscrutability.” (IFAI 2003:21)

As part of the positive boost, the use of instruments to measure corruption and transparency have become common in the last couple of years. In Mexico, a Survey of Corruption and Good Government (Transparencia Mexicana 2005) was undertaken; and internationally, measurements were based on the Report on the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2005 (Transparency International 2005) and the Transparency International: Corruption Perceptions Index 2005 (Transparency International 2005). It is expected, that the results of these initiatives will have an impact on decision making processes related to public services and further ‘correct’ performances of authorities and civil servants. Also, the results demonstrate that corruption includes a number of practices that increase costs of production systems and impact the outcome; and that corruption can ruin governmental production units as well as entire countries. In TI Book 2000: Confronting Corruption: the Elements of a National Integrity System, Peter Eigen states:

“Corruption is one of the biggest challenges of our era: a challenge that must and can be tackled. There are no shortcuts or easy answers. The scourge of corruption will, in some degree, always be with us. As we enter a new millennium, we are conscious that corruption, to a high or slight degree, is a menace not only for the environment, human rights, democratic institutions and fundamental liberties, but also undermines development and deepens poverty for millions around the world. If we allow it to continue to create an irrational exercise of power, fuelled by greed and not by people’s needs, and stopping the development of the private sector, corruption will negate the most fundamental human need: hope.” (Transparency International 2000:12)

The space of information units

As part of a federal framework, the Mexican Conference for Access to Public Information (2004) was created to assemble members of federal and state commissions working with transparency and access to public information. Its "Declaration of Principles" identifies objectives that may have a decisive impact on libraries and information services:

- 4 To favour and foster a culture of transparency, access to information, and accountability.
- 5 To promote and encourage laws and reforms to guarantee the right of access to public information generated, owned or managed by the people involved, as well as the protection of personal information.
[...]
- 7 To encourage the set up of criteria for the degree of divulgement of classified information, and to preserve and systematize archives as efficient locations of public information.
- 8 To promote, support, and establish collaboration with social, private, and institutional national or foreign academic organizations to strengthen the culture of transparency, accountability, and the rights of access to information.
- 9 To encourage the use of new technologies to facilitate access to information. (COMAIP 2004: 4)

These objectives are similar to those earlier discussed and coincide with the use of technologies and access to the Internet, as recommended in chapter 24: The right to Information: Information, Public Awareness, and Public Records in TI Book 2000: Confronting Corruption: The Elements of a National Integrity System: "*The Internet has greatly reduced the ability of*

governments to control what their people can or cannot access, and affords individuals and organizations unrivalled opportunities to carry information into the public arena." (Transparency International 2000:11)

Information technologies have the potential of generating a high degree of confidence in social relations, to quote: "*The Internet has also opened up new possibilities for governments to interact with their citizens*" (Transparency International 2000:11), which in the last years has become common practice, a formal relation between public power and the people, the citizens. The hope relies on better, controlled, and less obscure spaces where transparency becomes a daily fact and not a legal imposition. There is also a strategic aspect related to the control and management of information:

"Even legally enforceable rights of access to information are meaningless if government records are chaotic. Although information may be available in principle, if it cannot be found then it cannot be made available to citizens. Not only does this limit government accountability and its credibility in the eyes of citizens, but it also has a serious impact on the capacity of government to discharge its duties efficiently." (<http://ww1.transparency.org/sourcebook/24.html>)

Apart from their objective to hold records and documents, archives in Mexico work with management of information techniques, creation of guidelines and dispositions to treat document repositories (in particular under the guidelines establishing the Nation General Archive and the Federal Institute of Access to Public Information). In this context, the Federal Electoral Institute and the National Commission on

Human Rights are successful examples of institutions that have gained a high level of respect and trust. It is expected that federal government institutions such as the Public Management Secretariat (former the Comptroller and Administrative Development Secretariat) will implement similar procedures and thus follow in the steps of the Secretariat. Once again, it should be highlighted that these initiatives only applies to some information services - in particular it is enforced to comply solely with archives. Therefore, steps should be taken to implement a new standard procedure in all public and private organizations and institutions dealing with public management.

Many countries that have introduced freedom of information laws (FOI) are seeking to replace the “*culture of secrecy*” that prevails within their public services with a “*culture of openness*”. FOI laws are intended to promote accountability and transparency in government by making the process of government decision-making more open. Although some records may legitimately be exempt from disclosure, exemptions should be applied with caution as the intention is to make disclosure the rule rather than the exception. However, one thing is to confer a right to information on a citizen, quite another to grant his or her requests, as stated in chapter 24 in TI Book 2000: *Confronting Corruption: The Elements of a National Integrity System* (Transparency International 2000:7).

According to a newspaper article, Mexico is facing difficulties in the process towards the democratisation of access to public information. Governmental and institutional information is often classified and thus applicants are prevented from accessing records

of their choice. “*The amount of reserved records has increased to a total of 4,707,611 documents. A major part of reserved records of the SFP [Public Management Secretariat] concern investigations of civil servants and their execution of office.*” (Velasco 2006)

Only some public institutions and offices are under the obligation of law to keep their archives organized according to transparency and access to public government information principles; and of these only a few transfer records into digital formats. Due to their specific objectives and responsibilities, cooperation with other institutions is considered inconsistent with own interests unless it serves as a way to achieve their objectives (Vergara 2005: 32).

In these circumstances, and sharing the hope for the consolidation of democratic management - as expressed by political actors, civil servants and citizens who wish to develop society - libraries can become important agencies of access to public information and the mirrors of transparency.

According to the official census of 2005 regarding information services supported by public funds, Mexico has 12,452 libraries of which 7,010 are public libraries (INEGI 1005 and SIC 2006); 231 are specialized (INEGI 2005) and 5,301 are school libraries (INEGI 2005). The census does not include academic libraries, unless the classification of the National Institute of Geography, Statistic, and Informatics includes academic libraries in the figures of school libraries. It should be noted, that the differences between public and school libraries are few as their functions are almost identical. If public libraries survive primarily in a precarious state, school libraries are surviving in

marginal conditions; that is why their presence has minor impact within the national library system. The census does not include data on other types of libraries such as libraries in private organisations or libraries in other public institutions, e.g. hospitals, prisons, and museums. According to the table, "Users Served in Public Libraries by Federal Entity, 2003, 2004, and 2005" (INEGI 2005), Mexico's 12,542 libraries served an average of 15,766,000 users in 2003; 15,470,000 in 2004, and an estimated 15,186,000 in 2005. This is a noticeable performance but hardly relevant considering that the total population amounts 103,088,021 people (Population and Housing Census; 2000). On this background, we can assume that, in reality, libraries have less than average impact on the population. Moreover, there is a decrease of 580,000 in the number of users served during the period of 2003 - 2005. The figures are not encouraging in a country troubled by poor use of information services and document resources.

Despite these obvious limitations, it is feasible to direct efforts towards transparency and the defeat of corruption, and for information units to function as invaluable agents of the transformation and consolidation of democratic practices. However in the current circumstances, political and social institutions supporting the incipient and unsteady Mexican democracy can only express their good intentions.

The will and intention to use the network of information services represented by public funded libraries (federal, state, and municipal) is necessary, as well as urgent, because it will raise Mexican libraries from the passive state in which they currently stand. Libraries can articulate and promote transparency

and function as shields against corruption within a foreseeable future. However, only a few actors inside and outside the library community show an interest in making this a reality, and therefore initiatives that would advance the social and cultural relevance of information services are kept in a near null.

Information professionals, transparency and corruption

Mexican information professionals are facing responsibilities that may be difficult to deal with, but the influence of libraries has great potential with regard to advancing access to information, transparency, and the forced decline of corruption. "*Values that imply the right of access to public information are not deep-rooted in the incipient Latin American civil society as it can be logically imagined.*" (Villanueva 2003) An explanation of these circumstances could be:

"a) citizens' involvement in the specific topic: the right to access to public information is an exception to the rule; usually only organisations are promoting human rights or civil liberties but, there is a shortage of appropriate places to spread knowledge, engage in debate and advocate access to public information

b) there are no unequivocal parameters to decide which should be the unique or paradigmatic model for legislation on access to information. It should be stated that, it is not enough to import foreign models that do not take the Latin American reality into account, or to develop elaborate models based solely on local knowledge of the topic; the most appropriate step is to combine democratic international parameters with local circumstances thus

implementing a model specifically designed for the reality of each of the Latin American countries

c) the media of the different parts of the region have not played a crucial role including the topic on their agenda, they have irregularly covered efforts to promote legal dispositions on the topic. [...]; and

d) the majority of universities and institutions of superior education in the region have not met the needs of society and therefore, no efforts have been made to produce scientific knowledge on the topic; the consequence is a reduced capacity to discuss the establishment of social movements that can transform ideas and motivations into laws and how institutions can advocate access to public information.” (Villanueva 2003:146-147)

New responsibilities and recommendations

The situation as described by Villanueva has not changed in the last years, and therefore there is a need to identify new responsibilities and values for information professionals as well as for the management of libraries that should focus on:

- Encourage library professionals to commit themselves to the transcendence of the culture of transparency.
- Regard the information user as an active citizen operating in the changing society of the 21st century.
- Establish a relation between society and economy of knowledge in which practices of corruption can not - and should not - emerge or grow roots.
- Value that access to information is intrinsically related to the creation of knowledge, improvement of civic and civil practices, enrichment of social relations, growth of education quality, strengthening of the ethos, political co-responsibility, and a better distribution of economic resources.
- Re-value libraries as agents/spaces of change as stated in the “Copenhagen Declaration: something for all, public libraries, and information society” (1999); the “Caracas Declaration on public libraries: a factor of development and an instrument of change in Latin America and The Caribbean” (1999); the “Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom” (2002); the “Buenos Aires Declaration on information, documentation, libraries and archives” (2004); “Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action” (2005); and “Libraries for lifelong learning: Toledo declaration on information literacy” (2006). These declarations would help and support information professionals in their just actions towards transparency.
- Adapt the work of libraries to the constant changes of this century. At present, the fundamental work of information professionals is not related to political acts, social impact decisions, and economic factors; but libraries cannot isolate themselves from society.
- Revise the mission of the librarian (precisely and rigorously defined by Ortega y Gasset in 1935) so, categories and concepts of transparency, corruption, and responsibility become part of the commitment of information professionals.
- Commit all who have a professional relation with Mexican information services, without distinction of ranks or formal responsibilities, to develop a culture of transparency built on solid democratic

principles and actions; a culture that not only oppose but rejects corruption.

- Promote transparency. Information professionals are academically, socially, and professionally obliged to promote transparency; and information units to become institutions participating in present and future democratic performances preserving information and knowledge.

The focus points listed above constitute the new tasks information professionals are to face. One of the national challenges is to further develop and preserve democracy and opportunities for civic and personal participation, and should be recognized as an obligation of society and implemented as an arithmetic operation: information + transparency = no corruption (a better society / a growing economy).

Conclusion

Individuals, groups and institutions have been working for decades to advance transparency in Mexico, so transparency is not a new issue of debate in the country. However, institutional opposition of government institutions made the implementation extremely difficult until the government entered into economic and politic commitments as a result of its cooperation with other nations. Then the need for political initiatives to foster transparency, and deal with corruption and its consequences was recognized.

The various aspects of transparency have been widely discussed but unfortunately very little have been written and read about corruption, although informal talks include a number of aspects. Consequently, the term 'corruption' is generally not searchable via

information systems. Even though transparency has been implemented in institutions by law, the levels of transparency show an obvious opacity. At this stage, it can be justified to state that the institutionalized transparency is still very young, and that there is a legitimate doubt about the future.

Libraries and information services have the potential to support implementation of transparency and take over a good part of the responsibilities that comes with it but, they have been sidelined and are distanced from the reality of society. In Mexico, it is expected that access to information and transparency are two vital factors in the control of corruption but, if few resources are allocated or the work is built on a weak structure, then the fight against corruption will take a very long time. However, information professionals can influence the whole process by taking active part.

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Information and HIV/AIDS in Mexico: Towards building an appropriate system for public documentation?

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— Region: Latin America

Introduction

This paper describes the relation between mankind and diseases. HIV/AIDS is no exception; since it first appeared on the scene; many sectors within society have searched for ways to reduce its impact. Therefore, we consider that a better informed society can generate answers on this scourge and find effective alternatives to reduce and prevent the impact of the pandemic.

The paper provides a general view of the HIV/AIDS situation in Mexico and its impact over the last years, as well as discusses national, regional and worldwide proposals, and actions taken by institutions engaged in the fight to prevent and control HIV/AIDS. We also include examples of some of these initiatives such as international congresses, paper presentations, advocacy and promotion activities, and articles in the media.

Information and its social interaction involves the design of programmes and development of promotional and educative materials by representatives of national

bodies responsible for national politic, and educational and research institutions, as well as NGOs and CSOs.

We conclude that due to the fast growing of HIV/AIDS, information professionals should collaborate more actively in the organisation and systematisation of documental information systems, using the Technology of Information and Communication (TIC's) as a crucial resource.

Our relation with diseases

The relation between mankind and diseases has always been painful. Characteristics such as beauty, youth, and strength are related to health, and so are values associated with dignity, honour, and forgiveness. An often repeated saying runs: *Mens sana in corpore sano*: "A healthy mind in a healthy body." For the ancient Greeks and Romans, it was vital and unimaginable to understand diseases and their explanation as part of nature. Diseases could have a number of causes - biological, physical, chemical, environmen-

tal, economic, and social - and the general reaction to them was to despise, marginalise, and forget the ill that were considered pariahs - the undesirables. While causes of diseases were analysed, the results had no relevance, and the explanations for anomalies (diseases) were philosophical, magical, and religious founded. They took promptly care of illnesses of short duration, and accidents but not of the chronic diseases.

This historic overview allows us to identify the symbolic, economic, and social relations established by people and conclude that diseases are mirroring a confrontation between life and the possibility of death. Leprosy is mentioned in the Bible as a divine disease meant to punish impious, and the plague, a common scourge during medieval times, was attributed to God's ire. During the Renaissance and the era when syphilis was discovered, diseases were considered a symbol of mundane excess and light-some behaviour. In the 19th century, tuberculosis was associated with the tragic destiny of the great romantics, who gave us a rich literary, artistic, and musical legacy. At the beginning of the 20th century, the horrors of the influenza epidemic were related to unhealthy conditions of industrial development in spite of the cult of hygiene. Cancer in its multiple variations was associated with new products saturated of harmful substances as a consequence of the lack of control of industrial processes. The disease of diseases: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) scared many during the last century.

The use of information related to these diseases is important. In particular when medicine and health sciences consolidated and acquired an undeniable

prestige, the use of scientific systematised data determined the correct answers and the decision making processes. It is vital to state that information is a mental process that aligns different components to resolve a need or a problem. Besides data, information is composed by ideas, symbols or a set of symbols with a potential meaning, "*information reduce uncertainty and help to make decisions*" (Faibisoff 1976:3), this is one of the basic principles of science and its methods. Specialised information generated by medical centres, research groups, academic circles, and professional practices is produced in big volumes and has a surprising quality. As a result, the use of information, organisation mechanisms, and management of specialised health information is common practice.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS)

At the end of the 1970's, the trust in technologies, economic stability, and progress was undeniable, and society's control over most diseases evident. Nevertheless, in the mist of this perception of well-being, signs of an unknown and lethal disease occurred. At first, it was called the pink cancer (it was believed to be a rare disease attacking almost only men having sexual relations with other men) and it was identified with promiscuity among drug addicts (and promiscuity in general) as well as with donors or recipients of blood. As it rarely happens, the scare of this new mortal disease spread around the globe, having its epicentre in the prosperous North America. In the first years, negative values were associated with the disease now known as AIDS caused by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). Those values decisively impacted the ill (social and family status, sexual

orientation, and racial identification), and his immediate environment. This formed a complex picture where information played an important factor against terror, fear, anguish, uncertainty and other feelings generated by the geographic spread of the epidemic.

By the end of 2004, UNAIDS estimated that 39.4 million people in the world live with HIV: 37.2 million are adults of which 17.6 million are women, and 2.2 million are minors of 15 years and under. Each day, 14,000 people around the world are infected with HIV; thus 4.9 million people were infected in 2004, and approximately 50% of the new cases were found in young people between 10 and 24 years old. To compare with "only" 3.1 million died of AIDS in 2004. Even though Latin America and the Caribbean experienced a more recent epidemic, the number of HIV infections went beyond 2 million (1.7 million in Latin America and 440,000 in the Caribbean). The concern is that the Caribbean has become the second most AIDS infected region in the world after Africa, with a prevalence of 2.3% among the adult population (CENSIDA 2006). The patterns among vulnerable groups are relatively stable but, there are new actors on the scene: heterosexual women and children. This makes it difficult for poor countries to provide the services needed.

HIV/AIDS in Mexico

Due to Mexico's close location to the United States, the country already in 1982 received the first reports of an unknown epidemic attacking certain groups of the population. Since that very moment, the public health system and some NGO's showed an interest in this health problem that threatened to reach

an alarming level as documented by European and American doctors. The first measures taken were preventive; however, the development of AIDS was increasing over the years. This was documented at an acceptable level of precision in medical information, current epidemic statistics, and in papers on the advances and newest discoveries. Probably resulting from the worldwide tendencies to label HIV/AIDS as a priority issue for public health authorities, Mexico supported the creation of an information system dedicated to one of the most well-known and puzzling epidemic in history. In this context, the situation in Mexico is parallel to that of the rest of the continent, and in the world.

From the start of the epidemic and until November 15, 2005, the National Registry of Cases of AIDS has listed 98,933 cases with a distribution of 83.3% males and 16.7% females; that is five: one. The highest number of registered cases (78.9%) is found in the group of 15 to 44 years old. Sexual transmission is the cause of 92.2% of the registered AIDS cases in Mexico: 47.7% are males having sex with other males, and 44.5% are heterosexuals. A total of 5.3% of the cases were originated via contact with blood - of which 3.6% were infected via blood transfusion - another 0.7% derives from drugs consumption with hypodermic needles, 0.6% from blood donors, 0.4% from haemophiliacs, and less than 0.1% from infections caught at work. The prenatal transmission represents 2.2% of the total cases; and a combined category of males having sex with other males, and drug users infected via hypodermic needles, represents 0.3%. The risk factor for one of each three cases (37.8%) is not known (CENSIDA 2006). Global statistics state:

"Considering the total number of reported cases,

Mexico is in the third place within the American continent, after the United States and Brazil. However, according to HIV prevalence, Mexico is in the 23rd place in America and the Caribbean, and it is the 77th worldwide.” (CENSIDA 2006)

Beyond documentation and specialized data publicly available, the popular perception of causes and consequences of the disease is generally determined by the mass media, rumours, prejudices, and disinformation. Moral lynching and social stigma are frequent; and so are negative press coverage - ranging from exclusion and violation of human rights to hate crimes. However, sensibility and tolerance campaigns supporting those infected and their families started in the 1980's with the establishment of CONASIDA (National Committee to Prevent AIDS), and NGO initiatives that focused on a better informed public, particularly in the cities. Slowly, the effects of the many campaigns taken place in the federal capital are seen. They have inspired authorities of state capitals and cities - even municipal administrations. The rural areas present a high degree of marginality in this context, and information about HIV/AIDS is rare and of bad quality.

Institutional actions to prevent and control HIV/AIDS

Since the first HIV/AIDS cases were detected, health institutions have taken measures towards the fast and dangerous transmission of the disease. Their actions are founded in three rationales: “*a) fast and invasive start among social stigmatized groups to avoid the fatal affects of the disease b) its transformation into a fast growing scourge within the area, and c) the research results of number of disciplines.*” (Benitez 1990; 52)

To answer the call of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Mexican institutions formed the National Committee to Prevent AIDS in 1986, from 1988 known as the National Council to Prevent and Control the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (CONASIDA) a body of the Health Secretariat. CONASIDA had more autonomy and institutional pull and worked with noticeably efficiency. However, Mexico like other Latin American countries has a tendency to create and rename public bodies depending on the government in power. The order to modify CONASIDA was executed on July 6, 2001, voiding the 1988 order to recognise it as a government institution. After this change, CONASIDA became the National Centre to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS (CENSIDA). As established by the Official Diary of the Federation on July 5, 2001, the new role of CENSIDA is exclusively coordinating: to strengthen actions to promote; and to support prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Before 2001, the following institutions participated in the work of CONASIDA: the Secretary of Health and Public Education, Director General of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), the Institute of Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE), and the National Institute of Nutrition and Medical Sciences “*Salvador Zubiran*” - one of the pioneer institutions that runs high quality programmes to control and follow up HIV/AIDS.

Since 1988, economic support from the government and the WHO (via the *Pan-American Health Organisation*) had been assigned to national programmes trying to prevent AIDS in Mexico. The country's national health system is responsible for the execution of actions regarding HIV/AIDS as well as for the

provision of specialized information and guidelines to support the work of CENSIDA. The Health Secretariat (SSA), IMSS and ISSSTE maintain and manage federal health services integrated with state services via a net of clinics, hospitals and institutes that serve (with varying degrees of effectiveness) HIV/AIDS patients. The national health system also generates the largest part of official data and public statistics on HIV/AIDS; and includes information on most research, and programmes that monitor and follow up on HIV/AIDS projects. However, the national health system is not part of the strategic programmes; its work only concerns general data, reports, and information on other infections and chronic diseases.

Human rights and HIV/AIDS

Over the last years, autonomous state institutions such as the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) - established in 1990 and a governmental agency from 1992 - and the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) - established in 2003 - have participated in campaigns to foster scientifically based knowledge, answers and actions to help diminish intolerance. The classification of HIV/AIDS as a social disease that has personal impact and a dramatic outcome for those affected (exclusion, discrimination, violence, degradation, and violation of civil and human rights.) is a fundamentally important result. Future results will depend on cooperation with and the function of institutions regulating social and civic relations in Mexico, and of the fulfilment of requests for protection and legal petitions expressed by HIV/AIDS patients, their families, and NGOs. Some of these requests are already carried to fruition.

In its programme on “*HIV/AIDS and Human Rights*”, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) declared:

“Besides being a serious public health problem, HIV/AIDS is also a Human Rights problem; since the beginning of the epidemic, prejudices and false ideas has contributed to discrimination and the violation of the right to protect the health of those infected.”

“Due to mistaken conceptions about the disease, Mexicans living with HIV or AIDS face discrimination in multiple ways; from discrimination subtle and difficult to detect like that expressed by using language or inoffensive and discriminatory jokes to cruel and clear discrimination such as exclusion or restrictions of rights. Such discrimination adds up to other abuses as negation of health services or denegation of access to medicines needed to stay healthy.”

“With the conviction that people’s health condition should not motivate stigma, and that the right to health protection without discrimination is essential for mankind to live with dignity and develop own skills, the National Human Rights Commission created a programme especially dedicated to promote and defend the human rights of people with HIV and AIDS:

The objective of this programme is to protect, supervise, inform and promote respect of the fundamental rights of the population through 1) Design and establish courses and workshops about HIV/AIDS, 2) Establish links with human rights organisations working with people with HIV or AIDS, 3) Research and development of programmes on

stigma, discrimination and HIV/AIDS, 4) Develop informative campaigns to prevent discrimination and to promote a culture of respect, dignity, and rights of people with HIV or AIDS in Mexico.” (CNDH 2006)

The National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination (CONAPRED) emphasized that *“The surface of HIV/AIDS added up to the stigmatization and mistreatment associated to people with different sexual preferences.”* (CONAPRED 2006)

Information about HIV/AIDS

Efforts to advance cooperation between organisations that work to prevent HIV/AIDS have resulted in the establishment of information systems. These systems aim to support health authorities, the medical community, researchers, and civil society in locating knowledge and research, and developing public policies to prevent and control HIV/AIDS.

To support the exchange of knowledge, the *Regional Centre of Exchange, Documentation and Information on AIDS* (CRIDIS), was established. Supported by the WHO and the Pan-American Health Organisation, CRIDIS became part of CONASIDA in 1988 with the following objectives:

“encourage regional exchange of experiences and strategies of programmes and projects, prevent and educate about AIDS, publicise scientific and journalistic information related to HIV/AIDS, and support researchers, health educators, students, institutions, and people interested in the topic” (Ayala 1992:154)

In 1990, CRIDIS had three departments that compiled and analyzed scientific, journalistic, and educative materials managed by an institutional library. During that year, CRIDIS edited three publications: *“Boletín Bibliohemerográfico, Gaceta CONASIDA”*, and *“Bibliografía Comentada”*. Furthermore, a special department for the exchange of experiences and information among Central American countries, the Caribbean (Dominican Republic and Cuba), and the 32 federal states of the Mexican Republic was established.

The “Mexican Research and Intervention AIDS Registry” (RIIMSIDA) is a database created in 1997 by the research unit of CONASIDA. Currently, it is considered a vital programme of the National Centre to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS. The purpose of RIIMSIDA is to systematically register all works on HIV/AIDS by Mexican researchers and activists including books, scientific magazines, and national and international congresses. In February 2006, RIIMSIDA became the repository of the Mexican Virtual Library of HIV/AIDS making available for the public more than 4,200 research and intervention works on HIV/AIDS developed in Mexico as well as completing/full text (PDF format) of most published articles on the topic (Virtual Library of HIV/AIDS 2006):

“The Virtual Library of HIV/AIDS is seen as the base of health, scientific and technical knowledge registered, organized and stored in electronic format in the countries of the region. It is accessible through the Internet thus placing it on the level of international databases. The Virtual Library of HIV/AIDS operates within a virtual space composed by a net of regional health information resources. Users from different levels of education

and locations will be able to interact and search a number of information resources, independently of their physical location. Information resources are generated, updated, stored and managed on the Internet by producers and intermediaries in a decentralised way and in compliance with current methodologies. Basic information resources will be enriched, and/or transformed into new valuable information products and services to effectively meet the information needs of users from specific communities.” (Virtual Library of HIV/AIDS 2006)

At the time HIV/AIDS burst into our lives, information systems and documentary techniques were going through a critical and decisive transition from physical to electronic formats. However, databases that could maximize information resources dedicated to the study and control of the disease were eventually created; so what in past decades would have been a catastrophe in terms of documentary controls, has worked well for the organisation of data about HIV/AIDS. Twenty-five years after the first break of HIV/AIDS, documents on the disease can generally be classified as follows:

Specialised instructional materials:

- Formats: primary and secondary information resources
- Publications: manuals, guides, and other instructional material (leaflets, flyers, brochures, posters)
- Media: printed, audiovisual, and electronic (including online documents)

Specialised literature:

- Formats: primary and secondary information resources:

- Publications: Articles - published in periodicals, series, monographs, flyers, reports, manuals, guidelines, statistics, bibliographies, and directories
- Medium: printed, audiovisual, and electronic (including online documents)

Expectations were that,

“Prevention campaigns are a collective work where society should participate, specifically those sectors identified with a higher risk. A number of studies concerning the effect of promotional and educative campaigns to prevent HIV have demonstrated that campaigns help to increase awareness about the disease and the perception of risk. They also help to foster solidarity and empathy towards those infected.” (Pagan 2006)

Considering the fact that one of the most concerning characteristics of HIV/AIDS is its epidemiologic behaviour and fast growth, the use of information becomes vital. International organizations such as the Pan-American Health Organization (OPS) have identified the value of access to information through their “*GenSalud*” Information System:

“Information is an important tool available to help us fight this disease from the perspective of gender and health. The objective of the GenSalud Information System is to provide precise, relevant, and useful information about the effect of gender in the health of men and women of the Americas. The mandate of the Gender and Health Unit of integrating gender into projects, programmes, and health policies of the OPS and participating countries, requires a clear understanding of the effects of the relations between men and women and

their health. GenSalud is motivated by a) efforts to generate and collect enough evidence of the effect of gender on health to call for action; and b) the fact that there are no web sites, databases, or information systems dedicated to gender and health, although there are books on the topic”.

The website of “Gensalud Information System” holds relevant information on HIV/AIDS, a legal kit, flyers, and other resources such as the UNIFEM Portal of Gender and HIV/AIDS. In contrast neither the website of the National Centre to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS nor the Virtual Health Library’s website on HIV/AIDS refer to GenSalud, and until 2006, Mexico did not participated in this initiative.

Even though decisions about HIV/AIDS initiatives must be based on public policies, weaknesses can be identified in public health policies as well as in governmental mechanisms to support such policies in many Latin American countries; Mexico is no exception in this regard. In some cases, the problem is methodological anomalies, and in others inexperience in strategic work based on public policies.

[...]. Some characteristics are:

- Documents are more casual than conceptual
- Conceptual confusion between politics and public policies on HIV/AIDS
- Actions outlined in documents are not implemented
- Public policies on HIV/AIDS are considered static when in reality, they are very dynamic
- Compared to other policy areas, development of HIV/AIDS policies are methodologically more complex due to the complexity of solving a real

problem

- Refusal to interact and coordinate with other actors and sectors including the government. (Uribe 2003:249-251)

Moreover, without considering this a conclusion, the 2nd Forum on HIV/AIDS/STD in Latin America and the Caribbean (2003) identified common practices related to the documentation and study of HIV/AIDS:

- Technical cooperation between south-south countries
- Process towards social or strategic management
- Integration and decentralisation of HIV/AIDS services
- Preventive strategies and services from other countries
- Training of health personnel, civil society, and multidisciplinary teams
- Information systems to monitor the epidemic and establish a line of action
- Ethical aspects linked to HIV/AIDS research
- Community projects such as the establishment of support services to people living with HIV/AIDS
- Projects on self-esteem and identity
- The right to anti-virus medicines
- Social mobilisation and pressure on governments (Uribe 2003:247-248)

A construction was established to better manage the duties executed by the Council (formerly known as CONASIDA) and transfer its substantial operational tasks to a governmental Centre. This was done to prevent those topics, which should rather have been prioritised as national or federal actions, to be put on the agenda only for the purpose of general strategic discussion. This would also advance the development

and implementation of socio-economic parameters and indicators for the health sector, allowing the creation of concerted solutions and generating appropriate and valuable documentation.

Table 1: Selected indicators for new AIDS cases per year of diagnosis, 1983 - 2003

Year	New Cases ^a	Incidence rate ^{b, c}	Male rate ^e	Female percentage
1983	62	0.8	61	1.6
1990	3 719	44.4	6	13.9
1993	4 306	48.5	6	14.7
1996	5 311	56.8	5	15.5
1999 ^d	7 036	NA	ND	ND
2000	5 723	NA	ND	ND
2001	3 476	NA	ND	ND
2002	2 294	NA	ND	ND
2003	324	NA	ND	ND
1983-2003	69 795	NA	ND	ND

a: In 2002 CENSIDA implemented a programme to correct registrations. The number of cases per year is different from previous years.
b: Rate per 1,000,000 residents. In 1983 the rate was calculated using standards from INEGI, and CONAPO. Projections of the Population in Mexico and the Federal States: 1980-2010. Processed by the National Centre to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS (CENSIDA) at the end of 2002. From 1990 -1996 the rate was calculated using standards from CONAPO. Projections per population, sex, age group, and federal entities 1990-2005. Final version, August, 1999. Processed by (CENSIDA) at the end of 2002.
c: Data was presented by (CENSIDA) at the end of 2002.
d: Starting on this date, figures relate to June 30, 2003.
NA: Not applied ND: Not available

The National Institute of Public Health, the National Council on Population (Conapo), and the National Institute of Information, Geography and Statistics (INEGI) generate relevant data on citizens' development and wellbeing, and their economic and social status. However, to support public policy development on HIV/AIDS the data might be presented in separate settings as part of a problem rather than studied as a whole.

Spread of HIV/AIDS in Mexico

The National Institute of Information, Geography and Statistics (INEGI) have compiled data on the increase of the disease for a period of twenty years: See Table 1.

In its report on Mexican health in 2004, the Health Secretariat stated: Currently there has been a feminization of the epidemic: more than half of HIV infected people in the world are women who usually face more stigmatization and discrimination problems and lack of support to resolve problems associated to the disease. A number of studies have showed that, in some countries, the probability of infection in women is three times higher than in men. Equally alarming is the fact that in most cases women are infected by their husbands. This is related to social aspects difficult to modify and therefore strong actions to advocate the use of condoms are required. Up to date, and beyond any ideology or argumentation, that is the only way to prevent HIV.

The latest official figures (2003) show that 4,069 people died in Mexico of AIDS related causes in Mexico. A total of 42 were children younger than 1 year old;

and 3,061 were between 25 and 44 years old. A little over 80% of deaths caused by the disease occurred in men, although the tendency among males is descending, unlike the slow but consistent growth among females. Veracruz and Baja California had the highest mortality rate among men in 2003; and Zacatecas the lowest. The analysis is more difficult for women because few deaths can increase the mortality rate by a number of points. For example, Baja California only had three more deaths compared to the previous year, but the mortality rate was doubled. Nevertheless, the death rate of women is a critical problem in Veracruz, and Queretaro. (Salud Mexico 2004:54)

Investments in health

For the years 2003 and 2004, data concerning expenses of the general health services and the mortality rate of HIV/AIDS is available. The most recent data shows that the total expenses of the health sector represent 6.3% of the GDP. Public expenses on HIV/AIDS represent 3% of GDP, a slight increase compared to the previous year. Although less than 50% of the total expenses are public investments, the latest increases will reduce the percentage of private expenses. The GDP percentage invested by Mexico in health is still below the average of Latin America but the variations are huge; Colombia thus dedicates 6.7% of its wealth to health while Ecuador barely invests 1.7%. The differences in expenditures on a federal level are important to note: The percentage in Quintana Roo, Nuevo Leon, Queretaro, Chihuahua, and Baja California is less than 2.5%, while in Tabasco and Nayarit, public expenses in health represents more than 5% of the budget. (Salud Mexico 2004:68)

The total public expenses of Mexico are budgeted as a) earmarked and b) non-earmarked expenses. The first group concerns expenditures of government institutions and includes investments, services, and production of goods. Thus public health expenses, including treatments and care of HIV/AIDS patients, are earmarked. They explain the needs of investment in infrastructure and the epidemiologic profile of each department. The non-earmarked expenses are generally spent on legal obligations such as the payment of national debts.

In the United States and Canada, public expenses on health represent 23.1% and 15.9% of the total national budget, respectively; and in Argentina and Colombia 15.3% and 20.4%, respectively. To compare with, Mexico's percentage is on middle level. In 2004, the percentage of total public expense for health was 17.4% of the national budget although considerable differences between federal states were found. Campeche, Distrito Federal, and Durango had the lowest percentages - four times below the level of Jalisco and Nuevo Leon that invested 34.1% and 26.9% of their total public expense, respectively (Salud Mexico 2004: p.70).

Within this context, the national health system is considered a responsibility of the public sector; and therefore most information on medicine, health, and in this case HIV/AIDS is generated by this sector. The quantity of resources (and sometimes, the quality of information) is largely determined by the current structure; thus the health care of more than half of the population is the responsibility of state and federal health departments. Their duties go beyond health care to include preventive medicine, health

promotion as well as other activities geared to improve peoples' health condition. The health budget of each state is composed of its own funds as well as funds received from the federal sector, and shows how health expenditures are prioritised by both sectors, e.g. how the lack of federal funds allocated to the states impact the whole health care system. The tendency is that the states are increasing their own contributions, while federal allocations are decreasing - by 5% compared to 1999.

[...]

"The state with the largest percentage of health expenditures is Tabasco that spends 50% more than Jalisco, that is number two on the list, three times more than the national average, and 100 times more than Baja California which reported the lowest state expenditures." (Salud Mexico 2004: 72)

In 2002, participants in a conference entitled "Country Response to HIV/AIDS: National Health Accounts on HIV/AIDS in Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Uruguay", discussed parameters to measure investments and use of funds. The methodology used for the parameters was developed by the National Health Accounts (NHA) and published in the HIV/AIDS National Report. On the basis of the investments and funds allocated for the period 1997-1999 an evaluation of the fight against HIV/AIDS was carried out - from a continental as well as a national perspective (Izazola). The National Public Health Institute reported:

"Based on team work headed by John Stover of the international organisation Futures Group, and Stefano Bertozzi of the National Institute of Public Health of Mexico, researchers, working on the

study "The global Impact of Scaling-Up HIV/AIDS Prevention Programs in Low-and-Middle-Income Countries," estimated that, during the period of 2005- 2015, each case concerning the prevention of HIV in Latin America will cost 5,000 dollars, and the cost of health care and medicines will amount 12,000 dollars per case. The potential of substantial savings would amount more than 7,000 dollars per case - almost 12 thousand million dollars saved in ten years - if prevention programmes be expanded and specific programmes coordinated according to proved efficiency strategies."

Currently, Sergio Bautista and a group of other researchers of the INSP are developing an efficiency model to measure the performance of 40 HIV/AIDS prevention programmes initiated by civil organizations in Mexico. Studying 17 organizations administering HIV screening tests and HIV counselling - a programme otherwise known for its high efficiency - the first findings show high levels of inefficiency and big gaps between allocated resources and results. While some organizations do a high number of screenings, others show poor results even though the same resources were allocated; for example, two screenings including counselling compared to ten. The screenings amount only 19% of their total capacity (INSP 2006).

These examples of how to organize preventive work and display of HIV/AIDS data in a country of median revenues such as Mexico demonstrate the seriousness of the situation and the need to resolve structural problems such as design of homogeneous policies on health and specialized documentation that - as a consequence - must be generated from public and private

sectors. Up till 2006, systems that organized information included statistics, loose notes, and reports written by NGOs supported by international foundations, obsolete data, and information not related to government sectors.

Information and social interaction

With help from the health sector, that is funded and maintained by the state, the government has attempted to address the many problems associated with HIV/AIDS. However, civil society has expressed concern over the way this is done. Since the beginning of the scourge, political and social initiatives have been implemented such as participation in international events coordinated by different social sectors. A study covering the period 1989-1998 shows that presenters and authors from Brazil and Mexico had the highest participation rate in the international HIV/AIDS conferences (Table 2). The greater part represented governmental institutions, followed by NGOs, CSOs, and local community based organisations. The topics included HIV/AIDS epidemiology, health care, promotion, communication, and education systems (Licea 2001:139). Though their circumstances are very different, this indicates a noticeable level of activity for both groups. Participants working in public health institutions - of variable quality - should partner with these bodies to make use of their facilities such as laboratories, research and follow up on activities, access to and use of scientific publications and collections on health, epidemiology, and HIV/AIDS issues. While NGOs and CSOs normally interpret and value data of the basic research of governmental institutions; these factors determine the content of works and proposals of each group: a) study of tendencies of the disease

behaviour, and adjustment of hard facts; b) preventive reports; c) weight of policies over the impact of the scourge within groups and communities, and government initiatives to solve identified problems.

Table 2: Presentations at international conferences on AIDS, 1989-1998

Origin	Number of Presentations
Brazil	961
Mexico	405

Source: Table 2. Geographical distribution of presentations within international conferences (Licea 2001: 145)
Note: The total of participants by Latin American countries was 2070.

Research on the topic for the IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report 2006 showed that Current Contents Connect in a report has identified documents generated by the three countries with the highest number of HIV/AIDS cases in America: The United States, Brazil, and Mexico. The methodology used was general search, selection of the seven research areas (agriculture, biology & environmental sciences (ABES); social & behavioural sciences (SBS); clinical medicine (CM); life sciences (LS); Physical, Chemical & Earth Sciences (PCES); Engineering, Computing & Technology (ECT); and Arts & Humanities (AH). The research covered the period 1998 until May 26, 2006. Regarding languages and type of documents: "all" was selected. The results of the research on HIV/AIDS topics, by country, themes, and authors, showed that the United States generated the majority of documents, followed by Brazil and Mexico. (Table 3 and 4)

Table 3: Production of documents about HIV/AIDS per country (topic)

Country	Number of documents
United States	532
Brazil	300
México	76
Search strategies per topic: Brasil: HIV/AIDS and Brazil or Brasil; México: HIV/AIDS and Mex* or Mejico; Estados Unidos de América: United States	

Table 4: Production of documents about HIV/AIDS per authors' address

Country	Number of documents
United States	2964
Brazil	102
México	78
Search strategies per topic for the three countries HIV/AIDS including guidelines (author affiliation: Brasil: Brazil or Brasil; México: Mexico or Mejico; Estados Unidos de América: USA or EEUA.	

Recommendations

As was earlier established, Mexico has not implemented a national mechanism that can handle a federal information system; each institution and body develops their own systems according to their individual needs and resources. The Health Secretariat (SSA) assigns most of the basic research, training, and updates of programmes to national institutes working within the national health system maintained by the state. The Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS)

initiates programmes generated by its research sectors (in particular research projects organised by the National Medical Centre). The Institute of Social Security and Services for State Workers is organized in a similar way, identifying its medical centres and hospitals as learning units.

Noticeable efforts are made to develop a national health information system by public academic institutions such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico - and its biomedical science institutes - the National Polytechnic Institute (in particular its Centre for Research and Advanced Studies), although formally the HIV/AIDS topic has not been assigned to them as a fundamental academic duty; in many cases institutions work in conjunction with the IMSS and the SSA.

These institutions all run programmes on HIV/AIDS studies; they should, however, be attached CONASIDA - the governmental body working with the disease - to influence the actions of CENSADA. Each institution generates its own results, and distributes them to their partners in most cases external agencies such as NGOs, CSOs and IAPs (Private Assistance Institutions) that work in the field of alternative prevention and information initiatives - when they have resources to finance projects.

Other important players that manage public health information are federal institutions such as: The National Institute of Information, Statistics, and Geography (INEGI), the National Council on Population (Conapo), and the Social Development Secretariat (Sedesol) which analyses health, marginality, poverty, demography, and human development problems and

share important data on the social and economic status of the infected populations, or those at high risk. They publicize statistics that supplement information produced by the academic and health institutions already mentioned.

Besides the problems connected with the nature of HIV/AIDS, educational campaigns about the risks of the scourge and how to control it should include other problem areas in particular human rights and discrimination which are the responsibility of the National Human Rights Commission (CND) and state commissions such as the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED.)

Various sectors and a number of public institutions (private organizations seldom participate) create valuable and useful information that unfortunately is scattered in a badly organised and inefficient way in terms of accessibility, availability, and circulation.

The following proposal that includes a reorganization of Mexican information units derives from the question: Is it possible to develop a national health information system that will function?

- Given that the HIV/AIDS problem is not a local or national problem measures must be taken to connect with efficient global programmes.
- Institutional libraries and information services should be responsible for the organization, systematization and administration of documents (in all formats), and for enhancing their services through collaboration with other institutions.
- The administration and coordination efforts should be delegated to a body such as CENSADA in order to advance the sharing and exchange of documentary information between information units of institutions working with HIV/AIDS related issues. Officially, CONASIDA already has this objective but despite representation on State Secretaries level in the steering body; results of the last years are on minimum level compared to the advance 20 years ago.
- Given the change of formats of documentary information, efforts must be made to transfer documents into the new formats.
- Since documentary information can be presented in different formats (text, images, audio- information) professionals most implement and make available the necessary tools to offer new and better services and more efficient use of information products.
- Communication and Information Technologies (TIC's) should support management and systematization of documentary information. There exists a net of libraries that can be the backbone of this process making available information on HIV/AIDS to a large number of groups and people. This would bring information services to rural areas that have formerly been neglected and where the disease is increasing. The use of Internet portals and websites is an excellent solution for countries like Mexico because it reduces costs and maximizes the provision of information.
- Besides printed materials such as books, periodicals, and magazines; TIC's should be used to produce, edit, and publish educative materials (tutorials, presentations, posters, and leaflets etc.) and make them available and easy to access in electronic formats.
- Information services that have perfected the control and systematization of information would

be able to produce and adapt materials for communities. The use of simple and common language to communicate information on topics like HIV/AIDS is not meant to vulgarise academia but to help people survive.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that in a short time HIV/AIDS has caused a deep wound to societies, such as Mexico. Until we find a cure, all sectors of society should continue their research to develop medicines and coordinate and establish prevention programmes. Information professionals should coordinate the use of better and more advanced organization systems and information systematization to establish collaborative networks among government institutions and other bodies.

It is common knowledge that the work of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary groups can present the best results at local as well as regional and international level. Research to develop medicines or coordinate prevention programmes on HIV/AIDS - that in some parts of the world is no longer a mortal but a chronic disease affecting marginal groups (economically, socially and in terms of religion - is needed. Information professionals should work more closely with decision making bodies with regard to national policies, advocating the principle: "information reduce uncertainty and help to make decisions" (Faibisoff, 1976:3).

Information and Communication Technologies (TCI's) have developed very fast making it possible to reduce processes, storage and retrieval of informa-

tion, and the implementation of programmes directed to receive and send documentary information in large volumes faster and more efficiently. TCI's have also changed the way in which we relate to information and knowledge allowing a move from local level to national, from national to global, and vice versa. The concept of a nation as it was known until the last century is changing; TCI's make it possible to go beyond frontiers. Let us use TCI's not only to design the best possible information services but to become responsible and autonomous professionals and users.

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Access to books, libraries and information literacy

Adoption of IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos and Guidelines by public and school libraries in South America

Marcia Rosetto

— Region: Latin America

Introduction

From information to information literacy

The path of books is much tied to man's own history. Throughout its evolution, from Gutenberg's invention onwards, the multiplication and circulation of books has grown significantly. Knowledge and books have achieved an outstanding position and status in society. The growth of bibliographic information sources in the 20th century can best be explained by the recognition of information as vital for the development of modern society and hence the creation of the knowledge or information sector. In this context, we should also see the objectives of archives, libraries and museums - as institutions that organize, keep, protect, and transfer information contained in documents and cultural objects.

As a consequence of the development of multimedia technologies in recent years, books are now available in electronic format - a change similar to the invention of the press, some centuries ago. Information

technologies have created not only a new technique for text production, but have also provided new structures and communication formats especially on the Internet. Communication networks have thus increased access to information - though more emphasis has been put on its distribution than on maintenance. It makes, however, information available very quickly to large numbers of users worldwide.

The technological development has changed the concepts of work, trading, teaching, and leisure; and information is considered a main resource for the development of learning processes. Technologies of Information and Communication (TIC) have transcended the concept of time and space, and have created the "*virtual space*" with new territories of meaning (Fonseca, 2000) that offer great visibility to library services due to its extension and interactivity with users.

In this new paradigm libraries maintain their role to handle, store, and disseminate information, and to preserve the memory of society. However, the great

challenge is the promotion of pro-active actions that put emphasis on the demands and needs of library users. According to Wersig (1993), the role of knowledge for individuals, organizations and cultures has evolved in at least two dimensions - philosophical and technological - both have become a fundamental part of the great social changes identified as post-modernism. Through continuous analysis, the information sector must find its new role in this complex context that includes both the creation process as well as its role in a changing society.

Due to these factors, some studies carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have shown that curriculum outlines have been analyzed throughout the world, and that there is a growing awareness by governments and the population in general of the importance of education and qualification (Rychen, 2004). Also indicators show that academic achievements and basic abilities such as reading and mathematics have developed. In addition, it seems that the role of information literacy (IL) has attracted more attention within Information Science. Some studies and research work have been developed regarding IL analyzing the use of information, its interpretation and transformation into knowledge.

As a consequence of these studies, OECD has implemented the “DeSeCo” programme (Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundation) aiming to built wide reaching and relevant concepts for human development, based on key competencies and the perspective of lifelong learning set in a frame work that stresses the holistic, international, and across borders aspects. The programme

consider competence as an individual condition “*to meet complex demands successfully or to develop activities or tasks (...), supplemented by an understanding of competencies such as mental structures of capability, aptitude and existing availability*” (Rychen 2004).

The programme has identified three categories with nine key competencies that an individual should possess to develop effective participation in a democratic society. In the second category (using tools interactively) three competencies can be considered particularly as of interest to libraries:

- Competency to use language, symbols and texts interactively
- Competency to use knowledge and information interactively (identified as information literacy); and
- Competency to use technologies interactively (identified as TIC literacy)

Also the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has developed projects on literacy; and one of the results obtained was published in the IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report “Libraries for Lifelong Literacy” (Seidelin 2004). In addition, the organization of study groups that have contributed to the creation of the IFLA Section on Information Literacy should be highlighted. As a matter of fact, this area has already produced important procedures and guidelines that further libraries’ understanding, study and implementation of methods to promote information literacy.

Considering all the aspects mentioned above, the Brazilian Federation of Library Associations, Information Scientists and Institutions (FEBAB) therefore held a seminar in South America to make a status

of the involvement of libraries in lifelong learning activities, and to investigate the possibilities of defining cooperation projects to promote access to books and reading. A special focus point was the adoption of IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos and Guidelines, taken as strategic instruments to provide a basis for the implementation of information policies that include all citizens, contribute to the development of educational and cultural systems, and promote reading and information literacy in accordance with the needs of the information and knowledge society.

The “South-American Seminar on IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos and Guidelines for Public and School Libraries” was held on July 14-16, 2005, in the city of Curitiba, State of Paraná, Brazil, and sponsored by IFLA/LAC, IFLA/ALP, and educational and cultural institutions in Brazil.

Access to information and adoption of IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos and Guidelines in South America

In general, UNESCO/IFLA manifestos and guidelines for public and school libraries have had limited impact in libraries in South America. Library services are presently in varying stages of development. Therefore adoption of guidelines and recommendations could have a positive effect on the future direction of library services to users and to schools, as well as on the performance of staff working in these libraries.

The primary objective of the seminar was to present and to disseminate the IFLA/UNESCO Public and School Library Manifestos and Guidelines to professional librarians in South American countries; and

this way contribute to the formulation of policies and training programmes in local libraries. It is important to stress that especially for this event a translation into Portuguese of the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for School Libraries was distributed among the participants. The IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto for School Libraries had already been translated and a notice about this document was also sent to library professionals.

Another objective of the seminar was to get status reports on the present conditions and activities of public and school libraries in the countries represented. (Annex 1) The seminar enabled participants to identify specific issues which need to be addressed if, or when, the manifestos and guidelines are implemented in public and school libraries of South American countries.

The attendees were library professionals and other interested colleagues. To further the professional discussion, the following specialists were also invited: Authority of the Information Society Division of UNESCO, the Chair of IFLA’s School Libraries Section, a representative of the Group of IFLA Guidelines Dissemination/Public Libraries Section, and Brazilian specialists on public and school libraries, as well as specialists on information literacy. It should be noted that, in South America public and school libraries generally play a significant role to ensure access to books and information.

The results of the seminar have been published (REPORT, 2005) and contain an abstract of each presentation as well as recommendations proposed by workgroups and participants as will be seen below:

Public and school libraries services in South American countries: summary of Seminar lectures

Argentina

In 1990, an educational reform was implemented in the country but it did not include libraries. No plans regarding the possible adoption of the UNESCO Manifesto were mentioned. Presently, a project entitled BERA (Bibliotecas Escolares y Especializadas de la República Argentina) is under development aimed at the modernization of libraries including management based on international parameters that can be applied to records of library holdings as well as other management resources. Argentinean libraries are using the Aguapey software for network automation. Throughout the country, around 5,000 libraries and 7,000 schools participate in this project. Further, there are 2,007 "popular" libraries with scarce resources and technical limitations. The National Culture Secretary has formed a National Committee for the Protection of Public Libraries - CONABIP. Participants commented on the need for political changes towards the enhancement of libraries.

Bolivia

The country has 327 villages. Public and school libraries are not organized or structured at national level and they work with scarce resources. At present, the conditions for an effective implementation of the UNESCO Manifestos do not exist. A specific project Project Comunicateca - Centro Latino-Americano de Ações em Comunicações - was highlighted. Its mission is to contribute to life improvements of the

Bolivian population by considering human rights, cultural diversity, gender equity, generations and environment. Library services provide information access in the areas of health, culture, environment, education, human rights, citizenship and government. Services also include audiovisual materials, thematic and other exhibitions, all aimed at the provision of information to health communication professionals, students, researchers, government employees, educators and others. The services are carried out with support from USAID agency.

Brazil

The main characteristics of the National Public Library System were presented. The system was implemented by a presidential decree in 1992, and coordinated by the National Library Foundation of Brazil (SNBP). It presently consists of 5,012 libraries and aims to strengthen public libraries through systemic work, based on actions that lead to interaction and integration of public libraries throughout the country. SNBP develops its work in cooperation with public library state systems that on their part interact with the municipal public libraries in order to stimulate citizens' reading and use of information as a means to advance personal growth and social change. The list of new libraries joining the "Projeto Livro Aberto" in agreement with Brazilian municipalities was also mentioned.¹

Chile

The presentation emphasised the use of IFLA guidelines by public library management to provide services to the community. Initiatives such as read-

ing enhancement programmes were mentioned, for instance the provision of lending services in various places including open fairs. Library networks have developed Internet access and literacy programmes for users via the “Projeto BiblioRed” sponsored by the Bill Gates Foundation. The activities include community participation in planning and developing public library initiatives and are driven to achieve its potential of carrying out democratic actions and free access to information.

Colombia

The country considers developing a range of library services for young people, children and other population groups. Libraries will really achieve their mission when they are able to influence people positively through services adequately planned and provided. IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos are an inspiration for the development of library services in Colombia thus giving input to creative and effective proposals for the benefit of population groups, as well as contributing significantly to book and reading enhancement. Information about projects developed by CONEFALCO in Medellín and examples of products aiming at reading promotion activities were presented. These initiatives can serve as useful examples and suggestions for the planning and development of similar projects in several countries of the South American region.

Ecuador

The lecture highlighted the challenges libraries are facing in the country, and the need for an educational policy to advance education as a whole. Data on demography and education were included. The

efforts made to develop libraries were commented on, especially the role of the National Library that has become depository of cultural holdings in Ecuador. The country has no library legislation, and librarianship as a profession is relatively new: there are around 50 professionally trained librarians. Several rural libraries and libraries situated on the border to other countries such as Colombia and Peru function as cultural exchange facilities.

Paraguay

The status report indicated some weak points concerning education and access to information in Paraguay and the need for progress. The public library system is in a poor state and has little support from the state - libraries do not have their own budget. To compare with, school libraries are more developed and are therefore able to provide additional and most needed services to the public libraries. In Assunción, the capital of Paraguay, there is only one public library and the provision of services is influenced by the political instabilities. The Constitution of 1992 guarantees rights to information access for all, but the law of book enhancement has not been applied accordingly. Some cooperative programmes in school libraries have been developed since the elementary school reform of 1998 was implemented.

Peru

Based on the “Statement on Educational Emergency”, examples of initiatives for reading enhancement and school libraries development were given. A survey on the local reader profile shows that 89% of the respondents like to read and that - in average - they

do so five hours per week. Despite the difficulties Peru is facing, a National Plan for Reading, with aims and strategies defined, has been developed. Examples of the results obtained in libraries of the Moquegua region to enhance reading stimulus were also highlighted. The CERLALC regional centre (Centro Regional para o Fomento da Leitura na América Latina e Caribe) supports these initiatives.

Suriname

The presentation stated that local inhabitants come from various countries and the official language is Dutch. There is only one public library - placed in the capital of Suriname and financed by the Government. The main development of library services is carried out by school libraries (Instructional Media Centers) and managed by the school librarian. The centres are located in a school classroom and they provide books as well as other services and resources - Project Biology for instance supports the educational activities. In general, children do not have reading habits that encourage spontaneous reading therefore school libraries have implemented annual programmes to develop students' reading abilities. The need to reinforce contacts with IFLA and to more strongly disseminate UNESCO programmes in the country was stressed.

Uruguay

A clear policy for the development of school libraries do not exist in the country. The situation of libraries is similar to that of other South American countries. In general, only private schools have libraries that live up to good standards. However, the government is presently developing facilities aimed to provide

multiple resources for learning and these will include school libraries - even though, the majority of schools has a fragile infrastructure, with inadequate facilities and insufficient materials. Public libraries, developed according to a municipal model, are subjected to the political instabilities. The majority of public schools are named after other countries and consequently they receive some donations for their libraries holdings from the countries in question. Presently, the project "BiblioRed" is under development with support from the state. The initiatives have mainly been concentrated in Montevideo, but some of these have not been continued after some years. The Librarians Association of Uruguay is making efforts to encourage the Government to apply rules for librarians' professionals and their professional activities in libraries.

Venezuela

Some general statistics concerning poverty conditions and school system deficiencies were presented. Public and school libraries in Venezuela have an important role in the struggle to minimize those deficiencies. In the last ten years, public libraries have been enhancing their services in order to meet the needs of students concerning their homework rather than to contribute to the development of good reading habits. School libraries have insufficient collections, and they are not widely used. It was therefore stressed that, librarians need to advocate the use of collections as well as of other services libraries can offer. An important initiative has been taken by the "Book Bank", (a non-profit civil association founded in 1960 aimed to create alliances with state and private organisations such as "Programa Refréscate Leyendo", and sponsored by the Coca-Cola Corporation) concerning

reading enhancement, and qualification of specialists. The project has presented good results not least because its focus is on the needs of readers and the quality of books. The experiences of the project have already been of inspiration to other countries (Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica); and possibly other countries in the region will implement similar projects.

A special contribution to the Seminar

A spontaneous contribution from Prof. L. Anne Clyde (IFLA School Library Section and Resource Centres) for reflection and actions on the main points concerning the Seminar theme (Annex 2)² is considered as an important addition to the contents of the Seminar, specifically to its final part with the contribution of participants.³

Recommendations of the Seminar

The following are general recommendations of the Seminar:

- All speakers knew of the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines and Manifestos on Public Library and School Libraries. However, some emphasized the need for broader dissemination of these documents, and translation into the local languages of the region. This way the policies could be of wider use for library planning and serve as inspiration for the decisions of politicians and governors regarding library development.
- The majority of speakers stressed the influence of local conditions in their respective countries as a factor that restrains the development of library services, such as: management and political instabilities, orientation of educational programmes, illiteracy and poverty levels, ethnic and linguistic diversity, geographical conditions that sometimes cause difficulties for people's physical access to libraries, and the different levels of public and school library services in each country;
- Some countries stated the non-existence of library legislation, or the lack of implementation of already existing laws, as factors that prevent the creation and development of libraries. Also, the low standards of the education of library professionals were highlighted, lack of job opportunities, and of rules of procedure for librarians who work as heads of library services;
- With reference to the recommendations of the manifestos and guidelines, the need to develop the qualifications of librarians, school librarians and library assistants, and to revise educational programmes was emphasised by the speakers. It was also suggested that IFLA develop models of information literacy programmes to be used in the educational sector and in libraries in the region;
- Some countries have reported on their book and reading promotion policies, and their various levels of implementation within each region of the countries. The results of these initiatives are useful examples of how to plan and develop actions and would benefit similar initiatives in many regions of South America;
- In a few countries, public libraries have benefited from projects initiated by private companies on topics such as social liability management practices, implementation of library projects and reading promotion programmes. These initiatives could be applied in other countries of the region as well;
- Reports on the various degrees of implementation and use of TIC within each country show that

TICs have created a new dimension for library services in the Information and Knowledge Society towards the promotion of social and digital inclusion of people through information literacy programmes, use of Tele-centres, and resources to access the Internet;

- A few countries reported on agreements with CERLALC aimed to support regional reading promotion programmes carried out by libraries;
- Different names for the terms “libraries” and “library services” were reported by several countries. This is considered to be a consequence of information being made available on the Internet by multiple actors and of the fast growing use of TICs. The speakers emphasized the need to keep the traditional title “Library” for this organization;
- The important role of public libraries as active agents for promoting access to information and reading programmes on various levels was clearly acknowledged. Also, it was emphasized that public libraries can and should develop cooperation and resource sharing with school libraries. However, public libraries do not replace school libraries as school libraries specifically help achieving the mission and vision of the schools up to university level;
- The strong need to develop political actions was stressed. Such actions should strengthen freedom of expression and free access to information; help reduce monopolies and other restraints such as the costs of safeguarding the information flow in its many manifestations. Support from UNESCO to such actions was considered desirable;
- Contributions from private corporations, library associations and other sectors of the community were highlighted as a support to library activities

and interaction with the governmental sector on matters concerning the development of library action plans and activities;

- With the growing awareness and implementation of human rights in South America, popular libraries have acted as agents of social inclusion, despite the lack of resources and technical restraints; some countries reported on concrete experiences with positive results in their respective contexts;
- The experiences of how to promote library services and advance a more pro-active behaviour of librarians have provided positive results for the countries in question. Activities primarily concerning active citizenship building have reached urban populations as well as the populations of borderline and rural areas;
- The need review public libraries and school libraries census was stressed. As this has been successfully done in other countries, also the official census institutions of each South American country should revise their statistical methods and this way provide an important input to library planning;
- The quality of presentations was excellent and provided important details of actions and initiatives from the various countries. They served as an inspiration for the promotion of innovations, more adequate library services, and more active interaction between colleagues in the search for solutions to problems discussed at the Seminar.

Conclusion

The main function of libraries and information services is undoubtedly the promotion of access to information resources of quality, and implementation of programmes that, based on educational and cultural

policies, are aimed at reading and the advancement of information and technology literacy of individuals.

With reference to the competencies identified by OCDE, three categories should be prioritised for the whole development of individuals when planning library and information services projects concerning the promotion of reading and use of information.

However, the *South-American Seminar on IFLA/ UNESCO Manifestos and Guidelines for Public and School Libraries* has demonstrated the challenges facing librarians and educators. They need to contribute significantly for the enhancement of educational programmes for their users, and the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines and Manifestos would be of support to this work. Such programmes should have high priority status and would help overcome several of the difficulties identified by local populations in order to achieve better results. Compared to other regions of the world, the countries of South America are struggling with great disadvantages.

The participants of the seminar recommend that IFLA and UNESCO be requested to create opportunities for a more active dissemination of their guidelines and manifestos among local governments; and to advocate the importance of their implementation in South American countries. Such initiatives would significantly contribute to the process of guaranteeing freedom of expression and free access to information - without costs - by every citizen, so they become ready to participate in the Knowledge and Information Society under development.

Notes

1 Information from this presentation was included in a presentation by FEBAB President at the Pre-Conference of the World Summit on the Information Society, sponsored by IFLA at Alexandria Library in November 2005. In addition, other projects and actions in Brazil to promote access to books, reading and libraries in Brazil were included therewith (see references).

2 About two months after the Seminar, FEBAB received the announcement of Prof. L. Anne Clyde's death in Iceland and regrets the untimely loss of this outstanding library educator, vigorous proponent for school libraries and strong IFLA supporter.

3 In addition to the main section of lectures, two groups of participants (which included lecturers and registered participants) were assembled in order to discuss public and school libraries respectively. Their task was to identify main points and proposals to be used as a basis for new studies and the development of national and regional policies aimed to provide information access for the population. As a result, more specific recommendations were stated and will be part of additional documents in order to be considered as a contribution for the development of studies and projects in this region.

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Annex 1 - Participant countries and representatives in the South American Seminar

- Argentina: Lic. Roberto Servidio
- Bolivia: Lic. Waldo Spinar
- Brazil: Bibl. Sandra Domingues
- Chile: Lic. Ricardo Gaston Lopez Muñoz
- Colombia: Lic. Glória Maria Rodriguez Santamaria
- Ecuador: Lic. César Alfonso Polit Villarroel
- Paraguay: Lic. Emilce Sena
- Peru: Lic. Álvaro Julian Tejada Sanches
- Suriname: Lic. Anita Macintosh
- Uruguay: Lic. Magdalena Reyes
- Venezuela: Lic. Maria Elena Zapata

Annex 2 - School libraries - South American characteristics in the vision of Anne Clyde

- Political instability and its effects (guerrillas, warfare even);
- School and public libraries better in urban areas than rural - the geographical divide;
- Serious inequalities in society; libraries have the potential to reduce inequality through access- but often increase the inequalities;
- Problems of levels of literacy and functional literacy;
- Dependence on “projects” and projects fragile (mostly small projects) with charges (NGO’s from overseas may have little local control);
- School libraries better in the private schools than in the government schools;
- Problems of languages: Spanish/Portuguese/Indigenous languages;
- Not all schools have libraries in most countries;
- Responsibility for school libraries to public library services to schools be divided among federal, state and local government. Most countries do not even know the number of school libraries;
- Role of the Professional Associations in promoting libraries and librarians. LIS professional is new. Library directors often are not librarians;
- Dependence on volunteers, part-time staff, teachers with only short courses;
- Lack of appropriate legislative support for libraries and librarians;
- Centralized systems (when exist) have advantages & limitations:
 - Access to more variety selections (evaluation skills?)
 - But collections do not suit local needs
- Little support for schools libraries in the compulsory curriculum or in teaching methods (Lack of support from principals teachers);
- Conflict between building “traditional” book collections and providing net access: with low funding they compete - administration believes that net can replace books;
- Problems of institutional and countrywide support for school libraries.

Georgian libraries and the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption

Irakli Garibashvili

— Region: Eastern Europe

Introduction

This paper examines all of the three topics included in the IFLA/FAIFE Theme Report 2006 and will thus discuss the current situation regarding HIV/AIDS, poverty, and corruption seen from a Georgian perspective. It describes the role of Georgian libraries within this specific context; however some general tendencies and developments within the region will be included as well.

The Republic of Georgia regained and proclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union on April 9 1991, and a year later the Republic of Georgia became an active, voting member of the United Nations. Prior to her independence, Georgia enjoyed one of the highest living standards and levels of per capita income in the former Soviet Union. However, the independence was accompanied by a civil war in the regions of Abkhazia and Ossetia. This situation lasted until 1994, culminating in the formation of autonomous regions, and left Georgia with a disrupted and fundamentally transformed economy.¹

Since then, the libraries of Georgia have tried to position themselves as important factors in the struggle of creating a society based on freedom and democratic development. The Georgian Library Association was founded in 1997, but already in 1995 the Library Automation Association of Georgia (LAAG) was established. This organization studies, promotes and implements modern achievements in information technology as well as international standards in Georgian libraries. As one of its first tasks LAAG was in charge of translating the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto into Georgian.

Access to information on HIV/AIDS in Georgia and the role of libraries

This part of the article will discuss access to HIV/AIDS information based on a survey in Georgian libraries, undertaken in March 2006, and an analysis from 2001 entitled "Situation analysis on HIV/AIDS in Georgia" by the Georgian AIDS and Clinical Immunology Research Centre. This analysis was the first attempt to make a comprehensive assessment of the

actual situation regarding HIV/AIDS in Georgia; and was carried out in order to develop recommendations for further improvements of national responses and to prevent a wide scale AIDS epidemic.

The situation in the country will be assessed, and the major impeding factors for effective national responses be identified as well as the opportunities libraries missed for their further involvement in the national strategic planning process on the fight against HIV/AIDS. International HIV/AIDS Epidemiological Data and statistics will be presented along with a description of the Health Care Services and State AIDS Programmes, as well as various legal, cultural, educational, religious, and media related aspects connected to the subject matter.

International focus on HIV/AIDS in Georgia

Georgia is part of a region that is experiencing a considerable growth in the spread of the HIV and AIDS. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS, UNAIDS states that,

”The epidemics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia continue to grow and are affecting ever-larger parts of societies in this region. The number of people living with HIV in this region reached an estimated 1.6 million [990,000 - 2.3 million] in 2005 - an increase of almost twenty fold in less than ten years. AIDS claimed almost twice as many lives in 2005, compared with 2003, and killed an estimated 62,000 [39,000-91,000] adults and children. Some 270,000 [140,000- 610,000] people were newly infected with HIV in the past year. The overwhelming majority of people living with HIV in this region are young; 75% of the

reported infections between 2000 and 2004 were in people younger than 30 years (in Western Europe, the corresponding figure was 33%)”²

On March 21, the parliament passed the HIV/AIDS Control Regulation in Georgia Act. (Amendments and additions, November 2000). The final law came into effect in January 2001.

The main provisions of the law are:

- Government responsibility of the control of HIV/AIDS and development of national, regional, and local policies
- Equitable access to health care
- Voluntary testing
- Protection of the rights and interests of people with HIV/AIDS, and observance of personal freedom, respect and safety
- Epidemiological surveillance of the HIV-infected and health benefits
- Non-stigmatisation of AIDS patients, confidentiality, privacy and voluntary decision making (testing is mandatory only for blood, organ and sperm donors)
- Protection of the rights of patients' families, as well as the rights of those in contact with HIV-infected people
- Health workers' rights and duties in AIDS patient treatment and social protection. The law provides the following financial, social and other guarantees of AIDS patients:
- Free testing, treatment and monitoring of HIV-infected patients under the respective government programmes
- Local residents (Georgia) who were infected with HIV as a result of medical treatment are entitled to

- a pension as defined by current law
- For epidemiological surveillance and periodic tests, the HIV-infected are entitled to free round-trip tickets to public transportation to Tblisi four times a year
- Parents and guardians of the HIV-infected have the right to stay at the hospital with their children under the age of 14. During this period, they are excused from work and will receive welfare payments
- The HIV-positives under the age of 18 receive a monthly allowance that equals double the minimum wage (targeted benefits programme)
- Unemployed HIV-infected people receive a monthly allowance that equals double the minimum wage (targeted benefits programme)
- HIV-infected may be employed, except in jobs (listed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection jointly with relevant agencies) where they risk infect others
- HIV-infected may participate in sports events and exercises, except for sports (listed by the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection) where they risk infect others
- HIV-infected prisoners have the same rights and obligations as all other inmates. In addition, they are entitled to medical care, full and timely information on HIV/AIDS, confidentiality and protection from HIV infection.³

Furthermore the government and the president of Georgia recognized the critical epidemiological situation related to HIV/AIDS in “Enforcement of the process of fight against AIDS and preventive activities” (President’s Decree # 587 article 5, Oct 8, 1998). The Georgian National AIDS Prevention and

Control Programme has been assessed according to the recommendations of World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNAIDS; and the specific Georgian context was taken into consideration. Thus in 1994, Georgia was one of the first former Soviet Republics to develop a national programme followed by a strategic plan of action for 2003-2007. The action plan has seven priority areas:

- Advocate the development of an adequate legislative basis for the implementation of effective prevention interventions among people likely to be exposed to HIV
- HIV prevention among injecting drug users, including users in the penitentiary system
- HIV and sexually transmitted infection prevention among sex workers, men who have sex with men, and their partners
- HIV prevention among young people
- Safety of blood and blood products
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission; and
- Care, support and treatment of people living with HIV and AIDS

UNAIDS states:

“Georgia’s proposal was approved in February 2003. Georgia will be receiving US\$ 12.1m over five years. HIV and AIDS activities in Georgia are coordinated by the “Governmental Commission on HIV/AIDS, STIs and other Socially Dangerous Infections”. This commission, created in 1996, is now functioning as the Country Coordinating Mechanism with government, civil society and UN participation.”⁴

The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Georgia has

played a very active role in the Country Coordination Mechanism where several international agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA are members. The Theme Group has initiated the development of an Implementation Support Plan which identifies four strategic areas:

- Support for people living with HIV and AIDS
- Advocacy
- Strategic information-monitoring and evaluation
- Capacity building

“The Theme Group has developed a Programme Acceleration Fund proposal, which was approved by the Programme Acceleration Fund committee in November 2004. The Group played a lead role in advocacy efforts and particularly in the World Aids Days activities in Georgia. UN Theme Group continued to mainstream the emerging UNAIDS agenda within the five cross-cutting functions. Having played a critical role in NSPP and leveraging resources from Global Fund, Theme Group continued advocacy for scaling up of the Global Fund project implementation process as a key prerequisite for success of national responses. In late 2004 following a request from the Country Coordinating Mechanism the First Lady, founder of one of the first nongovernmental organization partners in the field of HIV and AIDS, accepted the Country Coordinating Mechanism Chair and has already ensured that the Global Fund project implementation has accelerated through strong leadership and increased monitoring and evaluation provisions.”⁵

Spread of HIV/AIDS in Georgia

By January 2005, a total of 638 AIDS cases have been

registered in Georgia. The CIA World Fact Book includes the following statistics on HIV/AIDS in Georgia,

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:	Less than 0.1% (2001 est.)
HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:	3,000 (2003 est.)
HIV/AIDS - deaths:	Less than 200 (2003 est.)

(<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gg.html#People>)

The UNAIDS organisation provides the following statistics,

Country HIV and AIDS estimates, end 2003*	
Adult (15-49) HIV prevalence rate	<0.1 % (range: <0.2%)
Adults (15-49) living with HIV	3500 (range: 1100-6800)
Adults and children (0-49) living with HIV	3500(range: 1200-6900)
Women (15-49) living with HIV	600 (range: 200-1200)
AIDS deaths (adults and children) in 2003	<200 (range: <400)

In 2004 the UNAIDS also made an assessment of the epidemiological situation in Georgia,

“Georgia reports the fastest growing of HIV infection in Caucasus. The total number of reported cases amounts to 440 as of the end June 2003. The main route of transmission is IDU which is attributable to 72%, heterosexual transmission constitutes to 25%. Majority of HIV positive people lives in capital city of Tbilisi. The vulnerable population groups are mainly IDU, FSW, and MSM. In accordance with experts’ estimates their size is as follows: FSW - 30,000; MSM (engaged into network) - 10,000; IDU - 100,000. About 50 % of FSW are

16-25 years old. MSM is highly stigmatised group. Majority is involved in sex work; high number of occasional sex contacts is common. Available data suggests that prevalence remains low in high risk group populations: 1, 4% in FSW, and 0, 54% - in IDUs, 0, 36% in STI patients, and 0, 67% - in TB patients. There is a sharp increase in IDU population, especially among adult population which along with high risk drug injection practice and risky sexual behaviour suggests about the high potential for further growing of HIV infection there.”⁶

Georgian media neglecting HIV/AIDS

Unfortunately, the role and contribution of the Georgian mass media is very limited in the fight against the HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS related issues are covered primarily as episodes and incidents, and mainly from a sensational perspective in the hunt for a good story. As a result, the media mostly ignore its major function, which is to inform/educate society about the disease and promote a healthy life style. Regrettably, there are cases where the mass media provides information in a way that, instead, causes panic in society; because of fear of acquiring infection the population tries to avoid places of social meetings, and visit medical centres. This does not help people avoid the infection but instead puts those infected with HIV in extremely isolated condition.

The representatives of the mass media explain the limited coverage of these issues by the government's insignificant interest in HIV/AIDS and lack of interest in society itself. The existing difficult social background and tense political environment places generally health care problems on the back plane.

HIV/AIDS is considered to have even a lower priority. Also, press, radio, and TV journalists consider this problem to be of no interest to the public. They give priority to other more important political or social topics and events; this reflects the passive position of the mass media that only tries to cover the day-to-day situation and does not have any desire to influence and/or correct common false beliefs of society, or to contribute to the process of rising of population's awareness on HIV/AIDS.

A Georgian survey confirmed the low coverage in the media; during one year the media covered HIV/AIDS issues in:

- 27 articles
- 8 radio programmes or adds
- 12 TV programmes.

There is no way that such a frequency and volume of information would be effective. The survey on the population's views on mass media coverage of HIV/AIDS problems showed, that a majority (76.4%) considers media coverage of this topic to be insufficient.

Libraries - key players in the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information

Recommendations

Most of the public libraries, university libraries as well as the National Information Learning Centre hold collections of various printed and electronic materials on HIV/AIDS prevention. The materials, that are available in both Georgian and other languages, consist primarily of books, legal acts and newspaper articles. Also, libraries that are able to offer online

access to the internet can provide its users with electronic resources e.g. link to appropriate websites produced in the Georgian language such as <http://www.aids.gol.ge/> - Georgian AIDS & Clinical Immunology Research Centre.

In the survey that was carried out in March 2006, one public library reported that they had organized several consultations with medical experts. It would be an important and appropriate initiative - both in terms of developing and qualifying the dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS and for the Georgian public libraries themselves - if this practice could be adopted and implemented on a general basis. Furthermore, the initiative to invite experts and other capacities in the medical field might also result in a situation, where the librarians will be much more confident and at ease with an otherwise tender and potentially taboo subject, and thus provide users with better information and resources.

Libraries providing information and materials on HIV/AIDS also contribute in bringing down taboos and support dissemination of knowledge on the sensitization against people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). This is indeed much needed in Georgia as reported in the situation analysis on HIV/AIDS in Georgia, "Low awareness on HIV/AIDS transmission increases the risk of AIDS patients' discrimination." The libraries should seize this opportunity to draw not only attention to the fact that they can play a much more important role in this specific matter; but also to create a better understanding among relevant decision makers of the professional competences and qualities of libraries and of the librarians working there.

Access to information for the poor and the role of libraries in the reduction of poverty

The economic situation of Georgia

The question of poverty and how to fight it is most certainly relevant within a Georgian context. The CIA World Factbook 2005 states that 54 % of the population in Georgia lives a life below the poverty line. The unemployment rate adds to this picture since in 2005 an estimated 12.6% of the total population had to survive without a job. The Capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, experiences an even greater challenge in this regard, since as many as 26 % of the citizens here is outside the labour market. (Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, Yearbook 2005)

In 2004, the subsistence minimum amounted to 137.1 Lari (Georgian currency). The table shows the gross average monthly wages and salaries for selected groups compared to subsistence minimum level in 2004 (Source: Ministry of economic development of Georgia. Department of statistics. Yearbook 2005)

	Lari	% of Subs. Minimum
Average income	156.6	114%
Education	88.7	65%
Health and Social workers	80.3	59%
Public Librarian	35.0	26%

These data clearly demonstrate and help explain why a majority of the Georgian population is living beyond or very close to the poverty line.

The state of Georgian public libraries

The Georgian public libraries do not take specific actions to provide information specifically for the poor or marginalized members of the community; all services are equally available for any user. Library services includes: free admittance to libraries (except for an insignificant number of public libraries that charge an annual membership fee equivalent to 1-1.5 USD per year), free or low cost Internet access (wherever this exists), access to online databases, reference services, lifelong learning and information literacy (IL) activities, etc.

One of the positive effects of the services provided by Georgian public libraries can be observed if we look at issues concerning literacy; according to the CIA World Fact Book literacy amounts 100% - literacy is defined as people over the age of 15 that are capable of reading and writing.⁷

The libraries are not adequately funded by the Georgian Government, and librarians themselves, as has been established, belong to one of the lowest paid income groups in the country. There are no suggestions that this situation will change; one explanation is the tradition of the core services of libraries be free of charge to the public - a tradition that was established when Georgia was part of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there are real legal complications connected with the introduction of chargeable services in Georgian libraries.

International support and collaboration

Since the Georgian independence, the country has

been supported by foreign and international organizations - particularly in regard to Internet connectivity and access to online databases. For example: IREX (USA) supports several "Internet Access & Training Centres" in libraries and provides free hosting of Web services; also several international programmes grant access to online databases (EBSCO; Cambridge University, Springer, Blackwell publications; etc.). Though much less widespread, there are examples of local authorities, political parties or businessmen that donate collections of modern Georgian publications. All of the projects mentioned help advance wider and free access to information materials and services. The latest statistics on Georgian communication shows: telephones main lines in 2004: 683,200; mobile phones in 2004:840,600; Internet host in 2005: 8,942; and Internet users in 2005: 175,600.⁸

The STAGE project (Support for Transition in the Arts and Culture in Greater Europe) serves as an example of how international organizations, in this case the Council of Europe, try to help countries like Georgia in building national programmes, policies and strategies on culture. STAGE provides manuals on best practise designed for cultural decision makers, officials and administrators - specifically of countries in transition.⁹

At national level the STAGE projects have the following objectives:

- Encourage an open, democratic and transparent approach to policy-making and cultural management, with a new modern relation between public authorities, the cultural sector and the civil society.
- Promote the four major principles which have been seen as key issues for cultural policy in most

European countries and remain of high importance in terms of democracy, i.e. the building of cultural identity, the respect of multicultural diversity, the stimulation of creativity and the encouragement of participation in cultural life. - Help policy makers to implement appropriate policies in order to respond to the challenges of democratic transition, notably new ways of financing, decentralization, privatization, status of artists and the development of civil society".¹⁰

Conclusion

Currently most of the services of Georgian libraries are available for poor members of society, but libraries are generally badly under-subsidized or provisionally supported from the government and local authorities thus leading to uncertain assessments for their future and quality.

The role of libraries in eliminating corruption

The libraries can play an important role in the fight against corruption. In order to take active part in the elimination of corruption, the population has to become more aware of the issues related to this area: Which kind of corruption schemes are widespread in society; what are the consequences of corruption; and how much damage has corruption brought to society as such and to its individual members? In the society, where corruption penetrates all spheres of social, political and economic life, every citizen, intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, is involved in or promotes operations of corruption schemes. Only well-informed citizens can identify and oppose corrupt actions they may encounter in various

institutions, organizations, agencies, etc. Only well-informed citizens would be able to protect themselves and the society from corrupt individuals who force ordinary citizens to accept and obey corrupt practices. Therefore, libraries can play a huge role to educate population by the dissemination of information on corruption and related topics including legislation.

Though some libraries in Georgia do work on various anti-corruption issues, it is currently very rare that libraries take any specific initiatives or actions.

The "Trans national Crime and Corruption Centre Caucasus Office" operate a small library, which has a unique collection of information materials on corruption. The library is accessible to all interested readers. TraCCCCO periodically publishes (in Georgian, English or Russian) the research works completed by its researchers and grantees and circulates free of charge among libraries or interested individuals. At least 20 libraries receive their publications regularly; others obtain those publications freely by own initiative.

The National Library of Georgia has a display of publications on this topic; and public libraries in Tbilisi are able to provide information based on their small collections of information about corruption and related issues. The materials include books, reports, and bibliographic lists of Georgian newspaper and journal articles; and librarians can also direct users to the many websites that hold information and research analysing corruption. Unfortunately, their use of the Tbilisi collections is not widespread.

Recommendations

Libraries therefore need to take more pro-active part on the fight against corruption; with this purpose they should engage in the following activities:

- Cooperate with NGOs carrying out anti-corruption activities including Trans national Crime and Corruption Centre Caucasus Office, Transparency International, and other organizations.
- Invite the public leaders or lecturers with adequate knowledge to give lectures, and organize public discussions on the topics of corruption, citizenship, human rights, trafficking, money laundering, trans-national crime and other hot issues; and analyze success stories on the fight against corruption in other countries;
- Organize training workshops on the basic legislation that would enable and encourage citizens to oppose corruption cases they encounter in their daily lives;
- Develop a list of reading materials on corruption and related topics;
- Install a display in the library halls where the clips of the latest newspaper articles on corruption scandals would be exhibited;
- Provide a corner in the library building to exhibit posters or caricature drawings on the corruption theme.

These are just ideas inspired by writing this article and participating in discussions regarding “libraries against corruption” issues.

Notes

- 1 http://www.dfidhealthrc.org/Shared/publications/Country_health/GEORGIA.PDF
- 2 http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/Regions/EasternEuropeAndCentralAsia.asp
- 3 Source: <http://www.ilo.ru/aids/docs/dec02/cis/Georgia-eng.pdf>
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- 5 http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/Countries/georgia.asp
- 6 http://data.unaids.org/Publications/Fact-Sheets01/georgia_EN.pdf
- 7 <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gg.html#People>
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Conclusion

Susanne Seidelin & Thomas Skov Jensen

Introduction

It is encouraging to note that, although the authors of this report see many difficulties lying ahead of libraries and information services, they have no doubts that libraries should engage in the problems and challenges their respective countries and regions are facing. The starting point is to provide services and disseminate information at a high professional level, however, the authors concur that libraries would have to leave the “ivory tower” and engage themselves in their local communities, their country as well as internationally if they should be able to effectively respond to their users’ needs. Cooperation, partnerships and redefinition of objectives and tasks of libraries are some of the key focus points of the authors. It is also evident that they regard library services on HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption as commitments that go beyond borders of communities, countries and regions - thus all three subjects of this report are also seen as a commitment of the international library community.

More concretely the authors advocate the engagement of libraries in strong education efforts, implementation of information laws, awareness of the consequences of poverty and corruption, advocating transparency; and enhancing libraries’ position in society; and thus increasing the abilities of libraries’ successful participation in the fight for equal opportunities, transparency and better public health.

Libraries and the HIV/AIDS pandemic

“Library and information services cannot sit on the fence when their nations young people are being decimated by the enemy from within who strikes silently and in darkness”
(Kingo J. Mchombu 2002)

The IFLA/FAIFE World Report 2005 showed that libraries - particularly in the regions most affected by HIV/AIDS - were engaged in programmes that raise awareness about the disease and, to some degree, they also disseminated information to members of the community unable to read. The report concluded, however, that countries were more likely to have un-

dertaken general HIV/AIDS awareness programmes than specific programmes targeting illiterate groups. Just over half of the respondents (43 out of 82) had been involved in HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. From a regional point of view, awareness programmes were more likely to be found in African and Latin American libraries although the USA and Canadian libraries run programmes and half of the Oceanic respondents had been involved in similar activities. As can be imagined, a wide variety of programmes were operating throughout the library community (exhibitions, poster displays but also book displays and leaflet dispensers - as the most popular activity). Libraries in some countries arranged more in-depth activities to publicise the subject (discussion sessions and workshops, hosted lectures and set up of web-sites).

Partnerships with health authorities and local organizations were also a common way to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, and in some cases also with international bodies such as the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme, or with health libraries in developing countries for educational and supportive purposes. About 33% of the responding countries reported they supplied information to members of their community unable to read but results showed that there were fewer efforts on behalf of illiterate people. African libraries were the leaders in this area, and 9 out of the 17 respondents to the questionnaire had created, or partnered with, broad-based efforts to ensure that no member of the community is deprived of information on HIV/AIDS. The World Report 2005 concluded that there was plenty of room for increased action on behalf of libraries in this area.

Canon of society

The introduction to this year's Theme Report, mentions some of the problems libraries and information services can also help overcome such as the religious and cultural barriers that may hinder free access to HIV/AIDS information in some communities. These problems are discussed by Yasuyo Inoue who identifies religious beliefs and "the canon idea of the Asian community" as some of the reasons why parts of society ignore the demand for provision and dissemination of information about various aspects of the disease. Community groups, e.g. elderly members of the local communities and parents oppose safe-sex education in schools and availability of information material at school and public libraries. Other, and equally important, barriers are the lack of information in local languages and to people unable to read. Kendra Albright refers to Sturges and Neill when indicating that most of the international publishers are reluctant to invest in African publishing thus creating a situation where

"...many informational materials on HIV/AIDS that are distributed in Sub-Saharan Africa do not originate there and may not be as culturally appropriate or effective as those that could be developed by Africans." (Albright:34)

Opportunities of libraries

Authors discuss the possible reasons why libraries and library professionals may not engage in the provision and dissemination of information about the various aspects of HIV/AIDS. Some of the reasons mentioned are little, or no recognition, and perception by the relevant agents with regard to the potentially crucial

role of libraries and librarians

“Libraries and information professionals stand to be key participants in this fight against HIV/AIDS, yet libraries are not perceived to be important components in the prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission.” (Albright:29) “Funding is also scarce because of the poor perception of libraries in these countries. Libraries are not seen as vital to the solution of critical problems such as the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, libraries cannot compete for government funding with something that appears more critical such as agriculture or health care.” (Albright:34)

In this context Garibashvili regrets the opportunities Georgian libraries missed for their further involvement in the national strategic planning process on the fight against HIV/AIDS. With reference to the report “Low awareness on HIV/AIDS transmission increases the risk of AIDS patients’ discrimination” he states “libraries should seize this opportunity to draw not only attention to the fact that they can play a much more important role in this specific matter; but also to create a better understanding among relevant decision makers of the professional competences and qualities of libraries and of the librarians working there.” (Garibashvili: 140)

Another barrier for involvement is lack of knowledge; the disease is said to cause fear amongst librarians, and also anxiety regarding user privacy issues

“In the dissemination of health information, privacy becomes an important issue since it is likely that persons may wish to access this information without exposing their interest in the subject. The patron may fear that it would be perceived that

they might have the disease or condition.” [...] “The library therefore has a particular challenge and responsibility in providing such information in a discreet manner if this is what is needed. There is a challenge to library staff as well, since they are likely to be working in a context in which sexual behaviour is still discussed with relative unease.” (Lewis et al.:76)

Therefore libraries and their staffs should recognize the opportunities they have, and identify the barriers and challenges connected with their engagement in HIV/AIDS activities and dissemination of information.

“Their role, however, is constrained by a number of factors which impede their involvement in IEC activities. These constraints must be examined and understood within the context of the societies they serve in order to fully exploit their contribution to the prevention of HIV/AIDS.” (Albright:30) Albright, however, concludes “By taking a lead in HIV/AIDS information efforts, LIS professionals have a unique opportunity to establish and build their visibility, contribution, and establishment as a recognised, respected profession.” (Albright:40)

Urban vs. rural areas

The advantages of serving urban communities compared to rural are stressed. In relation to all three topics of this report, authors underpin the need to establish partnerships that may be considered a little controversial by some LIS professionals but the importance of tele-centres and other community centres as partners are highlighted. Often, these centres are the only information services rural communities are

offered - hence the recommendation of identifying such centres as libraries (Albright: 36). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are seen as one of the necessary tools for the development of information provision in rural areas (e.g. HIV/AIDS information); and ICTs are considered to have the potential of reducing the gap between efforts carried out in the urban areas compared to services in rural areas. However, as Pobeá states; "Promotion and prevention actions must not be derailed for lack of access to the Internet." (Pobeá:85) In this context, it is crucial that libraries and information services, operating in rural areas, realize the specific needs and abilities of their users and adjust their collections and ways of disseminating the inherent information accordingly.

Cooperation and partnerships

By providing appropriate and up to date materials, libraries and information services have the potential to become important collaborators and partners in joint ventures aimed at preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

"Libraries and librarians are potentially valuable collaborators in HIV/AIDS information, education and communication projects and should champion and demonstrate the role of information as a catalyst for change." (Lewis et al.:70)

Despite the possible poor perception of libraries in some areas/countries partnerships between libraries and other sources of HIV/AIDS information activities should be established;

"the value of information in HIV/AIDS prevention is well recognised and is increasingly at the centre of policy and funding practices. Partner-

ships, therefore, could be made with educational institutions and communication organisations." (Albright:38)

Libraries are recommended to participate in the work of multidisciplinary teams that may operate in their local community; in Cuba these teams are in charge of community-wide work and members are family physicians, psychologists, educators, sexologists, epidemiologists and health promoters. To be part of these teams would make libraries "better understand the surrounding problems and even prepare themselves as health promoters and carry out independent work if necessary." (Pobeá:82)

Libraries should also be able to assist the various groups of people that are concerned with or directly work with HIV/AIDS issues; this way libraries would be better equipped to segmenting their services to patients, relatives, students, professionals, decision-makers, and NGOs etc. Particularly, the support of NGO activities is highlighted,

"One constituency that may present a challenge is the NGO community, many members of which do not have library and information centres and to whom services could be provided as a support mechanism for the national effort." (Lewis et al.:75)

The overall message in regard to the role of libraries is that they "serve not only as an information clearing-house on HIV/AIDS but also local community needs." (Albright:36)

Different groups - different information needs

The local needs and contexts should, as always, be taken in to account when selecting and assessing information materials on HIV/AIDS such as the following factors,

“the types of literacy in their users, especially the oral tradition. Information that is current and accurate is vital to the users of the resource centre. Efforts should be made to verify the source of materials for authoritativeness and timeliness. Materials should also be available in the local language(s) of the users and should be translated if necessary.” (Albright:36)

Thus the Internet is not always the best answer:

“It must be remembered that the Internet is a recent rapidly expanding phenomenon that has extraordinary impact on the development of today’s world. It grew up under the myth of democratisation of knowledge, information and technologies worldwide, but in reality, the figures prove that the world is still very far away from accomplishing this objective.” (Pobea:85)

Role of the media

The role of the media is debated both for their positive and negative effects. Ideally, the media should operate as agents for education and information of the public. “*Information also helps to fight the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. Relevant and accurate information helps to reduce fears, increase awareness and compassion, and change behaviours leading to increased risk of exposure to HIV and infection.*” (Albright:35)
However, discussing the role of the Georgian mass

media Garibashvili indicates that, regrettably their main focus is sensation mongering and they therefore contribute to the misinformation about the disease and “*provide information in a way that, causes panic in society; This does not help people avoid the infection but instead puts those infected with HIV in an extremely isolated condition.*” (Garibashvili:139)

Information as a means to reduce poverty

“The reduction of poverty is more than a process to find resources, it is also a process of increasing liberties, possibilities of conscious choices, accessibility to information and not only to the use of it but to be able to transform it”
(Cháidez 2005)

Information technologies

Equal participation in the knowledge and information society is seen not only as a means to overcome barriers such as the digital divide; but also as a means to reduce poverty. However, discussing the role of ICTS Gulati and Riley state:

“The idea of an information system that can reach the most remote and marginalized populations of the world’s poorest nations has captured the imagination of proponents worldwide; information and communications technology (ICT), the electronic means of capturing, processing, storing, and communication, has been touted as the latest in a long history of panaceas that will help those without the most basic resources of the modern world to improve their livelihoods. The idea of ICT4D [Information Communication Technology for Development, ed.] is based primarily on the extension of the Internet (although other forms of ICT exist).” (Gulati/Riley:50)

It is well-established that major problems such as lack of electricity supply and the huge costs of the introduction and application of the Internet in developing countries form a solid barrier between those who can access digital information and those who cannot - leaving millions of people deprived of information. Ocholla indicates yet another barrier concerning the implementation of information systems in libraries in the African region, "We are thrilled with the information service capacities of modern information systems but apathetic with regard to their development and maintenance." (Ocholla:18)

Other economic barriers also exist as Gulati and Riley point out

"the inability of large numbers of people to afford the hardware, make use of the software; and trust the content that has been designed and written by people who have little or no knowledge of the circumstances of the users, can one justify further experimentation with ICT4D?"

They also query the efficacy referring to critics of ICT4D who have pointed out that "the rural poor need proper nutrition and health care more than they do laptops and Internet connectivity."

However, they conclude that we cannot allow the digital divide to grow unchecked, and suggest ways to overcome these problems by focussing on the needs of the individual community user; provide relevant information that can be recognized and understood by all; making ICTs more user-friendly (local languages, alternative non-text based approach for illiterate users); and insuring access for all members of the community a price affordable for all. These actions being

implemented and in concert with the government and non-profit organisations, libraries would be ideal providers of ICTs as part of their mission to provide information for their communities.

The Internet is a "network of exchange" and thus it allows "many-to-many" communication - an advantage compared to other forms of information exchange that are essentially "one-to-one" (telephony) or "one-to-many" technologies (broadcasting and television).

"The Internet, therefore, has the potential to promote (or inhibit) the nature of interactions in the public sphere. This, in itself, has the capability of significantly altering human relations; however, the proponents of ICT4D envision a more ambitious role for the new technologies." (Gulati/Riley:50)

With their specific knowledge of the local communities in which they serve, there is no doubt that telecentres and other communication and community centres are recognized as important partners for libraries in their struggle to safeguard equal access to the Internet as a means to help reduce poverty. The role of the Telecentres is defined by Dagron in 2001

"telecentres should be a modern version of public libraries, with an additional outreach communication component that transforms the former individual relationship between the library and the user, into a collective process involving the community. One of the main thrusts of libraries and telecentres is to open the world of information and knowledge to the communities, with the advantage that telecentres can tailor the information to community needs. From the point of view of sustain-

ability, community telecentres should be treated as public libraries.” (Gulati/Riley:52)

Role of libraries

In his article Musino refers to Silvia C. Vattimo (2004:1): “*Among the obstacles to foster reading habits is poverty, stopping people of accessing books, schools, and libraries.*” Musino argues, “*If reading is considered unfamiliar or distant from the immediate context of family or social activities for the majority of the poor, how can we expect access and use of information to become an important factor in the reduction of poverty?*” (Musino:92)

The question is what libraries can do to position themselves and which activities they should engage in. Riley and Gulati recommend policies that address and recognize the role of libraries be developed, and to implement a practical and workable public information policy in libraries. They also stress that information technologies do not automatically help society fight poverty; as was the case regarding the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information - technology implementation has to take the specific context of local areas, regions and countries into account.

The authors agree that, libraries cannot solely rely on established and conventional competences. Librarians and information professionals must recognize their full potential and constantly seek to evaluate and adapt the scope of their work and commitments. One way they can position themselves is to influence those in charge of political decision-making processes advocating the role of libraries as potential agents of social improvement and economic equity. Another is

to invite politicians, and representatives of the civic and institutional sectors to participate in library circuits.

On the practical level, libraries should take more active part in the communities they serve. In this context a barrier that may hinder a successful result is their image within society and the impact of their services. As referred by Musino, a Mexican survey showed that over 80% of those interviewed never visited a library (Musino:92) and he also discusses the possible reasons why children and young people do not visit libraries - one explanation could be “*that they only consider public libraries as places where one does one’s homework.*” (Musino:92)

Ocholla is particularly concerned about the marginalized communities,

“Unfortunately, libraries have not been able to reach communities deprived of information largely because they were not designed for these communities, and until now, lack sensitivity toward the information requirements of these groups, regardless of how much they try.” (Ocholla:18)

He states that the existing libraries do not always fulfil their mission and role in society and “*Worse still, they are irrelevant to communities where libraries do not reach most people.*” (Ocholla:20)

To make libraries and their services relevant and used by the public, the provision of information should be an integrated part of community activities - hence the point of cooperation between libraries and local community centres made by the authors. They suggest such activities and projects may take form of literacy

training, reading promotion, adult education and other more informal educational initiatives, community information services within public libraries, ICT access and use of wireless technology, and recreational activities such as drama and dancing. Some of these activities “*should coincide with poverty alleviation and a general literacy campaign. Suffice to say that a new model for information access to marginalized and deprived persons should be considered within the outlined framework.*” (Ocholla:26) The selection of materials should also take the specific needs of the local community into consideration; particularly focus should be on materials for those unable to read, e.g. audio-visual materials, and materials in local languages.

Ocholla summarize the role of libraries, “Essentially, the library’s role is to inform, entertain, enlighten, educate, empower and equip individuals and communities with tools enabling better life orientation, enabling communities to recognize their rights and responsibilities in society, and fulfil their social roles both knowingly and responsibly.” (Ocholla:19)

Corruption, transparency and the role of libraries

“The potential of ICT for transparent delivery of public services and a consequent limitation of the scope for corruption exists. The challenge is to take the ideas and comparatively tentative beginnings into countries with a variety of different circumstances and find ways of inserting them effectively into corrupt and hostile, or merely indifferent and apathetic, service provision environments.” (Paul Sturges: Corruption, transparency and the role for ICTs)

Culture of transparency

Authors addressing the issue of corruption agree that the best weapon against it is a well-informed society and the development of a culture of transparency. Garibashvili argues the need of citizens’ active participation in this process; they have to become aware of the specific corruption schemes in their country. He also points out that in a society where corruption is wide-spread the population is involved, or passively supports, corruption; “*In the society, where corruption penetrates all spheres of social, political and economic life, every citizen, intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, is involved in or promotes operations of corruption schemes.*” (Garibashvili:142) The solution is information because only well-informed citizens can identify corrupt actions and thus protect themselves and society from corruption penetrating all levels of society. Therefore, “*libraries can play a huge role to educate population by the dissemination of information on corruption and related topics including legislation.*” (Garibashvili:142)

Role of libraries eliminating corruption

In his article Corzo further identify the role of libraries; “*Libraries should develop a culture of transparency built on solid democratic principles and actions; a culture that not only oppose but rejects corruption.*” (Corzo:105-106) To support the advancement of a culture of transparency freedom of information legislation is considered an important step. However, Corzo states that, it is not enough to agree that access to public information be a priority or to pass formal legislation;

“In Mexico, it is expected that access to informa-

tion and transparency are two vital factors in the control of corruption but, if few resources are allocated or the work is built on a weak structure, then the fight against corruption will take a very long time.” (Corzo:106)

Corzo also identifies nine new responsibilities and focus points for library professionals and the management of libraries (Corzo:105-106). Corzo's recommendations relate to: advancement of transparency and fight against corruption to become part of the commitment of library professionals; identification of a new role of libraries as agents of changes - and in this connection to make use of international declarations to support this process, e.g. the IFLA “Glasgow Declaration and on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom” and “Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action”; the work of libraries to be adapted the constant changes in society; establishment of a relation between society and economy of knowledge in which practices of corruption can not emerge or grow roots; and information units to become institutions participating in present and future democratic performances preserving information and knowledge.

While Corzo primarily concentrates on changes of what we could call the mindset of libraries and library professionals, Garibashvili presents some concrete activities for libraries to engage in to eliminate corruption. Recognizing the important anti-corruption activities of national and international NGOs and organizations, he calls for cooperation between libraries and such bodies; he also recommends library activities to include lectures given by public leaders; public discussions on corruption, citizenship, human

rights, trafficking, money laundering, trans-national crime and other hot issues; and analysis of success stories on the fight against corruption in other countries. Further he suggests training workshops on legislative issues; development of reading lists; and special displays of articles, posters and cartoons.

Future challenges of libraries

The most important messages the authors bring are that, libraries do indeed have a commitment to engage in the fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption; and information access and dissemination is a crucial factor in this fight. Information is the only vaccine that helps prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS; literacy is fundamental to the advancement of peoples' lives, and transparency and access to information are vital factors in the control of corruption. Thus by facilitating freedom of access to information libraries contribute to making the world more equal.

To effectively contribute to the development of their countries and local communities - particularly in rural areas - libraries and information services should recognize their full potential; re-define their role and review their practices to become agents for social and democratic changes. Therefore libraries must become visible by influencing the development process of their country and by engaging in partnerships and cooperation projects within their local community. In other words, to become important factors that have the capability to participate in the development process, libraries must engage in advocacy and provide results and success stories; only this way they can be regarded as equal and essential partners by society.

The international library community can help colleagues in the process of making libraries better equipped to meet these challenges. The development and implementation of IFLA policies and declarations provide the mindset and help advocate the role and potential of library services. IFLA's focus on HIV/AIDS at the WLIC in Durban in 2007 and the IFLA/FAIFE World Report Series help support national and local initiatives by discussing and reporting on the state of affairs also in regard to poverty and corruption. International support of local workshops addressing the three themes of this report is also a concrete contribution to raise awareness locally as well as internationally.

In the preface to this report, the President of IFLA, Alex Byrne, indicates why libraries and information services should engage in the issues concerning HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption:

"In that unequal world, access to information can be liberating. It can truly change lives by opening windows and doors and thereby providing opportunities for those willing and able to grasp them. This is where these issues become questions of freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, become issues for IFLA/FAIFE. It is not 'social work' but fulfilment of our duty to provide the fullest possible access to information without bias which takes us to engage with these issues because, by providing that information access, we enable people to take action on the important issues for their societies. By doing our best to ensure that access, we work to reduce inequality".

Statement on Libraries and Sustainable Development

Meeting in Glasgow on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of its formation, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

- Declares that all human beings have the fundamental right to an environment adequate for their health and well-being.
- Acknowledges the importance of a commitment to sustainable development to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future.
- Asserts that library and information services promote sustainable development by ensuring freedom of access to information.

IFLA further affirms that:

- The international library and information community forms a network that connects developing and developed countries, supports the development of library and information services worldwide, and ensures these services respect equity, the

general quality of life for all people and the natural environment.

- Library and information professionals acknowledge the importance of education in various forms for all. Library and information services act as gateways to knowledge and culture. They provide access to information, ideas and works of imagination in various formats, supporting personal development of all age groups and active participation in society and decision-making processes.
- Library and information services provide essential support for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development for all. Through their vast collections and variety of media, they offer guidance and learning opportunities. Library and information services help people improve educational and social skills, indispensable in an information society and for sustained participation in democracy. Libraries further reading habits, information literacy and promote education, public awareness and training.
- Library and information services contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual free-

dom and help safeguard basic democratic values and universal civil rights. They respect the identity, independent choice, decision-making and privacy of their users without discrimination.

- To this end, library and information services acquire, preserve and make available to all users without discrimination the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and cultural diversity of society and the richness of our environments.
- Library and information services are helping to

tackle information inequality demonstrated in the growing information gap and the digital divide. Through their network of services, information on research and innovation is made available to advance sustainable development and the welfare of peoples worldwide.

IFLA therefore calls upon library and information services and their staff to uphold and promote the principles of sustainable development.

This Declaration was approved by the Governing Board of IFLA meeting on 24 August 2002 in Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom.

Alexandria Manifesto on Libraries, the Information Society in Action

Libraries and information services contribute to the sound operation of the inclusive Information Society. They enable intellectual freedom by providing access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and regardless of frontiers.

They help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights impartially and by opposing any form of censorship.

The unique role of libraries and information services is that they respond to the particular questions and needs of individuals. This complements the general transmission of knowledge by the media, for example, and makes libraries and information services vital to a democratic and open Information Society. Libraries are essential for a well informed citizenry and transparent governance, as well as for the take-up of e-government.

They also build capacity by promoting information literacy and providing support and training for effective use of information resources, including

Information and Communication Technologies. This is especially critical in promoting the development agenda because human resources are central to economic progress. In these ways libraries contribute significantly to addressing the digital divide and the information inequality that results from it. They help to make the Millennium Development Goals a reality, including reduction of poverty. They will do more with quite modest investments. The value of the return is at least 4-6 times the investment.

In pursuit of the goal of access to information by all peoples, IFLA supports balance and fairness in copyright. IFLA is also vitally concerned to promote multilingual content, cultural diversity and the special needs of Indigenous peoples and minorities. IFLA and libraries and information services share the common vision of an Information Society for all adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in December 2003. That vision promotes an inclusive society based on the fundamental right of human beings both to access and to express information without restriction and in which

everyone will be able to create, access, use and share information and knowledge.

IFLA urges national, regional and local governments as well as international organisations to:

- invest in library and information services as vital elements in their Information Society strategies, policies and budgets;
- upgrade and extend existing library networks to obtain the greatest possible benefits for their citizens and communities;
- support unrestricted access to information and freedom of expression;
- promote open access to information and address structural and other barriers to access; and
- recognise the importance of information literacy and vigorously support strategies to create a literate and skilled populace which can advance and benefit from the global Information Society.

Adopted in Alexandria, Egypt, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, on 11 November 2005

Associated documents

- Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom
- IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto
- IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto: The school library in teaching and learning for all
- IFLA Internet Manifesto
- Maintaining our digital memory: a declaration of support for the World Summit on the Information Society. Communiqué from the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL), Oslo, August 2005.
- Beacons of the Information Society - Alexandria Statement on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning. High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 6-9 November 2005.
- IFLA Statement on Open Access to Scholarly Literature and Research Documentation.
- See <http://www.ifla.org/V/cdoc/policies.htm#Manifestos> for other statements.

Some further facts

There are worldwide:

- more than half a million library service points,

- 15.000 km of library shelving,
- well over half a million Internet connections in libraries,
- 1,5 trillion loan transactions each year,
- and 2.5 billion registered library users.

The claim that libraries return at least 4-6 times the investment is supported by numerous studies.

See for example:

- Svanhild Aabø. The Value of Public Libraries. Paper presented at the World Library and Information Congress in Oslo, August 2005. <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla71/papers/119e-Aabo.pdf>
- Measuring our value. British Library 2003. <http://www.bl.uk/pdf/measuring.pdf>
- José-Marie Griffith & Donald King. Taxpayers return on Investment in Florida Public Libraries, September 2004. <http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/roi/publications.cfm>
- Daniel D. Barron et. al.. The Economic Impact of Public Libraries in South Carolina, 2005.
- <http://www.libsci.sc.edu/SCEIS/home.htm>
- IFLA Headquarters. The Hague, Netherlands

Beacons of the Information Society

The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Celebrating this week's confirmation of the site of the Pharos of Alexandria, one of the ancient wonders of the world, the participants in the High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina on 6-9 November 2005 proclaim that information literacy and lifelong learning are the beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom.

Information Literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations. Lifelong learning enables individuals, communities and nations to attain their goals and to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the evolving global environment for shared benefit. It assists them and their institutions to meet technological, economic and social challenges, to redress disadvantage and to advance the well being of all.

Information literacy

- comprises the competencies to recognize information needs and to locate, evaluate, apply and create information within cultural and social contexts;
- is crucial to the competitive advantage of individuals, enterprises (especially small and medium enterprises), regions and nations;
- provides the key to effective access, use and creation of content to support economic development, education, health and human services, and all other aspects of contemporary societies, and thereby provides the vital foundation for fulfilling the goals of the Millennium Declaration and the World Summit on the Information Society; and
- extends beyond current technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking and interpretative skills across professional boundaries and empowers individuals and communities.

Within the context of the developing Information Society, we urge governments and intergovernmental organizations to pursue policies and programs to

promote information literacy and lifelong learning. In particular, we ask them to support

- regional and thematic meetings which will facilitate the adoption of information literacy and lifelong learning strategies within specific regions and socioeconomic sectors;
- professional development of personnel in education, library, information, archive, and health and human services in the principles and practices of information literacy and lifelong learning;
- inclusion of information literacy into initial and continuing education for key economic sectors and government policy making and administration, and into the practice of advisors to the business, industry and agriculture sectors;

- programs to increase the employability and entrepreneurial capabilities of women and the disadvantaged, including immigrants, the underemployed and the unemployed; and
- recognition of lifelong learning and information literacy as key elements for the development of generic capabilities which must be required for the accreditation of all education and training programs.

We affirm that vigorous investment in information literacy and lifelong learning strategies creates public value and is essential to the development of the Information Society.

Adopted in Alexandria, Egypt at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina on 9 November 2005.