

## The Library Services in the International Context: A Brief Review

N.P. Mahwasane

*Department of Library, University of Venda, Private Bag X5050,  
Thohoyandou, 0950 South Africa  
E-mail: Nkhangweni.mahwasane@univen.ac.za*

**KEYWORDS** Bookmobiles. Contemporary Libraries. Elementary School Library. Living Book Mobile. Virtual Library

**ABSTRACT** This paper focuses on the different types of libraries that are available internationally. The aim of this paper is to examine the library services in the international context. Following aspects were covered including, moving libraries, bookmobiles, the ship library, “living mobile library” services, virtual/digital library services, school libraries, elementary schools libraries, middle school libraries and junior high school libraries, high school libraries and contemporary libraries. A systematic literature review will be utilized to examine the library services in the international context. The paper recommends that libraries are the backbones of their parents’ bodies. They are necessary for providing the community with much-needed information.

### INTRODUCTION

In the USA contemporary libraries are concerned with the extensive use of the Internet as well as its various interactions like the web 2.0 and social networks such as the Twitter, Facebook, blogs, skip, LinkedIn and so on (Hoelscher 2010). Moreover, there are some different types of portable plans, which serve as the “mobile libraries”, for example the e- book reader containing an assortment of digital book files, iP-hones and other related strategies. The developers, technicians and librarians who are participating in emerging these strategies for library services interchange practices in the functioning cluster “m-libraries”. This occurs as a result of the fact that society is in the information society in which libraries are able to match the information needs of the client and helping them realize knowledge-related association (Hoelscher 2010; Lan 2016).

### Moving Libraries

These are the mobile libraries that can move from one place to another. They are moved mak-

ing use of animals or human beings. There are three various types of libraries, which are mobile in the USA namely, bookmobile, living libraries as well as ship libraries.

**Bookmobiles:** Bookmobiles are sometimes referred to as libraries on the wheels. These are libraries, which are housed in vehicles like buses or trains. These types of libraries house the library collection and make it available for use by its clients. With the bookmobiles, the vehicles are not used to only hold the books and to make the library collection accessible, but it also transports the library collection to where the clients are. Their major functions are to provide literature and information to those people who are unable to reach the immobile libraries. As a result, bookmobiles back up information literacy even to the people in the most remote areas (Hoelscher 2010; American Library Association 2010; Connaway 2015).

**The Ship Libraries:** In countries like Bangladesh and Scandinavia the ship libraries are used like the bookmobiles to supply literature and information to the population, which cannot be easily reached or cannot be reached by making use of land. Fundamentally, the ship libraries are identified by the types of the target group they intend to serve and the type of ship on which the group is situated. Some of the ship libraries are meant for amusement of the travellers. There are also special libraries, which are intended for the team on traveller boats. There are also libraries, which are meant to meet the information

---

*Address for correspondence:*

Mrs N.P. Mahwasane  
Library Department  
University of Venda  
Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou  
0950, South Africa  
E-mail: Nkhangweni.mahwasane@univen.ac.za

needs of the scientists on the research vessels (Hoelscher 2010; Connaway 2015).

**Living Mobile Libraries:** These types of libraries are mostly found in the rural areas of Africa, Asia or South America. With the living mobile libraries, individuals use animals like the donkey, camel or elephant to move the library collection from one area to another with the aim of instructing information literacy as well as to meet the elementary literacy needs of the people in the remote areas. The living mobile libraries are preserved by uncompromising persons with the aim of providing the people in the remote area with the needed literature as well as to impart them with the reading and writing skills whenever necessary. People in Andes in Cajamarca make use of the human being to deliver information on the back of an animal, while in Indonesia men use bicycles to transport information (Hoelscher 2010).

According to Halsey (2009), there are different types of libraries that are available to meet different user needs because there cannot be a single library that can provide information needed by various user groups. There are different types of libraries and they are as diverse as their nature and uses. Libraries consist of six basic categories namely, school libraries, basic libraries, college and university libraries, government libraries, research libraries as well as the special libraries.

### Mobile Library Services

Hoelscher (2010) indicated that the term “moving library” is not used only for those libraries that transport the library from one area to another, but motionless library or library subdivision agencies that are strategically placed in areas where mobile population frequent most of the times are also regarded as the moving libraries. These types of libraries are placed at highly visited places, effectively interact with their clients to capture their responsiveness, they also back up clients with information literacy as well as attaining new clients. These automatic mobile library services are library machines that are usually found in urban areas located in subway stations for example, the Bibliometro, which is found in Madrid in Spain. Some automatic library machines are also placed where many people visit, like in the malls or railway stations (“The Bookmobile Collection” 2011).

**Virtual/Digital Library Services:** Virtual as well as digital library services can be accessed making use of the Internet. It also takes mobility of the population into consideration. As a result they form the third part of moving libraries. An example of this type of library service is the one referred to as “Onleihe”, which is provided by the German DiViBib, which started in 2007. This is a service whereby clients can access the databases and download movies and music making use of the public library and be able to use that for a specific period of time. Another example of such a library service is the Europeana, which is a database containing digitized automated research work in libraries and museums as well as e-ebook collections provided by most libraries across Europe (Chowdhury 2001; Hoelscher 2010).

**School Libraries:** School libraries are responsible for catering to elementary school (Foundation Phase in South Africa), middle school (Intermediate Phase), junior high school and high schools (Senior Phase) (Singh 2011). The main aim of a school library is to back up the different educational programs as well as to advance the learners’ skills to search, retrieve and use information, while on the other hand teachers also need the school libraries. Teachers use the library collection needed to advance and back up their classroom teaching. They use the library collection to prepare the lesson to teach their learners. On the other hand, the learners use the library collections to do their schoolwork (Library Association 2000; Hooper 2016).

Learners at different educational levels, have their specific information needs, preferences and interests. As a result the following different school libraries contain different types of collection that is suitable for that specific educational level:

**Elementary School (Foundation and Intermediate Phases) Library:** Elementary school libraries have a vital role to play in the early age of children’s education by providing undeveloped children with books and other resources, which are at their level of education. Elementary libraries specialize in illustrated children’s storybooks, coloring books, as well as audio-visual materials. Most of the elementary school libraries also comprise reference materials, for example encyclopedias for learners, fiction and non-fiction books, which are at the level and understanding of the elementary school learn-

ers. In some elementary school libraries, there are computers installed, equipped with the kids' scholastic programs.

In the Foundation Phase especially from Grade R to Grade 3 learners are offered classes in which they are trained the basic skills for searching and retrieving information from the library collection. They master the skills on how to search a book making use of the library catalogue, locating a book on the book shelves as well as borrowing the book from the issuing desk and taking the book home. Foundation Phase learners can also utilize the school library collection to master elementary computer skills, or to listen to stories during the story hours (Gisolfi and Asla 1998; Halsey 2009).

***Middle School and Junior High School Libraries:*** Middle school and Junior High school libraries are those that cater to learners and students ranging from Grade 6 to Grade 9. They are concerned with encouraging learners' interest in acquiring information and creating ideas. Learners in the middle and Junior High school levels are given the personal as well as the collective investigation work to work on. The library collections of the middle and junior high school libraries are of different categories higher than those provided by the elementary school libraries, so as to sufficiently meet the information needs to do their schoolwork. These libraries also provide access to library information through the computer databases as well as advanced bibliographic tools (Halsey 2009; IFLA 2015).

***High School Libraries:*** High school libraries are libraries that serve students from Grade 9 to Grade 12. High school libraries are large and contain a classier library collection as compared to libraries for lesser grades because the educational level at the high school level compels students to embark on research, and thereby making use of the library collection. The high school library collection is made up of materials that can back up the teaching of different learning areas such as mathematics, science, technology, social sciences humanities, art literature as well as other languages. As a result of long time spent by the students in the school library doing research work, the high school libraries are large enough to accommodate a large number of students at any specified time. Highly developed and well stocked high school libraries are equipped with computer labs, reference collec-

tions meant for teachers to prepare their lessons, conference areas, group work rooms as well as classrooms inside the school library. In some high school libraries there is a space set aside for the purpose of college or vocational guidance. The types of information contained in these spaces are specifically on specific colleges examples of applications for colleges, vocational aptitude tests, as well as other collections intended to offer guidelines for high school student graduation (Halsey 2009; IFLA 2015).

### **Contemporary Libraries**

Contemporary libraries are the types of library that do not include print materials like manuscripts, books, magazines as well as newspapers only but also include collections such as film, sound and video recordings, art reproductions, maps, photographs, microfiche, CD-ROMS, computer software and online databases. Apart from maintaining library collections within the library premises, contemporary libraries also provide telecommunications connections that facilitate access to information in isolated areas to users (Borgman 1999; Halsey 2009; Reed 2015).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this paper was explored through a systematic literature review by utilizing a combination of both contextual and conceptual review approaches. A thoughtful and knowledgeable review of suitable literature positions the researcher in a context of conflicting study.

## **RESULTS**

Teachers in the advanced grades of the elementary school, that is in the Intermediate Phase, are motivated to visit and use the school library during the course of the day to compile their school research projects, assignments for leisure reading and to interact with learners of the same age group. For learners in this level of education, the flexible schedule influences the schools to mix research skills and library materials into the day-to-day classroom teaching.

School libraries contain and preserve library materials in different forms and format. They contain the collections such as books, magazines, and newspapers school libraries can also

comprise of computers, CD-ROMS, games and maps, photographs, sound and video recordings as well as films. Certain school libraries may also comprise regalia, that is, artifacts like the different types of stones for studying geology, or different types of soil for studying geography. Moreover, recently most school libraries participate in school library cooperation in which the school libraries share their library resources among the participating school libraries (Brown 2015; Library Association 2000; Halsey 2009).

### DISCUSSION

The main aim of a library is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide ease of access to available knowledge and information. Libraries play an important role of conserving treasured records of culture so that they can be handed over to the following generations. It is understandable that libraries are also regarded as an important connection in this communication between the past, present and future. Moreover, the libraries make sure that any cultural record is well maintained and made available for use in future irrespective of its form or format. Libraries also assist people of different ages by providing access to information that will meet their needs, it may be to learn, work, pastime, play, govern, and other (Besser et al. 2014; Halsey 2009).

People from all walks of life rely on the contemporary library resources to enable them to do their job effectively. This is consistent with literature that people use the library collection to access information concerning reading for pleasure as well as to gain access to recreational information such as film and novels. On the other hand, learners and students use the library to complement information to boost their classroom knowledge environment, to master skills in searching and locating sources of information as well as to develop good reading culture and study habits. Moreover, government officials also use libraries to do research concerning issues in connection with legislation and public policy matters (Halsey 2009; Reed 2015; Scott and Owings 2004).

Therefore, it is logical that a school library can also be referred to as a school library media center. It is situated within the school premises. It provides access to a wide range of information sources to learners, staff as well as parents.

As a result, the school library media center ensures that all the users of the school library media center have equal access to books and reading, to information and to information technology (standard for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners). A school library media center provides all types of information resources. Moreover, the school library media center is automated and makes use of both electronic as well as print information (Markuson et al. 1999; Morris 2004). School libraries are different from public libraries because they specialize in providing learner-oriented materials, which spread, back-up and personalize the school's curriculum. Furthermore, the school libraries function as the focal point and organizing agency for all material used in schools (Scott and Owings 2004; Morris 2004).

The school library collection should consist of books, films, recorded sound, periodicals, and digital sources. These items are for education, pleasure and amusement for all teachers, parents as well as to extend and improve the school curriculum (Morris 2004). To this effect, Celano and Neuman (2001) contend that the need for libraries, in a school and public, has increased and should address literacy as a lifelong learning process.

### CONCLUSION

In this paper the researchers looked at the various types of libraries that are found internationally. The paper outlined the main aims of these libraries, the materials or collections contained in those libraries, their major functions and their locations. Moreover, it was demonstrated in the paper that libraries are regarded as hubs that provide learners with learning materials made available in different formats to support their school curriculum. There cannot be successful learning without libraries. As a result, the availability of libraries is of utmost importance.

### LIMITATIONS

Only schools in developed countries have these types of contemporary libraries, while in the developing countries in most places there is a lack of libraries in the true sense of things and as a result the notion of libraries in developing countries is still a fantasy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The developing countries should develop the libraries both in school and as public libraries, and equip them with modern information resources so that learners in this era are able develop an understanding of what a library is, and how a library works.

All schools from Foundation Phase (elementary school), Intermediate as well as High schools should be provided with a school library so that children will grow up knowing the types of libraries that are there to assist them with their information needs.

## REFERENCES

- American Library Association 2010. *State of America's Libraries*. USA.
- Association of Research Libraries 1995. Definition and Purpose of a Digital Library. From <<http://www.ifla.org/documents/libraries/net/art-dlib.txt>>
- Besser H 2014. *Ethics, Technology and the Challenges of Documenting History Real Time*. France: IFLA.
- Borgman CL 1999. What are digital libraries? Competing vision. *Information Processing and Management*, 35(3): 227–243.
- Brown TL 2015. *School Libraries and Public Libraries Collaborating to Improve Student Academic Success*. Warrenburg, Missouri: University of Central Missouri.
- Celano D, Neuman SB 2001. The Role of Public Libraries in Children's Literacy Development: An Evaluation Report. Pennsylvania Library Association Technical Report Pennsylvania Department of Education. From <<http://www.ifpl.org/junior/studies/Roleoflibraries.pdf?>> (Retrieved on 3 March 2010).
- Chowdhury GG 2001. *Digital Libraries and Reference Services: Present and Future*. Department of Computer and Information Science. Glasgow, UK: University of Strathclyde.
- Connaway LS 2015. *The Library in the Life of the User: Engaging with People Where They Live and Learn*. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research.
- Gisolfi PA, Asla A 1998. A place to read: Designing successful elementary school libraries. *American School Board Journal*, (October).
- Halsey RS 2009. *Library (Institution)*. 2009 [DVD] Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation.
- Hoelscher M 2010. *Moving Libraries: Mobile Library Concepts in Response to the Challenges Regarding Modern Information Society*. Germany: Fachhochschule Münster/muenster University of Applied Social Sciences.
- Hooper M, Mullis IVS, Martin C 2016. *PIRLS 2016 Context Questionnaire Framework*. United State: PIRLS 2016.
- International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) 2015. *IFLA School Library Guidelines*. Netherlands: IFLA.
- Lan C 2016. The digital divide in the post Snowden era. *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, 2: 1-32.
- Library Association 2000. *The Primary School Library Guidelines*. London: Professional Practice Department of the Library Association.
- Markuson C, Zolonis MF, Finke MB 1999. *School Library Media Centre Long-Range Planning Guide: A Workbook for Massachusetts School Library Media Centers*. Boston, MA: Biblio TECH Corporation for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.
- Reed P 2015. Technology and contemporary library. *Insights*, 28(2): 81-86.
- Scott L, Owings J 2004. *School Library Media Centres: Selected Results from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002)*. Washington DC, US: National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES).
- Singh P 2011. *Foundation Phase Educators' Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Implementation of the National Reading Strategy*. Durban: Durban University of Technology.
- Smith EG 2006. *Student Learning Through Wisconsin School Library Media Centre Case Study Report*. Wisconsin, USA: Division for Library, Technology and Community Learning, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, EGS Research and Consulting.
- The Bookmobile Collection 2011. Western Maryland's Historical Library. From <<http://www.whilbr.org/bookmobile/index.aspx>> (Retrieved on 16 June 2015).

**Paper received for publication on September 2015**  
**Paper accepted for publication on August 2016**