KENYA COUNTRY REPORT 1998 - 2000

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Introduction

This report covers the period August 1998 to March 2000. During this period, the Kenya Library Association (KLA) has continued to address the challenges enumerated in our reports to the 12th and 13th SCECSAL Conferences. Towards this end, the main challenge has been directed towards the strengthening of the Association and making it visible in the country. Since the last SCECSAL meeting, KLA has undertaken several activities some of which, though not directly, address the various Resolutions passed during the SCECSAL- XIII. These activities include:-

- Publication of the Proceedings of SCECSAL- XIII.
- Meeting with Senior Professional Librarians
- Membership drive.
- Holding the Annual National Seminar
- Participation in professional meetings
- Matters related to Terms of Service for Librarians working in government service.

Publication of SCECSAL XIII Proceedings

In addition to winding-up activities of SCECSAL XIII, the Executive Committee was, with funds provided by UNESCO Regional Office, Nairobi, able to publish the Proceedings of SCECSAL- XIII Conference. We have been able to distribute copies to all Associations in the SCECSAL Region. Copies are available for sale.

Membership Drive

As indicated in our previous reports, KLA membership i.e. paid up members has been very low. During the last two years, our efforts have been directed towards recruitment of more Information Professionals, as well as finding ways through which members can actively participate in professional matters. Towards this end, we held a day's seminar in February 1999 which was attended by the KLA Executive Committee members, Senior Professionals and Library and Information Services Managers. The topic was Revamping the Information Profession in Kenya: The Way Forward.

The offshoot of this seminar was the establishment of the Documentalist Chapter as provided for by the Kenya Library Association Constitution. The Chapter has brought together about 30 documentalists most of who were not members of KLA. The Chapter has been very active some of their activities include quarterly meetings, development of a Union List of periodicals, establishment of a central depository for duplicates and recently, publication of an Electronic Newsletter.

Annual National Seminar

KLA 13th Annual Seminar was held on 22nd to 24th September 1999. The theme of the Seminar was Freedom of Access to Information in a Changing Environment. The Seminar was officially opened by Kenya's Attorney-General Hon. Amos Wako. Among the papers presented were those dealing with legal aspects of information access in Kenya, creating affordable and efficient communication links, building a knowledge based society for development of small and micro enterprises, creating gender responsive information structures, copyright and freedom of access to information, book piracy and copyright laws, educating Kenyans for a learning society and educating and training of the information professionals of the next millennium. The proceedings of this seminar will be published soon.

Survey of Government Libraries

Problems affecting the scheme of service for librarians employed by the government has been around for many years. Like in many countries, terms of service for this cadre of staff is very low and is a matter of concern.

In addressing this problem, KLA decided sometime last year to approach it through identification of the state of libraries in Government Ministries and Departments. A survey to establish this has been undertaken and a lot of useful data has been collected. We are in the process of analyzing this data. Our hope is that this will help make a case to Government on the need to improve their libraries which will only be possible when the right human resources are employed under good terms of service.

Information Development Initiative

During the last year, three new initiatives with far reaching implications on the future of libraries and information services have taken place. These are:

- The African Virtual Library Initiative (AVL-I)
- Kenya Education Network (KENET)
- Building Information communities in Africa (BICA-Kenya)

African Virtual University - Initiative AVL-I)

The mission of AVL-I is to provide online library services that meet information needs of educational, research and economic development work in eastern Africa. Towards this end, the following objectives have been set:

- To encourage and where possible assist in the establishment of library on line services in private and public organizations;
- To provide electronic access to databases and Library catalogues;
- To promote linkages through collaboration and understanding among local, regional and international organizations;

- To develop through training a pool of information management and technology human resource to support the sector.

AVL-I is a five-year project and all stakeholders have agreed to work to meet these objectives and to celebrate their fruitful completion on 29th April 2004.

Kenya Education Network (KENET)

KENET was established on 1 June 1999 with a secretariat at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology for purposes of working with USAID to implement the objectives of Leland Initiate in Kenya. As most of us know, the Leland initiative is a U.S. government effort to extend full Internet connectivity to a number of African countries. KENET has 4 objectives, namely:

- To establish an internet infrastructure
- To provide affordable tariffs
- To develop human resources in information content, information management and Communication Technology to support, operate and manage KENET.
- To develop and improve local content.

BICA Kenya

The mission of BICA-Kenya is "undertake to lobby and facilitate the realization of Universal access to information and communications technologies by all Kenyans". BICA-Kenya offers a forum for networking between stakeholders involved in issues of the information society and global knowledge.

KLA participates actively in activities of AVL-I, KENET and BICA-Kenya. During the last two years, officers of KLA have also participated in forums dealing with matters related to curriculum development in Library and Information Studies and examinations.

The Future

KLA faces the future with confidence. We are confident that in the near future most of SCECSAL-XIII Resolutions will be implemented. The stage has been set.

During the year 2000-2001 we have lined-up a number of activities which include:-

- Training in IT short courses such as IT for beginners and WINIS IS (CDS/ISIS-WINDOWS)
- Revival of MAKTABA - the journal of KLA
- Establishment of other Chapters and Sections. This will enable all members to actively participate in professional affairs.
- Increasing membership
- Annual seminar now renamed annual conference - to be held in September 2000. The theme and sub-themes will be communicated soon and we hope many of you will be able to come to Kenya to participate.

It is our hope that SCECSAL will also grow. KLA wishes to request future organizers of SCECSAL Meetings that it is important to observe the rules. KLA has been disappointed by the way our head of SCECSAL Secretariat Mrs. Were has been treated by asking her to write papers in order to get funding. We also note with dismay that the diversion of this year's Conference has been shortened.

Thank you.