Library Science and Librarianship in Swaziland: An Overview

Thiyam Satyabati Devi, Nkosinathi Dlamini
University of Swaziland
Swaziland
{sdthiyam, ndlamini}@uniswa.sz

Abstract. *This article will present an overview of library development in Swaziland. It will describe the various types of libraries in Swaziland. Highlight the basic problems in the development of the library in the country. Suggestions for the improvement of the present situation are outlined along with recent moves by the government to improve the state information activities.*

Keywords: Libraries, National Library, Public Library, Academic Library, Special Library, Swaziland, FUNDZA

1. Introduction

Swaziland is a small, landlocked country in Southern Africa with an area of 17,363 Sq. km that is situated between Mozambique and South Africa with an estimated population of 1,386,914 as of 2012 with a literacy rate of 81.6%. It is the smallest country in southeast Africa founded by Bantu peoples from Mozambique in the 18th century and became a British protectorate when colonial rule was established in 1903. Swaziland was led to independence by King Sobhuza II in 1968, and is now a dual monarchy with a King (currently King Mswati III since April 25, 1986) and the Queen Mother. Swaziland is proud of having achieved its independence and restored its traditionalist African way of life. The friendly Swazis mainly live in small rural communities with still stable polygamous family structures and strict morale. Since 1986, the young King Mswati III rules the country. King Mswati III is the sovereign head of the Kingdom of Swaziland. The affairs of the country are administered by the Prime Minister and Cabinet through a Parliament of elected members. Mbabane is the administrative capital, with a population of 60,000. Manzini is the hub, situated next to the Matsapha Industrial Estate. The population of Manzini is about 80, 000. SiSwati and English are the official languages although English is used extensively in government and business.

The various landscapes are characterized by forested Highveld in the north-west, the softly undulating hills of the Middleveld in the central part, flattening out towards the southeast, where the subtropical Lowveld begins, which is being used mainly agriculturally and covers 40% of the entire country. In the very east, the Lubombo Mountains form the border to Mozambique and run south into KwaZulu-Natal. The Swaziland landscape comprises of three types of land forms: savannahs, plateaus and mountains. The landscape is full of tourist attractions. The climatic conditions prevalent in Swaziland are dependent on the landscape and altitude of the country. So, different regions in the country sport different temperatures, although the variation is marginal. The Highveld temperature is temperate and seldom uncomfortably hot while the Lowveld may record temperature around 40°C (104°F) in summer. The country has a wide range of habitats and great variety in flora and fauna.

Swaziland is famous for its many cultural ceremonies, celebrated in a picturesque and colorful way. The most important and spectacular one is the Incwala Kingship Ceremony. No less popular is the Umhlanga Reed Dance at the end of August where young women from all parts of the country - they must be still virgins - gather here in the royal village to dance before the king and his mother. Swaziland is an attractive destination for the lovers of nature and hikers, boasting a number of excellent nature reserves. The country depends heavily on South Africa, which it relies on for 90% of its imports and sends 60% of its exports. 70% of the population works in the agricultural sector and sugar and wood pulp are important foreign exchange earners. The majority (80 percent) of the people are

Christian and the rest (20%) have indigenous beliefs. Sugar, soft drink concentrates, citrus products and wood pulp are the major exports, mainly to South Africa from which the Kingdom of Swaziland receives almost (90%) of its imports. Tourism is one of the Kingdom of Swaziland's biggest industries.

2. Libraries in Swaziland before independence

Prior to the attainment of Swaziland's independence in 1968, volunteer housewives drawn from the community of colonial officials operated the few Libraries that were available. Professional librarianship in the Kingdom only took root in the 1970s and 1980s. This ushered in a new era of service enhancements among which were information technology (IT) applications. However, progress on library IT initiatives have been slow due to pressing financial, human resources, and socio-economic challenges.

Libraries have always been central to education and self-improvement. They also have the power to act as motors for more dynamic and effective learning, whether for individuals or for groups. The library plays a vital supportive role as a source of research and reading material in school or college or at University. It has always had a significant role in supporting reading and literacy, as well as helping to develop pupils' independent learning. The library is the heart, which itself has learning at its core and good libraries can empower the learner. The resources in a library can allow our imaginations to run free, introduce us to new experiences and promote access to knowledge and enjoyment. The situations of the libraries in the country are in the various stages of development. There are three major types of libraries in the country the National Library or the Public library which serves the nation, the Academic Libraries and the Special Library.

2.1 The National Library/ Public Library
National Libraries are libraries that are mandated by their government to collect and preserve a complete collection of everything published in that country. Collections often comprise of books, newspapers, journals and magazines, maps, government publications, etc. National Libraries are usually notable for their size, compared to other libraries in the same country.

2.1.1 The Swaziland National Library Service (SNLS)
The Swaziland National Library Service is the nation's leading documentary resource institution under the Ministry of Information and communication and technology. It was started in 1970 in Manzini and the service began in 1971 under the Ministry of Home Affairs then known as the Ministry of Local Administration. The British Council, the United States Embassy and the Ranfurly Library Service were instrumental in its construction and in getting the SNLS functional information needs of Swaziland (Kingsley, 1991: 33). The SNLS was initially established for recreational purposes rather than to perform the functions of a National Library. Hence it was more of a Public Library than a National Library (Mkhwanazi, 1996: 1-2). The vision of the SNLS is "*to develop the Swaziland National Library Service as the nation's leading documentary resource institution*" (Swaziland Government, 2008a: 1). In 1983 the Swaziland National Library was opened in Mbabane which is now the present headquarters. The Swaziland National Library Service provides two types of services, the Public Library service and the National Library service. The library is run by 160 staff of which 13 are trained professional staff. The Public library service consists of two main Public libraries, namely, Mbabane and Manzini Public Libraries and thirteen branch libraries, Bhunya, Big Bend, Hlatikhulu, Lavumisa, Lomahasha, Mankayane, Mhlume, Mpaka, Nhlangano, Pigg's Peak, Simunye, Siteki, Tshaneni which are scattered all over the country and operates school libraries at secondary levels. There is also a mobile library service. The Mbabane library acts as the headquarters, and also houses the National Library service. The National Library is charged with the responsibility to expand the collection and promote the accessibility of research and study materials in Swaziland on a National and centralized basis. The National Library provides the following services i) Reference ii) Lending services iii) Interlibrary Loan iv) Internet services v) exhibition and conference facilities vi) Computer literacy, vii) Digital Opportunity Centres viii) School Library service ix) Information Literacy x) Outreach programmes (Services to Correctional institutions, Hospitals and Tinkhundla centres/ Constituencies. The library has a collection of over 270,945 volumes including fiction and children's collection and subscribed to 300 periodical titles at present. At the beginning in 1974 the library has a

total collection of 55,800 volumes and 155 periodicals. The National library and most of the libraries in the country use Dewey Decimal Classification and AACR II.

2.2 The Swaziland National Archives

The Swaziland National Archives was established by the Archives Act no.5 of 1971. Its mission is to empower Swazi citizens to fully participate in their country's social, political and economic life through the equitable development, preservation and protection of the Swazi cultural heritage. The National Archives were then placed under the Deputy Prime Minister's offices in Mbabane. On the 7th September 1978, a purpose built Archival building in Lobamba was officially opened by His Majesty King Sobhuza II with Queen Mamohato of Lesotho as guest of honour. Thereafter, the Department was placed under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Communication. From 2009 to date, the Swaziland the National Archives are placed under the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology. The Swaziland National Archives comprise of the different sections including:

- ➢ Records management, which is mainly concerned with improving the economy and efficiency in the creation, maintenance and use of records;
- ➢ The Archives administration/research centre, which deals mainly with non-current records of permanent value. Indexes date between 1947-1969. This is mainly consulted by researchers and visiting scholars;
- ➢ The Library, which is a section where there is secondary materials on Swaziland; books, government publications, reports, conference papers, Gazettes dating from 1901, times of Swaziland date from 1905; press cuttings from South African newspapers and SADC publications;
- ➢ There is also the Photography section and this has a collection of photographs dating from the pre-independence era to date. These photographs are of national events;
- ➢ Last but not least is the Book binding section, which deals with all materials to be bound from all sections (Swaziland Government: Ministry of Tourism, 2002).

2.3 Swaziland National Museum

The Swaziland National Museum, located in the Royal Area adjacent to the houses of parliament was built in 1972, and is run by the Swaziland National Trust Commission. The museum located in Lobamba is dedicated to King Sobhuza II who led Swaziland to independence in 1968, and is well known by many in Swaziland, and provides an interesting and insightful introduction to the origins and history, culture, lifestyles and traditional attire of the Swazi nation. The museum also highlights the close relationship between the Swazi people and nature, and features amongst other interesting exhibits, a natural history hall built in 1991, which houses various dioramas covering a range of topics including vegetation types, numerous animal displays, and a representation of the nation's well know Mantenga Falls and its aquatic species. The Swaziland National Museum include a library with an impressive collection of Swazi historical books and other material set aside for research purposes, and a showroom which houses three of the royal cars once used by King Sobhuza II.

2.4 Academic library

An academic library is a library that is attached to academic institutions above the secondary level, serving the teaching and research community of the institute. The University of Swaziland is the only University in the country which provides multidisciplinary courses. The University of Swaziland was started as the University college of Swaziland (UCS) in the year 1972 at the Faculty of Agriculture at Luyengo in Swaziland. The University of Swaziland was developed into an independent University in the year 1982. The UNISWA (University of Swaziland) Library was started along with its parent body the University of Swaziland in the year 1982. Since its inception the Library supports the educational research and learning functions of the University and a number of services are directed to these efforts. It also caters to the needs of the students and teachers of the university at large. The Mission of the Library is to "*effectively provide services and access to quality academic information resources, irrespective of format and location to the University staff, students and associates in support of the instructional, learning, research and administrative functions of the University*". The University has the most comprehensive

collection in the country, housed in the three campus libraries Kwaluseni, Luyengo and Mbabane. The library has a total membership of 5767 out of which 5251 are graduate 165 students are Post graduates, 1695 students are form IDE and 351 members are from Academic and administrative staff. The UNISWA library has a collection of 1,966,500 monographs and current subscriptions to more than 325 print journals with back issues for more than 600 journals. The collections are categorized into:

> - General lending materials;
> - Reference materials;
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> - Journals;
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> - Law collections;
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> - Health Science;
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> - Agricultural Science;
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> - Special collections comprising of Swaziana, SADC, World Bank, IMF, African Development Bank and UN materials.

Library automation improves the image of the library and staff. It also provides additional services to the users. The UNISWA library is automated with the system URICA (from 2000) in the beginning and now is using SirsiDynix Symphony. It is the most versatile and customizable Integrated library System (ILS) in the industry, and is the best place to start from basic library functionality to complete customizable tools based on the library ambitions.

2.4.1 Services offered

The UNISWA Library has a mission to provide service and access to quality academic information resources in support of instructional, learning, Research and Administrative functions of the University. It also offers a combination of print and electronic resources to its readers. Others service includes: Reference service, Circulation, Inter-library loan, Internet and CD-ROM database searches, Duplication and Block loans:

2.4. 2 Special Library

A special library is a library established, supported, and administered by a business firm, private corporation, association, government agency, etc., to meet the needs of its members or staff in pursuing the goals of the organization. Special libraries include corporate libraries, law libraries, medical libraries, museum libraries, news libraries, and nonprofit libraries. These libraries are not usually open to the public. In Swaziland special libraries are available in most government ministries, international, private and Non-Governmental organizations mainly to serve the needs of their parent organizations. The Malkerns Research Centre (1959), The British Council, USIS (United States Information Service), United Nations Childern's Fund, the Central Bank, Swazi Bank, UNDP (United Nations Development Program), UNICEF, Tibiyo, Provident Fund, Women's Resource Centre, a Save the Children's Fund STBC, the Attorney Generals Chamber's, Swaziland Farmers Development Foundation (SFDF), National Agriculture Marketing Board (NAMBOARD), Swaziland Finance Development Corporation (FINCORP). Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services (SBIS), University of Swaziland Faculty of Agriculture (UNISWA FoA), Royal Swaziland Sugar Corporation (RSSC), Sebenta National Institute Library, William Pitcher Training College Library, SCOT Library (Swaziland College of Technology Library). Others include the Coordination of the Assembly of the Non-Governmental Organizations and the World Universities Library and Information Centres, the former having indicated an interest to join as an international member of our Association SIMPA formerly known as the staff training institute library, the current Swaziland Institute of management & Public administration.

2.5 School libraries

A school library is a library within a school where students, staff have access to a variety of resources. The development of school libraries can be traced back to 1971, when the British Council established the Swaziland National Library Service, which started the school library service in 1974, after a donation from the British Council. Ever since then the British Council has continued to support school libraries through various donations, as reported by Tawete (1993). He further noted that The Swaziland National Library Service now provides only professional

advice to schools on the establishment of school libraries and the selection of books. A new director that was appointed in 1979 recognized the need for libraries in schools, revival of school libraries (Kingsley 1991).

Principals and teachers started school libraries on their own, through library fee payments and donations. In 1987 a non-governmental organization FUNDZA was established after a study into the reading materials in schools was carried out (Simelane 1991). The study further showed that there were very few schools with supplementary reading material. Most learners were stuck with textbooks and teachers' notes and it also revealed that most schools did not have library rooms. Even schools that had libraries converted them into classrooms, because of the large numbers admitted to schools, or because of lack of appreciation of the library facility. Recently, the Swaziland National Library Service and Fundza were invited to a meeting by the Ministry of Education officials to look into the possibility of formulating a policy document for school libraries. The National Library Service is currently in the process of arranging a meeting with all stakeholders to discuss the logistics of formulating this important document which will assist in streamlining support services of the said libraries. The Extension Services division of the National Library Service and Fundza continue to supply books to a number of selected schools. It must be noted that no harmony exists between the two institutions, based on the fact that one is a government department and the other a non-governmental organization.

3. Learning and Libraries in Swaziland

Swaziland has 14 public library centres serving a population of approximately 900,000 (Swaziland, 1995a) and spread across the four administrative regions of Hhohho, Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni. The libraries and population distribution are as follows: two centres in Hhohho serving a population of over 201, 464; six centres in Lubombo serving a population of over 168,388; three centres in Manzini serving a population of over 219,06; and three centres in Shiselweni serving a population of over 162,374 (UNDP, 1998). The operations and services of these libraries are manual.

A representative random sample of eight libraries, two from each region, was surveyed from July to September, 1998. The libraries covered were Bhunya, Hlatikhulu, Manzini, Mbabane, Nhlangano, Piggs Peak, Simunye and Siteki. The collections in these libraries are organised in accordance with the Dewey decimal classification scheme (DDC). The HIV/AIDS information resources assessments were based on an examination of the catalogues, as well as shelf browsing, guided by the respective Dewey subject classes. Attention was also paid to evidence of any information publicity relating to the epidemic.

Observations were made with respect to availability of information resources, currency, scope, appropriateness, accessibility, and usage. Consultations with library personnel were also carried out where appropriate. With respect to usage observations, it is noteworthy that circulation records, mainly date-issued stamp marks, indicate only a general overview and not a comprehensive picture of usage trends. The records exclude users who prefer to read within the library premises. Moreover, in Swaziland, where communities are closely networked, HIV/AIDS is stigmatised and some users will not check out material to avoid suspicion. The result is a sensitive and secretive transaction, which leaves no trace behind. Also usage of non-circulating material such as reference, posters and serials are not captured by the circulation records.

4. Library organization in Swaziland

4.1 Professional organization
SWALA: The Swaziland Library Association (SWALA) is the only professional organization in the country. It was formed on April 28, 1984. The association has an Executive Committee, which is elected by the general membership during an Annual General Meeting (AGM), and is headed by the Chairperson. The Association has four membership categories, namely; individual, institutional, corresponding, and honorary. Membership subscriptions are determined by the Association's membership and subject to annual renewal. The current rate for individual membership is E 100.00 and E 500.00 for institutional membership. The Association has a publications programme that covers issues

of interest to the profession. Among some of its publications are the *SWALA Newsletter* and the *SWALA Journal*. The publications are freely available to paid up members. In addition to the Annual General Meetings, the Association organises workshops, courses, conferences and seminars on issues of interest to its members. From time to time, members are either nominated or sponsored to represent the Association and/or participate in international conferences to enable the profession to keep abreast with topical issues in the library and information services. SWALA is committed to high standards of service and to promoting a strong sense of professional identity among its members. In this connection, members are encouraged to participate in study tours, production, purchase and sale of SWALA regalia at affordable prices and terms, and other fundraising events.

4.2 Non-Governmental Organization

FUNDZA: Fundza is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established in 1987 which has its headquarters in the Ministry of Education and Training that focused on library development. The organization has a board of directors that sets Fundza's direction. The members have developed their conviction in the power of reading to change lives through personal experience. Their daily operations are led by Ms. Nonkululeko Mdluli, a dynamic and professional librarian with many years of experience in library development. The word Fundza is a SiSwati word meaning "*to learn*" or "*to read*" depending on the context. Their mission is to raise the literacy rate and promote lifelong learning among Swazi children. Their aim is to increase literacy rates by making information and library services available to primary and high schools. They train teachers in library management and methods to improve literacy. In addition, they provide and promote HIV/AIDS materials, run annual school debate competitions and train other NGOs on how to manage their Information Resource Centers. Fundza is a partner of the African Library Project. They conduct one-day library management skills training workshops for two teachers-librarians from each school. Fundza host the 3rd ALP African Partners Summit in our capital, Mbabane in November 2011. 38 delegates from 6 nations attended the Summit and our schools were very proud to show their libraries off. On the last day of the Summit, 90 of our teacher-librarians came to Mbabane for workshops run by the ALP partners from other African countries. They are looking forward to initiating more libraries in 2012.

5. Library Automation in Swaziland

The automation scenario of libraries in Swaziland is quite discouraging. Libraries are still in the automation planning stage. So far the fully automated library in the country is the University of Swaziland Libraries. The UNISWA Library has, since August 1998, installed the URICA integrated library management software for its housekeeping operations. The library started automated in the year 1999. Now they have upgraded the system to SirsiDynix Symphony and all the functions are carried out by the system. Waterford College has a small in-house system covering approximately 65 percent of its stock which is capable of conversion into a union catalogue. No other library had any degree of automation other than some small in-house databases using Procite or CDS/ISIS microcomputer software. There is clearly an inadequate provision of staff trained in information technology, and most libraries do not have access to a computer.

6. Bibliographical control and service

The bibliography is said to be the structure of the book world of any nation .The importance of any nation can be gauged from its publication and its bibliographical activities. The SNB provides a complete catalogue of publications and other documents issued in the kingdom of Swaziland and by the Swazi authors which have been deposited in the University of Swaziland Libraries, The Swaziland National Archives and the Swaziland National Library in terms of Swaziland National Library Act 2002. They include monographs, serials, conference proceedings as well as other publications of the government, statutory bodies, societies and associations. In addition it also includes periodical articles and other publications issued from other countries whose subject matter relates to Swaziland. Swaziland is unable to establish a National Bibliographic Control Agency (NBCA) and has been unable for quite some time. Under the circumstances the UNISWA Library assumed the role of a quasi-NBCA and published the first four issues of the *Swaziland National Bibliography* starting in 1977 (Muswazi, 1998b). It has

however been unable to realize the aim of producing it on an annual basis. The last was published in 2008 which covers from 2005-2007.

Swaziland does not have its own union catalogue or an interlibrary lending scheme, although certain libraries are part of the Southern African Inter-lending Scheme (SAIS) and some have contributed to the *South African Joint Catalogue* (*SACat*), the catalogue of books and journals which are held by cooperating libraries in Southern Africa (Westra, 1993). The *SACat* forms the backbone of the SAIS, which is coordinated by the South African State Library in Pretoria. The *SACat* is managed as a union database by the South African bibliographic utility, SABINET Online, whose members add their holdings to the database. For many years the State Library undertook the task of adding the holdings of smaller and foreign-based LIS (including those in Swaziland) to the *SACat* on their behalf, but owing to its budgetary restraints it had to cease this service in April 1998. *SACat* thus enabled a degree of National Bibliographic Control, and it is to be regretted that there are now no Swaziland Libraries adding holdings today.

7. Library development and problems

Libraries in Swaziland have been in the development stage. There had been practically no planning of libraries before the country got her independence from the British in 1968. The importance of libraries and information came gradually recognized only with the establishment of the Swaziland National Library services and the University College of Swaziland which is now known as the University of Swaziland and other few libraries, but the country has not granted them significant support because the educationalists and the top administrators in the country seem to be unaware of the role of the library as an effective instrument for education and decision making. Hence the library has hardly any place in the national education programme. This is evident from the fact that the importance of school libraries in the country is not fully recognized. Unless this is done there will be a total lack of library awareness and vital importance of libraries and information for educational effort would remain only at the instructional level and would certainly lack the cultural element which is important for education. Another characteristic observation about library development in Swaziland has been the greater degree of dependence on foreign aid for capital and recurrent library expenditure and the undue reliance upon the expatriate professionals for establishing and running of libraries.

7.1 Other problems include

➢ Absence of a National Body responsible for planning and coordinating the development activities in the field of librarianship and information science,
➢ Lack of qualified library personnel in the library,
➢ Nonfunctional of any professional association at the national level that would enhance the status of the profession as well as promote the library service in the country,
➢ Acquisition of library material due to the poor performance of publishing and book-selling industry in the country.

7.2 Some development
Important development in the field is the publication of the king's order-in –council No 3 (1978) being the copyright (Amendment) order 1978, which confers the legal deposit status upon the library of the University, the National Library and the SNLA. The order requires every publisher in the country to deliver one copy of every book coming out of his press to each of the enumerated libraries with effect from14th April, 1978. A seminar was organized by the government and the CRIT (Coordinating Centre for Regional Information Training –a joint programme of the Kenya National Academy for Advancement of arts and Science and the German Foundation for International Development) in 1979 was a landmark in the development of libraries in Swaziland. The Swaziland National Library Services initiated a partnership with African Library Project in 2008 to develop primary and secondary school libraries throughout Swaziland. SNLS partner with FUNDZA to work with the African Library Project (ALP) to provide learning materials for schools. The African Library Project started in 2005. It is a project which changes lives of book by book by starting libraries in rural Africa. They approach the grassroots, mobilizes U.S.

volunteers, young and old, to organize book drives and ship books to a partner library in Africa. Since 2008 the ALP has provided books for 65 libraries out of which FUNDZA helped to establish 15 ALP libraries in 2010. The school provides the space; furniture and staffing for a library and the partners provide teacher-librarian training and coordinates the book distribution.

8. Challenges of the library profession in Swaziland

A library based education trains people to find out evaluate and present ideas. It also trains critical thinking and develop self-reliant thinking. Swazis are an oral society. Elias Ndwandwe (1991:10) of Macmillian. Swaziland complains that the Swazi society is not a reading society. Swazi tell and listen to stories, they do not read and write. In fact Ndwandwe is not alone in his philosophy. He is supported by schools such as Havard-William (1979:41), Andrew de Heer (1975:119) who claim that the major problem of librarianship in Africa is the strong oral tradition. Altbach (1975:119) adds that illiteracy or low literacy contributes to a limited market for books. Librarians in Africa and Swaziland have bought these ideas of the problem of the oral tradition. Mostly Librarians feel that it is better to wait until a certain level of literacy has been reached before they set up the libraries. Baregu (1972:24) notes that this argument is often used to justify the growth of urban library services at the expense of the taxpayers of the rural areas. The result of this is that libraries of today in Swaziland as a whole are created for few elites just like the libraries which exists in Europe and America before the 18th Century.

9. Conclusion

Although Swaziland librarianship is not very rich in information sources yet, in spite of all constraints on library research faced being a poor nation, it has a significant amount of literature. Information sources discussed above are available for researchers and students of Swaziland librarianship in the University Library and the Swaziland National Library and eminent public libraries in the country as well. The areas in which the compilation of work is needed are many. There is no control over report literature and government publication published in the field of librarianship. Catalogues of the holdings of library schools should also be published.

Library and information development is necessary for every country without it is not possible to get full benefit from the government in education. It is time that any plan adopted for library and information development in the country in the next developmental plan should be taken as a pilot project with well-defined parameters and the time –table should be established for its execution with special consideration to the education and training of library personnel as well as users. It should however be flexible and responsive to change with the changing needs and the priorities of the country. Information is essential commodity and the information centre which may be taken to be the library of today has to change its outlook and methods to make the information flow easy and fruitful for users. The library user depends on the resources of a good library not general enlightenment to the treasure of knowledge. At the end it is recommended that the Swaziland Library Association, with the help of the National Library of Swaziland, should set up a documentation center on the subject of library and information science and should provide all documentation and information facilities to researchers throughout the country.

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