

## **2008 REPORT OF THE BOTSWANA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (BLA)**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

At the time of assuming office in 2006 the Executive Committee came up with a strategic plan and through out the period of office there has been some activities carried out by the different committees towards attaining the specified objectives. Below are the successes that have been made.

### **EDITORIAL**

Information on the website was updated. However, the website is not impressive as it is hosted by a free web host and it is not in a good state as the page displays a lot of adverts that cover the BLA text. The plan is to acquire a domain name and set up a proper web site although there may be financial challenges in sustaining the web site in the future.

After unsuccessfully attempting to secure funding for a newsletter and the BLA Journal, the editorial committee resorted to coming up with newsletter that could be circulated by email. The first issue of the BLA Newsletter was issued in January 2008. Work on the second issue is in progress. The original intention was to produce the newsletter monthly but that has not been possible. The biggest challenge with the newsletter is that members are not forth coming with information to be included in the newsletter so it becomes very difficult to compile it.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Having realized that there was a need to engage with information services workers more so as to maintain BLA's presence in their minds, a number of training activities were organized. On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2006 there was a seminar presentation that was aimed at raising awareness among the library and information personnel on the role played by the library association. There were two papers presented, one by Dr Mutula's titled *Professionalism in library and information science: the case of Botswana Library Association* and another one Mrs Chedza Molefe's paper on *The Role of libraries and Library Association in the National Agenda: the Case of Botswana*. The seminar proved to be a good start since it received good reviews even from seasoned library professionals. Another seminar was held in April 2008 and the theme was on Information Sharing with the focus being the IFLA conference. There were great deliberations and as a follow up to the seminar Botswana Institute for Development Policy

Analysis (BIDPA) library hosted a presentation on Libraries as Learning Centers with the view to sharing information in May 2008.

The professional development committee (PDC) also organized a workshop on budgeting issues for librarians with the title Finance for Non-Financial Managers. The workshop was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2007. There were 21 participants in attendance who were mainly from Colleges of Education and Institutes of Health Sciences. Mr Teddy Sinsunga of the Botswana Technology Centre donated his services and facilitated at the workshop.

## **PUBLICITY**

One of the areas that have been identified as a cause for the lack of participation by library professionals is the lack of connection and working relationship between the association and the relevant stakeholders. The publicity sub committee therefore, planned as its main objective to visit stakeholders and sell the association to them and also appeal for more support. Some success was attained. Two of the major stakeholders were met with positive results. Two meetings were held with Botswana national Library Service management and on both occasions the executive committee was well received. There was also a visit to the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture where the idea of a Commission for Library was discussed.

## **NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

In June 26 to the 28 BLA hosted its first national conference with the theme *Revitalisation of the Library and Information Profession in Botswana* and the first conference of its magnitude to be hosted by BLA in many years. The conference was an ultimate success with 150 participants. BLA received sponsorship for the conference from a number of organizations namely:

- (a) LIBWIN library Systems (South Africa)
- (b) SWETS (South Africa)
- (c) Books Botswana (Botswana)
- (d) Macmillan Botswana
- (e) Edutech (Botswana)
- (f) Exclusive books (Botswana)
- (g) Ebsco Information Service (South Africa)

## **MEMBERSHIP DRIVE**

There has been a lot of success in membership drive with the number of paid up members having increased from 45 individual members in 2006 to 163 in 2008 and 3 institutional members in 2006 to 37 in 2008.

## **WAY FORWARD**

Following the AGM and conference resolutions BLA will focus on the following areas for the next two years:

- Membership drive
- Collaboration with other stakeholders in various activities and projects
- More training activities for librarians
- Advocacy
- Improve communications channels with membership

## **CONCLUSION**

Notwithstanding numerous challenges like lack of funding, apathy among information professionals, lack of office space, and work commitments for executive committee members; the 2006-08 committee showed a lot commitment hence the success in a number of their activities.