

THE GAMBIA

THE GAMBIA NATIONAL LIBRARY

ABDOU WALLY MBEY — CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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The Gambia National Library combines National and Public Library functions although its public library role is more pronounced. It has its origins in the British Council Library, established in 1946. The library was housed in a converted bungalow in the city centre. The Council withdrew from the country in 1962, handing the library over to Central Government. However the building soon became too cramped and dilapidated, largely due to neglect.

In 1976, it relocated to its purpose-built and much better-equipped headquarters, although in a part of the city less central than before. It was then that it started assuming National Library functions as per The Gambia Library Board Act, 1976. Section 20 of the Act designates it as a legal depository. The Library, on its part, compiles The Gambia National Bibliography, now an annual publication based mainly on deposited material.

However, it sometimes proves to be an uphill task getting publishers to willingly deposit copies of their works. This is perhaps more so because the Act itself seems to be rather weak. For instance no penalty is prescribed for non-compliance with the depository requirement, nor is a time frame within which to deposit specified. Moreover no provision is made for the deposit of non-print material.

It is with a view to addressing these and other emerging issues that proposals for amendments to the Act were made by The Gambia Library Board. They are currently at our line Ministry (Education) for onward transmission to the Attorney General's Office.

ACQUISITIONS

3344 books and periodicals were acquired through purchase, gift or deposit. Of these 56 were Gambiana which have all been documented, preserved and made available when required.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access to our increasing number of users was increased by the acquisition of 2 new computers.

TRAINING

34 teacher librarians received training at the National Library.

WORLD BOOK DAY CELEBRATIONS

World Book day was celebrated by organising a book exhibition and reading promotion campaign crowned by a live story telling performance by a recently-published Gambian author. These activities were well attended by pupils of Basic Cycle Schools.

SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICES

The Gambia National Library is given responsibility for the country's Schools Library Services. We have already executed a massive World Bank-funded order for supplementary reading material for Gambian schools. This is geared towards developing a culture of reading.

GAMBIA LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES ASSOCIATION

The association is now accommodated at our premises.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

As the National ISBN and ISSN Agencies respectively, we were inundated by requests from publishers, authors and editors for issuance of these numbers. These are perceived as according protection and recognition to their publications.

COPYRIGHT

On a related matter, the National Assembly enacted a copyright bill this year.

This replaces the grossly dated one of 1911.

ADDRESS:

R.G. Pye Lane,
Banjul,
THE GAMBIA

Tel: + (220) 4226491
Fax: + (220) 4223776

Email:

URL: www.national.library@qanet.gm