Public Libraries in Northern Nigeria: A Step in Public Direction

By Professor Ghaji Badawi, Ph.D

Public libraries had a late beginning in the Northern states of Nigeria. While the first library in Nigeria was established in the western part of the country in the 1800s, the first public libraries or Reading Rooms in Northern Nigeria, as they were initially called, were first organized in the 1940’s.

At first, libraries in Northern Nigeria were regarded as alien by the people they were created for, because they initially stocked only books and newspapers written in the English language. In those early years, 98% of the people in Northern Nigeria could not read or speak English. Those who could read knew Arabic or a local language, not English. For that reason, the majority of the population in Northern Nigeria at that time never ventured to use libraries and public libraries became irrelevant.

After independence in 1960, Northern Nigeria wanted to improve its education system, building more schools, colleges, universities and public libraries. Library Boards were established in each of the 19 states with library headquarters in state capitals and branch libraries spread in local government headquarters. Mobile library services were provided for areas that were hard to reach. Library edicts were promulgated to guide librarians and promote library services.

From 1978 – 1982 political leadership emerged in the North that gave more lift to public libraries. States were competing to build bigger and better stocked libraries. Libraries became very usable and the collections relevant to the needs of the communities. Public Libraries were so well utilized in Northern Nigeria that in the Islamic city of Kano the government was motivated in 2000 to build what became the finest, largest and the most well stocked public library in Nigeria. Other states of Northern Nigeria followed suit in the north. I have visited many public libraries in Nigeria and the best built and best stocked public libraries are now in the northern part of the country.

Funding

In the past, libraries depended solely on government funding through their Ministries of Education. Because libraries were barely used by their communities, the budget for libraries was just enough to pay staff salaries. But since the last two decades, public libraries are so much used by the communities that they now get an average of 60% of the annual funds they need to run their affairs from governmental sources. To make up the difference, public libraries in Northern Nigeria have developed other means of sourcing funds. They rent out rooms for weddings parties and other cultural...
Message from the Editor

Welcome to a new year and a new volume of International Leads! I hope the new year has started off well for you. It was great to see many colleagues again at the ALA Midwinter Meeting.

This issue has an in-depth article about the state of libraries and librarianship in Nigeria - Northern Nigeria to be exact. Dr. Ghaji Badawi shares a report on how libraries have grown and improved in the predominantly Islamic region of Nigeria. She also sent along several photos illustrating how the libraries have improved and are being used by the public. It’s always wonderful to see photos of people in libraries, especially the shining faces of young people!

Our Chair, Sha Li Zhang, shares a report of activities at Midwinter. It was a very productive meeting time. Some daunting news came from the ALA Endowment Fund, notifying the Executive Committee that the minimum requirement for opening a fund is US$25,000, not US$10,000 as we previously believed. The good news - we have reached the US$10,000 amount! Please continue to give - go to http://www.ala.org/irrt60thanniversary to send in your tax deductible donation.

We also have some teasers for upcoming conferences. The pre-conference program organized by IRRT for ALA Annual Meeting coming up in Washington, DC will offer insights to using Web 2.0 capabilities. And don’t forget to register for the International Librarians Reception - it sold out last year!

The Annual meeting for IFLA will be held in Sweden this year, instead of Australia. I for one was looking forward to Australia, but Sweden in August is beautiful! The three notable speakers lined up for the conference give a taste of the quality we have come to expect from the IFLA World Library and Information Congress.

We have all been shocked by the tragic earthquake in Haiti in mid-January, and more recently in Chile. The next issue of IL will have reports of how libraries in these countries have been impacted - both literally and figuratively - by these natural disasters. If you work in a library in either of those countries - or are in touch with someone who does - please share your experiences with readers. Send a note or report to intl.leads.irrt@gmail.com.

~ Rebecca L. Miller

Call for Submission

Do you have news about...

International library activities?

People in international librarianship?

Upcoming international conferences?

International partnerships between libraries?

Then why not submit it to International Leads? Send your news to intl.leads.irrt@gmail.com for consideration.

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**Message from the IRRT Chair**

IRRT members had busy schedules at the ALA 2010 Midwinter Meeting held in Boston in January 2010. It was a very productive midwinter meeting.

**The Reception**

IRRT hosted a Reception for Endowment Donors and International Librarians, attended by about 15 international visitors and 30 endowment donors. It was an excellent opportunity for welcoming international visitors coming to the Midwinter Meeting and recognizing the endowment donors whose generous contributions will help support library initiatives on a global scene. Many thanks to Dr. Camila Alire, ALA President, for offering her presidential suite for hosting the event and being present at the Reception. Among the guests were also Ms. Ingrid Parents, IFLA President-Elect; Ms. Agneta Olsson, Chair of the 2010 World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) National Committee in Sweden; Dr. Loriene Roy, ALA Past President; Mr. James Rettig, ALA immediate past President; Ms. Roberta Stevens, ALA President-Elect; and all IRRT Executive Committee members. A special thanks also goes to Delin Guerra, Program Officer of the ALA International Relations Office, for providing logistics to the Reception.

**Action Items at the Board Meeting**

At the IRRT Executive Committee meeting, several action items were approved by the Committee.

**Approved**: An increase on ticket price for the International Librarians Reception to be held at the ALA annual conferences, from $30 to $35. The increase on the ticket price reflects inflation of expenditure items related to the Reception.

**Approved**: A slate of candidates for the ALA 2010 Election. Eve Nyren was nominated for IRRT Vice Chair/Chair-Elect and Joan Weeks for the Member-at-Large. Both Eve and Joan have been very active on IRRT activities. Congratulations, Eve and Joan.

**Approved**: Support for the Resolution on Rebuilding Libraries and Archives Damaged or Destroyed by the Earthquake in Haiti from the ALA International Relations Committee (IRC). The Executive Committee asked Marilyn McClaskey, the IRRT Councilor, to support the Resolution when it was brought to the ALA Council and subsequently passed on January 19, 2010. Many thanks, Marilyn, for your active role in representing IRRT on this important Resolution. The International Relations Office has set up the donation web site to help with the damaged libraries in Haiti, at http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/iro/iroactivities/haitirelieffund.cfm

**Approved**: The guidelines on the ALA Presidential Citations for Innovation in International Librarianship. Chaired by Dr. Loriene Roy, ALA past President, the Ad Hoc Committee did an extensive literature search, reviewed guidelines and procedures of the ALA awards, and developed guidelines to help facilitate the selection of deserving library projects for the ALA Presidential Citations. This project was initiated by Dr. Roy when she was ALA President in 2007-2008, recognizing significant and innovative library projects that support one or more ALA Key Action Areas. The Citations were presented at the International Librarians Reception in 2008 and 2009. The Executive Committee approved the guidelines in principle and an Advisory Group was formed to fine tune the guidelines and procedures for future Citations.

**Endowment Campaign**

Under the excellent leadership from Jordan Scepanski and Lea Wells, co-chairs of the IRRT’s 60th Anniversary Endowment Campaign, more than $10,000 from over 80 donors was raised in 2009. Prior to the Midwinter Meeting, the Executive Committee learned that the minimum amount to establish an endowment account was $25,000, instead of $10,000. The Committee had a lengthy discussion at Midwinter with Mr. Keith Brown from the ALA’s Accounting Department. He offered needed information on the endowment fund and process. Though concerned by the tough economic climate, the Round Table will continue to explore strategies to reach the amount of $25,000 for the first endowment in the near term.

**Preparation for Annual**

Joan Weeks, Chair of the Reception Committee, has spent much time in exploring venues for the event, including the reading rooms at the Library of Congress. However, high overhead charges have made it impossible to use these locations, and the choice of the location is yet to be finalized. Planning from the committees of the International Papers, Pre-conference, Chair’s Program, International Connections (formerly Exchanges), and Sister Libraries is progressing well. The International Poster Session Committee is busy reviewing submitted proposals. The International Librarians’ Orientation/Mentoring Committee has sped up its preparation to welcome the visitors from abroad.

As always, it was wonderful seeing many IRRT members and colleagues in Boston. Again, many thanks to the generous donors of the IRRT endowment campaign and to those serving on the IRRT committees.

*To donate to the Endowment Fund, go to [http://www.ala.org/irrt60thanniversary](http://www.ala.org/irrt60thanniversary)*
IRRT Special Events at ALA Annual

Yet again, IRRT has exciting special events planned for the 2010 Annual Conference
Be sure to sign up for them when you register, using the event codes.

Pre-Conference Program
Web 2.0 and Mobile Technology - Building Global Connections
Friday, June 25, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Lunch follows

Join librarians around the world to explore how libraries employ Web 2.0, social networking, and mobile technologies to enhance their services, expose their resources, expand their outreach, and enrich the life of diverse customers in the digital environment. Speaking will be:
• Brandon Badger, Product Manager of Google Book;
• Christopher Carlson, Supervisor of the Web Services Division at the Library of Congress;
• Tao Yang, East Asian Librarian, Rutgers University Libraries

In addition, the International Relations Committee of the ALA will provide an overview of the ALA 2015 International Strategic Plan.

Tickets: Advance: $75, Onsite $75
Event Code: IRR1

International Librarians Reception
Monday, June 28, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Library of Congress, Great Hall

Please join the International Relations Round Table (IRRT) in welcoming and celebrating with librarians from more than 80 countries at the ALA Annual Conference. Open to all conference attendees, this reception offers a unique opportunity to network with hundreds of information professionals from around the world. Join us for a mixing of culture and ideas, regional cuisine, hors d’oeuvres and open bar (this event is free for international librarians). Advance registration is required. **No tickets will be sold that evening at the Library of Congress.**

Tickets: Advance: $35, Onsite: $35
Event Code: IRR2

These tickets go fast, so don’t hesitate. It’s always a great celebration!

A preliminary program for Annual is available online, at http://www.ala.org/annual. A complete schedule of IRRT meetings scheduled for Annual will be published in the June 2010 issue. Stay tuned to the IRRT website for most current updates.

Don’t forget also about the volunteer opportunities at Annual.
• Mentors are needed for international guests
• Staff are needed for the International Visitors’ Center

See the blurb on page 8 for more information and how to volunteer. Please consider helping - it’s a great way to meet international librarians!

The IRRT Executive Committee at 2010 Midwinter
From left to right:
Judith Lin Hunt, Joan Weeks, Sha Li Zhang, Pat Oyler, and Win Shih
Time for Summer School - Programs for Current Students and Continuing Education

British Summer Studies
From Teresa S. Welsh, Associate Professor at the School of Library & Information Science, University of Southern Mississippi, comes this announcement about the British Summer Studies LIS Course.

In July 2010, students will once again have the opportunity to study Library and Information Science in London through a four-week course offered by the British Studies Program. The program is offered July 1 – August 1, 2010 and carries six hours of credit from The University of Southern Mississippi, a fully-accredited institution of higher learning.

The Southern Miss School of Library and Information Science is fully accredited by the American Library Association and students from LIS and IS programs from across the United States have participated in this British Studies course. Information about course requirements and tentative schedule is available online at: http://www.usm.edu/slis/British.htm

Students participating in the Library and Information Science course will learn about various types of British libraries, archives, and collections from distinguished British scholars and lecturers at sites in London, Edinburgh, Oxford, and Stratford-on-Avon.

The British Studies Program stays in central London at King’s College in one of their dormitories. The rooms are small, but everyone gets a private room with fridge and private bath. Everyone has access to a shared kitchen and the dorm has a large courtyard that serves as a social center of the program. Participants quickly make friends with the students in their class as well as students from across the country.

The dorm is on Stamford Street, a hundred yards or so from Waterloo Station. The central location puts you just a few minutes' walk from Trafalgar Square, Leicester Square, and the theater district. Most people walk when they're headed to central London, it's so close. A historic recreation of the Globe Theatre, where you may purchase tickets to a Shakespeare production, is within walking distance, as is the historic Old Vic Theatre, and the modern National Theatre.

The cost for the program is $5,799 for undergraduates and $5,999 for graduates. This price includes tuition, air travel, housing, and academic travel, including a 4-day trip to Edinburgh. Qualified students can normally get financial aid just as if this were a course you were taking in the U.S. You apply through your local financial aid office. The International Programs office at Southern Miss is more than happy to provide you with information and assistance regarding financial aid transfer. For details on the program visit: http://www.britishstudiesprogram.org or contact Dr. Douglas Mackaman with International Programs at 1-601-266-4344 or StudyAbroad@usm.edu.

See the report by Nicole Powell in the December, 2009 issue of International Leads for a recount of her experiences on this program. She blogged about her time at http://nimbus-2009.blogspot.com/

German Summer School
Brigitte Doellgast, Library Director and Regional Coordinator at the Goethe-Institut in New York, sends an announcement about summer classes at the Media University in Stuttgart.

From May 3-15, 2010, the Department of Library and Information Management of the Media University in Stuttgart is organizing an international Summer School. Six workshops are planned, including ‘Music in Digital Libraries and Archives’, ‘International Encounters’ and ‘Strategic Management for Electronic Publishing’. The workshops range from 2 to 6 days in length and will be led by lecturers from Germany, Malaysia, the Netherlands and the United States.

Fees range from 300 to 450 Euros per workshop for library professionals; and 50 Euros per workshop for library students who are not from one of the many Media University’s partner schools. A list of partner schools can be found at http://www.hdm-stuttgart.de/international/partnerhochschulen

Further information can be found on the website: http://www.hdm-stuttgart.de/bi/bi_akademie/summerschool/english/ or by contacting Inge Simon, dean of the LIS faculty at simon@hdm-stuttgart.de

Can’t travel this summer? Don’t worry! The IRRT Free Links Program offers a collection of free web-based tutorials and professional development information focusing on technology and advocacy.

Go to http://irrt.ala.org/ and click on Free Links Program
Nigeria
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activities, which brings in large sums of money. There is no membership enrollment fee in all public libraries in Northern Nigeria, but other sources of funds include photocopying, donations from private organizations, government agencies and NGO’s. Public libraries have also created advocacy between them and the local business communities who support them too.

Library Resources
Initially, public libraries stocked books written in English, which made them unpopular among the majority of northerners who could not read at all or could read only Arabic alphabets. Now, public libraries stock books and journals in different Nigerian and foreign languages and like most public libraries in the country, the largest resource are books and journals. Public libraries often get donation of books from friendly libraries and International NGO’s in Europe the United States.

Public libraries in the North are reasonably well stocked with books, journals and often electronic resources. For example, the main public library of Kano has more than 460,000 books and journals in its stock and an Internet café serving users free of charge. Unlike public libraries in the South, a majority of public libraries in Northern Nigeria have good computer/Internet services in their main libraries. Internet/computer services are often free to users.

Users
More than 80% of users of public libraries in Northern Nigeria are male secondary and tertiary college students. Unlike public libraries in Southern Nigeria, more males visit public libraries than females. This anomaly is more pronounced in Shariah states like Kano, Sokoto and Zamfara. There is a plan now to create separate reading areas for female users in many public libraries in the states mentioned. Our greatest aim since the last ten years is to promote advocacy and support from the female populace; with the integration of the female community, public libraries will truly become part of the public.

Staffing
This is also another great problem for all public libraries in this region. Public librarians are civil servants working for their state governments. They are on the same salary scale as the rest of the civil service. Government salary scale is less than half that of private organizations or universities in Nigeria. As such, librarians working in private organizations or universities are paid more than twice the public librarian salary. This could be the factor behind the shortage of librarians venturing into public library service. To date, for example, Kano State Public Library with four very large floors, serving an average of 700 users every day, has only 9 librarians and 13 library technicians. There is an acute shortage of librarians in all public libraries in Northern Nigeria. This shortage often results in poor library service especially at the circulation desks and other reader services departments.

Again, public library boards have still yet to realize the importance of re-educating and re-training their staff. Often staffs retire with the same level of education as they first came with into service. In most cases it is not for a want of re-training grants or funds, but because of the attitude of both staff and administrators. Library staffs often don’t care to seek furthering their education or training; library administrators care even less.

Another problem is the absence of female users in public libraries in the North. This is again most obvious in Shariah states; many fathers and husbands would not allow their wives or daughters to venture into public places such as public libraries and mingle with the opposite sex. Many researchers have advised library boards in Shariah states to demarcate female users from male, by providing reading areas for women away from men.

On the left, the poor conditions of one of the original public libraries.
On the right, the new computer facilities in one of the newer public libraries.
Continued from Page 6

Nigeria

Circulation Services
Public libraries in all the Northern states provide facilities for borrowing books. This service is provided to registered library members and also to institutions on interlibrary loan agreement. Most public libraries in this region have very large reading spaces. But because of staff shortages, operating hours are inadequate and the circulation desks are often manned by very few junior staff members that are often impatient and short-tempered. There are suggestions that public libraries should automate some of their activities to ease this problem.

Library Legislation, Edicts or Acts
Since 1968, each library board in Nigeria is charged with the responsibility of public library development in their states. Each state formulates its policies in the light of their needs, recourses and local conditions. The Library edict of each state was established in the year the library board was set up. For example the ‘Kano State Library Edict’ was established in 1981 with the setting up of the ‘Kano State Library Board’.

Library Association
One amazing fact is that public librarians in Northern Nigeria are very active in the Nigerian Library Association. A majority of State Chapters in the North engage in social and professional activities throughout the year. For example in April, 2009, the Kaduna State Chapter held a one month ‘Children Story Telling Competition’ throughout secondary schools in the state. The Nigerian Library Association State Chapter held its annual general meeting and elected a new executive committee in March 2009.

Conclusion
Due to culture and circumstances, public library services started on a weak footing in Northern Nigeria. Desire for development encouraged the Northern Nigerian state governments to improve and expand public library services. Now, the best public libraries in terms of building, funding and resources in Nigeria are in the north. Branch libraries serve most local governments and mobile libraries serve the remotest areas of the region. Public libraries have become part of the culture of people and libraries are stocked with materials for every body. This has given governments in the north the courage to invest in public libraries. As democracy takes firm root, public libraries are playing their roles in the social, political and educational development of their communities.

Professor Badawi is affiliated with the Department of Library and Information Sciences, Faculty of Education, at the Bayero University in Kano, Nigeria

The Biblioteca Alexandrina Gives and Receives

Early January, 2010: The Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF) donated the largest book collection ever given to a library to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, in Alexandria, Egypt. The donated collection (500,000 volumes) is part of the BnF’s legal depository and includes a wide range of subjects varying from arts to zoology available in different reading levels for users of all ages. With this gift and the current BA French material holdings, the Library of Alexandria will become the 2nd largest library for Francophone resources, outside French speaking countries, preceded only by New York Public Library.

Late January, 2010: In response to the earthquake in Haiti, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) offered its help through the IFLA Center for Arabic Speaking Libraries (IFLA-CASL) by donating French and English books to help Haiti re-build its libraries. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina urges all Arabic speaking libraries to send their donation of French and English books to the BA where the books will be stored until the time is suitable to send them to the Haitian libraries. To donate books to Haiti, please send your donation to the BA in a parcel labeled with “Haiti Libraries Relief” to the following address:

Haiti Libraries Relief
IFLA Center for Arabic Speaking Libraries
Bibliotheca Alexandrina
P.O.Box 138, Chatby
21526 Alexandria
Egypt

For more information about the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, go to http://www.bibalex.org/English/index.aspx

Has your library been doing exciting things with an international twist? If so, please share your experiences with us! Send a report to intl.leads.irrt@gmail.com.

Photos are always welcome!
Haiti Library Relief Fund at ALA

We have all been saddened at the tragic loss of life and damages suffered from the earthquake in Haiti on January 12. While we are probably all aware of the efforts by the Red Cross and other international relief agencies to respond to the physical needs of the residents of Port-Au-Prince and other devastated areas, what about their cultural and intellectual needs?

ALA has now created a fund to support specifically the reconstruction of affected libraries and the rebuilding of collections. Go to http://www.al.org/haiti to learn how you can contribute. All donations are tax-deductible.

IFLA Announces Headline Speakers for 75th WLIC

IFLA is gearing up for another amazing conference, to be held 10-15 August, 2010, in Gothenburg, Sweden. As well as many sessions, there are multiple opportunities to visit libraries throughout Sweden and 14 satellite meetings before and after WLIC throughout Scandinavia. IFLA recently announced the keynote and plenary speakers.

Opening the conference as keynote speaker is H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, elected President of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly on 13 June 2005. Mr. Henning Mankell, author of the series about detective Kurt Wallander, is one of the plenary speakers. The second plenary speaker is Dr. Hans Rossling, professor of International Health at Karolinska Institutet, the medical university in Stockholm, Sweden. More information about the plenary speakers can be found at http://www.ifla.org/en/news/gothenburg-2010-keynote-and-plenary-speakers-announced.

Go to http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76 for all information and news alerts.

Volunteer with IRRT at ALA Annual

The IRRT Orientation/Mentoring Committee seeks mentors to help out international colleagues during the ALA Annual Conference. If you are interested in being a mentor Washington, DC, please fill out a form at http://tinyurl.com/arprg or contact the International Relations Office at intl@ala.org.

The IRRT International Visitors Center (IVC) Committee needs volunteers to staff the IVC anytime from Friday, June 25 through Monday, June 28, 2010, at the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC. The IVC is an essential help station for international conference attendees, conveniently located at the Convention Center near the exhibit halls to help answer questions and provide directions and conference information. Volunteers are supplied with the information needed to make this happen so all you need bring with you is a friendly smile and a desire to help. If interested, please contact Ruby Bell-Gam, Co-Chair of the IRRT International Visitor’s Center Committee, at rbellgam@library.ucla.edu by June 1, 2010.

International Leads

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