

SCANUL-ECS

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STANDING CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN EASTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

13-15 APRIL 2002

RESOURCE SHARING AND COOPERATION IN UNIVERSITY AND NATIONAL LIBRARIES

The fifth meeting of the Standing Conference of African National and University Libraries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (Scanul-ECS) was held in the Esselen Park Conference Centre in Kempton Park in South Africa. Scanul-ECS is an organization of national and university libraries established to promote and enhance cooperation among such libraries in the region. Previous meetings were held in Malawi (1994), Lesotho (1996), Kenya (1998) and Namibia (2000).

The parallel session for national libraries was attended by the representatives of only three national libraries: Johan Loubser as chair (National Library of Namibia), Ratanang Motlhabane (Botswana National Library Service), and Dr Peter Lor and Joan de Beer, both of the National Library of South Africa.

The lack of representation of national libraries in the region at Scanul-ECS meetings has been ongoing for some years and is a matter of considerable concern. Very few national libraries are able to contribute to and share in the information of this conference, and they also miss out on the networking opportunities provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Libraries Group reviewed the recommendations to the plenary session of Scanul-ECS in Windhoek, 11 April 2000. The first one was to investigate ways to fund information and communications technology (ICT), to be represented to Scanul-ECS in 2002. However, no action was taken by anyone within the Group on this recommendation.

The National Libraries Group therefore proposed to the plenary session of Scanul-ECS 2002 that a status report on the availability and accessibility of ICT in the region should first be compiled. The Group also requested Scanul-ECS to support the National Library of Namibia and the National Library of South Africa in compiling this report and in obtaining funding for the research and compilation of the report.

Delegates to the National Libraries in the African Renaissance conference in October 2000 in Pretoria compiled a set of recommendations on the role and development of national libraries in the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The major feature was a proposal for the establishment of a library and information services desk within the SADC's Sector for Culture, Information and Sport, which has not yet materialised. The National Libraries Group therefore recommended to Scanul-ECS 2002 that national libraries in the Scanul-ECS region be encouraged to ask their own ministries and representatives at SADC to support the development of appropriate legislation, and that university and other libraries support such appeals by the national libraries to their governments and ministries.

It was a matter of concern that so few national libraries were able to attend Scanul-ECS meetings. One reason could be a lack of funds, as the national librarians in many countries do not have the same access as university librarians to being sponsored by private companies, eg booksellers and publishers. It was recommended that Scanul-ECS together with the Standing Conference of East, Central and Southern African Libraries (Scecsal) find ways and means of providing national librarians with support and encouragement to enable them to attend the conferences, in order for them to benefit from the networking and resource-sharing opportunities presented by these events.