# A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION EDUCATION NETWORK IN EASTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (LISENET-ECSA)

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## Abstract

*This paper investigated the proceedings of the SCECSAL XIV Pre-Conference held 3rd - 4th July, 2004 at Niagara Hotel, Kampala. It was dedicated to resolve Guidelines to establish the Network of Library and Information Science – East, Central and Southern Africa (LISENET-ECSA). It was sponsored by the IFLA, Africa Section and INASP. The objectives of the paper were to: establish the Current Status of Consortia in the Context of SCECSAL Region, review/postmontem the recommendations of the Pre-conference on Establishing LISENET-ECSA, scrutunise the possible challenges to the materialisation of the recommendation of the Pre-conference and propose a Library and Information Education Network in East, Central and Southern Africa (LISENET-ECSA)*

*Methodology involved extensive literature review; content analysis of the Pre-conference Seminar proceedings; and interpretation of the input from the Online Focus Group Discussion with the selected participants of the Pre-Conference Seminar. Purposely selected respondents by the authors included members who were recommeded by the Pre-conference Seminar to form the Caretakeker Committee. Selected LIS educators who attended that Pre-Conference Seminar also gave their opinion. These two categories had wide experience in LIS Education. Findings established that the Caretaker Committee was frustrated because of lack of funding and could neither take action on the Pre-Conference Seminar recommendations nor have a Forum to report to for further action. The Conclusion was inescapable to produce this report at this regional forum so that future strategies to address this issue should be resolved.*

**Key Words:** *LISENET-ECS A, Consortium, Network, SCECSAL*
**Beneficiaries:** *LIS professionals, LIS Managers/Administrators, and Library Associations.*

## Background

Consortium and Network are sometimes interchangeably used. Consortium is an agreement, combination or group of companies formed to undertake an organisation beyond the resources of any one member. A network on the other hand is a group or system of interconnected people or things. A network has similarities as consortium in that its constituents are geared to achieve the same aim and objectives of undertaking/s. Both the consortium and Network agendas involve supporting each other with tools, resources, team building, training, knowledge management, and error management. The services and related matters engaged in by the Consortia in Library and Information Science Education Institutions (CLISEI) - University and other Tertiary Education Institutions, are greatly influenced by the LIS Education Institutions (LIS Schools, Departments or programmes). This relationship should be nurtured.The pressing current challenge is that NO Consortia related to LIS Education in the SCECSAL region exists. Extensive literature search reveals the Procedings of the SCECSAL XIV Pre-Conference tasked to examine the possibility of establishing the Library and Information Education Network - Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (LISENET-ECSA).

## Aim

This paper critically reviews the SCECSAL XIV Pre-Conferenc e Seminar proceedings to derive guidelines towards establishing LISENET-ECSA.

## Objectives

The objectives of the paper were to: review consortia in universities and research libraries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa as background to the philosophy of consortium; review current status of consortia in LIS Education Institutions in the SCSAL Region; review/postmortem the recommendations of the Pre-conference; review the possible challenges to the achievement of the recommendations of that pre-conference seminar; and Propose a Network of Library and Information Education in East, Central and Southern Africa (LISENET-ECSA).

## Methodology

The methodology included: extensive literature review; content analysis of the proceedings of the SCECSAL XIV Pre-Conference Seminar, Kampala; and interpretation of the input from the Online Focus Group Discussion of the selected participants of that Pre-Conference Seminar. This was mainly an exploratory

review of the appropriate action/s to take in establishing  LISENET-ECSA. It adopted mainly qualitative  approach.

**Current Status of Consortia in Universities and Research Libraries in the SCECSAL Region.**

The SCECSAL region has many Universities and Research Libraries each struggling through sole efforts to achieve the best but constrained by inadequate well educated, trained and experienced  human resources to achieve maximum excellence for sustainable development. Physical, human, financial, informational resouces are also duplicated. In a nutshell single institutional approach becomes too expensive; ultimately output  gradually dwindles, or completely ceases. LIS education, is the corner stone of the provision of information professionals that manage library and informatin services, the blood for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the  UNESCO Agenda by 2030 could be jeopadized. Therefore steps should be taken to arrest the threat. Building a LIS Education Institutions Consotium could be the the answer.
Msuya (2014) is more emphatic on the advantage of consortium.

> "Library Consortium has many advantages, not only for developing countries, but also for developed countries. It brings related libraries together for a common goal; reduces prices for e-resources through common bargain; the amount to be paid by each (unit cost) is relatively small with shared subscription."

Datch (1999) observed that no library institution on its own, however rich, can purchase all  resources it wants. In such circumstances sharing resources could be the only solution.  He points out that:

> "There is no academic libray that can have the financial resurces to purchase all its needs let alone what is wanted.  … consortium is therefore an attempt to rationalise the building and use of information resources collection through sharing and grooming more than ownership."

Although Datch's and Msuya's views targeted academic and research libraries, the same views are  relevant to the LIS education institutions in the SCECSAL region today.

**Selected Consotia in University Library Services/Higher Institutions of Learning in the SECSAL Region**

| Country | Consortium | Type |
|---------|-----------|------|
| Kenya | Kenya Library and Information Consortium (KLISC) | All Libraries |
| South Africa | Gaunteng Environ Library Consortium (GAELIC) Cape Higher Education Consortium (CALICO), South African Research Information Consortium (SANRIC) | Higher Education, Research Libraries |
| Tanzania | Consortium of Tanzania University and Research Libraries (COTUL) | Univesity and Research Libraries |
| Uganda | Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL) | University Libraries |

Source: Kigongo-Bukenya and Kaddu, 2017

The table above shows the Consortia efforts in Academic and Research Libraries in the SCECSAL region.

## The Current Situation of Library and Information Education Network of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (LISNET-ECSA) – A Proposal

Extensive literature review revealed that there was no "Consortium/Network" dedicated to LIS Education in the SCECSAL region. However, Library Consotia in traditional library and information services in Higher Education Institutions, were found estblished in the region See Table above. The affairs administered in Consortia of Academic Library Institutions (University and other Tertiary Education Institutions Library and Information Services) including establishing users needs, selection of information resources, processing these resouces, storage, retrieval and distribution for use and other related routines, are taught and trained by the LIS Education Institutions - LIS Schools, Departments or programmes - per se. Building these institutions to efficient and proactive levels means good foundation to the production of efficient information professionals and hence the services they manage .

The proposal below is the product of the review/postpontem of the recommendations made at the Pre-Conference Seminar to establish the Library and Information Science Education Network of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Region (LISENET-ECSA) that took place 3rd - 4th July, 2004, Naigara Hotel in Kampala, Uganda. Content analysis of the above proceedings was the major methodology; suplemented/supported by the Online Focus Group discussion comprising of the selected participants of the Two Day Pre-Seminar.

Proposed LISNET-ECSA
Details of the LISNET-ECSA feature below:
1. Name
   The Library and Information Education Network of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (LISENET-ECSA)

2. Vision
   Developing a Network of Library and Information Science Education responsive to curriculum development and research needs of the SCECSAL region.

3. Mission
Bring together Library and Information Science Educators in the SCECSAL region to promote research education and curriculum development.
4. Aims
    i. Enhancing the teaching, learning, research, publishing, and research capabilities of LIS education insitutions and multi lateral cooperative initiatives.
    ii. Exploring the collective expertise of LIS Educaters to provide an innovative response to to the challenges.
5. Objectives
    i. Establish a network of LIS Schools and Departments in the ECSA region
    ii. Create a forum for exchaning ideas about curriculum ideas for mitual assistance member and community service
    iii. Determine required change and incorporate them in LIS schools
    iv. Assess IT training and expertise needed
    v. Assess IT requirements for LIS schools to provide e-learning
    vi. Assess the possibilities of staff and student exchange programs
    vii. Consider joint reasearch production of materials and textbooks
    viii. Establish a database web page for LIS schools and departments
    ix. Encourage mutual recognition of curriculum to allow transfer of credits
    x. To enhance LISENET-ECSA income generating capacity
    xi. Membership of LISENET-ECSA

xii. Library Schools, department or faculties should hold membership to LISENET-ECSA. In addition, the 38+ ECSA Library and Information Schools should form the core membership.

xiii. Associate membership to be held by those institutions from other parts of ECSA region

xiv. Honorary membership from other parts of the region

xv. Observers to individuals inteessted in LIS Education but should have no voting rights

6. Structure

i. Rotating Secretariat

ii. Meetings (Pre-conference) should coincide with SCECSAL- 2 years rotation

iii. Library schools within a country should sort themselves out and select a representative to host the Secretariat

7. In Addition

i. Heads of Library Schools/Departments should put in place a structure to manage the LISENET-ECSA

ii. Formulate operation guidelines for the Secretariat, LISENET-ECSA assisted by the respective library associations

iii. Form an Interim Executive Committee

iv. Activities

v. Form Interim Committee

vi. Develop Guidelines for the Secretariat

vii. Harmonise discussions on developing LISENET - ECSA

viii. Initiate publicity and advocacy

ix. Mobilise resources and/or develop funding proposal

x. Draft Constitution

xi. Mobilissation for Membership

xii. Develop Website/ListServe/Porto

8. Functions

i. Curriculum development and harmonization

ii. Monitoring of standards through exchange of examiners

iii. Establishment of the centers of advaced studies and research

iv. Exchange of lecturers and students

v. Accreditation of qualifications

vi. Promotion of research through joint researvh specially in the fields such as Information for Development in Africa, and ICT applications.

vii. Joint publications, creating African texts, which will be more relevant, and the African referred journals disserminating information on researchers related to information field.

viii. Discussions and negotiations on creating centers of excellence

ix. Regional conferences, seminars and other professional gatherings.

9. Publicity

Target LIS Education members and other groups including, employers, students, supporters (fund raising agencies), Library Associations, government, including policy makers.

10. Publicity Strategies

i. Website

ii. List serves

iii. Paper documentation

iv. Journals or newsletters (e-journals, e-newsletters, etc).

v. Workshops/seminars

vi. Media adverts

vii. Sending representatives to bigger organs like IFLA, etc

viii. Collaboration with other groups/key players

ix. Working together with other professional associations e.g Argentina Library Association

x. Seeking for appropriate legislation affecting LIS

11. Funding

i. Membership fees – institutional and individual

ii. Income genereting activities e.g. workshops, seminars, short courses within countries or within the region

iii. Well-wishers – for donations depending on LIS marketing strategies

iv. Research proposals

v. Publications, etc

12. Sustainability

i. Distribution of responsibility

ii.  Donor funded projects
iii. Management of funds
iv.  Avoid political interference
v.   Changing interest of ownership

**Challenges**

The challenges given below by the authors of this article are feared as possibilities that could negatively affect the achievement of the objectives of LISNET-ECSA. The fears were established from both literature review and the administered Focus Group discussions.

1.  Reliabe Funding
    One of the challeges anticipated is lack of sustainable financial base to undertake planned activities. Major source of funding would be foreighn donors. Unfortunately this is dwindling; alternative sources should be fundraising.

2.  Lack of Awareness
    Another challenge expressed was lack of awareness of the resources that are available. One librarian commented on the issue:
    E-resources awareness is a big challenge because of constant changes
    of faculty members and admission of new students every year, You
    have to keep on training new members every year**.**

3.  Poor Institutions' participation
    The fear expressed again by the Focus Group was Government dwindling budgets to the Univesity and Tertiary Institutions Library Services hence no adequate capacity for paying subscriptions by the institutions.

4.  Functional Secretariate
    Any successful Organisation should have a strong Secretariate to effectivelymanage the Organisation. Funding of the personnel and administrativecosts may not be possible anymore.

5.  The Geographical distances amidst members This could makethe General meetings quite impossible. Some members might drop out.

6.  Funding to launch the Network
    Following up the resolutions to implement the NETWORK continues to be a road block. Hence the Establishment Agenda of LISENET-ECSA has faced stalement.

## Recommendations

The authors believe a strong case has been made for the establishment of the LISENET –ECSA. This idea has been on the discussion table much earlier than 3rd - 4th July, 2004, Hotel Naigara, when resolutions were originally made to establish and manage LISENET-ECSA. We can state that FUNDING is the mother of all challenges to the actualisation of LISENET –ECSA. Despite frantic efforts funding has been an insurmountable obstacle to host LISENET –ECSA and subsequent meetings. Holding the meeting as an attachment to SCECSAL would not assist out either because many LIS educators may not attend SCECSAL. The African Federation of Library and Information Association(AfLIA) - the continental body has taken strong support to Public Library Development in Africa - was at one point approached to support the establishment of LISENET-ECSA, BUT no positive action has been taken yet.
A very strong PLEA is made to AfLIA to take positive action to support the setting up of LISENET-ECSA. In the circumstances the formation of LISENET –ECSA is still remote. Indeed the que of problems is still long. The authors further recommend to set up a Working Committee comprising of the President, Secretary, Treaurer, IT Expert, and Member. The proposed terms of reference appear below:

## Committee Terms of reference
1. Draft the Constitution
2. Propose rules and regulations to govern the NETWORK
3. Write and Market for funding the Project to Establising the NETWORK
4. Take any other action in establishing a fully fledged LISENET –ECSA

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**APPENDIX 1: Content Analysis Guide**
Content Analysis was the strategy involving critical definition and explaination of the terms used in the study or research. It aimed at getting terms and contextualing them in line of the study.

Vision:the big picture/wish/aspirational features/characteristics, LISE-ECSA should take as guidelines. Words used included:

Mission: the ambition to strive to attain/achieve

Aim: The General achievement expected to be made by LISE-ECSA

Objectives: Strategies through which to achieve the aim of LISE-ECSA

Structure: Organisational/managerial structure of LISE-ECSA

**Functions:** managerial\admnlstrative activities of LISE-ECSA

**Publicity:** deliberate activities to promote LISE-ECSA

**Publicity:** Strategies – techniques to publicise LISE-ECSA

F**unding:** means of getting money for LISE-ECSA **activities**

**Sustainability: ability to maintain the functionality of LISE-ECSA**

**Challeges:** problems/frustrations that may affect LISE-ECSA

**APPENDIX II: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

This FGD comprised an on-line discussion on the possibilities of establising LISE-ECSA. It comprised of the six people of different experience and expertise in LIS education at different levels. Three of these were professors of LIS Education; one LIS Educator at PhD level and well positioned in LIS professional association management activities. Both were involved in the founding Pre-Conference to consider setting up LISNE-ECSA hosted before SCECSAL X1V, Kampala Uganda.

Discussion involved the following questions:

1. What befell of the resolutions of the Pre-Conference to set up LISNET-ECSA, Niagara Hotel, in 2004?
2. Do you think that it is important to ressurect the issue?
3. What issue should the LISENET-ECSA consider as priority?
4. Which challenges do you envisage?
5. What strategies would you put forward for making LISE-ESCA a reality?