Fall CAMP Meeting Greenlights Two Digitization Projects

The fall CAMP meeting, held in San Francisco on November 19, 2010 during the African Studies Association meeting, gave the go-ahead for two important archival digitization projects – the digitizing of the District Inspector Reports in the Arquivo Historico de Mocambique and the District Archives in Kabarole, Uganda.

According to the proposal submitted to CAMP, the Kabarole collection includes “250 boxes concerning the colonial and post-colonial judiciary, the conduct of the elections in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, the supervision and popularization of traditional musical groups, and the conduct of the Rweenzuru War during the 1960’s and 1970’s.”

The two projects will be funded with the assistance of Title 6 money.

The CAMP meeting also voted in favor of changing the name of the organization (not the acronym) to Cooperative Africana Materials Project and announced that the Peter Limb (MSU) was elected vice chair/chair elect and Ghirmai Negash (OU) was elected faculty representative.

When Empty Shelves Speak Volumes

Reflections on my visit to the National Library of Togo - by Atoma Batoma.

After 15 years of absence from my home country, Togo, I returned for a short stay in the summer of 2009. I had only 18 days to visit relatives both in the north and in the south, but I nonetheless took some time to make a few visits to the National Library of Togo (NLT), as well as the Library of the University of Lome.

The National Library of Togo was created in 1969. Its major mission was the publication of the national bibliography. As Zakari Mamah (1993) reports, the NLT ran into difficulties, among which the setting up of a legal deposit system. It was not until 1990 and 1992 that, following a serious assessment of its function and its needs by a committee recommended by the National Conference the NLT received the long overdue attention on the part of the government. This attention has yet to be translated into political will and concrete measures in order to implement the recommendations of the Conference.

(Cont. on page 2)
Reflections (from page 1)

Located in an old building that once belonged to a German administrator, the colonial style structure that houses the NLT was clearly not built to accommodate library materials.

Entering this building in the late 80s, a visitor would have been struck by two very different book collections on the shelves inside the Reference Room. During that time period, I was living in Belgium, pursuing a Ph. D. at the University of Liege, and when I stopped by the NLT during one of my visits home, I saw something I had never seen before.

On the first row of shelves there were the books I was used to seeing, volumes related to the African and Western bibliographic world. However, new to me at that time was the fact that several of these books were missing. The second row of shelves was filled with brand new books, almost all the same size, half of which were red and the other half green. Curious to find out what these books were, I looked closer to discover that the red books were all by the same author, Mao Zedong, and the green books were all by Kim Il Sung.

“Aha!” I thought as my youthful mind fancied that my country was secretly and progressively transforming itself into a Marxist state. After all, I had noticed other signs that could support this conspiracy theory. For instance, the economic cooperation between Togo and China and North Korea was on the rise: the North Koreans were busy building hospitals and monuments, and the Chinese were active in

(Cont. on page 3)
helping implement agricultural projects in several regions of the country. In addition, Benin Republic, our smart neighbor to the East, had turned socialist some time ago.

Given these facts, I thought it not unreasonable to assume that Togo was following suit and that the government was insidiously but efficiently preparing its citizens for the revolution by changing the collections of the library. At the same time it appeared inconceivable. This country was once compared to Switzerland, not only because of its beautiful mountains and the cleanliness of its streets, but also because it was to some extent a haven for Western economic investments, the capital city was and still is an international gathering place, the preferred spot for international and regional conferences, a getaway and vacation destination for its neighbors. Was it possible that Togo was slowly but surely falling into the communist camp? How could the French, who had always had a firm grip on this tiny country since it was placed under their protectorate by the victors of World War I, allow this to happen?

I was approached by a library worker who brought me back to my senses. He explained to me that if several of the books on the first shelf were missing, it was not because they were being replaced with the red and green books, but rather because they had been checked out permanently.

“Permanently?”, I said. Seeing my confusion, he hastened to offer clarification, his face wearing a smirk which betrays the self-contentment of people in the know. The books, he said, were checked out by people higher up, people in power and powerful people, those that the poor librarians could not ask to return their books for fear of losing their jobs. “As for the red and green books”, he added, “Don’t be fooled by their number. Nobody checks them out”. I would learn later that these books were donated by the Chinese and the North Korean governments, probably as part of the cooperation package. In other words, they did not get into the library through a selection process based on the library’s collection development policy.

I will not speculate here about the lack of collective consciousness of the higher-ups, those people who were probably developing their cultural capital in order to increase their symbolic power, nor do I want to dwell on what this attitude says about the cultural and educational state of the country which was then under a dictatorship and had turned its back on “culture” in the humanistic and critical sense of the word, to encourage the practice of what was then called “traditional cultures.” Instead, I will rather emphasize the positive changes that have occurred since then at the National Library. These changes show, I believe, that the forces of progress, “les sentinelles de l’ombre”, as they are called in French, had been vigilant all along.

(To be continued in ALN #128.)
ALC Libraries & Librarian’s Activities

Stanford University

Regina Roberts (Stanford University) has edited a video of the ALC panel at the 2009 ASA meeting. The link to the videos is: http://africana-librarians.blip.tv/

ALC

The Africana Librarians Council held a successful meeting San Francisco last November. Due to labor problems at the ASA convention venue, the ALC activities were held at the San Francisco Public Library. Pictured below are Deborah LaFond (U-Albany), Stewart Shaw (SFPL), and Beth Restrick (BU).

Northwestern University

REMEMBERING BOB LESH
AFRICANA CATALOGER AND FRANCOPHONE BIBLIOGRAPHER, NU Library 1986-2008

This rare book was purchased with funds donated to Northwestern University Library by 34 friends and colleagues of Bob Lesh from Northwestern University Library, the Africana Librarians Council and the American Library Association.

Left, Prince Ermias viewing LC display and right, the Prince with ALC member Laverne Page (LC).

Library of Congress

Prince Ermias Sahle Selassie, grandson of Haile Selassie, visited the LC Africana collection last December to view Ethiopian-related manuscripts and rare material.

ALN

This issue of the ALN will be the last one with Bassey Irele (Harvard) as editor. The ALN and the ALC express our heartfelt appreciation to Bassey for all the work she has done. Miriam Conteh-Morgan (OSU) will join ALN as co-editor.
Professional Literature


Book Review


Review by Hans Zell, Hans Zell Publishing.


With so many papers contained in this collection it is difficult to do justice to the book in a short review. The book is particularly strong in overviews of scholarly publishing in South Africa, covering both book and journal publishing. It offers some interesting discussions and fresh insights about alternative publishing and distribution models, articles reporting about new initiatives and strategy approaches, and also including papers on the politics and practise of the peer review process, and on South African intellectual property rights.

One or two papers by academics from other regions unfortunately are weak and poorly informed about the current state of scholarly publishing in Africa, for example citing literature that goes back to books and articles published in the 1970s and 1980s. Some also contain numerous misspellings of the lit-
Book Review (cont.)

-erature cited, or misspellings of names of authors, publishers, or book trade associations; and there are many errors or typos in the documentary apparatus in at least two of these papers. The titles of some of the papers can also be misleading. For example, Godwin Shoki’s paper “Publishing in Africa since 1973”, promises to provide an assessment of the progress that has been made since the historic 1973 Ile-Ife, Nigeria, conference on publishing and book development in Africa, and “to establish what changes have taken place in book publishing since 1973”, but then merely proceeds to analyze the results of questionnaire mailed to publishers and booksellers in Nigeria, and the whole article is almost exclusively devoted to the Nigerian situation. The article’s “Literature review” cites from just three sources, and the paper also contains erroneous information such as “Further research has shown that some Nigerian publishers also export books to the African Books Collective (ABC) in Kenya” (p. 63). The author’s recommendations are feeble, e.g. “I have identified different areas of book publishing which could be developed into full scale professional activities.” Meaning what, exactly? Or virtuous pronouncements stating the blatantly obvious, such as “…all stakeholders – authors, publishers, printers, booksellers, etc. – must collaborate in the many varied facets of publishing.”

A much stronger paper is “The crisis of scholarly publishing in Africa. A case study of selected countries in Africa” by G.N.K. Vukor-Quarshie and Emmanuel K. Oseifua, which presents an analysis of the current state of scholarly publishing in four countries (Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa), supported by some interesting tables and statistics. The authors state that many researchers have explored the challenges and problems facing scholarly publishing, and that “notable among these are Adebowale, Zeleza, Akin Aina, Zeil [sic], Jaygbay, and Aitbach [sic] and Teferra [sic]. These researchers, however, have not prescribed the palliatives needed to arrest this trend.” That is not correct, and all these researchers have in fact put forward some quite concrete proposals and suggestions how to strengthen African scholarly publishing. In their own article the authors make a number of entirely sensible recommendations too, but many of them are of the “must do” kind, such as “Tertiary educational institutions must also publish high-quality postgraduate dissertations”, or “African tertiary institutions must establish and fund scholarly publishing houses”. Recommendations of this nature are not new. They are the kind of recommendation that have been put forward many times over, but have rarely led to any significant action.

Indeed it is perhaps symptomatic of this collection that it contains many well-intentioned recommendations for action, but translating recommendations into practice is another matter altogether. For example James Currey’s “A model for an African scholarly network press” has been published, under different titles, in at least two previous collections as far back as 1999 and is here further developed. The proposed African Scholarly Network Press, linking outstanding research institutions in different regions of Africa to form a continent-wide network of co-publishers, would primarily disseminate electronically, would (1) select work by peer group review, (2) get the authors and/or their departments to seek funding for pre-press editorial and typographical origination, (3) circulate text to partners by electronic means, and (4) put the books into the public domain but by solely using print-on-demand (POD) technology. It is an innovative proposal and a business model well worth thinking about, but unfortunately, over ten years since it was first floated, nothing further has materialized. An earlier project designed to encourage collaboration among Africa’s scholarly publishers and university presses, the Nairobi-based Consortium for African Scholarly Publishing, run out of steam as soon as initial donor funding came to an end.

This is not of course to suggest that any such proposed projects should be abandoned. On the contrary, collaborative ventures, co-publishing projects, partnerships, or networks at national and regional...
levels, surely are the key for the advancement of scholarly publishing in Africa: pooling editorial and management expertise, sharing production costs and consolidating strength in production skills, fully exploiting the benefits of new digital printing technology, and sharing marketing, distribution and Internet know-how.

Invariably in any collection of essays on the state of publishing and the book sector in Africa, one or more contributors will always raise the issue of Africa’s publishing output compared with the rest of the world, and almost equally invariably will cite the figure to be between 2-3% (or occasionally even lower). That percentage figure has been cited time and again by those writing on African publishing and book development; it is the same figure that has been quoted perpetually for the last three decades at least; the figure has been static and has neither shown an increase, or a decrease, when cited over the years.

Solani Ngobeni, in his paper “Scholarly publishing in South Africa”, once again quotes the figure to be “in the region of 3%”, a figure which he describes as “miniscule”. In this case he cites his source as APNET/ADEA research published in 2000. But in fact APNET has never undertaken any systematic data gathering, much less made it accessible in published form, for book production statistics in Africa, and the “2-3%” figure they cited were based on figures from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS; which has also published a wide range of educational and literacy statistics, and reports analyzing cross-border trade data from about 120 countries on selected products, such as books). The UIS figures, in turn, came from the analysis presented in the ‘Culture and Communication’ domains in the now discontinued annual UNESCO Statistical Yearbook from 1963 to 1999, (and more recently from the UNESCO World Culture Report: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism published in 2000). However the UNESCO figures have always been seriously flawed and chronically unreliable for several reasons, among them difficulties in the data gathering process and adequate verification of data. The analysis of publishing output was regularly inflated by government and official publications, frequently missing out titles from commercial imprints; and for some countries the figures were only available for school textbooks and government publications, and/or were based exclusively on the number of new titles received through legal deposit by national libraries. Moreover, some times figures were overstated by the inclusion of various serial publications, including newsletters, etc.

Analysis of annual book publishing output is available nationally in a few African countries, notably South Africa, where that country’s Print Industries Cluster Council (now merged with the South African Book Development Council) has published a wide range of valuable annual surveys and reports relating to the book sector, including the retail trade. There have also been some attempts to document scholarly publishing output in Africa, for example through the PASCAL database (the multilingual multidisciplinary bibliographic database in science, technology and medicine) from 1991-1997, and databases from the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) from 1981-2000, but these statistics do not distinguish between books/academic monographs and journals, and are primarily concerned with STM publishing rather than the humanities and social sciences. Reliable figures of book publishing output for Africa, or sub-Saharan Africa as a whole simply, and lamentably, do not exist, and it is therefore misleading and serves no purpose to continue to cite the “2-3%” figure ad infinitum, when that figure cannot in fact be supported by hard statistical evidence.
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**Africana in Prague**

by

*Patricia Kuntz*

Czech scholars, missionaries, travelers, and explorers have recorded their experiences in various African countries since the 16th century. However, following World War II during the Communist regime, African studies emerged slowly in Czechoslovakia as a formal, independent area of research with a specialization in Ethiopian languages and culture based on the work of several Czech missionaries. The African Studies program began in 1960-61 as a department in the Faculty of Philosophy coordinated by Ivan Hrbek, Karl Růtička, and Karel Petráček. Until 1972, the program was housed in the Oriental Institute of the National Academy of Sciences. Hrbek wrote *A History of Africa in Czech* which became the foundation study. After researching Sheikh Mamadu Lamine of Senegal, he published his findings in *Studies in the History of Islam in West Africa*, a UNESCO publication. Růtička was the premier scholar of Swahili. Other members of the Institute published on Ghana, South Africa, and the Hausa language.

In 1978, the African department emerged as a section of the Department of Near East and African, Faculty of Arts on Celenta Street. Scholars typically wrote in German or Czech such as Karel Petráček, a Semitist, who wrote *Introduction to the Afroasiatic linguistics*. Luboš Kropáček specialized in Islamic revolutions in Sudan. As a physician, he reviewed the Lambaréné Medical Center. After the Soviet invasion in August 1968, many of the faculty and students fled into exile or returned to the African countries of their original research. Today the faculty members are not being replaced following their retirement.

There is also a collection of artifacts from early missionaries in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures.

African studies departmental library in the Faculty of Arts is managed by students and faculty. The African portion is being phased out due to budget constraints.

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This program is the only one of its kind in the country. Books are catalogued in card format and shelved from floor to ceiling with the help of ladders. The library has open stacks. Using the card catalog, I found a Swahili-Czech dictionary. Very few new documents are acquired as a result of limited space and minimal funding. There are rumors that the collection will be closed.

*Patricia S. Kuntz travels abroad regularly to visit libraries. She specializes in Africana librarianship. She holds a Wisconsin DPI license in school media & information specialist and reviews book nominations for the ASA Children’s Africana Book Award.*

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**Classic Film History of Africa Now on DVD**

A new boxed DVD set of The Black Man’s Land Trilogy has been released to mark the 40th anniversary of the production of the highly regarded and still widely used series on African history. The films in the trilogy, White Man’s Country, Mau Mau, and Kenyatta, were shot in Kenya in 1970 and originally distributed in the U.S. on 16mm film and later on VHS cassettes. For information about acquiring the new release and for discount eligibility, please contact:

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