

ZIMBABWE COUNTRY REPORT 2000 - 2002

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Introduction

The past two years since SCECSAL 14 was held in Namibia have seen mixed fortunes for the Zimbabwe Library Association (ZimLA). The major highlight of the period under review was the election into office of a new National Council at an extra-ordinary annual general meeting in October 2001. The new Council is holding its first Annual General Meeting and Conference at the end of this month. The theme at this Conference is *Libraries and the African Renaissance: the Zimbabwean Perspective*.

The following are some of the major activities that occurred during the period under review:

Workshops

The Zimbabwe Library Association organized the following workshops of note during the period under review:

1. The IFLA/ALP / ZimLA Regional Workshop
 - o The International Federation of Librarianship Advancement of Librarianship program funded this conference in response to a ZLA project proposal. The main focus of this Conference was provision of resources to school libraries in the SCECSAL region. The following countries were invited to this workshop under full sponsorship; Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Delegates from Sweden and librarians from Norway and Ghana also attended the conference. Important resolutions were passed and these are awaiting finalization for submission to the relevant authorities. Plans for the publication of the papers presented at this workshop have reached an advanced level.
2. The ZimLA Mid Year Conference
 - o For the second time in a row, ZimLA's cooperative partner, the Swedish Library Association funded the mid year conference that was held in Bulawayo. The theme of the workshop was libraries and the legislative framework. Important resolutions were passed at this workshop and a consolidated document is being compiled for circulation to members.
3. Zimbabwe Library Association Workshops
 - o The four branches of the Association held a number of workshops for school librarians / teacher librarians. Emphasis on school libraries is due to the fact that untrained librarians run these libraries. The Association thus is trying to build capacity in these libraries by equipping those who run them with basic

librarianship skills. Unfortunately limited funding has reduced the scope and extent of these workshops.

Zimbabwe International Book Fair

ZimLA participated in the 2001 edition of the highly popular Zimbabwe Book Fair. The major highlight activity that the Association conducted during the Book Fair was holding a seminar for librarians. This seminar entitled, "Libraries and Intellectual Freedom" was convened by ZimLA in conjunction with the Norwegian Library Association, The Swedish Library Association, The Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association and the IFLA Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression program was well attended by librarians from a number of countries

School Libraries Task Force

ZimLA has set up a school libraries task force to oversee the formation of a School Libraries Committee. A large number of the members of ZimLA are school librarians and the Association has resolved to form a School Libraries Section rather than form a separate Association for school librarians.

Library School at the National University of Science and Technology

During the period under review, the first Library and Information Science degree awarding institution in Zimbabwe opened its doors to its alpha class. This Library school is at the National University of Science and Technology. This move is to be applauded, as prior to the NUST Library School, there was no degree awarding library school in the country. Of note is the cooperation between the library school and ZimLA in the design and formulation of its curriculum. The Association is also pursuing dialogue with the Zimbabwe Open University on the idea of offering a degree in Library and Information Science through its distance-learning programme.

Interest Groups

The Zimbabwe Library Association recognizes the need for librarians with same interests to group into working relationships and therefore encourages the formation of interest groups. To date, the following groups have the backing of the Association: The Zimbabwe Isis User Group, Zimbabwe Association of Academic and Research Libraries, the Zimbabwe Association of Music Librarians and the Association of Librarians in Higher Education and College Libraries. A consortium of University Libraries has recently been formed and the Association is exploring the best way to create maximum synergy between such consortia and itself.

Representation

ZimLA is represented in important fora involving players in the book chain and stakeholders in the library and information science profession. The Association has maintained contact with other organizations that are involved in information and libraries and is a member of the Zimbabwe Book Development Council, the National Library and Documentation Services Board, the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe and was recently appointed to the Zimbabwe International Book Fair Board of Trustees.

Links and Cooperation

The Association has maintained its links with international organizations involved in libraries and information work. ZimLA cherishes the good working relations that exist between itself and the Swedish Library Association, the Norwegian Library Association, the International Federation of Library Associations and the Commonwealth Library Association. ZimLA has also continued to participate in regional associations with the same interests like SCECSAL. These links and cooperative arrangements with these organizations are making the running of the Association a less stressful exercise through their financial and technical support.

SCECSAL 16

ZimLA has withdrawn its bid to host SCECSAL 16 in 2004 but would like to bid to host SCECSAL 17 in 2006.

Challenges / Constraints

- Low membership
- Apathy to ZLA activities
- Lack of a secretariat has led to poor communication among members. Members are scattered all over the country and without fixed premises and a full time secretariat communication has been rendered difficult.

Future Plans

- Increase the visibility of the Association.
- Empower school librarians and teacher librarians by providing further training in the form of workshops and seminars on school librarians.
- Increased advocacy especially to Government to revisit the issue of the national library and school libraries.
- Launch of the Association's website and a monthly newsletter.