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# Family literacy is key to development

> In the present day, performance is the fluid that fuels the economic engine. KNLS received a certificate of excellence in performance in recognition of attaining "Very Good" status with a composite score of 2.2 during the 2008/09 contract period. With increased level of automation and beneficial partnership aimed at improving service delivery to the public, the performance is expected to be even better in the times ahead. The opening of Buruburu and Murang'a libraries is just a tip of the iceberg.

ICT is the way to go if as an organization we have to release notable impact into the achievement of Vision 2030. KNLS has established sound partnerships with both local and international development partners and library services have been taken a notch higher. Ehealth information units in Kisumu and Eldoret, G-Youth in Garissa and Practical Answers Unit in Mandera have become very popular with library users. CCK has also committed to establish ICT centers in ten KNLS rural libraries.

Inculcating reading and information seeking habits in the lives of children when they are young could be the answer to the so much needed "sustained reading culture" in Kenya. KNLS has encouraged all the librarians working within its network to partner with parents and teachers and establish parent-baby reading clubs. Though the idea may sound simple, it is a bit complicated and needs to be approached with a considerably sober mind. Read about some of the key tips on how to start a successful parent-baby reading club inside this issue.

It is said that ebooks will by no means replace the print book. Libraries must therefore balance between the two and what is likely to be experienced is integration.

It is said that ebooks will by no means replace the print book. Libraries must therefore balance between the two and what is likely to be experienced is integration. Libraries in Kenya should however appreciate that soon numbers of people physically visiting the libraries will reduce dramatically as more and more information becomes available in electronic format which can be accessed online from any location.

The idea of taking the library outside the library is speedily gaining momentum in several KNLS libraries. People must be motivated to read at all costs if this monster "IGNORANCE" which is number one enemy of development has to be overcome. Read about some of the strategies being adopted by some libraries to reach out to the public.

Family literacy has been defined as a movement that addresses the needs of millions of families across the world. Public libraries play a major role in helping families develop their literacy skills. They are in remarkable positions to expose children and parents to great quantities of books and pre-reading skills.

For more details and other interesting articles, read on!

- Nancy

# Buruburu library opens doors to the public



Customers access services in the Buruburu Library cyber cafe during the open day

➤ On Saturday 19th February 2011 KNLS held an open day at the new Buru Buru Library Branch situated at the junction of Mumias/Ol Doinyo Sabuk Road. This was an opportunity for the members of the public to learn about the library services lined up for them.

The library provides a serene environment where readers can easily access information that will enable them enhance career skills; carry out comprehensive research from electronic databases and online journals; make references to various subjects; widen their knowledge base; grow their businesses and read for pleasure.

The reading atmosphere in the library is inviting to young children, teenagers, youth, adults and senior citizens alike. Researchers and serious readers will also find the atmosphere in the library very conducive. Regular library services commenced on 21st February 2011.

The public's excitement during the open day was quite evident as they praised the KNLS Board for giving them a magnificent library where they can spend their valuable time seeking relevant information for empowerment.

Some of the services available at the new library include junior, teenage and adult reading and lending; advisory on library services; bulk lending of books to learning institutions (limited to availability of stock); technical assistance on library development to interested people.

The library houses a well equipped cyber café and offers inter-library lending, electronic data bases and multimedia services.

## Briefs... ➤

### Donor support

IN partnership with well wishers, KNLS has engaged on the following library programmes and services:

### Ehealth information units established

PUBLIC Library Innovation Program (PLIP) funded by Melinda and Gates foundation through EIFL has established ehealth information units in Eldoret and Kisumu libraries. This project focuses on training and setting up functional ehealth information sections in the two KNLS branch libraries.

The 2nd Public Library Innovation Program (PLIP) grantees' meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 28th November to 1st December 2010. The meeting brought together participants from the following twelve countries: Slovenia, USA, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chile, Ghana, Mexico, Lithuania, Macedonia, Zambia, Nepal and Serbia.

The three day meeting included a visit to the KNLS headquarters, Buruburu and Nakuru libraries. One of the senior project directors of Melinda and Gates foundation, Janet Sawaya visited the project libraries (i.e. Kisumu and Eldoret).

### Practical Answers Section

Practical Action, a development charity NGO, has established a practical answers section in Mandera Library. This is a knowledge node that focuses on areas such as:

- The technical enquiry service
- Resource centers and knowledge nodes
- Knowledge products
- The section holds a distinctive collection of appropriate technology and development literature.



Hon. Wilfred Ombui, Assistant Minister of Heritage and Culture unveils the plaque during the official opening of Murang'a Library



## Murang'a Library officially opened

▶ **M**urang'a KNLS Library was officially opened on 31st August 2010. The opening was presided over by the Assistant Minister, Ministry of State for National Heritage & Culture, Hon. Wilfred Ombui on behalf of the Hon. Minister.

All the stakeholders present commended the Board's efforts to provide library and information services to the community in Murang'a and the surrounding areas. The community reaffirmed their commitment to utilize the facility and services effectively for their socio-economic empowerment.

## NAL bags Library of the Year award



Guests visit the NAL library during the National Book Week celebrations

▶ **T**he KNLS Nairobi Area Library received the Library of the Year Award and a token of Kshs.50,000 for public libraries category.

The award was an initiative of Goethe Institut, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and Kenya Library Association to recognize innovative library and information services provided by various academic, community, public and special libraries.

## Donor support

### Support for construction of Laikipia Library

SAFARICOM Foundation organized a golf tournament/ fund raiser on 4th September 2010 to support the Laikipia Community Library Project. During the event, the Foundation donated Kshs1.1 million and Coca Cola Company Kshs.200,000.

The successful event, courtesy of Major Rtd. General Waweru, helped to raise a total of 1.4 million. General Waweru said that the purpose of the fundraiser tournament was one of the strategies of Nanyuki Sports Club's contribution to the wellbeing of the community.

The KNLS Director Mr. Richard Atuti who was present during the event, gave Board's contribution of Ksh.100,000 and pledged another Ksh. 2.9 million.

The funds are being utilized for the ongoing construction works at the Laikipia Library building. The Safaricom Foundation also donated electrical and ICT equipment worth Ksh 800,000 for Kwale Library on 25th September 2010.

### Children and Teenagers reading corners

THIS project is funded by Book Aid International (BAI) to establish book corners for children and teenagers for three branch libraries i.e Nyeri, Kisii and Wajir. The project is aimed at encouraging children and teenagers to read therefore promoting a positive reading culture among them. Phase two of the project will include: Nakuru, Buruburu and Murang'a. Phase three will focus on Kisumu, Masalani and Meru.

### Establishment of health corners

THIS is a three-year project funded by Elsevier Foundation through Book Aid International (BAI). It is aimed at increasing access to relevant medical information for primary healthcare providers through the development of local resources and effective health sections in Kenyan public libraries. Year one of the project is being implemented in Thika, Isiolo, Mombasa, Embu and Kabarnet libraries. The libraries earmarked for year two of the project are: Garissa, Wundanyi, Kericho, Laikipia and Nairobi.

# E-book takes its place in the library



*E-books are electronic publications which can be downloaded and read on a variety of hardware platforms with the aid of reading software.*

*By Caroline Kayoro, CDBD*

▶ **T**he e-book is attracting a lot of interest within the library and information world. The notion of ebooks eventually replacing traditional print books has even been mentioned on several occasions, but Rod Bristow, president of Pearson Education UK, argues that this is unlikely to happen, quoting the history of media in general as evidence of integration rather than outright replacement". Some libraries in other countries such as Singapore have revolutionized their library service by fully embracing the ebook. Libraries in Kenya must wake up to the realization that very soon numbers of people physically visiting the libraries will reduce dramatically as more and more information becomes available in electronic format which can be accessed online from any location.

The term ebook tends to mean actual content - i.e. books that are available in electronic form, and which can be downloaded and read on a variety of hardware platforms with the aid of reading software. Ebooks are published in a variety of formats which require appropriate software to 'decode' the text thus enabling it to be read on a computer or mobile device. These factors need to be taken into consideration when choosing an ebook supplier; some suppliers focus on PC-based solutions, whilst others provide mobile technology solutions, or they may offer both.

Implementing ebooks is a complicated business, and publishers are anxious to protect their profits. The access models offered by ebook suppliers reflect publishers concerns, but do not necessarily provide the level of access libraries require. The 'one book, one reader' model common with ebook publishers may not be appropriate or economical to libraries. Publishers in Kenya are yet to take on publishing e-books. Since they are in business and they may have genuine reasons for not jumping into ebooks at the moment consider-

## Partnerships

### G-Youth Career Resource Centre

The USAID's Garissa Youth project was established to provide a place for youth to access critical knowledge and resources about educational, career, and life choices. The project is designed to empower youth to make sound career and life decisions as they transition from high school to the next phase of their lives. This enables the youth to actively participate in both personal and community development. The center is also meant to be a meeting space for youth to interact, exchange ideas and socialize in a safe and comfortable environment.

### Mt. Kenya University

In the spirit of good neighborliness, Mt. Kenya University sponsored the construction of a perimeter wall and a gate house at the Thika KNLS Library all valued at Ksh. 800,000. During the handing over ceremony, the Chairman of the university also promised to construct study villas at the Thika library compound worth about Ksh. 400,000.

### Local publishers

The Board Chairman and Director met with local publishers for a breakfast meeting organized by KNLS on 18th August 2010. During the meeting the Director appealed to the publishers to donate books for Buru Buru library. It was agreed KNLS would select books of their choice worth the amount that the publishers were willing to donate. The meeting was concerned about the government's allocation of Kshs 40 million annually for book purchases, which translates to about one shilling for every Kenyan for public library books. The meeting observed that such a budget cannot sustain a positive reading culture and urged the government to increase the book allo-

# E-books and the library

ing the market they serve. The Information Communication Technology in general is still largely a preserve of the urban Kenyans. The rural Kenya which is a bigger percentage still has a long way to go as it faces the challenge of Internet connectivity. However, it is hoped that the advent of the fiber optic will improve the situation. Meanwhile, for publishers in Kenya, the print book still has a large market.

KNLS, has to start integrating the ebook in our service provision. Actually our customers especially in the major towns are already demanding for such services. Hence we need to first understand some advantages and disadvantages of the ebooks in libraries as explained by Penny Garrod and Jane Weller.

Ebooks have advantages over print titles for libraries as well as users. They neither occupy shelf space nor generate 'overdues' - ebooks automatically 'expire' at the end of a loan period. In addition, ebooks cannot be damaged, lost, or stolen (although library owned portable reading devices do run this risk). Ebooks may free staff from routine tasks, such as shelving, and issuing and returning books.

Ebooks can be a boon to specific groups of users such as housebound and persons with disabilities. They are also lightweight, portable and do not involve visiting a physical library. Ebooks can be used to support reader development, as well as distance e-learning.

However, libraries have to weigh the perceived advantages of ebooks against a number of drawbacks. For example, local content suitable for Kenyan public libraries may be limited.

Furthermore, publishers are reluctant to allow the simultaneous release of print and electronic versions of publications. The electronic version may be delayed. Libraries need to be aware that an e-book may not be the latest edition.

Ebooks may also pose a compatibility challenge in a developing country like Kenya, where only a small percentage of the total population have access to a computer or can even handle a computer.

All said and done, it is clear that ebooks will by no means replace the printed book. Libraries must therefore balance between the two and what is likely to be experienced is integration. For every book budget a certain percentage should be dedicated to ebooks. Libraries must consciously put in place significant ebook programs. While appreciating that digital publishing and the Information technology sector in general is highly dynamic, libraries must be ready to keep up with the changes.

## Partnerships

cation budget so as to sustain all round knowledge for all professionals. It is this knowledge that will be pegged to any meaningful achievement of Vision 2030.

In response to KNLS appeal, donations worth Kshs 1,170,000 were received as follows: 1. Longhorn Publishers donated books worth Ksh. 1,000,000; 2. Focus Publishers - Ksh. 70,000; 3. Macmillan Publishers (Now Moran Publishers) Ksh. 50,000; 4. Longman Publishers Ksh. 50,000.

### KNLS/CCK ICT Centers in Community Libraries

The Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) has committed to fund 10 KNLS libraries at a cost of Ksh. 20.5 million. The MOU between KNLS and CCK was signed on 5th November 2010 and an open tender for supply of project equipment was placed in the dailies by CCK. The project seeks to establish 10 public access centres in rural community libraries through provision of hardware and software and



KNLS Director, Mr. Atuti (left) and CCK Director General Mr. Waweru after they signed an MOU

supporting internet connectivity using cost effective technology. The main objective of the project is to facilitate increased access to public communication by providing affordable access and enhancing ICT capacity among communities in rural areas. The project will be carried out in Laikipia, Murang'a, Dzitsoni, Habaswein, Werugha, Mandera, Kwale, Mwingi, Lusumu and Lagam.

# Door step service: Taking library services to the people

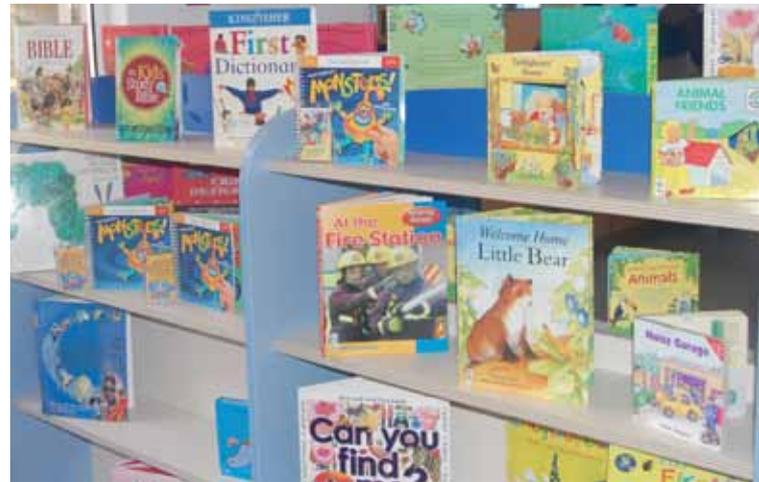
*By Patrick M Mutta, Mwingi*

▶ This is a service whereby, a potential library user is identified, enrolled as a member and served at his/ her place of work. This service was initiated to cater for people who need library service but cannot make it to the library premises due to the nature of their work. Amongst people served at Mwingi branch are businessmen/women, bankers and hospital staff. This service requires a one on one marketing strategy through convincing and good persuasive language. Commitment, dedication, loyalty and trustworthiness are virtues that add spice to the service. The service has been in operation since March 2010 when the inter library loan partnership with NAL was initiated. This partnership was created to satisfy a special need of a certain group of clients (Christian Literature Readers). Mwingi branch has limited materials on this subject. Hence our partnership with Nairobi area library (NAL) helped to address this need. The popular Christian literature books from NAL and the innovative mode of serving the users has led to the discovery of interested users who could not easily access the library due to the nature of their work.

The potential users are identified through: observation (does one read his/her own books?); casual talk aimed at making the potential user open up; and introduction by those already being served.

The potential user is given a copy of rules and regulations to read (at place of work), and if he/she accepts to comply, an application form is issued to be signed by either the chief or employer. After completing the appropriate membership process, the new member is issued with the membership card.

The new members' reading profile is taken, and he/she is served from their work places. The service is sustained through frequent visits and the use of mobile phone to e.g. renew or



*A children's collection in the library*

ask the library staff to collect books that have been read and issuing of new ones. The essence of the service lies in the dedication of the library staff especially in being available at very short notice, knowledge of user needs and sacrifice as this service needs "a pedestrian type of operation". The service is limited to the central town zone of Mwingi. An easy Impact assessment has revealed that a new type of user group has been created and their needs met.

Publicity of the library has been enhanced by users talking about the library service from their point of work as they interact with their clients. As a result, there has been increased usage of library information materials

Some of the members have since reorganized their busy schedules and created time to visit the library so that they can sample the available information materials by themselves.

Taking library service to the people is a concept that needs to be embraced and researched on. There is a lot of potential if it is approached wisely and made user friendly. Though it is challenging, the gains thereafter are worthwhile because people are reached and their needs are met.

# The role of public library in promoting family literacy



*A children librarian helping a junior library user at the KNLS Thika Library*

*By Philomena Mwirigi, NLD*

▶ **F**amily literacy has been defined as a movement that addresses the need of millions of families across the world. It addresses the critical link between education, self-sufficiency and success in family programs, parents and their pre-school children after school together.

As parents identify their strengths and develop their literacy skills, essential message about the importance of education are successfully passed on to their children. These parents and children become learning partners for the success of the whole family. It involves parents coming together to talk about their own educational need as well as the needs of their children during what is called parent and children together (PACT) time. This creates a good approach to serving the educational needs of the family (Logan, 2002).

The public libraries play a major role in helping families develop their literacy skills. They are in remarkable position to expose children and parents to great quantities of

books and pre-reading skills. The location for family literacy includes schools, baby clinics, family centers, day nurseries, libraries after school playgrounds, church buildings and housing schemes.

Children, their parents and grandparents especially in developed countries frequent libraries not only to use books and other information materials in various formats (audio tapes, video cassettes, CDS, talking books, CD-ROMs) but also to use libraries as places for public cultural activities. For example art painting, craft and antique exhibits, lectures, get-togethers with authors, together with launching of new books. (East, 2000).

Indeed, libraries should target families because illiteracy seems to be passed on from one generation to the next. Moreover, children whose parents are functionally illiterate are twice as likely as their peers to be functionally illiterate.

Family literacy programs emphasis is on the parents; role as the child's first teachers. Some libraries go ahead and invite entire families to share in reading activities and book talks with each member borrowing a book to take home. (Talan, 1990). Public libraries build collections, and plan programs for the public in appreciation of the wide range of reading levels within a community.

A further contribution of public libraries is the readership role in a community. This is a achieved through out-reach programs designed to serve disadvantaged families and children. They also focus on family literacy program aimed at assisting low income rural communities and urban neighborhoods providing families chance to borrow books from mobile libraries. Public library programs help children develop reading skills which is a long term achievement as they climb the ladder in pursuit of higher academic levels. In addition, these programs also help parents improve practical skills in all aspects of their lives and in turn help their pre-school children.

# Embu Library gets donor for medical and health section

*By Eunice Nyambura Zakayo, Embu*

▶ Libraries provide their clientele with information that help to support their personal development as individuals, contributing massively to raise the quality of their lives and enrich their participation in community development.

They can therefore identify with the ancient Chinese proverb that, if you give a man a fish you have provided him with a single meal but if you teach him how to fish, he will be able to have meals all his life.

However, for the library to remain relevant, awareness creation has to continually appear in the list of library activities. Bunch {1984} says "it is not simply enough to set up an Information service and expect people to come flocking to your door. Users need to be continually and effectively reminded of the existence of your service and what it offers."

Without a doubt the core objective is to ensure a relevant collection that reflects current trends of evolution of society. The medical and health section has been revitalized and now there new, up to date and current information materials.

Late last year, a renowned Doctor in Embu Dr. P. Ndirangu in conjunction with some of his friends donated books worth more than K sh.50,000. What is pleasing about the new partnership is that he has promised to regularly do so when he is able to. We appreciate Dr P. Ndirangu's generosity and big heart. He is truly a friend of the library. We are sincerely thankful for this partnership and hope others will emulate his steps. We salute you Daktari!



## Out door reading gains popularity in public libraries

*By P. M. MUTTA Mwingi*

▶ In the recent past, reading trends of Kenyans have changed considerably. Most of the people in employment especially in public service have gone back to class.

The emphasis on transformation, professionalism and competence in public service delivery motivated many employees to go back to school. As a result, public library usage has increased and new demand for more information resources has been coming up.

Some of the clients such as the teachers go for their lessons over the holidays when schools are closed. They come to the library with their assignments, they request to be allowed to hold discussions at the library compound where they are provided with furniture. Discussion groups have become very popular in our libraries. This cannot be done indoor unless there are special rooms created for that purpose.

Other clients, who are not necessarily in any group, also request to be allowed to do their studies out door. Reading shades would come in handy where library users gather in discussion groups for better revision and brainstorming. Climatic and weather conditions of a region may also favour outdoor reading, especially in hot and humid areas. The idea of gazebos for example can be a welcome move if well thought out.



## Taking the library outside

*By Margaret Mbithuka, Malindi*

➤ The Malindi community library renders its services in a unique and exciting approach. However disadvantaged by space (size), it goes an extra mile in extending and marketing its services outside the library i.e. taking the library outside the library. Through user studies conducted by the library, a four member committee was formed to identify the core root cause of under utilization of library resources by the community. The committee came up with possible ideas of initiating reading clubs targeting the juniors. This was aimed at giving a firm foundation of the growing and exploited generation by the tourist.

KNLS Malindi has two active clubs which include: a special unit-mentally handicapped at Sir Ali Primary and parent-child reading club at St. Paul Kindergarten. The parent-child club was initiated on 25th February 2010 by Malindi staff. The clubs undertake various activities such as reading, storytelling, puzzle and word building, composition writing, educational tours, among others.

One tour that has already been undertaken was at Mida Creek which is an environmental conservation and tourism attraction site. This was agreed upon by the library staff, parents and the teachers. The Mida Creek is regarded as one of the most productive & diverse Mangrove Forest. It has a large tidal inlet hosting thousands of migrating birds & resident reptiles and marine type. During the educational tours, the children learnt about eight different types of mangrove trees and their uses; the different species of foreign birds; the coral reefs; marine medicinal herbs; various types of crabs and their reproduction system and how the local community has benefited from the eco-system.

With more innovative ideas, we are destined for better services.



*Malindi library book club members from St. Paul kindergarten had a boardwalk experience among other activities at the Mida Creek. The tour was jointly organized by library staff, parents and teachers.*





# Empower communities with information

*By Abdullahi Abdi Ali, Masalani*

▶ The twenty first century is characterized by the need for information in all aspects of life. Societies have evolved from hunters and gatherers to industrial society all the way to the current information society where information is vital in every aspect of man's life and endeavor.

Large amounts of information is generated in all human activities and transfer of this information has been made easy through creation of networks where information is available with the click of a button. However, this is a tall order to achieve given the digital divide that exists among communities. The cost of information seeking and the language used in disseminating this information may also pose a major challenge for the common man to comprehend.

This brings us to the fold of information professionals who should take up the mantle to claim their responsibility in the society to deliver the much needed package to most deserving rural communities so that they can participate fully in the development agenda just like their counterparts in the urban and affluent world . According to Muchombu, 1993, rural communities have common information needs such as:-

- Information on income generation (projects, non-farm incomes and money saving initiatives)
- Community leadership
- Literacy support
- Basic economics (petty business, finance/loans and how to get them and

survival of small businesses)

- Government policies on rural development (health, agriculture, education, cooperatives etc)
- Soil conservation, fertility restoration and soil erosion among other specific needs of different rural communities in the third world countries.

Information professionals and librarians in particular should reach out to the majority rural communities who are helpless and in dire need of information. Community information service has been particularly very successful in south East Asian countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

The information systems in Indonesia, for instance provides programs like village broadcasts and village newspapers where "listening groups" in villages have been formed as part of the strategy towards direct involvement in government programs as outlined by state policies. Such programs are spearheaded by aggressive librarians named "bare foot librarians" synonymous with the long distances they travel to reach out to the communities.

Our librarians should emulate them and take advantage of the new constitution by influencing county laws and policies with regard to information and negotiate for better budgets to enable meet communities' information needs. Library services should be guided by consumer needs and the shift from information provider to information consumer (clientele) should be the focus in order to win the confidence of the user.



KNLS Director, Richard Atuti (left) receives a book donation from Focus Publishers



KNLS Director (seated) admires some of the show exhibits at the KNLS stand during the 2010 Nairobi International trade Fair



KNLS Director (2nd right) receives a one million Kenya shillings book donation from Longhorn Managing Director, Mrs Janet Njoroge (centre)



Guests arrive for the Buruburu Library open day



Children play with toys at the children's section during the open day



Guest of honour, Mr Kenneth Lusaka, addresses guests during 2010 National Book Week Celebrations at KNLS headquarters



Participants at the official launch of the 2010 National Book Week celebrations at KNLS headquarters



at the new Buruburu Library



A junior library user is taken through the children section at the new Buruburu Library



St. Paul's Kindergarten pupils on a tour of the Mida Creek in Malindi, organised by Malindi KNLS Library

# Interlending: A welcome idea



*A collection of books at the new KNLS Buruburu Library*

*By P.M Mutta, Mwingi Library*

Inter lending or inter-library loan, according to Harrods's Librarian's Glossary and Reference Book, is defined as: Schemes whereby users of one library or information system may request their service point to borrow from other library systems materials not held in their own library systems. Kudos Nai-

robi Area Library for reviving this service. It is an ancient idea that is relevant and important in present times. This move is a clear indication that we are going back to the nitty-gritty of professional librarianship. This service ensures that information materials are optimally exploited and it helps in the enforcement of two of the five library science laws, namely: Books are for use, and every user his/her book.

It is a tool that enhances confidence and loyalty in library users because they feel catered for when materials are sought outside their stations. Mwingi Community Library is a beneficiary of this service courtesy of Nairobi Area Library. Since early 2009, these two libraries have been enjoying a good symbiotic relationship as far as service delivery is concerned. Through this service, Mwingi Community Library has been able to:

1. Form two reading clubs, namely-Christian Literature Readers, and Fiction Readers
2. Increase membership enrolment due to exposure of materials borrowed from Nairobi
3. Retain and build confidence of the clients because of striving to satisfy their needs
4. Pilot a new type of service delivery whereby very busy willing users are served at their convenient service point (place of work)

Notwithstanding, Nairobi Area Library must be enjoying the increase of bulk materials borrowed in regard to book issues statistics. No library is an island by itself; we cannot be self sufficient. When one library lacks information materials that can be found from another library, inter-library lending facilitates resource sharing. Many potential users make their decision by checking what is available on the shelves. Users should know what is not in the respective branch shelf can be brought from other branches.

I would like to request Nairobi Area library staff to go an extra mile and act as an information source that will facilitate inter lending among other branches in the KNLS system. Ability to meet a user's need is just a phone call away. Again, kudos NAL let the anointing of inter-lending flow to other branches. We embrace the idea dearly.

## Countries to miss deadline to realization of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

By David Muswii, DD (TS)

► Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by world leaders in 2000 as development plan for 15 years up to 2015. A recent review by world leaders' summit revealed that some countries may not realize all the goals by 2015.

The overall purpose of MDGs is to reduce poverty in all its major dimensions by 50%. Based on that, the leaders' summit concluded that progress has been mixed and prospects for reaching all the goals are uneven. They committed themselves to an action plan to accelerate progress toward the goals over the remaining five years of the project.

Governments with impoverished populations are seen not to be committed to realization of the goals. At the same time donor countries haven't met their financial commitments to the project. No one can be under any illusion about the inherent difficulties involved in attaining MDGs. There are eight goals, several specific targets for each goal and numerous measurable indicators have been established to gauge progress toward these targets and the overall goals.

In general, data collated by the United Nations show some significant progress in sub-Saharan Africa, and Kenya has performed well by sub-Saharan Africa standards in many but not all areas. According to the report, Kenya has actually lost ground in a few notable areas.

The eight millennium development goals (MDGs) are: Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger; Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education; Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; Goal 4: Reduce child mortality; Goal 5: Improve maternal health; Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for development.

## Sharing health information to meet our goals

By Omar Abdi

► The 2010 AHILA 12th Congress was held in Ouagadougou Burkina Faso. I represented KNLS and had an opportunity to present a paper on "Training and setting up functional health information sections in KNLS branch libraries."

The congress brought together participants from Africa, Europe and North America. It was one of the most creative and production information sharing venue for many of us. The theme of the congress was "Health Information in Africa: Meeting our goals." It had sub-themes such as: re-defining the role of the information professional in the provision of health information; use of ICTs to bridge information divide in Africa; patients access to and dissemination of health information; and sharing the latest research findings with relevance to local practice.

The attendance to this conference was generously supported by Electronic Information for Libraries Network ([www.eifl.net](http://www.eifl.net)), a non governmental organization that promotes research and development of libraries in the developing and transitional countries.

Kenya had the largest delegation of presenters with eight participants representing various organizations and learning institutions. The country was hailed for being a key driver and active member of the Association through its local Ken-AHILA network. Nasra Gathoni, the secretary of the local Ken-AHILA chapter was elected president of the Association.

The congress activities included practical training on the use of HINARI ([www.who.int/hinari](http://www.who.int/hinari)) with some emphasis on research for life, a presentation on literacy manual for Health Science, launch of LATINA (Learning and Teaching in a Digital World), a University of Oslo run program that had been availed to Africa for the first time. The project would be implemented in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan during summer 2011. The next AHILA congress will be held at Cape Verde Island in 2012.

# SCECSAL XIX Conference on information and governance

*By Caroline Kayoro, CDBD*

➤ The 19th Eastern, Central, Southern Africa Library and Information Associations (SCECSAL) conference was hosted by the Botswana Library Association (BLA) at the University of Botswana. The theme of the conference was “Enhancing Democracy and good governance through effective information and knowledge services”.

This theme was based on the premise that good governance may not be achieved if libraries and Information services do not play a pro active role in closing the gap between the information rich and the information poor nations and in particular create a sustainable information society and a knowledge economy environment.

The 21st century should be seen as a watershed in the development and contribution of libraries and information services towards democracy, good governance, and elimination of poverty in the continent through the provision of open access to effective information and knowledge services for Africa’s development. Democracy and socio-economic development requires an informed and questioning citizenry.

Libraries and information centres in the region face the challenge of proving their continued existence to national governments and societies in the midst of other information service providers. Given this scenario the SCECSAL conference needed to answer the following questions?

- Should African governments continue to provide funding for libraries and information services?
- Should members of society or community

use library and information services when Google is available 24/7?

- Given the development of ICTs and networked environment how much are libraries and information centres still relevant?
- What critical role do libraries and information services play in national development?

The conference addressed various issues revolving around developments in ICT and information and governance.

- Freedom of access to information, censorship to information, Internet monitoring, information privacy and confidentiality
- Democratization process and promotion of sustainable good governance in Africa, human rights, socio economic development,
- Advocacy and Smart partnerships between libraries and government in national development
- Freedom of access to information, censorship to information, Internet monitoring
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- Digital divide and achievement of democracy, E-Governance/e-government and libraries in Africa, universal access to information and disadvantaged groups
- Information literacy, local content, knowledge management/services.

Meeting with other information professionals in the region is always beneficial and eye opening. Kenya is not very different from the other countries in many ways in terms of service provision.

Participants learnt various lessons from the papers presented. It was clear that public libraries were catalysts for change in the community.

The EIFL public library innovation programme brought this out very clearly as it aimed to place the libraries at the centre of community life by helping them to overcome challenges such as understanding community needs, integrating ICTs and improving outreach services.

Public libraries are instrumental in alleviating poverty and building a democratic society.

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Public libraries serve as university, school and community libraries all in one and users place high demands on them.

Librarians need to tap into the numerous avenues for partnerships with government and other stakeholders in youth, sports and tourism, music, cultural activities and indigenous knowledge programmes in their respective countries. These partnerships with government can enable libraries to add value to national development.

University libraries have broadened their horizon and are now involved in outreach programmes with the communities surrounding them such as information literacy and outreach programmes to the disadvantaged groups.

Most governments have developed websites to promote governance and democracy, however these sites are not updated regularly and most are not very interactive. Information professionals need to be in the fore front to ensure that effective and practical government websites are maintained to enhance e-governance.

Government publications are important tools of promoting governance and democracy and should be accessible to all citizens starting from primary level students through the school libraries. Librarians therefore need to stock the school libraries with the necessary government publications.

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Countries have initiated various programmes with partners to fast track integration of ICT in service delivery e.g the sesigo project in Botswana National Library funded by Melinda and Bill gates foundation.

The need to integrate Information ethics in the curricula for African Universities was discussed. Information ethics would enable information professionals to engage in ethical reasoning by determining what is right or wrong in a dilemma situation. Integration of Information ethics in the curricula would support information professionals in their understanding and development of ethical values and morals with regard to protection (privacy and confidentiality).

Introduction of Knowledge/ Information management in the curriculum for the SCECSAL region was discussed. It was agreed that this curriculum was required for information professionals in nurturing democracy and good governance.

The emergence of open source software (OSS) in the information industry has shaped the way software is developed and maintained. It is free to download, use and modify. South Africa demonstrated how it has successfully implemented open source software and in the process ended up saving on a lot of funds. Following the world wide option of OSS by governments, the South African government approved a policy on the use of free open source software (FOSS) in 2007. This policy states that the "government will implement FOSS unless propriety software is demonstrated to be sufficiently superior and whenever the advantages of FOSS and propriety software are comparable FOSS will be implemented when choosing a software solution for a new project. Whenever FOSS is not implemented then, reasons must be provided in order to justify the implementation of propriety software". The National Library of South Africa (NLSA) has migrated from Microsoft Windows

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and office to Suse Linux Enterprise Desktop (SLED) and OpenOffice.org which has translated into long term cost savings as it is no longer necessary to regularly upgrade both hardware and software as in the past. However, they had to invest on required I.T skills heavily in the initial stages. Participants in the conference felt that open source is the way to go for libraries.

Public libraries are unable to demonstrate their value in a language that the politicians and decision makers can understand. Librarians were urged to be vigilant in collecting routine statistics, and to select one or two of their regular activities or special projects and systematically gather tangible evidence of their impact on users in terms of behaviour, competence and level of knowledge. An example was given of a public library arranging for tuition for students in the library on Saturdays and during the holidays. To assess impact it is important to document improved performance of these students in exams. Narratives that are backed up with objective and verifiable evidence can provide politicians and funders with incontrovertible proof of the value of public library services.

Investing in the development of Digital libraries will greatly uplift scholarship in the region. Sustainable digital libraries require necessary digital infrastructure, appropriate collections and services, standards and policies, training both library staff and users and allocating necessary financial resources.

Today's online experience has added a new dimension in our information seeking activities, presenting users with a vast array of options. A considerable amount of information has migrated from the print world to the World Wide Web. Some of the early concerns that discredited web content such as the widely held view that web based information lacks credibility are gradually losing ground.

Although questions about the quality of web information are still relevant, they appear to have little effect on its utilization.

Open access (free and immediate online access to peer reviewed journal literature) is still not used effectively in the region mainly because electronic resources are inaccessible to most African countries and communities do not have the technological infrastructure to receive and distribute open access publications effectively. However, open access publications can play a major role in achievement of cultural rights and thus help societies and communities stand firmly on a base of democracy and good governance from which they can work toward a better future.

The concept of knowledge management is often not clearly understood and its true value and potential not always recognized. The perception often exists that hoarding knowledge enhances competitiveness. Africa's potential can only be unlocked if there is a shift from concentrating on physical development of economic and other resources to recognizing the value of knowledge and information and understanding that there is a need to leverage the social and intellectual capital of its citizenry.

Library and information centres will remain relevant if they are vigilant in adopting relevant Information Communication Technologies, acquire dynamic skills such as Information ethics, knowledge management, advanced IT skills and demonstrate their value to the politicians and funders.



*A section of participants who attended the SCECSAL XIX Conference at the University of Botswana*



Junior library users and their parents and guardians in an outdoor activity during the club meeting.

## Parent-baby reading club gathers steam

By Eunice Wambeti Mwaniki, NAL

➤ A parent-baby reading club is a wonderful way of fostering a life-long love for reading, expanding children minds as well as providing a forum to build important life skills such as public speaking, debate and viewing things from different perspectives. Such clubs are also great opportunities for children to socialize and meet new friends.

To realize a successful parent-baby reading club you have to be very friendly with both the parents and the children. It is important that you explain to the parents what your intentions are and the benefits of them and their children joining the club. Most of the parents are excited about such a beneficial arrangement for their children.

At Nairobi Area Library (NAL) the Children librarian had to research on how best to start such a club and how it can be sustained.

The club started on 9th November 2010. The parents were excited about the idea and together we agreed to be meeting every 3rd Saturday of every month. We also developed the vision, mission and objectives of the club, as well as the constitution to govern the club.

The club has 12 children and 15 senior (parents/ guardians) members. Activities include public speaking (begins by children giving some detailed introduction about themselves to others), socializing and making friends.

We noticed that after doing this introduction by introducing and doing activities together all the children, who came to the club when they were very shy and not able to socialize with others, could do so without fear. Their attitude changed to being friendly and social to each other.

The club's activities involve children building blocks, playing with toys, moulding, singing, watching cartoon movies while parents read stories for children.

The senior club members compete in loud reading, writing, spelling, mental sums, dictation, drawing, performing plays as well as singing.

In future the club plans to introduce outdoor games, bouncing castle, swings, halloos and ball games as well as picnic and educational trips to national parks, animal orphanages etc.

# Guidelines in setting up a reading club

▶ Lessons learnt from by NAL Children Librarians in the course of working with children in the parent-baby club:

1. You have to be caring as this is the best way to help children value themselves and their culture, for example reading stories for them, watching pictures together, modeling, coloring and listening to them. You need to reduce yourself to their level.
2. While working with children can be exciting and certainly not boring, it can also be tiring and much patience is required. You need to be patient and calm when you are with them.
3. You have to be a good listener. This is important for you to be able to get close to them and understand their needs or what they are trying to tell you.
4. Beware of your body language. This is an important factor while working with children because it sends out messages to them and they can easily read your mind through the body language that you project. Babies, for example will cry if they feel that the person holding them is not relaxed because they can feel the tension in the person's arms.
5. You need to smile and look interested in what the children are saying and doing. You need to show them that you enjoy being with them. With young children you also need to make sure that you maintain eye contact, bend or crouch down so that you are on the same level with them.
6. Encourage the children to play and join together with the parents to play with them. Playing helps children to socialize. You may find that some children seem to be more successful in their friendship than others. Researches show that children who find it difficult to play with others are more likely to have problems with their relationships in adulthood. For example a study by S.W Duck in 1991 suggested that those who were rejected by their peers were more likely to display signs of alcoholism, schizophrenia and delinquent behavior in later life. It seems likely that if the loners can be detected early and helped to play with others, bullying and later social isolation can be avoided.
7. For the club to be successful stakeholders must formulate a constitution which will guide its operations. The constitution shall also define the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders, who are KNLS Librarians, Parents, Children and Partners. It should also define the membership.

With the continuous support of our NAL Librarian and the parents, the junior library staff are committed to keep the club active through:

- Organizing competitions against other clubs
- Linkages through the internet
- Start a children's magazine and encourage children to contribute articles
- Solicit for funding of the club activities from various organizations and individuals.

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