

Document: THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN THE WSF PROCESS

Proceedings by Kingsley Oghojafor

Workshop: Sunday 22 January 2006

Time: 11.30am - 14.15pm

Venue: Pyramide du Souvenir, Bamako (H1)

PART 1 (11.30am - 12.45pm)

La situation des bibliotheques au Mali, bibliotheque et democratie avec M.K Keita (Directeur de la Bibliotheque Nationale, President de l'Ambad, Mali), Lamine Camara (Secrtaire General de l'Ambad, Mali), Anne Abdrahamane (bibliothecaire, faculte de medecine, Mali).

PART 2 (13.00pm - 14.15pm)

The Role of the Library in the WSF Process
With Esther Obachi (PALIAct, Kenya), Mary Wanjohi (PALIAct, Kenya) and Kingsley Oghojafor (ISC, Nigeria).
Moderator: Mikael Book (NIGD, Finland).

Aim of the activity :

- * raise library-consciousness within the WSF-process
 - * raise WSF-consciousness among library and information professionals
- Follows up the workshop DEMOCRATIZATION OF INFORMATION WITH A FOCUS ON LIBRARIES at the WSF in Mumbai 2004 (see <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai>)

Expected outcome:

- * dissemination of WSF-information via libraries
- * library-based documentation of the WSF-process
- * library-related events at the WSF 2007



The three Malian speakers in the workshop on the role of the Library in the WSF. From left to right: Lamine Camara (Secretary of the Malian Library Association), Mamadou Knoba Keita (Director of the National Library of Mali; Chair of the Library Association of Mali), and Anne Abdrahamane (Librarian at the Medical Faculty, University of Bamako). - Photo M.B.

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Part 1:

Mikael Book opened the workshop by introducing himself and NIGD. According to him, focus on libraries started with the statement by Ms Kay Raseroka, the IFLA chair from Botswana when she pledged all librarians to go and participate in the WSF, and to start documenting the WSF's conferences, seminars, workshops and events in their libraries.

Mikael Book went further to introduce the entire workshop's first and second parts. Immediately after his introduction he invited the Malian librarians to take their seats to give their talks.

M.K. Keita (Director of Mali National Library) started the session by expressing his delight to be invited to this workshop and went further to explain how his colleague - Anne Abdrahamane - first told them about the workshop. They all decided to attend and contribute meaningfully to the workshop. He also explained how correspondence between them and Mikael Book made it possible for them to attend this workshop.

The title of his presentation is *L'état des lieux des bibliothèques au Mali*.

He gave an overview of the legislation on culture and libraries in Mali, and of the cultural policy. His presentation also included statistical figures. There are more than a hundred libraries and reading centers of different categories. This figure includes, for instance, 7 libraries in the national languages (bibliothèques en langues nationales) and 6 communal libraries (bibliothèques communales) in Bamako, and a mobile book-bank that is served via the railway stations between Bamako and the border to Senegal.

His presentation showed that libraries in Mali were lacking a lot of things needed to make them function more.

Anne Abdrahamane presented the situation of the university library, focussing on the faculty of medicine.

According to Anne Abdrahamane in his presentation, Mali has one university with several departments. The university has no central library. They have 9,000 books and some documents have been lost or kept away. They have more than 1,000 titles of periodicals, among others.

As for the users of the library, he said they are mostly students and lecturers who visit and use it for free. The medical library has 4 staff and there is 1 librarian for every 100 students, 2 of them are specialized in management.

About Internet and computers, he said there are 2 computers with Internet connection in the library. These were given by US National Institute of Health.

About journals, he said they have access to about 70 journals.

He said they don't give book loans to people because the materials are few and they are afraid it can get lost. They only give when they have serious confidence in the person collecting it- knowing that they would return it.

He said they also have a database for works published in the University.

Students, according to him, take the libraries seriously only when they are about to write their examinations.

Conclusively he said the libraries in Mali have a lot of problems. He even toured the libraries recently and the situation he encountered was pathetic, to say the least. There are no new books bought by government that he knows of- only certain journals they receive for free. He added that there was hardly ever any budget for libraries in Mali.

He recommended that policies need to be put in place to improve the situation of libraries in Mali.

Next to speak was **Lamine Camara**, who acknowledged the importance of the WSF as a powerful globalization initiative which should be encouraged and sustained. He also thanked the organisers for inviting them. He also acknowledged that libraries have a big role to play in the WSF process. In his words, there can't be meaningful democracy without the contribution of the libraries because of the important role they

play in information dissemination.

The title of his presentation is - The Role of Libraries in Democratization in Africa.

To him, libraries are more of a documentation avenue than anything else. And this makes people to find what they need in the libraries to help them make better decisions. Going further, Camara acknowledged the importance of libraries in educating people and disseminating information. Democracy, according to him, allows people to express views freely, to benefit from as many rights as possible. So, libraries have a lot to bring in strengthening democratic state by bringing transparency and good governance.

Going further, Camara said libraries need to take a part in educating people since they are in the heart of the education process. If libraries do this, it will help the people to contribute positively to democracy of the state since they will read current issues in the libraries. So, libraries and education go hand in hand.

Other issues he raised include the fact that information has become the most important aspect of the democratization process and without the role libraries dissemination would be difficult.

He also said that libraries allow citizen to have access to understand democratic process and help strengthen the process.

He concluded by saying that the WSF is a good avenue to publicize their profession as libraries and how important their profession is.

After this Mikael Book continued and gave his view on the importance of libraries, showing how it has helped in the democratization in his home country, Finland. He tried to correct the erroneous views people have of libraries not being as important. To him, libraries are far more important than how people take them to be.

Another thing, according to him, is that IFLA has ascertained the importance of libraries in democratization process. Librarians have made several statements in this regard.

Kingsley Oghojafor took over from there and introduced the second part of the workshop by asking if there were any questions, suggestions and/or ideas about what has been discussed thus far.

A lady asked of the situation of the National Archives in Mali. M.Keila answered that the archives in Mali are in a poor state and receive no funds.

A student participant explained that in his country, Guinea, there is a National archive and others not accessible to the people- because they are classified as top secret.

There were a few other questions and after the questions Kingsley continued and introduced the 2nd part.

PART 2:

Kingsley explained the theme of the second part of the Workshop, which was- The role of the libraries in the WSF process. According to him, the WSF process which

includes all the global, regional, national and local social forums since 2001 now needs the involvement of librarians and information professionals more than ever.

He introduced the speakers of the second part who will all try to answer the following questions-

- . How to raise library-consciousness within the WSF process?
- . How to raise WSF-consciousness among the library and information professionals?
- . Dissemination of WSF-information via libraries: methods, practical solutions.
- . Documentation of the WSF in the public libraries: project strategies, organization and funding.

Kingsley Oghojafor first handled the question of "How to raise library consciousness within the WSF process.

He explained indepth the important role that librarians and informational professionals have to play in the WSF process.

Esther Obachi handled the question of "How to raise WSF consciousness among the library and information professions?"

According to her, changing the librarians beliefs of keeping a status quo in society is an uphill task... but not an impossible one. She suggested, among other things, that it will be important for every opportunity available to be used to sensitize librarians and information professionals on the importance of playing a role in the WSF process.

She went further saying that using the National and International Library forums to sensitize these people would be an important starting point. She gave an example of the two forthcoming conferences (SCECSAL and IFLA).

She also suggested that the youths could be used since they are easily receptive of new ideas.

According to her, it is also necessary for us to come up with success stories from the WSF to encourage the librarians on the necessity of playing the role in WSF.

She also suggested on holding workshops, conferences, publishing both hard and online copies of newsletters, opening a discussion website/blogs for the librarians and link with the International library association throughout the world.

She concluded by saying that it would be important to hold an immediate pre-2007 WSF workshop for librarians.

Mary Wanjohi took over from her and handles the question of "Dissemination of WSF information via libraries: methods, practical solutions-

According to her, since the colonization of Africa, libraries have been for the elites. Libraries have been used by students for their academic work and to do research or

study for examinations. Since colonial days the trend has continued. There has been no changes in most African libraries.

She advocated that even the illiterates should benefit from libraries. Her emphasize was on the rural people who have had no access to information because they need it to improve their lives and to empower them. Therefore, information generated from the WSF must be disseminated to these people for empowerment purposes.

She recommended that librarians are the best placed professionals to disseminate these information. Therefore, librarians need to gather, organize and disseminate this information to the people who need it most. This can be done in all format - books, posters, audiovisuals, journals, pamphlet, etc.

She also recommends for WSF participants to work with the librarians and information professionals to make this achievable.

Mikael Book took over from her and handled the topic of "Documentation of the WSF in the public libraries: project strategies, organization and funding.

After his talk other people who attended the workshop asked questions about what they have heard.

How can the WSF participants help the librarians to gather the information that they generate at the forum? The workshop formulated the question but it ended without immediately answering it.

We discussed whether WSF participants have found it necessary to work with translators and journalists, but yet with librarians. The progressive translators have formed a the Babels group. The librarians could perhaps come of with a group called the Bibels, suggested Antonio Martins from Brazil.