

School Reading Clinics: A Programme Organized in Accra

Adjei Apenten

This reading clinic was a five-day programme, organized by the Accra Metro Education Directorate, for the Ablekuma South Sub-Metro, in collaboration with the Ghana Library Board, between 5 and 9 August 2002. The programme's aim was to help more children acquire an interest in and high moral attitude to reading. A total of 200 pupils were selected from 57 public schools in the Ablekuma South Sub-Metro area for the project.

Theme

With the theme 'Ability to Read is the Right of a Child', the main objectives of the workshop were to:

- equip the children with skills to enable them read books meaningfully;
- give the children a high moral attitude towards reading;
- give the children the rudiments of pronunciation and spelling skills;
- help participants cultivate the habit of using their leisure hours profitably.

Activities

The children were taken through:

- recognition of letters;
- names and sounds of letters;
- use of the names and sounds of letters;
- pronunciation and diphthongs.

Children played games that involved them in simple activities that could sustain their interest in reading during the clinic.

This programme was held at the Salvation Army School compound at Mamprobi, in Accra. The Ghana Library Board collaborated by providing reading materials suitable for children aged between 6 and 12 years of age and some reference materials. The Board provided staff, who also tried to develop and promote the participants' interest in reading.

Resource persons were selected from Sub-Metro Education Office. During the programme they took the participants through the rudiments of reading, as in the classroom situation, to identify their problems and interest in reading.

There were also periods for library activities. The library staff provided a library scene that encouraged and promoted a reading culture in the participants. This included activities as performed in the public libraries in the country:

- How to borrow books from the library for home reading.
- How to take good care of library materials.
- How to use reference books to answer questions.

Additionally, the library staff organized extension activities to promote the reading habit, spread over the five days:

- A spelling bee (two- and three-letter words).
- Drawing a line to match the same words.
- Silent reading.
- Reading aloud.
- Telling stories to arouse the children's interest.
- Using games to draw children to the library.
- A reading competition.

It was found that most of the children found it difficult to identify and pronounce even two-letter words initially. By the end of the clinic, it was thought that there had been some improvement.

Funding

This was sourced from the following:

- Ablekuma South Sub-Metro.
- Parents of participants.
- Fund-raising activities.

Some organizations also donated towards the programme:

- Metro Director of Education.
- Officer in Charge, Ablekuma South Sub-Metro.
- Executives/Schools Management Committees.
- Academic Board, Ablekuma South Sub-Metro.
- Member of Parliament of Ablekuma South.

Conclusion

By the end of the programme it was concluded that most children, especially those living at the coast, initially have little or no interest in

books. Most of the children also realized these flaws and were eager to overcome the problem.

Reports on the participants were given to their parents and teachers to sustain the interest that the children gained during the clinic period, and to encourage more children to acquire an interest in and high moral attitude to reading.

It was hoped that this would improve the academic standard of children in the area.

The Book-Box Programme of Karatina Community Library, Kenya National Library Service

Rosemary W. Ngumo

The area of this study, Mathira Division in Nyeri District in Central Kenya, has 289,000 people distributed over 324 square kilometres. Situated along the Equator (0° latitude) the temperatures are cool and temperate, as it fans out along the slopes of Mount Kenya, the highest point in Kenya at 5,199 metres above sea level. It is one of the most fertile areas in Kenya, rich in volcanic soil suitable for arable farming, an economic activity widely practised in the region.

There are five large-scale farms around the slopes of Mount Kenya providing seasonal labour for the community. The majority of the population are small-scale farmers, growing food mainly for subsistence with the meagre surplus sold to meet overheads and living expenses. The youth mainly trade in the informal sector around small village centres.

Notably, the inhabitants have the potential to work towards the betterment of living standards within the region, but poverty has adversely affected the resource capability producing a low level of literacy.

Following the introduction of a multidimensional policy on Intervention and Poverty Eradication, these levels are expected to rise in the near future.

Karatina Community Library

Karatina Community Library was established 1991 in line with the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) policy of setting up community-based libraries. The policy involves the establishment of libraries by KNLS in partnership with local communities. Although the KNLS Board has the mandate to establish library services countrywide, this proved not feasible owing to budgetary constraints. Therefore, Phase II in the development of libraries was through partnership with local communities, as outlined and stipulated in a memorandum of understanding between both parties. The Karatina Community Library was realized in this way.

The book-box programme

This is one of the reader development and reading promotion programmes run by KNLS. It is operated from the Karatina Community Library. The service takes books to schools on a rotational basis, using a motor cycle. The benefiting schools contribute funds towards the purchase of books. It is a resource-sharing programme for the schools in Mathira.

Vision

To provide cost-effective and appropriate library and information services to accommodate the needs of information seekers and to sustain a reading culture in society.

Mission

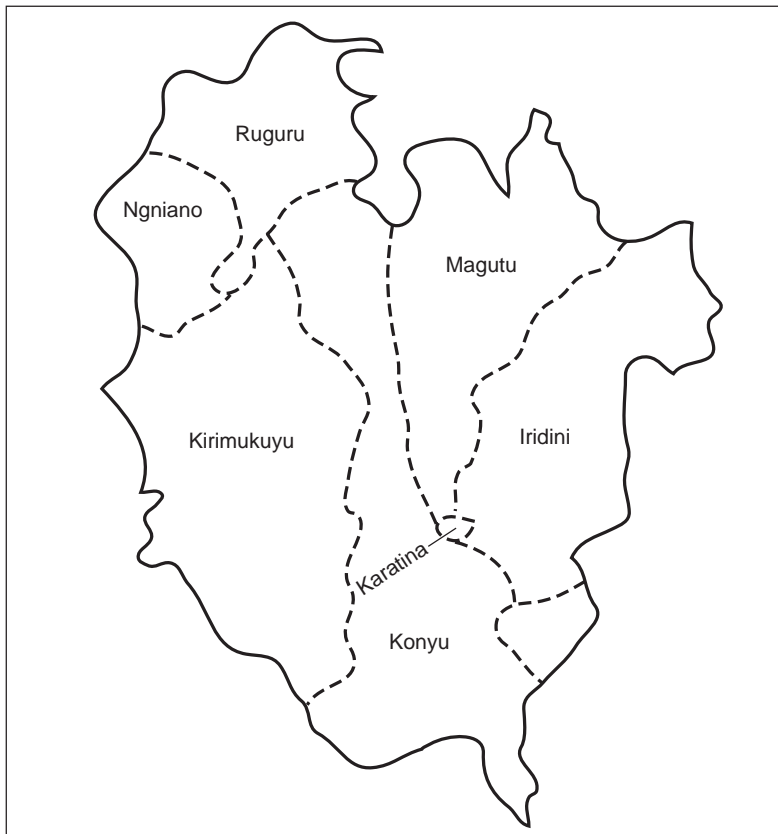
To provide well co-ordinated and efficient library and information services aimed at promoting and sustaining a reading culture and an information-driven society.

Objectives of the programme

- To make books and other information resources available to children in rural areas.
- To bridge the information gap between the rural and urban child.
- To improve academic performance in schools by supplementing formal education.
- To inculcate reading habits and a love of books in young people.
- To sensitize the community on the necessity of reading and the fundamental importance of knowledge to the community.
- To empower young people with information and knowledge towards more wholesome and well-rounded personal and social development.
- To open up children's minds and expose them to the many options and opportunities in life by broadening their minds through information.
- Enhancement of learning skills through effective reading.
- Emancipation through the development and raising of the literacy levels in a rural community.

Justification

There are 17,360 primary schools in Kenya. One in every 10 schools has a library and these are clustered in towns and schools serving the élite; there are 76 schools in Mathira Division. Given the long distances



Sketch map of Mathira Division, Kenya.

from schools to the static libraries, many children are unable to use their facilities. Consequently, the Mathira community in collaboration with the KNLS Board pulled resources together and introduced an innovative pilot reading programme whereby books are made available to children using boxes.

Funding and support

The communities provide: a financial contribution through fundraising for the acquisition of stock; physical facilities where the library is housed; the book boxes.

The government, through KNLS, provides: policy guidelines and



Books are transported by handcart, bicycle and motorcycle.

administration of the programme; recurrent expenditure; technical advice; book donations; and a motorcycle to transport books.

Programme activities

Selection and acquisition of materials

This is done by class teachers in collaboration with the librarian. The materials selected depend on the nature of the school and its students. Library is still an alien word and the schools' segmentation and the uneven distribution of resources has adversely affected the literacy levels of individual primary schools.

Organization of the materials

The professional services (cataloguing, classification) and packing of book boxes is done by the librarian based at KNLS Karatina Library.

Mapping of the service routes

This is done by the librarian with the help of the motorcycle rider.

User education

This is organized by the library to create the necessary awareness and train the teacher-librarian on the circulation and care of materials.

Marketing the service

This is done through public barazas, brochures, newsletters, school magazines, and sub-district development meetings.

A publication

A biannual journal is produced, highlighting the information service in the Division.

Transportation

At the start of the project, boxes were transported to nearby destinations using handcarts and a form of public transport minibuses known as *mataus*. The latest development is the use of bicycles and a motorcycle donated by the KNLS Board.

Human resources

For the implementation of the programme, three categories of manpower are involved.

Librarian/library personnel

This group has the basic skills in library and information management. There is, however, a lack of personnel trained to work with the community.

Teacher-librarian

Though a teacher by profession, he/she has basic skills in library science. Most schools have no reading policy and the teacher-librarian has to take on this extra responsibility on a voluntary basis. This makes the commitment low as it is viewed as an extra burden over and above the teacher's curriculum duties.

Library prefects

These are pupils within the various grades in the school who help in routine circulation procedures among their fellow pupils. These include charging and discharging of loaned books, packing the books ready for exchange, and some minor repairs. The teacher-librarian imparts these routine procedures to the pupils in the school and also supervises them.

Outcomes

Membership

The programme started with eleven primary schools in the Division. The number has risen to 28. As a result of the popularity gained over the years, more schools are willing to join.

Book stock

The circulation stock started with 2,200 volumes. The current book stock stands at 5,400.

Performance

The mean score in National Examination has risen, as shown in the chart overleaf.

Transportation

The mode of transport has improved from handcarts to bicycles and a motorcycle.

Participation

With increased awareness, community participation has also increased.

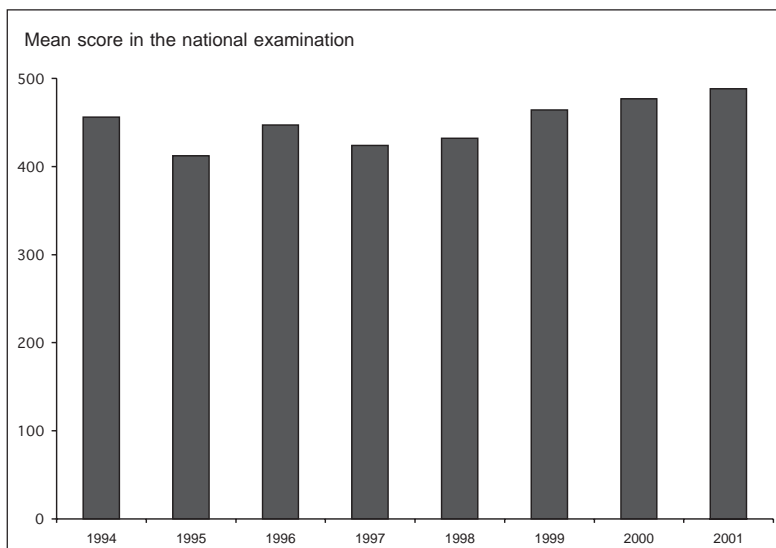
Challenges

Resource constraints

- The inadequacy of reading materials.
- Emphasis on textbooks, leaving no time for the reading of non-textbook materials in the school syllabuses.
- Lack of trained staff, both at the library and at the school.
- Teachers are committed to traditional methods of instruction, resisting changes that bring additional demands on their free time.
- With the little funds available, acquisition of reading materials takes the lowest priority.

Social environment

- A verbal/oral culture that does not support literacy.
- The social background of a semi-illiterate community does not support children acquiring a given level of literacy.



English language performance in public primary schools in the Division.

Physical

- The location of the programme area falls on the slopes of Mount Kenya, making the terrain very difficult to traverse with a bicycle or motorcycle;
- The climate is harsh for the rider, and during the wet season it is impossible to get to the schools.

Acquisition of non-textbook reading materials

- These materials are not readily available in the local market. The publishing industry concentrates on textbooks, which will sell quickly and make profits.
- Local authorship, particularly in the indigenous language, is limited.
- Because few books are circulating among many children, the wear and tear on them is high.

Evaluation

There is extensive information about the various aspects of the book-box service. It includes oral presentations by the children themselves, discussions with the community, and reports from the teachers – all beneficiaries of the service.

The following methods of evaluation have been used:

- face to face interviews;
- focused group discussion involving teachers, Board members and community leaders;
- observations on how the community is participating;
- reports from the teachers;
- language performance in national examinations.

The statistics available indicate that the programme has proved to be very popular:

- The community appreciates the programme and other communities have also shown interest – for example, the Marakwet community of the Rift Valley Province has ordered boxes to start their own programme.
- The local community has identified itself with the programme, claiming total ownership.

Conclusions

- The book-box programme is a project of the future and needs to be developed and supported by all the stakeholders: the family, the government, the community, the private sector.
- The feasibility study was not conclusive at the launching of the programme. Further funding is required, as the envisaged amount was insufficient.
- There is need to acquire more materials in local languages, probably translations from Kiswahili or English to the Gikuyu language.
- The memorandum of understanding between KNLS and the local community needs to be strengthened to include partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders.
- Vigorous campaigns to solicit book donations and a vehicle should be mounted.
- The librarian, through project proposals, should solicit funds to assist in translating available materials into the local language and in harnessing indigenous knowledge into print format for preservation and retrieval.
- Schools should be encouraged to publicize the programme in their school magazines. The project implementation committee should introduce the publication of a library journal.

Readership Promotion Campaign Activities of the Oyo State Library Board, Ibadan

Emmanuel Adebayo Oyegade

Information is essential data that is indispensable in decision-making. Books which contain the thoughts, ideas and ideals of great minds are vital in developing man and society. Books have rightly been described as tools of inestimable value and means of proficiency and excellence in all human endeavours. It is actually through books that the mind is enriched and knowledge acquired. As important as books are, it is an irony of life that most Nigerians have not fully embraced reading and exploited its potential.

Oyo State is one of the 36 federating states of Nigeria and one of the most urbanized in the whole of the federation. Beside Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Oyo, Iseyin and Saki, there are several other big towns with large populations. According to the latest census, the population of Oyo State stands at 3,452,720, made up of 1,711,428 males and 1,741,292 females. The state covers a total of 27,249 square miles and consists of 35 local governments. Education has always been regarded by successive governments of the state as an industry that must not be neglected. Presently, the state has 1,703 public schools, 971 private nursery, primary and secondary schools, 15 nomadic schools, 5 technical colleges, a polytechnic, a college of education, and a university that is jointly owned with another state. All these are in addition to a federally owned university, and similar college and research institutions located within the state.¹

The Oyo State Library Board is one of the government parastatals charged with the responsibility of ensuring the development of education in the state. The history of library services in the state predates the creation of Oyo State. Library services started in 1954 when it was then part of the three regions that made up the country. The political development of Nigeria led to the creation of states out of the regions, including the

¹ Nigeria. Oyo State. Ministry of Information, Youth, Sports and Culture. *Oyo State: Past and Present*. Ibadan: Government Press, 2002.

present Oyo State, and correspondingly the birth of the Oyo State Library. The library service in Oyo State became purposeful in 1988 when it was backed with an enabling law.²

The Oyo State Library Board has the mandate of serving as an instrument for the improvement of the reading habits of the citizens of the State and as a source of encouragement to provide facilities for continuing education for all.

The functions of the library are to:

- establish and maintain a library and documentation service within the State;
- provide such services as are usually provided by libraries of the highest standard;
- be responsible for the control, maintenance and operation of all existing State and local government libraries, including those in the ministries and parastatals;
- be responsible for and encourage the establishment of libraries in the State and to make available to the various interests and institutions in the State the widest possible range of books and other records of human intellectual works in arts, science and technology.

The responsibilities of the Oyo State Library Board are enormous and wide. It is a library service for all segments of society.

Readership campaign programmes

Why?

Professor Chukwuemeka Ike, president of the Nigerian Book Foundation (an NGO concerned with promoting reading in Nigeria), identified the following reasons why Nigerians are said not to have a reading culture:³

- Millions of Nigerians – male, female, young and old – are completely illiterate and consequently rendered incapable of reading.
- Millions of Nigerians judged literate, including pupils completing primary education in the public education system, lack functional literacy to enable them to read, understand, and enjoy books in any language.

² Nigeria. Oyo State. *Gazette, August, Edict 18*. Ibadan: Government Press, 1998.

³ C. Ike, Address by Professor Chukwuemeka Ike, President, Nigerian Book Foundation, at the formal handing-over ceremony of the Nigerian Book Foundation Library, Bodija, Ibadan, to Oyo State Library Board on 16 July 2002.

- Millions who are functionally literate do not read books simply because they have no access to books relevant to their lives and aspirations, books of interest to them.

The reasons, as enumerated, no doubt have been responsible among others for the poor reading habits of the people of Oyo State. A contributory factor is also the lack of awareness on the part of the public of the availability of relevant resource materials in the libraries. It is for all these reasons that the Oyo State Library Board undertakes various readership promotion campaign activities towards improving reading in the society.

Target groups

The Oyo State Library Board is a public library institution that opens its doors to all. Its target audience is therefore heterogeneous and diverse. The various readership campaign activities involve school children (primary and secondary), adult literates and those who cannot read. The activities being organized are multifaceted and also multidimensional in approach. The various approaches are, however, keyed to two main objectives: the first is to ensure that relevant resource materials are within the reach of the intended users; the second is to ensure that awareness is created of the existence of the Oyo State libraries and the resources therein so as to arouse interest in their use.

Availability of resource materials

One of the serious problems responsible for the lack of reading culture in the society is the lack of conducive reading environments supported with relevant resource materials. Over the years, there has been total neglect in funding the establishment of libraries and where there are library facilities (buildings, shelving, etc.), these are stocked with irrelevant and obsolete books. The Oyo State Library Board identified and recognized the need to provide libraries and community reading centres all over the State. The Board therefore maintains good rapport with government and various local and international agencies to ensure that opportunities for reading are provided for all, not limiting the establishment of libraries to urban locations.

Presently three additional zonal libraries are being built in Oyo, Ogbomosho and Saki with funding provided for the purchase of pertinent books. This is in addition to book donations from such institutions as Book Aid International (UK) and the San Francisco Urban Renewal Board. In order to spread the use of the available resources and make wider and better impact, a school loan centre and local government library

loan centre have been established in the headquarters library complex in Dugbe, Ibadan. The loan centres provide avenues through which schools and local governments borrow books in bulk for their clientele, with the loans being replenished at intervals. The mobile library of the Board assists and facilitates this bulk book-loan activity to schools and to the local government libraries.

Creating awareness and arousing interest in reading

A serious hindrance to reading in Oyo State and Nigeria in general is the lack of knowledge on the part of many members of the society that libraries, where they can access information and read, exist. Even where the people know that the library exists they are not sure or not convinced that the environment of the library is conducive for their use and that relevant resources that can be of benefit to them are available. The reason for this lukewarm attitude may be due to the neglect of libraries by successive past government administrations. The expectation of potential users of the libraries is therefore very low; at best they expect the public library building and the environment to be in a derelict state and contain resources that are irrelevant and obsolete.

The lack of interest and attitude of society to the public libraries has a reason, as shown in the findings of Kantumoya.⁴ He revealed that public libraries in most countries in tropical Africa rarely provide relevant materials and hence they are ineffective. They are stocked mainly with foreign literature that is both out of date and irrelevant to the information needs and interests of the people who are expected to read them. A large percentage of the public still hold this view and bias. It is therefore a challenge to the State Library Board to create awareness of the library and arouse interest in reading. The approaches adopted by the Board are varied, and many of the activities are referred to as library extension programmes. The campaign activities of the Board towards creating awareness and arousing interest in the use of resources are:

- book fair/library weeks;
- publications like handbills and calendars;
- film shows/video library;
- repackaging of information;
- exhibitions and high-profile lectures.

⁴ A. Kantumoya, 'Public libraries and community information services in Africa', *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science* (1992), 2(1): 33–8.

Book fair/library week

A week of intense literary activities is devoted annually to sensitizing the public to the importance of books and reading. As indicated in the programme of events, the aims and objectives of the book fair/library week are:

- to expose and create awareness of the books and other resource materials that are available in the Nigerian market and libraries to the general public;
- to bring authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians and users of the materials together to discuss issues relating to books;
- to enable the public, especially parents and guardians, to have the opportunity to purchase books and related materials directly and cheaply for their wards;
- to expose readers to the facilities available at the Oyo State Library Board.

In support of the above goals, literary activities such as symposiums, career talks, sport discussions, children's fair, essay competitions, etc., involving school children, rural dwellers, the educated and the unlettered, are organized. The various activities are supported with book exhibitions by publishers, booksellers and the Library Board. The policy-makers are also not left out, as they are invited and involved in the opening of the various programmes. The book fair/library weeks have been effective means of creating awareness in the community.

Handbills, programmes of events and calendars

Publications such as handbills, printed programmes of library extension activities, reading slogans on mobile libraries and the production of yearly calendars with readership promotion campaign slogans have gone a long way in sensitizing the public on the importance of reading. The slogans on the Board's calendars in the year 2002 are:

- Reading Improves Knowledge
- Read a Book Today
- Enrich Your Minds with Reading
- Reading Empowers Man
- Knowledge Is Power, Develop a Reading Habit

Film shows/video library

It was observed that the public cherish watching films more than reading books. The Oyo State Library Board has taken advantage of this by developing a rich collection of locally produced entertainment films as

well as subject-based video-cassettes. The strategy has paid off as most patrons of the video collections have been attracted to the book sections of the library. Similarly, international soccer screenings have attracted the public to the library, since events such as the World Cup and the African Cup of Nations are loved by the majority of people. In an environment where not everyone owns a television set and where electricity is unreliable, the public appreciates the Library Board providing the opportunity to watch these global events. Such events have proved advantageous to the library in winning over clients as users of its resources.

Repackaging of information

It can be safely stated that the unlettered appreciate 'information'. The Board's Badeku experience – a pilot rural information service project in Badeku village near the State capital, Ibadan – revealed that the 'uneducated' recognize the power of books, particularly when they have books that have a bearing on their daily lives. The villagers eagerly look forward to the visits of the library and this is because information in books is repackaged and made meaningful to their day-to-day experiences. It is therefore not surprising that they present enquiries on various topics within health, agriculture, education and even sports to visiting teams from the Board.

High-profile lectures

Organizing and presenting lectures on topical issues and inviting key figures in the society to deliver such lectures have proved effective in drawing the community to the library. The most recent lecture organized by the Board was delivered by the late well-known Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, Uncle Bola Ige, who lectured on 'Democracy in Nigeria: The Journey so Far'. The programme attracted the mighty and the low in society, thus making the library prominent and visible.

Factors affecting effective readership promotion activities of the Board

The readership campaign activities of the Board are regarded as library extension programmes. The Board is generally short-staffed and, in this situation, any of the staff of the Board from the various departments are tasked in the various promotion activities of the Board. It would have paid off better if a unit of the library had been charged with the main responsibility of readership promotion campaign activities. Most often

other areas of the service suffer when staff have to shift from their normal schedules for *ad hoc* responsibilities.

Lack of adequate funding is a serious handicap in the campaign activities of the Board. The Board's main source of income is the government. Often funding is not released on time and may not even be released at all. The planned Book Fair/Library Week for years 1999 and 2000 could not be held because the budgeted sum was not released. The inadequacy of funding is responsible for the limitation in the production of relevant publications. Handbills, posters, almanacs and calendars have proved to be effective sources of reminding people of the need to read. Such publications make better impact when they are constantly produced and varied. In the past, jingles on radio and TV presentations have been ways of luring the public to read but such programmes now attract fees, which invariably require a budget and the release of funds for the purpose.

Funds are also required to organize seminars and workshops for staff that are engaged in the readership promotion campaign activities of the Board. Our librarians are already trained and know what to do in public librarianship but they still need workshops and seminars to share experiences and perfect their arts.

Conclusion

It is imperative for public libraries, particularly in Africa, to devise means of getting the citizens interested in reading. The culture of reading is still lacking in the society but by establishing libraries stocked with relevant resources and making the people aware of their availability, the habit of reading will be formed gradually. There is no doubt that the present efforts of the Oyo State Library Board in sensitizing the public on the need to read are making a great impact. More people now see the library as a place of succour where their information needs can be met. The various readership campaign programmes are not only winning readers to the library but also getting converts within the ranks of policy-makers. This is a good trend, which should result in better funding for the library.