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Training of Library Staff

by

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Since the Unesco Seminar in Ibadan in 1953, there has been an enormous increase in library activity in Africa. Books and articles on this field are rare, and are out of date before they appear in print, so that developments of librarianship in Africa are badly reported. Even such an authority as Lionel McColvin could not keep pace with library development, as can be seen, for example, in the sections dealing with Nigeria and South Africa in his "A chance to read".(1)

I. SURVEY OF EXISTING FACILITIES

Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland

A working party of the new Library Association of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland was appointed to study the position in 1961 but there is no word of the committee's having met. D.H. Varley, Librarian of the University College of the Federation, considers that the most that can be done in the meantime is the in-service training of African graduates, possibly sending some to the United Kingdom or the United States of America for post-graduate studies.

Ghana

The first course in library training in West Africa was started in Ghana as the result of a succinct report by Miss E.S. Fegan, British Council Library Organizer, and fourteen students of librarianship were enrolled in Achimota College, Accra, in 1945. This course was made possible by the British Council, in association with the Governments of the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Ten of the students were successful candidates in the entrance examination of the Library Association for that year, and two subsequently studied in Britain and qualified as chartered librarians. The course did not survive after the first year.

Following the decision (1959), to establish a post-graduate Institute of Librarianship at Ibadan, the Ghana Library Board investigated the possibilities of establishing its own school of librarianship.

Mr. J.C. Harrison, a well-known English librarian, with experience of training librarians, visited Ghana, and reported to the Ghana Library Board on the need for adequate local training facilities. He estimated, (in 1960), that not less than 50 qualified librarians would be required during the next few years in

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in Ghana. Harrison's proposals were put into effect with considerable speed, and in February 1962, the Ghana Library School was opened in a new building, adjacent to the Central Library in Accra, under the direction of Mr. R.C. Bengé, formerly of the North-Western Polytechnic and the Eastern Caribbean Regional Library, who brings a wealth of teaching experience for Library Association examinations to the new school.

Bengé⁽²⁾ in describing the first few days of the Ghana School's existence, mentions that "of approximately two dozen students" studying for the First Professional and Registration Examinations of the English Library Association, less than half are employees of the Ghana Library Board, while the rest are either sponsored by government departments or hold government scholarships. The School has two full-time and two part-time lecturers and intends to invite visiting lecturers and, as soon as possible, more Ghanaian lecturers. Though he would perhaps prefer the school to be attached to a university, Bengé is sceptical of the possibility of attracting suitable graduates.

Kenya

The Royal Technical College of East Africa in Nairobi offers evening classes designed to help students with their English library examinations.

Liberia

In his report of a survey on the University of Liberia Library (1960), Harold Lancour noted that there were only two trained professional librarians in the country and states that President Tubman in an interview in 1959 indicated his willingness to authorize several government scholarships for the purpose. Lancour "strongly recommended that these students be sent not to the United States of America, but to ... Ibadan".

Mauritius

Some students have apparently gone to England to train while others are studying by correspondence.

Nigeria

There were short courses at the University College, Ibadan, in 1950 and at Kaduna in 1952, while the British Council in Lagos organized a six months' course in 1961 to prepare students for the first professional examination. It is understood that another course of this nature will start late in 1962.

Following the Lancour Report⁽³⁾ in 1958, the Carnegie Corporation of New York offered the University College, Ibadan, the sum of \$88,000 to be spread over a five-year period for the establishment and maintenance of a post-graduate library school. Six students were enrolled for the first session, which started in October 1960, and the establishment of the Institute met with general approval.

In the first prospectus,⁽⁴⁾ the Director (John Harris), set an appropriately high note by stating "The course has been established to help the development of libraries by training librarians and investigating problems of librarianship and

bibliography, with special reference to West Africa and with particular attention to the leadership level". It was pointed out that admission would be by selection and that the requirements were either:

- (a) The first degree of an approved university; or
- (b) At least two years full-time experience in a recognized library together with at least one part of the Registration Examination of the Library Association, London.

A working knowledge of at least one modern European language other than English (preferably French) was desirable.

The courses were designed to lead to the passing of the Registration examination of the Library Association in one year, and if the students were successful in this, a local diploma, which involved additional work with special reference to libraries in Tropical Africa, would be open only to graduates.

The Ibadan Institute started its second year's operations in October 1961 with a student enrolment of ten, of whom seven were graduates. There is a full-time tutor-organizer at the Institute and lecturers are drawn from the university library staff and other Nigerian libraries.

It is authoritatively estimated that at least 500 additional fully trained librarians will be required by 1970 in Nigeria. (See W.A.L.A. News. Vol. 4, No.1. October 1961. p.1).

Senegal

The Library of the French African Institute (IFAN) at Dakar, has arranged for short courses based on practical work followed by overseas training in Paris, while the International Association for the Development of Libraries in Africa intends to discuss with the newly independent African States the training of qualified librarians as part of its technical aid programme.

Unesco has a library expert in Dakar advising the Senegal Government on the establishment of a regional training centre for librarians from French-speaking African countries attached to the University of Dakar and this school is due to open in January 1963.

Sierra Leone

Library services in this country are the least developed of the three English-speaking West African territories which have been mentioned. The Ghana Library Board has assisted in training librarians from Sierra Leone to First Professional examination level. Until 1961, only three Sierra Leoneans had gone abroad on library courses, one of whom subsequently abandoned librarianship. A Sierra Leonean is now training at the North Western Polytechnic. The main difficulty in training librarians in Sierra Leone is the fact that it is almost impossible to recruit anyone with any educational certificate. With the building of a new public library in Freetown and developments at the Fourah Bay College Library, there should be increasing interest in the future.

South Africa

Although South Africa is no longer a member of Unesco and, while invited, did not participate in the Ibadan Seminar, it is a pioneer in library training in Africa and has to be taken into consideration, as library development is most advanced. In 1933, the South African Library Association started a correspondence course based mainly on the English pattern leading to an Associateship and Diploma, which could be converted into a fellowship after three years full-time work in an approved library and the production of evidence of competence in two foreign languages. In 1952 it was decided that only university graduates would be eligible for a diploma. In some institutions, notably the Johannesburg Public Library, the Association's course was linked with in-service training. The course is now administered by the University of South Africa.

Further developments occurred with the opening of the Department of Librarianship at the University of Pretoria in 1938, and the introduction of academic degrees (B.A. and M.A. in Librarianship) in 1951. The output of graduates from Pretoria has, however, been rather meagre.

The University of Cape Town was the next to enter the field in 1939, and under the energetic direction of R.F.M. Immelman, made an outstanding contribution to the training of South African librarians.⁽⁵⁾ It was appropriate that the working paper for the Ibadan Seminar was written by Immelman and in this he outlined some of the methods which he uses so successfully in Cape Town.

Cape Town's example was followed by the Universities of South Africa, Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch, and the Witwatersrand. The latest entrant is the University of Western Cape, one of the new segregated universities.

The pattern of training changed in 1960 when the Government barred Africans from enrolment in the library training courses of the universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand.

The only training open to non-whites appears to be the courses offering at the University of South Africa and the University of the Western Cape, which follow parallel lines. The University of South Africa, with correspondence courses leading to degrees in librarianship, has a highly qualified teaching staff. There is a postal service of textbooks to the students which is administered by other organizations and, of course, on a segregated basis, and it is understood that the student enrolment is very large indeed, coming not only from South Africa but from many adjacent countries.

Students of librarianship from South Africa are, of course, eligible to study for the English Library Association examinations, but the syllabus has little validity for South Africa. The problems of acquiring practical experience and of obtaining textbooks and recommended reading material are formidable, and there is no record of South African students having attempted English examinations. Regional, refresher and State Library vacation courses have also been held in South Africa, the latter being financed mainly from a grant made by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for this purpose. The Cape Province holds occasional short courses for its public and school librarians.

Sudan

In Khartoum University, the Librarian drew up a syllabus based on the standards of the English Library Association but designed to meet local conditions. Members of the staff have also been sent to England to study librarianship, particularly at the University of London School of Librarianship.

Uganda

Again the pattern is one of in-service training with staff members being sent overseas to complete their training.

United Arab Republic

The Institute of Documentation and Library Science in Cairo has a four-year course for secondary school graduates, specializing in Palaeography and Archives. The language medium is Arabic.

Others

Short courses in librarianship have apparently been given in Algeria and Tunisia by the respective national libraries.

II. NOTES ON THE VARIOUS AGENCIES

The British Council. Mention has been made of this organization's training activities in English-speaking West Africa. The Council has provided an impetus to the training of librarians, by grants for the establishment of new public libraries. It has made available the services of English librarians who have come to West Africa and lectured to the public and to library associations and has provided short courses on public library administration such as that given by Mr. R.F. Ashby, County Librarian of Surrey, in the Eastern region of Nigeria in 1961. The Council has given grants to West African librarians to study in Great Britain.

Congress for Cultural Freedom. This organization recently decided to sponsor a student from a French-speaking territory in West Africa to study librarianship at Ibadan, which would seem to be a desirable rapprochement between the two important language groups in Africa.

Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Ibadan endowment has been mentioned and, in addition, travel grants have been made available for West African librarians to study library conditions in the United States of America and earlier in the United Kingdom. Carnegie also sponsored the Lancour Report.

The British Publishers Association. According to the Times Educational Supplement of 5 August 1960, p.176, a memorandum was submitted to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by a special committee on British books in East and West Africa. The committee consisted of the representatives of two major publishing firms and a member of Parliament. The recommendations call for postal concession for books, more and better equipped libraries and the Government is asked to give financial help for the training of African librarians in England. The outcome of this memorandum is not known.

The Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara and the Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara was to have held a conference on Libraries and Documentation in Bukavu, (Congo) in April 1960. This conference was postponed several times, eventually to Ibadan, on 12-16 March 1962. At the last moment, it was again cancelled. Among working papers, was an extract from an article on the "Professional training of Librarians in Arabic-speaking States" by F.L. Kent and Fawzi Abu Haidar, which appeared in the Unesco Bulletin for Libraries, Vol. XIV, No.3, May-June 1960. The training of librarians and documentalists was prominently featured on the agenda.

The Ford Foundation has shown its interest in library problems and also in the question of training.

Unesco has played an important rôle in library training in Africa. The Ibadan Seminar in 1953, at which there was a working party on professional training, had far-reaching results which have led to the creation of the West African Library Association, the Lancour Report and the Schools of Librarianship in Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal.

At Unesco Headquarters the International Advisory Committee on Bibliography, Documentation and Terminology examined reports from FID and IFLA on the training and status of research librarians and documentalists, and recommended setting up a working sub-committee on these questions. It was felt that "Another very important aspect is assistance in the training of librarians through courses and library schools, in countries where such training does not exist or is completely inadequate". It was strongly felt that "this is one of Unesco's most important areas for continued and expanded activity".

At the request of the governments concerned, library experts have been sent in 1961-62 on missions varying from 6 to 18 months to advise and assist in library development, to Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan. During each of these missions the experts have conducted short courses, and fellowships in librarianship for training abroad have been awarded to nationals of Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan.

III. COMMENT ON COURSES OFFERED

From all this, it will be seen that the general pattern of training is uneven, and the most successful ventures have been in those countries where library schools have been established. The attachment of such schools to universities, as in South Africa, has given the profession a standing commensurate with other professions and with appropriate salaries. As library services expand in emergent countries, training policies will follow local needs rather than being dependent on outside sources.

Mr. D.H. Gunton⁽⁶⁾ points out that "The future of libraries in the Commonwealth largely lies with its indigenous peoples" and he goes on to say that the schools at Accra and Ibadan "should supply the much-needed librarians, complete with training in the aspects of librarianship that are peculiar to the tropics. This could lead to the departure from the Library Association's Syllabus without lowering the standards inherent in that examination structure".

Bernard I. Palmer stresses that while in many Commonwealth countries, the original library impetus came from Britain and British librarians, the British pattern has been replaced by a local one orientated to local conditions. He could, perhaps, have amplified this statement further by mentioning the part that the Carnegie Corporation of New York has played. By giving indigenous librarians in various countries the opportunity to visit North America, a new vista of library service became available and a fusion of the ideas of both American and British thought on librarianship has speeded the creation of local courses to suit local needs.

Teachers of librarianship in the English-speaking parts of West Africa, together with students, seem to be in agreement that the Library Association courses are not the answer. Bengé⁽³⁾ deplores the divorce between teaching and examination in the Library Association course. Nor is there any indication that the Library Association can or will modify its courses to suit West African conditions. Palmer gives some statistics about the 1958 summer examinations which are revealing. 3,190 students sat, and of these only 176 came from outside the United Kingdom and of the latter number, only 73 from Africa. The virtue of the Library Association's examinations is that its certificates are recognized in most parts of the world and this, of course, is an advantage to the African who may travel and work round the continent or wish to work in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the Library Association does not recognize certification from overseas library training organizations.

Another method of training which has been used a lot is that of sending suitable graduates or library staff for training overseas, but while this method is costly, it has not always produced satisfactory results.

Dr. Raynard C. Swank⁽⁷⁾ disagrees with lowering the standards of American training for the benefit of such overseas students. He concedes that:

"While no general, significant adaptation of the library school programme can be made to fit the varying needs of librarianship throughout the world, the possibility that individual schools might specialize in the needs of librarianship in specific regions of the world is worthy of study." But he firmly maintains "that no curricular modification for the benefit of foreign students should be permitted to compromise the quality and integrity of the American library degree"; and that "no degree should ever be granted to any foreign student who has not demonstrated the same standard of professional competence that is required of an American student. Even the best foreign students are likely to need more time in the United States than is usually allowed by their study and travel grants in order to earn an honest graduate degree and to acquire some practical experience".

Miss Jean Waller⁽⁸⁾ commenting on Dr. Swank's remarks, made several interesting points which are paraphrased:

1. That similar problems existed in the United Kingdom of which the Library Association was well aware and an orientation and introductory course had been set up at the North Western Polytechnic School of Librarianship.
2. Newly independent and developing countries in Africa and Asia needed their own national schools and some had already got off to a good start.

3. While one school at least in West Africa was preparing students for Library Association certificates, this seemed to give the students "the worst of both worlds in the study of an English-orientated curriculum minus the advantages of travel and observations in England itself".
4. With the sponsorship of various international bodies, it seems advisable to set up "one or two first class library schools in Asia and Africa" at post-graduate level.
5. Elite local librarians trained in the United States or the United Kingdom are often disillusioned when they find the ideas they have learnt are not applicable to local conditions.

The training course in Ghana, in the light of Bengé's proposed compromise with the Library Association's course, has advantages and disadvantages. The first-year course with its own examination, followed by a second year leading to the Library Association's "ALA", should certainly lead to the provision of a reasonable number of trained librarians for the lower and intermediate levels of librarianship, and could produce the leaders who will carry on to F.I.A. level, and who will, in addition, have the advantage of studying for a course which has been modified for West African conditions. Its main disadvantages are that it is not a post-graduate course and will not carry the necessary academic and professional status which can best be supplied by attachment to a university. It may also be costly and as the method of admission does not appear to be as selective as that of Ibadan, there may be wastage.

Miss E. Evans, (11) Director of the Ghana Library Board, expressed some misgivings about the Ibadan post-graduate course on the grounds that it would not satisfy the needs of public libraries, and in particular, that students needed access to "well-run public library systems" and that they would benefit from visiting and working in "well-established public libraries overseas".

Miss Evans overlooked the facts that the Ibadan Institute had made generous provision for what was virtually in-service training; that considerable use was being made of the expanding library services in the Ibadan area (e.g. the British Council and Western Regional libraries); that practising librarians (mainly Nigerians) came as visiting lecturers; that modern training media such as films and filmstrips were available; that the Director wanted a qualified and experienced public librarian to be in charge.

The main difficulty at Ibadan is the problem of attracting enough suitable graduates - the training facilities are certainly offered - but Nigeria is in the throes of a vast expansion of its educational system and the demand for graduates is very high from the teaching profession and civil service.

Short courses such as those given by the British Council are of considerable use, particularly if they are linked with other methods of library education offered, as has been the case in Nigeria, where elementary training in librarianship was given which could be followed on to a higher level through the common factor of Library Association examinations.

In a report to the West African Library Association, in 1962, R.F. Ashby calls for bold measures to combat the shortage of librarians at what he calls

the "N.C.O." level, in Nigeria. He suggests a National Director of Library Training, backed by an Advisory Committee for Library Training which would consist of the representatives of the principal libraries and the library schools. The Director would lead a Training Unit which would record the progress of students and supervise training in libraries on the in-service basis. The Unit would organize short courses and conferences. While this scheme has much to commend it, there seems to be little chance of its achievement when the question of the formation of a national library and the appointment of a national librarian are still very much in the air. It could weaken the present slender resources of qualified librarians. Ashby favours the establishment of local examinations but points out that the establishment of such a structure needs time and opportunity and that such a course must be equated with overseas standards and subsequently recognized by other library associations.

A possibility is the setting up of a course at one of the newly established Nigerian universities which could give tuition, possibly on a correspondence basis similar to that of the University of South Africa, to other West African countries and this, again, might be provided, with foundation help, in different languages.

IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING IN THE FUTURE

1. There is an urgent need for regular collection of statistics and information on library development and training in Africa. Unesco⁽⁹⁾ made a preliminary attempt at this in 1952 and in 1959 produced a much fuller and valuable statistical report.⁽¹⁰⁾
2. There should be correlation of the efforts of the various agencies and governments interested in library training. Unesco, with missions in many of the emergent countries, appears best able to accomplish this.
3. Both undergraduate and post-graduate courses are required, not necessarily in the same institutions. Courses should be offered in Arabic, English and French at both levels in the various African countries. For example, the Ghana Library School could cater for undergraduates and Ibadan for graduates with courses in English.
4. Governments and foundations freely offer scholarships to students from Africa but such scholarships should be given in the first instance for study at local, and not overseas institutions. Although it may be currently difficult to recruit graduates for librarianship courses in West Africa, this position could change and in view of enhancing the status of the profession, attention should be given to post-graduate training in librarianship.
5. Admission to professional courses should be on a selective basis.
6. Courses offered should be based on local needs and not on the syllabus of any overseas library course.
7. Training courses must be backed by an adequate supply of professional library literature. Here, the foundations could be of great assistance.

8. Training institutions should be situated where the best equipped libraries are available.
9. Training institutions should organize and publish research projects on problems affecting libraries in Africa and full research facilities should be available at the parent institution.
10. Training institutions should employ where possible, indigenous teachers who have received advanced training abroad. This is not merely a question of the employment of nationals but one of communication between teachers and students.
11. Teachers should have no other library duties apart from training, and budgets and reporting should be a separate branch of the parent institution as in Ghana.
12. Wherever possible, library training should be attached to a university.
13. On graduation from a library school, there should be opportunities for students for post-graduate study and specialization abroad.
14. Library schools should offer opportunity for refresher and specialist courses.
15. In view of the interests of foundations and governments, opportunity could be taken of the secondment of expatriate library training experts from abroad for periods of not less than three months and preferably six months.
16. Regional conferences on training should be held at regular intervals, say, every two years. Training problems simply cannot be dismissed as incidental items on the agendas of conferences held for other purposes.

NOTES

- (1) McColvin, L.R. A chance to read. London, Phoenix, 1956.
- (2) Benge, R.C. The future of the Ghana Library School. (A paper given to the West African Library Association, Accra, 1962, mimeographed).
- (3) Lancour, H. "Libraries in British West Africa; a report of a survey for the Carnegie Corporation, N.Y., Oct.-Nov. 1957" University of Illinois Library School, Occasional papers, No.53.
- (4) University College, Ibadan. Training course in librarianship. Prospectus. Ibadan University Press, 1960. 7 pp.
- (5) Thompson, Anthony. Building-up a library school: the University of Cape Town's achievement. Library Association Record, Vol.50, 1948. pp.126-8.

Wertheimer, Leonard. "The University of Cape Town's School of Librarianship; a survey of its ex-students, 1939-59". South African libraries. Vol.28, No.4, April 1961. pp.129-134.
- (6) Gunton, D.H. A library in the tropics; a history and a blueprint. Library Association Record. Vol.63, No. 5, May 1961. pp.149-1954.
- (7) Swank, Raynard C. "The education of foreign librarians." Journal of Education for Librarianship. Vol.1, No.4, Spring 1961. pp.191-199.
- (8) Waller, Jean. Journal of Education for Librarianship. Vol.2, No.2, Fall 1961. p.115.
- (9) Unesco. A preliminary statistical study on libraries. Paris, Unesco, 1952. 57 pp. mimeographed.
- (10) Unesco. Statistics on libraries. (Statistical reports and studies). Paris, Unesco, 1959. 128 pp.
- (11) Evans, E. "The public library and the community." Wala news. Vol.3, No.3. 1959. p.149.

The following documents also merit the special attention of members of the Seminar:

Harris, John. "Librarianship in West Africa." New Zealand Libraries, Vol.23, No.2, March 1960. pp.43-51.

Immelman, R.F.M. "Some problems concerning the education of librarians." South African Libraries. Vol.23, No.3, January 1956. p.78.

Palmer, Bernard I. "Education and training of librarians in the newly developing British Commonwealth countries." Library Trends, Vol.8, No.2, October 1959. pp.229-241.

Unesco. Development of public libraries in Africa; the Ibadan Seminar. Paris, Unesco, 1954. 155 pp.