The ALC in 2010

“We May Need to Re-evaluate Priorities”

by Deborah LaFond

At the request of our ALN editors, I have been invited to share my goals for ALC as the incoming ALC chair. First of all, I would like to thank Tim Johnson and Bassey Irele for their persistent and conscious work to gather and share ALC’s history as an organization through ALN. Becoming chair of ALC, one becomes more aware of the importance of ALN as well as other communication and outreach tools. Bassey and Tim continue to carry on the devotion invested by many in ALC who have shared our model of working together as Africana librarians and our commitment to sharing this news with colleagues in Africa and beyond. I hope we can create more dialogue and partnerships with librarians, publishers, and scholars in Africa, as well as those everywhere who work to respond to critical needs of Africa and promote knowledge of Africa. This year we will be addressing potential changes that many organizations are forced to consider. We may need to re-evaluate priorities which we will begin to do at the Spring 2010 meeting. ALC plans to continue virtual access to meetings, discussions on public and technical services in the Bibliography committee where we can voice the impact of our collective activities, and co-creatively determine coping strategies and vision for future roles of Africana librarians. I hope we will effectively articulate how the work of ALC will continue to stimulate institutions, support librarians in their work, support African knowledge production, and the dissemination of resources about Africa.

As chair, I am responsible for organizing an ALC panel for the fall African Studies Association Annual Conference in San Francisco, November 17-21st, 2010. This year ALC has teamed up with other coordinate organizations within ASA who are preparing a larger debate and potential education initiatives on African and African Diaspora food and energy futures in Washington, D.C. 2011 at the ASA conference. I hope that our call to promote dialogue on environmental justice and sustainable futures for Africa and the African Diaspora this year will stimulate this debate and that we will be able to gather more African voices at the Washington conference. Therefore, I invite ALC librarians to participate in developing this debate which will begin this November in San Francisco. I have proposed that ALC engage in an information bazaar on a particular theme of African food, land, energy sustainability visioning.

This year the ALC panel will focus on critical literacies, information, and resources for the sustainability of food and energy futures in Africa and in African Diasporas. The call for proposals below further articulates the questions and themes raised. So far, we have a mix of respondents. All participating ALC librarians are encouraged to contribute a poster or handout on this theme in the hopes that this panel discussion could culminate in a production, and/or a publication. Most importantly, I would like ALC to send a message that librarians are actively interested in addressing the critical needs of Africa, in identifying available resources that we can use to support African efforts. One of our strengths as librarians is that we want to be sure debates in the US are informed with the perspectives of those who may not have access or funding to attend major conferences, and policy-making spaces where international decisions are made. My hope is that librarians, in coordination with other ASA coordinate groups, specifically the ASA Women’s Caucus and the Association of Concerned African Scholars, will in effect, create primary source documentation by inviting the voices and experience of those in Africa who are least heard and perhaps least represented in the academic literature received in Western institutions. One of the most important of my goals is to recognize and support the ways in which we welcome and facilitate a collegial and supportive environment for both longstanding and newer ALC librarians. This welcome and collegiality are the gifts given to me by this group over the past 15 years for which I am very grateful. Perhaps as a group we can find new ways to continue to support each other despite the ubiquitous economic downturn. My goal is to encourage dialogue and devote time for brainstorming within the group. Though we are very practical people and must rely on e-mail

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communication most of the year, this is a limited form of communication. I hope we continue to support ALC's face-to-face interaction and communication while forging ahead with previous ALC initiatives to explore and experiment with virtual meetings. Last year Laverne Page (previous ALC chair) along with the gracious support of Edward Miner and the University of Iowa, spearheaded the effort to arrange for our first experiment of hosting ALC Executive meetings on the University of Iowa's Elluminate software. This year we have had 3 Executive virtual meetings and while we are documenting the pros and cons, we have definitely increased in our facility in using this technology. At our meetings, we will, I hope, continue to invite virtual participation from African librarians on the continent of Africa. We remain committed to continuing our face-to-face meetings because human interaction is very key to our work.

The importance of sharing our work and our model has increased. Utilizing the communication and outreach tools such as African Libraries Newsletter (ALN), I have invited more participation and discussion of issues and challenges faced by Africana librarians. I have asked individuals to report projects which exemplify the vision and the synthesis of the work we do. I have encouraged and would like to introduce a new section in ALN to be called "Conversation with a librarian", which could be either an interview or a piece developed by a librarian telling a story about collection building, acquisitions travel, or what they learned from a particular project. Perhaps a light-hearted piece sharing anecdotes about the collision of professional expectations we experience would be fun and therapeutic? I'm sure there are pertinent images that could be posted to the listserv which may invite a story for ALN. I have encouraged publication of relevant projects that we develop outside of our professional work to promote awareness and understanding about Africa. It is true that librarians often prefer not to talk about themselves and their work. I would however, like ALC members to consider sharing more publicly, what we believe is critical to our work and how what we do is integral to our work...”

New Africana Resources

Web
Mandela historical online archive http://www.archivalplatform.org/news/entry/mandela/

African Studies Monographs


Professional Literature

The Book Donations Committee of the Africana Librarians Council (ALC), the oldest active section of the African Studies Association (ASA), works to support and fund donation initiatives. The committee is happy to announce the reinstatement of its Gretchen Walsh Book Donation Award. The award is named in memory of ALC member Gretchen Walsh to highlight the important contributions she made conceiving and facilitating the work of the Book Donations Committee. The deadline for new applications is April 15, 2010. Application procedures are online at the ASA website.

The roots of the Book Donations Committee can be traced back to discussions in the 1980s among librarians and publishers concerned about the state of libraries in Africa. The term “book famine” was used to describe the condition of these libraries. This term highlighted the combined effects of failing national economies, shifts in priorities of governments, general poverty, and fluctuations in the publishing and book trades both internationally and in Africa as major causes for the famine.


Committee member Gretchen Walsh and other individuals serving on the “Book Famine Task Force” began work to materially support donation efforts. They theorized this task, in a series of articles in ASA News. These articles gave broad context to the “book famine,” suggested best practices for donation initiatives, and highlighted success stories of recent donation projects. Perhaps most importantly, it detailed the initial framework and procedures by which the current Book Donations Committee operates. By 1992, the ASA Board approved the funding of a book donation committee to award donation projects annually. The first announcement of the program’s existence appeared in the July/September 1993 issue of ASA News. It has operated every year since except 2008-2009, awarding funding for donations of library materials to numerous universities, schools, and organizations operating in Africa.

The ALC Book Donations Committee has funded many types of donation programs. Funding has primarily been used by recipients to defray the cost of shipping materials. Others used funding to pay for operational costs on the ground. The applicant pool generally consists of American-based organizations, Africanist scholars, and concerned individuals. Each donation project is different. The committee generally funds programs sending newer, high quality books and materials, not those sending materials that are dated or in poor condition. A methodology for individuals and organizations interested in book donations is spelled out in Walsh’s 1992 ASA News article. It covers the role of donors, types of recipients, book condition and recipient-appropriate subject matter, as well as transportation and communication issues. As she points out, book donation projects are a much more complicated endeavor than acting on charitable feelings, no matter how sincere.

Over the years, awardees have reflected various approaches and relationships between themselves and book recipients. Many projects involved American academics partnered with African universities as individuals or through their institutions. This was evident in a 2003 award given the Gerontology Institute at Georgia State University in partnership with Kenyatta University. Other awards involved U.S.-based African scholars sending materials to schools in their home countries. The 2005 award that funded the shipment of the papers of the late Dr. Lemuel Johnson to his home institution, Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, demonstrates this type of donation.

Another category of proposals the BDC has funded are organizations and concerned individuals partnering with African schools, communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Some of these partnerships are continuous, others are one-time donations. A few of these projects stand out. The Friends of African Village Libraries (FAVL) based in San Jose, California, has received funding multiple times. FAVL supports community libraries in northern Ghana and Burkina Faso by initially building and administering village libraries that focus largely on educating youth. Libraries are staffed by locally-based librarians and supported by volunteers from the U.S. and Europe. FAVL’s recent activities are highlighted on their blog, which includes interviews with African librarians. The ALC Book Donations Committee looks forward to continue funding innovative and spirited programs supporting African libraries, institutions of education, and other organizations. For more information on committee history and procedures please visit the BDC’s website.
University of Wisconsin

In celebration of Black History Month, the Libraries' "Haiti Past and Present" series, organized by ALC member Emilie Ngo-Nguidjol Songolo, was held in February. The films shown included:

*Haiti, Land of Tragedy, Land of Hope*, 2004 (Antoine Leonard-Maestrati) This documentary chronicles the history of Haiti back to its discovery in the late 15th Century and the violent process of colonization to the present.

*Égalité for all: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution*, 2009 (Noland Walker) The Haitian Revolution represents the only successful slave revolution in history; it created the world's first Black republic. At the forefront of the rebellion was General Toussaint Louverture, an ex-slave whose genius was admired by allies and enemies alike.

*Aristide and the Endless Revolution*, 2005 (Nicolas Rossier) Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the former president of Haiti, was twice removed from office with the complicity of the international community. An investigation into the events that led to his most recent ouster, 'Aristide and the endless revolution' exposes the geopolitical intrigue, the economic alliances between the Haitian and U.S. elite, the armed criminals posing as freedom fighters and other factors that have consistently threatened this young democracy....

*Profit And Nothing But!,* 2001 (Raoul Peck) The filmmaker contrasts the rhetoric of capitalism with the reality of his native land, Haiti. Explores the profit motive and its consequences on people's day to day lives, their history and their outlook for the future.

*Port-au Prince is Mine*, 2000 (Rigoberto Lopez) This documentary provides a portrait of the city and its problems: overpopulation, lack of urban infrastructure and environmental degradation.

State University Of New York-Albany

On Thursday March 18th, Lisa Merton, maker of the film, *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*, joined Albany faculty and students along with co-discussants, Mary Valentis, English professor, co-director, Institute for Critical Climate Change and Deborah LaFond, Social Sciences Bibliographer and Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Women’s Studies at the University at Albany to present the third evening in the month long Women’s History Film and Discussion Series.

The film, *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*, shares important history of Kenyan democracy as well as lessons of how women work to co-create positive solutions for human health in relationship to all our nature and the survival of biodiversity, by organizing for democracy through ecoliteracy and planting.

Library of Congress

*Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of The African Section*

*Airlift to America*

Don’t be a shroom, send events sponsored by your libraries Africana section to the ALN.

*Photo: Pamela Howard-Reguindin*
INSTITUTIONAL SPENDING AND ALC ACTIVITIES

by Joe Lauer

While thinking about the schedule for ALC meetings, I have wondered if the time spent on various ALC activities matches the resources expended by our institutions. The working hypothesis is that we should spend more time with vendors and talking about acquisitions.

Core activities of ALC members can be divided into at least 3 areas:

* Acquisitions/Collection development (both selection and purchasing);
* Cataloging;
* Reference, including bibliographies and web guides.

There is also a fourth category, Other/Outreach, which includes all the activities that help others at our institutions or in our professional organizations; plus time spent keeping up with general trends in librarianship and African Studies. It includes committee work and generating publicity for our institutions. Some of the work at ALC meetings falls into this category, but I am setting Other/Outreach aside because I find it difficult to quantify. That does not mean it is unimportant.

In terms of librarian time on the core activities, my initial assumption was that there is a 50-25-25 split between acquiring, cataloging, and reference assistance. Looking at the January 2009 ALC directory, there are about 95 names, including many retirees and vendors. Of the roughly 63 working librarians, 40 seem to be in acquisitions, 12 in reference and 11 in cataloging. Since most have shared assignments and assuming one-third of reference librarians’ work is in acquisitions while one-quarter of bibliographers’ work is in reference, this could be adjusted to 33 FTE in acquisitions or collection development, 12 FTE in cataloging (adding 2 part-timers), and 18 FTE in reference. (If I looked at attendees at recent Fall meetings, I might get a slightly different picture.) Breakdowns in individual libraries will be different, in part because ALC generally attracts more bibliographers than, e.g., catalogers.

If one adds the dollars spent on materials to staff salaries, the importance of acquisitions work becomes even more obvious. How much do we spend on Africana? This is an easy question to answer. Unlike organizations such as ARL or SALALM, ALC does not post spending numbers. Al Kagan did an informal survey of Title 6 center libraries in 2009. Nine of the 11 centers reported Africana budgets totaling $800,000. But this is not the total spending on Africa, since all libraries have some Africana purchased on disciplinary funds and a few exclude North Africa or non-Africana Western imprints from their African Studies budgets. A revised estimate for the 9 centers could be $1-1.2 million spent on Africa.

I will make an initial guess of another $1.5-$2.5 million spent on Africa by ALC institutions (i.e., those represented at ALC meetings) not represented in Kagan’s survey. This would include Boston and Yale (non-reporting Title 6 centers); Columbia, Stanford and UC-Berkeley (FLAS only centers); Library of Congress, Northwestern, Harvard, New York Public, and UCLA. Adding the two estimates gives a total of $2.5-3.7 million spent by ALC libraries. Two points should be made about this estimate: 1) a high percentage of spending on Africa comes out of non-African Studies budgets; and 2) these numbers are intended as a rough order of magnitude, somewhat like a historian’s date for the dispersal of Afro-Asiatic languages.

Another approach is to look at the total spending reported in the latest ARL (Association of Research Libraries) statistics, 2007-08, which are available on their website.

The 123 ARL institutions report Total Library Materials expenditures of $1,363,469,758. This includes $18.6 million for LC (which seems low), $34.2m for Harvard, $33.3m for Yale, etc. The great unknown is the amount of the total going for Africana, but there are reasons (see end of Note) to use 0.7% as an average rate. Multiplying the ARL total by .007 suggests ARL libraries spend $9.5 million on Africana. Do the ALC institutions account for half of that?

How does the $3-4 million spent by ALC institutions on materials compare with salaries? I will assume an average salary of $70,000 per year. This is mostly a guess. ARL statistics for 2007-08 do imply $47,000 per FTE staff, including non-professionals and student assistants. Salaries in large urban areas near the coast will be substantially higher than those in small towns away from the coasts. If I include fringe benefits and overhead, the average cost for a FTE librarian is closer to $100k.

Multiplying $70,000 by 63 (the number of working librarians in the ALC directory) implies that our institutions are paying Africana librarians a total of $4,410,000. (For the sake of simplicity, I will assume that the non-African Studies activities by those in the ALC directory is balanced by Africana work in ALC libraries by those not in the directory.) In ARL libraries (without Library of Congress, which has a large “other operating expend.”), materials expenditure are about 80% of salaries; or salaries are about 120% of materials expenditures. This suggests that ALC libraries spend $3.5 million, plus or minus $0.5 million; or somewhat more than my previous estimate of $2.5-3.7 million.

Adding salaries and materials expenditures and using the 12-18-33 FTE ratio for librarians, it appears that ALC institutions spend $840,000 for cataloging; $1,260,000 for reference.
The World Newspaper Archive: African Newspapers

by James Simon

The World Newspaper Archive (WNA) is a collaborative effort of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), its partner libraries, and Readex (a division of NewsBank) to preserve and provide persistent electronic access to historical newspapers from around the globe. The program was launched in 2008 with the financial and in-kind investment of CRL’s member institutions.

The WNA is envisioned as an ongoing, multi-year and multi-stage endeavor wherein CRL and affiliates will combine expertise and resources to digitize and make available for scholarly use their holdings of newspapers from several world regions. The first phase of the effort made accessible content from Latin America, with more than 1 million pages of content from 35 titles produced in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

African Newspapers is the latest module of the WNA. Released in January 2010, African Newspapers will make available more than 400,000 fully searchable pages of newspapers published in Africa between 1800 and 1922. African Newspapers features titles published in Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Languages include English, German, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Sotho, and others.

Titles were recommended by WNA Charter Participants, faculty members, and subject experts from the Cooperative Africana Microform Project (CAMP). The final material, nearly 40 titles in all, was selected for its breadth of coverage, diversity of viewpoints, and historical significance.

At the time of writing, African Newspapers contained more than 150,000 pages of content from 15 titles. This includes issues from such titles as the Buluwayo Chronicle (1894-1915), Imvo Zabantsundu (1884-1899), Indian Opinion (1907-1918), and Lagos Standard (1907-1920). Content is released on a rolling basis.

Content is combined from newspaper holdings of CRL and several major newspaper repositories. Contributing repositories have included Harvard University, the New York Public Library, University of Florida, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Texas at Austin, University of Washington, University of California, Berkeley, and University of California, Los Angeles.

The World Newspaper Archive employs the robust and reliable search and discovery platform used by Readex’s major newspaper databases: Early American Newspapers and Hispanic American Newspapers.

Thirty-five CRL Charter Participants to date have invested in the launch of this next phase of the World Newspaper Archive, and CRL will offer highly favorable rates of access for those member institutions that request ongoing access. Member investment goes directly back to CRL for additional conversion activity.

Additional information on this module may be found at: http://www.crl.edu/collaborative-digitization/world-newspaper-archive/african-newspapers

CRL will guarantee the long-term persistence and continued functionality of the news content for the CRL community. CRL aims to ensure not only persistent access, but CRL member control over the future costs and quality of that access.

James Simon is the Director of the Global Resources Network for the Center for Research Libraries.
The editors of the ALN need contributors to future issues. If you have the time to send in new book titles or websites of interest, profiles of Africana librarians in your area, or reports on Africana-related activities on your campus, please contact the editors.
the success of the academic communities we support, the collections we work to build, the partnerships we create, the activities that we participate in, the opening of dialogue, the exchange of interdisciplinary perspectives, as well as the contributions we make toward creating and strengthening scholarly production and resources in Africa. Since I invite, I will also share one way in which the professional work I do has culminated in invitations from other academic departments to organize or participate in campus events. At the request of the Women’s Studies faculty, this past March 2010, I was invited to work on their Women's History month film series. The College of Arts and Sciences asked me to place an exhibit which I focused on Women in Africa and the African diaspora.

Since I am working as ASA Women's Caucus co-convener and had planned to bring Dr. Wangari Maathai to the next 2010 ASA conference, I had several conversations with Lisa Merton (filmmaker of Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai) who was also trying to facilitate a speaking engagement for ASA. Through this correspondence and the invitation I received to coordinate a film series, I invited Lisa Merton to share her work and to show the film to students on the University at Albany, SUNY campus. A local organization and radio station picked this up and plans to hold a major event in May 2010 at the WAMC LINDA performance hall in Albany New York. Here is one example of how the synthesis of what we do culminates in activities which highlight much needed awareness about the people and culture of Africa, how we need to be more a part of the global family to address critical needs that impact all of us. In another example, which Emilie Ngo-Nguidjol Songolo has also allowed me to share, is a collaborative film series and exhibit she co-created with faculty, staff and students at the University of Wisconsin in response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti (see page 4 of ALN), as well as a response to the appalling mis-information with regard to the historical context of Haiti, Africa, and the African Diaspora. Thank you Emilie!

I welcome and invite your continued participation, ideas, methods, and dialogue on how to co-create whatever goals we as a group decide upon. Looking forward to a wonderful Fall meeting in San Francisco and a very productive year!