

LESOTHO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION COUNTRY REPORT 2008

LESOTHO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (LLA)

Introduction

The Lesotho Library Association was established in October, 1978 and held its first SCECSAL in 1980 when it was only two years old. Since its inception, the Association has been highly actively involved the development of the profession in the country, and has participated in both the regional and international professional conferences (SCECSAL and IFLA).

It is that time of the year again when we as National Associations have to look back and take stock of what we were able to achieve, and look ahead at what we intend to do to prosper. Despite the hardships that we encountered, the Lesotho Library Association was able to engage in a number of undertakings. This report covers the period from March 2007 to July 2008 when the present Executive Committee took office.

1. Training – School Librarians Workshop

School Librarians in the Northern region of the country attended a five-day workshop which was coordinated by the School Libraries Sub-committee. The purpose of the workshop was to equip them with the basic skills in running a school library.

2. Every Child Is Ours initiative (ECIO)

LLA is participating in the ECIO initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Lesotho National Library Service. This is an effort to extend a helping hand to underprivileged children in developing countries in the form of a provision of children books to help the young library users to love and practice reading. Before books are shipped, the ECIO fund sent a team of reading specialists who held a one-day workshop to deliberate on "how to teach

young children to read with understanding, and how to attract their attention since they have a very short concentration span. The workshop was attended by the National Library personnel responsible for children section, some kindergarten caregivers in the area of the capital, Maseru, and LLA members who will be able to sell the idea to members.

3. IFLA Conference in Durban

The Association provided transport for its members to attend the 73rd IFLA conference in Durban.

4. **Directory of Library and Information Centres**

So much has been said about information resources and skills sharing among information professionals. LLA is in the process of compiling a directory of libraries and information centre in the country regardless of their nature or size, to facilitate information sharing, and in a bid to know where, what kind of information materials can be obtained. The research is at an advanced stage. Questionnaires have been sent out, and the responses promise that the work will be a success. The questionnaires will solicit information from schools, tertiary institutions, private enterprises, government ministries, parastatals and non-governmental organization about the state of the information collections and organization.

5. **Lesotho National Library Act**

The 2002 - 2004 *Lesotho country report* indicated that the preparatory workshop for the establishment of the Lesotho National Library Act was held under the facilitation of the Association. A three-day workshop was also held to finalise the draft bill which is now ready for presentation to Parliament.

6. **Automation**

The Association has taken an initiative to consult an expert who designed a database management system that can manage school libraries' collections. The system has been designed by a local

technician specifically for the needs and challenges facing of the Lesotho schools libraries and their envisaged network. The system is said to be user friendly as it is designed in such a way that a web based interface is possible. As well, school libraries that have an internet facility can post their collections on the web. The system was demonstrated at the School Library workshop where participants were satisfied with its features. It is named *Simplified Software System for School Library Database Management (SSSSLDM)*

7. Royal Family Archives

Individual members of the Association as well as one institutional member, namely, the National University of Lesotho Library have volunteered to constitute a team that is working towards the establishment of the Royal Family Archives and resource centre. This is where the history and milestone of the Royal Family records will be kept and may be accessed. A lot of documentation has already been recorded. The profession is proud that it is making this contribution to the most revered institution in the country.

THE WAY FORWARD

1. Revival of LLA website
2. Celebration of LLA's 30th anniversary:

The Association will celebrate its 30th anniversary in a form of a conference in October 2008. Although the theme is not yet finalized, we would like to extend an invitation in advance, to our colleagues from the SCECSAL region who may wish to celebrate with us. Notably, at the 10th Anniversary, the presence of the representatives of the BLA and SWALA greatly honoured us.

3. Revival of the LLA publication "*Lesotho Books and Libraries*"

CHALLENGES

1. For an Association that survives on meager fee of annual subscriptions by members and a subvention by the Ministry of Tourism, it is not surprising that it falls short of fulfilling some its obligations, and participating in events that would otherwise see to its growth – subscription to IFLA and COMLA

2. Declining membership despite efforts made to rekindle the morale of members by a workshop on "The Association" whose main purpose was to revive commitment of members to the Association
3. Non-participation of members in LLA events
4. LLA's work is voluntary over and above the demanding members' commitments in their respective workplaces
5. Library professionals grow and develop independent of their associations. It is well known that country associations operate without the benefit of professional help and expertise abundant in their countries because members are indifferent to the development and growth of their associations.

Last but not least this paper would not be complete without us mentioning that National Library services of Lesotho building has recently been re-structured to accommodate the activities of both the national library and national archives, and is now, after being headed by a senior librarian for quite some time, headed by the director by the name of Mrs. Manthati Keta, here with us today.

CONCLUSION

The future growth and development of our Association lie in the hands of members and professionals in the Library cadre.

The true value of information is its dissemination!!!