XXVII SCECSAL CONFERENCE

CALL FOR PAPERS

Theme : African Libraries and Information Services at the New Crossroads

Avani Hotel, Livingstone, Zambia
27 April – 1 May 2026

Rationale

African libraries and information services have continued to face a range of challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, forced many libraries to suspend operations due to a lack of technical infrastructure, resources, and the requisite skills for remote service delivery. Today, Artificial Intelligence, digital exclusion of certain communities, budget cuts, and increasing pressure to justify investments in library services present new challenges for libraries. These factors underscore the urgent need for libraries, information centres and records centres to adapt by embracing evolving technologies and innovative service models to meet the diverse users' demand for both digital and physical services. There is also a growing need for African libraries to align efforts with global, regional, and national development goals to ensure that they continue providing support through knowledge dissemination and enhancing digital equity for sustainable development. African libraries and information services are at a new crossroads, needing to evolve to remain relevant in the digital age. This requires aligning with changing user needs and global trends while also addressing the challenge of serving communities that are excluded from or have limited access to digital technologies and resources. In all this, libraries and information services are expected to be provided to all communities, without leaving anyone behind.

Recognizing the urgency and importance of these issues, the Standing Conference of Eastern, Central, and Southern African Library and Information Associations (SCECSAL), in partnership with the host, the Library and Information Association of Zambia (LIAZ), invites proposals for research papers, case studies, best practices, practical experiences, innovative services or models, panel discussions, posters, and lightning (ignite) talks. Submissions should align with the theme, '**African Libraries and Information Services at the New Crossroads**,' and address one or more of the conference sub-themes for the XXVII SCECSAL Conference. The event will be held from 27 April to 1 May 2026 at the Avani Hotel in Livingstone, Zambia.

Sub-themes

1. **Information services for sustainable development** - proposals on aligning library services with global, regional, and national development initiatives such as national development plans, the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and addressing socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and the effects of shocks and crises (e.g., pandemics, climate change induced hazards, etc), to remain resilient and relevant to their communities.

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2. **Innovation in library and information service delivery** - proposals on library innovations as efforts to serve diverse communities, including rural, underserved, and marginalized groups, using both digital and Artificial Intelligence, as well as traditional methods.

3. **Empowering librarians, information professionals, and users** - proposals on capacity development initiatives, courses, innovative curricula, etc., for librarians, information professionals, and information users to adapt to new technologies, user needs, and deliver relevant service models in the digital age.

4. **Partnerships in library and information services development** - proposals on collaborations among libraries, governments, the private sector, communities, and international organizations to enhance library infrastructure, capacity, library service delivery, and innovation in information delivery.

5. **Data, privacy, and information security in libraries** - proposals addressing the growing concern around data management, electronic records management, user privacy, and information security in libraries as they adopt and integrate more digital and online services.

6. **Artificial Intelligence and libraries** - proposals exploring AI adoption and enhancing library service delivery such as personalised recommendations, reference services, automation of cataloguing and classification, circulation, and other library functions, supporting digital literacy training, automated content creation, archiving and preserving Africa's cultural heritage, and the ethical implications and biases of AI systems in libraries.

7. **Strategic marketing of library and information services** - proposals on how technologies are reshaping library services and the need to market emerging digital services to enhance visibility, user engagement, and competitiveness in the digital age; marketing of library services by leveraging social media, data-driven strategies, content marketing, and email campaigns to engage users, and measuring success through various analytics.

8. **Digital technologies and the reading culture** - proposals exploring the coexistence of physical and digital resources, access to digital resources, e-books versus print books, digital literacy, the role of mobile platforms, affordability, cultural preservation, and how technology influences reading habits across different demographics.

9. **Open access and social justice** - proposals on the role of libraries in promoting social justice, equity, and inclusion by providing free and open access to information and supporting marginalized communities or groups; open data and unrestricted access to scholarly research outputs.

10. **Big data and innovative information services** - proposals on using big data analytics in libraries for enhancing service delivery, resource allocation, strategic planning, providing personalized library user experiences, supporting academic research, addressing privacy concerns, and using predictive analytics to anticipate users' needs and trends, and contributing to social and economic development goals.

11. **Empowering libraries and information institutions** - proposals focusing on strategies to enhance the organizational and operational capacity of libraries and information institutions; monitoring and evaluating the impact of library and information services; and adopting sustainable practices in collection development, digital archiving, and service delivery to ensure long-term information accessibility

12. **Policy, advocacy, and legal environments for sustainable libraries and information work** - proposals addressing institutional, national, and regional policies and advocacy strategies aimed at ensuring the sustainability and growth of library and information services in an era marked by budget cuts, rapid technological advancements, and societal change. Submissions may also highlight successful advocacy efforts, lessons learned in promoting information policies and access laws, and their impact on supporting libraries and information accessibility.

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The **XXVII SCECSAL** Conference will serve as a platform to share knowledge, explore practical solutions, and promote innovative approaches tailored to the evolving needs of African libraries, information services, and their communities. The conference theme and sub-themes offer a wide array of topics designed to cater to diverse interests and areas of expertise.

Proposals and submission

Only proposals for unpublished, original work that has not been presented at any other conference will be considered. Proposals must be submitted in English and should include:

- Title of the proposed presentation.
- Name(s) of the presenter(s), and position(s) and/or title(s).
- Employer or affiliated institution.
- Email address(es).
- Abstract (no more than 350 words).
- Sub-theme being addressed (indicate only the main sub-theme).
- Type of proposal (e.g., research paper, case study, best practices, practical experiences, innovative services/models, panel discussion, poster, or lightning "ignite" talks).
- Keywords (up to three).
- Brief biographical statement for each author (no more than 100 words per author).

Abstracts should be submitted through the Microsoft Conference Management Toolkit using the link provided on the XXVII SCECSAL Conference website at **https://scecsal.edu.zm/.**

Pre-conference events

Proposals for sponsored pre-conference training sessions, workshops, and other related pre-events are welcome. Time/slots will also be available for full-day or half-day capacity development sessions on Wednesday, 29 April 2026. For details and further information about these events, contact **Ms. Aggie Mumba** at **scecsal@liaz.edu.zm.**

Important information about the submission of abstracts

1. Abstracts for research-based papers should include an introduction, a statement of the research problem, the methodology, findings (which may be preliminary), and the implications of the study. Reviewers will prioritize submissions that are original, well-written, and closely aligned with the conference theme.

2. The abstracts of accepted papers and posters, along with speaker bios and photos, will be published on the XXVII SCECSAL Conference website. Authors of accepted papers will be requested to provide their bios and photos. By submitting an abstract, you consent to having your photo published on the conference website.

3. The final version of the paper must be submitted in MS Word format through the conference management system. The URL for the system will be available on the XXVII SCECSAL Conference website at https://www.liaz.edu.zm.

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4. All presenters must be registered for the conference by **27 February 2026** and are responsible for their expenses to attend. Only papers from confirmed registered presenters will be included in the conference programme.

5. Only selected high-quality papers presented in person at the conference will be included in the conference proceedings. By submitting an abstract, you confirm that your work has not been published or accepted for publication in a journal or another conference's proceedings.

6. PowerPoint Presentations should be submitted to **scecsal@liaz.edu.zm** by **13 March 2026.**

Important dates

- 20 June 2025 :   Submission of abstracts closes
- 25 July 2025 :   Last day for authors of accepted abstracts to be notified
- 31 October 2025 :   Last day for submission of full papers
- 16 January 2026 :   Last day for submission of revised papers
- 27 February 2026 :   Last day for registration of presenters of accepted papers
- 13 March 2026 :   Submission of all PowerPoint Presentations
- 25-26 April 2026 :   Preconference Workshops
- 27 April - 1 May 2026 : XXVII SCECSAL Conference

Further information

For further clarifications on **abstracts and papers**, kindly contact:
Dr. Tuesday Bwalya - **tbwalya@liaz.edu.zm**

For information about the SCECSAL **conference arrangements**, kindly contact: **Mr Allan Mudenda Hagwelele** - **scecsal@liaz.edu.zm**.

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