

LESOTHO COUNTRY REPORT 1998 - 2000

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Chairman
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Introduction

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to report to you about the activities of the Lesotho Library Association (LLA) in the reporting period 1998-2000. Our Association has engaged in a number of important issues at the national level. We are also happy that we have witnessed the new millennium which has ushered in new opportunities in information technology for librarians and information scientists e.g. the exponential world-wide usage of Internet especially in business, the growing popularity of e-mail and the timeliness factor in communication, instant referral to electronic journals and their speedy facilitation of research in various subjects globally, etc. These are few examples, which indicate to all of us that whether we like it or not we have to change in our profession in order to keep abreast of latest technological developments.

Madam Chairperson, let me just focus briefly on what LLA has done in the reporting period. We have managed to engage in the following activities.

- a. Forum for librarians;
- b. Site for the Association;
- c. Publications;
- d. Twentieth Anniversary Celebrations;
- e. Fundraising
- f. Visits to school libraries;
- g. Seminars;
- h. Development Information Day;
- i. Cultural Policy for Lesotho;
- j. National Library Act
- k. Future plans

Reports on Various Activities

Forum for Librarians

The Lesotho Library Association has formulated a policy whereby special forums are held depending on the prevailing situations. At such forums, issues of interest on professional achievements and problems facing librarians and information professionals are discussed. In the reporting period two such gatherings were held on the 22nd September 1999 and 10th February, 2000.

Site for the Association

For more than ten years the Association has had a site which we intended to develop into "The Librarians' Cultural Village" for librarians and information specialists. Unfortunately our site was recently taken over by our Lesotho Government in that an important relief road in Maseru passed through it. Very fortunately we have been given an alternative site which we are planning to eventually develop into this cultural village and we hope some rooms will be available for rental, as a form of generating income for LLA.

Publications

The Association continues to publish its newsletter/journal entitled Lesotho Books and Libraries: the publication of the Lesotho Library Association. We have recently published this document and for those who are interested we are selling it for R10.00 per copy. There are other publications in the form of SCECSAL proceedings (for both SCECSAL IV and SCECSAL XII) and other publications resulting from our seminars. All these publications are available on request at reasonable prices.

Twentieth Anniversary Celebrations

The Twentieth Anniversary ceremony of the founding of the Lesotho Library Association was celebrated in the form of a seminar on the 19th November, 1999 at Maseru Sun Cabanas. Six papers were presented at this occasion. This was a memorable celebration in that it was also set aside in remembrance of Africa's Development Information Day. We are planning to edit and publish the six papers presented. In the future more seminars will be organized.

Fundraising

The Fund-Raising Sub-Committee of LLA organised a successful walk as a form of fund raising. We have realized that this is the safest and easiest form of generating income in that we simply issue invitation cards to our different potential supporters. In other words we don't have to dip our fingers into our revenue. Other fund raising schemes will be explored in the future e.g. dinner dance parties, braai, etc.

Visits to School Libraries

Two school libraries were visited in the reporting period, Assumption High School and Letsie High School Libraries. In the first high school the Chairman of LLA was invited at the inauguration ceremony of the new school library. It was a colourful ceremony, and the library was very impressive. The second school had a very poor library and the school management did not seem to care that much about keeping it well organized. The general observation by current the chairman of LLA is that many school libraries do not maintain library budgets which could be useful in purchasing relevant books needed for reading pleasure of students and for supporting the curricula. In contrast many school library shelves are stocked with donated books which most of the time are irrelevant to the needs of students.

Cultural Policy for Lesotho

The Lesotho Government through the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and Culture has formulated the cultural policy in order to sensitize the nation on the importance of maintaining the cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations. It is gratifying to realize that the cultural policy has areas focusing on libraries, museums, archives, etc. In addressing libraries the policy mentioned amongst others the absence of the "National Library Act". Other areas of concern were: "the copyright law" which though was in existence, it was felt needed further improvements and adjustments. The National Archives Act was also found to be wanting in many respects, it was felt that it should also be polished in order to make some improvements in its operations.

The National Library Act

As pointed out above, the Lesotho Library Association is engaged in formulating the National Library Act, the Legal Deposit Law for Lesotho and The Copyright Law. An ad hoc committee has been appointed to look into the matter.

Future Plans

It is the intention of the Lesotho Library Association to improve on the lot of its members especially through mounting training workshops, seminars and also through exposing its members to IT. In the future more fund raising activities will be pursued aggressively in order to ensure sound financial standing if we are to survive in the new millennium.

Conclusion

Future growth and development of LLA is dependent on the support of its members, and it is gratifying to note that in the last twenty years of its existence the Association has made tremendous achievements in many respects. It is with great pleasure to mention amongst others two memorable SCECSAL IV and SCECSAL XII which were such an eye opener in the history of the existence of LLA. Running training workshops has been of great benefit to the development and professional growth of many librarians and information specialists