CRL Assesses Online Availability of African Newspapers

By James Simon

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) recently conducted an assessment of African newspapers online to determine the extent to which those news sources are available in electronic format to researchers at North American institutions.

As academic libraries increasingly shift away from collecting print newspapers in favor of online database subscriptions to news aggregators and “e-print” collections—or simply directing scholars toward current content via the open Web—CRL sought to examine whether these alternate solutions are sufficient to provide the same degree of support for African studies as physical newspaper collections have historically afforded.

Specifically, CRL sought to determine:

• the extent of online availability of African newspaper sources;
• whether the majority of significant print newspapers were also available online, and extent of coverage;
• whether the paper’s format was replicated through “e-print” offerings; and
• whether African news content was being harvested, aggregated, or otherwise included in commercial and non-commercial news resources.

The assessment, available on CRL’s African Studies Topic Guide (under “Related Resources”), finds that a fraction of African newspaper titles are currently available online. Of an estimated 1,300 titles in circulation throughout Africa, CRL found only 484 titles with some form of active online presence. Additional key findings of the survey include:

• The number of active online titles varies from region to region, and from country to country. Daily newspapers tend to be more consistently represented online than weekly newspapers.

• Titles considered “significant” papers of record are reasonably well represented online, though the technical sophistication and range of content presented on such sites varies widely.

• Of the 484 identified sites, 74% had implemented search functionality. However, few had implemented advanced search capabilities beyond a simple site search. The presence and

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South African & Senegal: Travel Report

By Jason Schultz

(Jason Schultz, Librarian for African Collections at University of California, Berkeley and Vice Chair of the Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP), traveled to South Africa and Senegal from June 10-24, 2012. The trip was supported by the UC Berkeley Library and Title VI funds provided by Berkeley’s Center for African Studies.)

Johannesburg, South Africa

I first visited Johannesburg, South Africa to meet with archivists and librarians from the University of Witwatersrand. I toured the Historical Papers archive, African Studies collection, and Art Museum. As a representative of the CAMP Executive, I discussed collaboration between US and African institutions concerning digital archival collections. I also met with vendors and attended a lecture at the Sophiatown Cultural Center on the life of former ANC President A.B. Xuma, featuring Africana Librarians Council colleague Peter Limb (Michigan State University).

On Tuesday June 12th, I visited Frank R. Thorold Booksellers in Johannesburg and met with proprietor Carlos Alves. At the time of this visit, Alves indicated Thorold’s was in a period of transition but that it would not affect approval plans and other orders.

The next day I met with Michele Pickover, Archivist, Historical Papers, University of Witwatersrand. The recent activities of CAMP were discussed. This included proposed changes to CAMP’s bylaws concerning membership categories for African institutions. I mentioned the updated category of affiliate membership for African members would be given to institutions collaborating with CAMP on a current project. This could include the sharing of digital resources.

Pickover discussed the challenges she envisioned in the sharing of digital resources as well as the scope and nature of CAMP’s proposal given her experience working in South Africa. This comes in part from her work with the Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA) project (later packaged as part of the Aluka database) that digitized materials related to anti-apartheid and liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Pickover has also published on the ethics of South-North archival and information flows.

Cape Town, South Africa

I then traveled to Cape Town, South Africa to attend the Cape Town International Book Fair, where I met with numerous academic, trade presses, and non-governmental organizations, discussing their catalogs and distribution models in the US and South Africa. I found a mix of opinions concerning distribution methods. Some South African publishers expressed strong convictions that US institutions should purchase South African imprints through South African vendors. Others were fine or indifferent if US institutions purchased South African imprints via US distributors. Publishers from other African countries, including Ghana, Tanzania, and Cote d’Ivoire, were also present.

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ease of searching previously published articles is, as a result, highly variable.

- Electronic facsimiles of the print versions of titles are not widely available for African titles, with only 30% of active sites offering some form of “E-Print” or PDF version of the paper.

- Coverage of African titles is relatively sparse within aggregated databases, especially compared to titles from other world regions.

Taken as a whole, the survey suggests that heavy reliance on electronic access and large news packages may not be adequately serving the needs of current or future scholars. A large share of news produced in countries in the global South continues to be disseminated in print. The current availability of newspaper sites online and electronic aggregations do not provide comparable access to content formerly acquired by libraries in physical form. Aggregators, in particular, should improve coverage of sub-Saharan Africa to ensure that the range of content from this rich region is available to libraries and scholars worldwide.

The detailed report, as well as the set of titles and links studied are available from CRL’s website. For more information, see: http://www.crl.edu/news/9213


I then traveled to Cape Town, South Africa to attend the Cape Town International Book Fair, where I met with numerous academic, trade presses, and non-governmental organizations, discussing their catalogs and distribution models in the US and South Africa. I found a mix of opinions concerning distribution methods. Some South African publishers expressed strong convictions that US institutions should purchase South African imprints through South African vendors. Others were fine or indifferent if US institutions purchased South African imprints via US distributors. Publishers from other African countries, including Ghana, Tanzania, and Cote d'Ivoire, were also present.

The fair has reduced in size and frequency since first launching in 2006. Now biannually, the fair was three days and not as well attended as in past years. A number of local vendors were also not present at the fair.

I visited Clarke’s Bookshop for several days while in Cape Town. During the visit, Clarke’s was in the beginning stages of moving from their current location on Long Street to a space several doors down.

I received assistance from Henrietta Dax and the staff at Clarke’s in reviewing their collections and navigating Cape Town.

On June 15th a meeting with librarians and archivists at the University of Cape Town was arranged to discuss changes to CAMP’s bylaws to include African affiliate members that collaborate with CAMP on current projects. I met with Colin Darsch, Busi Khangala, Digby Sales, and Lesley Hart. They expressed interest in CAMP affiliate membership, especially if it was accomplished through the sharing of digital collections. They noted UCT participated in a cooperative digital collection project with Stanford University concerning historical maps.

The final meeting of note was with Dr. Premesh Lalu of the University of the Western Cape. This was arranged and attended by Marion Frank-Wilson, Librarian for African Studies, Indiana University. The activities of CAMP and its potential to branch into digital preservation, web archiving, film, and other mediums beyond print and microfilm were discussed. Lalu mentioned interest in seeing the preservation of collections of at-risk anti-apartheid film collections housed at UWC.

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South Africa and Senegal (Cont’)

Dakar & Gorée Island, Senegal

Senegal was the final destination of this trip. I was a presenter and attendee of the conference “Archives of Post-Independence Africa” that occurred June 20-23 on Gorée Island. Sponsored by the University of California Multicampus Research Group for African Studies, CODESRIA, and Leiden University, I presented a paper entitled “Supporting Archives in Africa: The Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP) Since 1995.” The conference included over 75 archivists, librarians, and scholars from Africa, Europe, and the United States. My presentation focused on two capacity-building projects supported by CAMP. The first concerned the partnership with CAMP and the Archives Nationales du Sénégal in their efforts to film colonial court records. The second focused on the recent support of the digitization of the Kabarole District Archives project with Mountains of the Moon University in Uganda. As an aside, there was no electricity on Gorée Island for the entirety of the conference even as presenters gave papers concerning digitalization and electronic archives.

The conference was originally to be held at the Goethe Institute in Dakar, near the University of Chiekh Anta Diop and CODESRIA. It was changed for logistical reasons and hosted at the Gorée Island Institute. The change of location and schedule made it difficult to meet with M. Coulibaly, the new director of the Archives Nationales du Sénégal, and visit the archive. I did speak with a number of European and Africa-based archivists concerning the work of CAMP. They included Guy Thomas at the University of Basel and Jos Damien at Leiden University. He also spoke about the evolving work and collections of CAMP with Dr. Manthia Diawara (New York University), Dr. Jean Allman (Washington University, St. Louis), and among other faculty and graduate student scholars in attendance.

The conference was a rewarding conclusion to an eventful two week trip.
Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature Incorporated in AfricaBib

By Pamela Howard-Reguindin

The African Studies Centre (ASC) in Leiden, the Netherlands and the Library of Congress’s Nairobi Office are pleased to announce that the database of the Library of Congress’s Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature (1991-2011) has been incorporated in the ASC’s Africana Periodical Literature AfricaBib database as of 1 April 2013. The new database is now available online and researchers can consult one significantly enhanced database instead of two separate and smaller ones. Some 51,000 QIAPL citations from 750 journals from 29 Sub-Saharan African countries have been added to the ASC’s AfricaBib database, which now has almost 200,000 entries. Wherever possible, QIAPL citations include links to the full text of an article to make elusive articles with original African content easier to access.

The ASC Library will not add new entries from periodicals that the Library of Congress covered. Entries will be added from journals the ASC Library subscribes to, with the emphasis being placed on links to the full text. About 6,000 links to full text have recently been added to the former QIAPL entries and this has made the citations more useful for scholars and students alike.

The African Studies Centre in Leiden is the only multidisciplinary academic research institute in the Netherlands devoted entirely to the study of Africa. It welcomes African scholars through its visiting fellowship programme and has interesting monthly seminars and an extensive library that is open to the general public. It is committed to open access materials and its Africana Periodical Literature database can be used free of charge.

The Library of Congress (Nairobi Office) published its Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature for twenty years from 1991 until 2011 and scholarly journals were usually selected for inclusion. Other materials of a less academic nature were, however, also chosen to cover subject areas (e.g. prisons) not found in the more readily available literature, as were publications by organizations that do not frequently circulate their reports (e.g. NGOs) and selected materials from each of the countries in the region. The QIAPL served as an essential bibliographic resource at a time when few African journals were being included in international indexing resources.

The URL for the merged databases, which is now hosted by the ASC, is http://www.africabib.org/perio.htm. If you require any further information about the above-mentioned merger, please contact Jos Damen, the Director of the ASC Library: JDamen@ascleiden.nl.

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Welcome to AfricaBib.org

The 5 bibliographic databases of AfricaBib:
- Africana Periodical Literature (including "Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature" record)
- African Women: 37000+ records
- Women Travelers, Explorers and Missionaries to Africa: 1600 records
- Islam in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa: 4000 records
- Kenya Coast: 1600 records

4 other Africa sources:
- AJOL: African Journals Online
- ASA Online: African Studies Abstracts Online
- Catalogue of the African Studies Centre in Leiden
- Connecting-Africa

April 2013: "Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature" integrated in AfricaBib
- About AfricaBib
- About the bibliographic databases
- About the founder and first compiler

Welcome to the Ruth First Papers project

The Ruth First Papers are the collected notes and writings of Ruth First, activist, campaigning journalist and scholar. The project aims to create and populate a digital archive of a selection of Ruth First’s writings held at the CiUS and in partner collections. The resource as a whole will represent a digital version of the Ruth First Resource Centre that was established in the immediate aftermath of her assassination.

http://www.ruthfirstpapers.org.uk