Library and Information Services: Global Best Practices

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Library and Information Services: Global Best Practices

A Report of Ambassador Dr. Sam Jimba Fellowship Award 2013
5th – 12th May, 2013

12/6/2013

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Libraries visited

i. The National Library – Main Building (Biblioteka Narodowa – gmach glowny); al. Niepodleglosci 213

ii. The National Library - Palace of the Commonwealth (Biblioteka Narodowa – Palac Rzeczypospolitej); pl. Krasinskich 3/5

iii. Warsaw Public Library – Central Library of Mazovia Province (Biblioteka Publiczna m. st.Warszawy – Glowna Biblioteka Wojewodztwa Mazowieckiego); ul. Koszykowa 26/28


v. University of Warsaw Library; ul. Dobra 56/66

vi. Mediateka START – META (Multicentrum); ul. Szegedynska 13a

Executive Summary

As the 2013 recipient of the Ambassador Dr. Sam Jimba Fellowship for Young Library and Information Science Professionals Award, I travelled to Warsaw, Poland from 4th – 12th May, 2013, and visited seven libraries, national, academic and public. As a Librarian, working in a University library in Nigeria, I aimed to learn more about the collections and how they are accessible to researchers both in person and remotely via online access to digitization projects.

I travelled round Warsaw from Powsin to Centralny, Niepodleglosci, Koszykowa in Mazova Province, Ochota, Dobra and Szegedynska. At each library I met a variety of staff with different responsibilities – for reader services, special collections, and digitization/web projects – and divided my time between discussions and tours of the facilities, both reading rooms and stack areas.

The tour ended in the National Library where it started, with a meeting with the Polish librarians’ Association General Board members. During the meeting, little comparison was made between the PLA and the NLA, pointing out similarities and dissimilarities in composition and mode of operations. The high point of the discussion was the NLA 50th Anniversary Uniform which I wore on that day especially for the meeting. They acknowledged the good idea of a National Uniform for the Association and promised to bring it up in their meeting as an idea to imitate.

I have returned to Nigeria with a much greater appreciation of the breadth and depth of the physical collections in the libraries I visited, as well as an understanding of the issues and constraints surrounding the process of making parts of these collections available digitally to researchers remotely. I have also gained contacts for future reference to benefit my work supporting research at the Niger Delta University, as well as learnt more about what resources are accessible for researchers without much stress. I have begun the process of sharing the knowledge I have gained via talks with colleagues and researchers in my environs.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due firstly to the Nigerian Ambassador to Poland, Dr. Samuel Jimba for the initiative and funding of the programme. Secondly, to the Nigerian Library Association/Polish Librarians’ Association and the Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria for granting me the award. I’d particularly like to
thank the NLA President, Alhadji Rilwan Abdulsalami and the CEO/Registrar of the LRCN, Dr. Victoria Okojie for their support and encouragement.

I’m grateful to all the following librarians, tour guides and other members of staff at the libraries I visited, who all gave so generously of their time and knowledge, and made me feel very welcome: Elzbieta Stefanczyk, Katarzyna Slaska, Ewa Korzeniowska, Mr. Martins, Jagoda Zakrzewska, Malgorzata Grzymala, Katarzyna Urbanowicz, Lilianna Nalewajska, Ewa Bukowinska etc.

And finally, thank you to my colleagues at the Niger Delta University Libraries, Federal University Otuoke, Federal Polytechnic, Ekowe, College of Arts and Science, College of Education, all in Bayelsa State and particularly Mr. Esbra Blakes, University Librarian, NDU, Mrs. Oyinkepreye Sawyerr-George, Head Librarian, College of Arts and Science and Chairman, NLA BYS Chapter, for supporting my application for the award with letters of recommendation and communication contact while I was away. Big thank you to Prof. Ebiegburi Alagoa who gave me 9 copies of the books I took to and distributed to libraries I visited in Warsaw, Poland.

Objective
My focus was primarily on learning more about their library and information practices/services i.e. how they are available to researchers, both by visiting the libraries in person and also remotely thanks to digitization projects.

My main objectives were therefore:
* To learn about the process of registering as a researcher and accessing materials within the libraries; what restrictions there are for different categories of researchers and/or material; thereby to be better able to support students and researchers as against our present system.
* To learn more about the digitization projects being undertaken to make parts of the collections available outside the physical location; the issues, constraints and policy decisions behind what is and isn’t being digitized; whether digitized material is freely available on the web or provided by a commercial supplier; plans for future development.
* To make professional personal contacts with librarians and staff working in major libraries.
* To share information and raise awareness as to state of libraries in Nigeria.

Secondary objectives were as follows:
* To learn more about the libraries’ use of social media; It is also a valuable means of engagement with remote researchers and means of providing access to digitized resources and so supports one of my main objectives
* To further enrich my knowledge of global best practices
Monday 6th May, 9am – 4pm
The National Library – Main Building (Biblioteka Narodowa – gmach glowny)

Founded in 1928 and located around the central part of Warsaw, it holds more than 9,000,000 information collections in all spheres. It has the legal repository right to collect 2 copies of each information material published in the country, 1 for circulation and the other for archives. It also has about 900 staff as its work force including professional librarians, organizing department, Preservation department, laboratories (non-librarians) and other support staff and a beautiful large expanse of garden by its two entrances.

The Nigerian Ambassador to Poland, Dr. Sam Jimba and I were welcomed to the library at 9.00 am, and held a meeting with Mrs. Elzbieta Stefanczyk, President of Polish Librarians’ Association.

Thereafter, between 9.15 and 10.30am, I had another meeting with the Director for Digitization, Katarzyna Slaska, who took me on a tour of the Digitization Department. Digitization in the National Library started in year 2007 and the aim is to have all information materials in their holding digital form where possible. But, because of copy right, they do not digitize and make available current books without the author or publishers’ permission. They digitize material before 1941 mostly concerning history, cookery, gardening, football, etc. They are also digitizing some materials to influence the younger generation towards digital collections to equate followership and viewership of YouTube and Facebook. They also have funding problems.
From 10.30am to 12noon, I was given a tour around the library (storage rooms and history of the building), with a good deal of information about the background and work of the library. The storage room holds most of the collections in electrically operated steel shelves in the first floor of the eleven story building.

This is because all books cannot be shelved in the six reading rooms, due to space. They are however made available to users through request placed, within 30 minutes. The request is sent in a filled form with the bibliographic description of the book copied from the catalogue (online database or catalogue card) from a reading room to the storage in a tray through a conveyor and the book sent back through that route. The storage room is not accessible to all staff. During this time, my tour guide, Ewa Korzeniowska, fainted and was replace for the day by Mr. Martins.

After lunch break, the tour continued with a visit to the Preservation Department: Laboratory and Microbiology Department between 13.30pm and 15.00pm. Here I met with Bogdan Filip Zerek, Head of the Section of Microbiological Control and Preservation of Unypical Collection, who gave me a concise lecture of the process of books and other materials preservation while monitoring and conditioning the air to maintain a particular temperature for the books in storage and open stack.

Tuesday 7th May, 9am – 10:30am
The National Library - Palace of the Commonwealth (Biblioteka Narodowa – Palac Rzeczypospolitej)
The Palace of the Commonwealth was constructed 1688 to 1699. After passing through several hands, destructions and reconstructions, it became part of the National library founded in 1928, in 1932. The Palace houses special collections, which is manuscripts, early printed books published before 1800, prints and drawings. The Palace currently holds some 20,000 volumes of books.

I met my contact person who welcomed and took me inside the Palace building to meet the librarian who then took me through the history of the building and the collections and the community they serve. That usually the palace is not open to the public except during occasions as the collections are prized and for security reasons. There are reading rooms for researchers only who are allowed to access some of the collections. Renovation work is ongoing.

Tuesday 7th May, 11am – 4pm
The National Library – Main Building (Biblioteka Narodowa – gmach glowny)
We transported to the National Library main building where we started the previous day at about 11am and spent the rest of that day’s tour visiting the Reading Rooms and the Preservation Department and Mass Preservation Department, Circulation section, Reading rooms and the Music department.

Learning Point:
1. The Library is completely computerized
2. The Library serve all category of users
3. Only 18yrs and above are eligible to use the library and its collections
4. Most of its 9,000,000 collections are in storage rooms only made available to users on request
5. A user have the right to reserve a particular book for his/her use within the library for six days maximum, subject to extension if other users are not waiting for that same book
6. The Library is a repository by Polish law of two copies of all information materials published in Poland
7. The Library is heavily involved in digitization of all information materials (books, microfilms, newspapers, pictures etc.) from 16th century collections to 1941 and making them available electronically, soft and hard copies according to readers demand. Any material from 1942 can only be digitized under permission due to copy right and Polish law. All digitized original copies of materials are not made available to users.
8. Books are borrowed upon refundable deposit as collateral and overdue after two loan extensions
9. Books can be requested and reserved online and loan period extended as well
10. The Libraries Preservation Department (laboratory and microbiology department) and the Mass Preservation Department is second to none I saw in Warsaw, Poland
11. The library cooperates with other libraries to make information materials available through inter library loan facility of only circulating items
12. Books in the Palace of the Common Wealth are not lendable
Wednesday 8th May, 11am – 3pm
Warsaw Public Library – Central Library of Mazovia Province (Biblioteka Publiczna m. st.Warszawy – Główna Biblioteka Województwa Mazowieckiego);

The Warsaw Public Library founded in 1907 upon the initiative of 'The Public Library Society', holds a collection of approximately 1,500,000 volumes of books as at the end of 2011. In 1964 the library acquired the legal right to receive an obligatory copy of each printed book in Poland. The collection is enriched by selected publications of foreign languages, with particular attention to encyclopedias, dictionaries and other information publications. In addition to books and magazines the library is collecting special items such as maps, manuscripts, CDs, cassettes, drawings and illustrations and photographs.

My contact person, Jagoda Zakrzewska and her colleague welcomed me at the entrance of the library building and took me to meet with the Chief Librarian first. Between 11am and 3pm I was given a comprehensive tour of the library and lunch.

Wednesday 8th May, 3:15pm – 7pm

After lunch, I was sent to the Children’s Library at Ochota, which is part of the Public library. I first with Malgorzata Grzymala, my tour guide. She explained to me that the library is one in a network of five libraries serving children and the communities. Malgorzata then took me on a tram ride to visit one other library not in the itinerary to witness their community awareness programme and exhibition. There I met a lot of people who turned out children and adults, vendors, fortune tellers, artists and staff from Embassy of Ecuador who had a stand. This was something entirely new to me and it was fascinating to learn about how the various people can be drawn to make use of the library facilities and spaces. I was delighted to be introduced to different people that I am an ambassador of the Nigerian Library Association to Poland.

Finally I ended my day with a very long ride home on a tram and bus, by about 8.30pm.
Learning Point:
1. The Library register free of charge and serve primarily the people of Warsaw, with a library card that is valid for 5yrs
2. Book is borrowed for a month period upon deposit of a refundable sum as stipulated by the library authority and overdue charged after extension lapse or failure to renew.
3. 13yrs and above eligible to use the library, under 18yrs not eligible to borrow books
4. ICT use is free of charge for 3hrs per user a day
5. Use of the Audio Visual facilities are available with a special card for readers
6. There are separate reading rooms for Arts, Music, reference materials and magazines
7. All the library holdings are in database and available to readers for searching
8. All information in card catalogue are also in book form 1795 – 1970
9. The Library does book preservation
10. All materials before 1941 is digitized and made available on the World Wide Web
11. The Public Library of Warsaw has 11 children’s libraries under it, with 5 networked in Ochota district
12. The children libraries serve communities of both children and adults
13. Children are allowed 30mins on computer and their accounts blocked if another user is waiting, and allowed to continue if user is waiting to use the systems
14. The library cooperate with individuals, NGOs and GOs to organize shows for children and host communities
15. OPAC allows users to reserve books online, change date of return and prolong loan period twice maximum after initial 1 month if no other user is waiting for that book
16. Social Media use – Facebook and other social media are used by the libraries for announcement, solicitation, to get feedback, suggestion for purchase etc. blogging used specially for children’s books
17. The children’s library carries out awareness drive of the host and surrounding communities, emphasizing computer literacy and language
18. Volunteers work for the libraries free of charge especially on ICT, education and organizing, giving room for minimum of 3 regular library staff attending to over 300 patrons daily
19. 20m zlotys (N100,000,000.00) yearly for children’s books by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage

Thursday 9th May, 10am – 4pm
The University of Warsaw Library founded in 1816 is the main library of the University holding one of the three largest collections of scientific books in Poland. The library holdings as at end of 2011 stood at 3,052,773 volumes including – books: 1,953,604 – journals: 703,620 – special collections (early prints, manuscripts, music collection, maps, ephemera): 395,549. The Library primarily serves the University of Warsaw academic community of over 50,000 students and more than 6,000 faculty members. The main library and 47 faculty libraries form the library and information system at the University. The Library also offers its services and resources to the general public – everyone who is over 16 years of age has the right to use the collections on the premises of the library. The main library is a 10-minutes’ walk from the main campus of the University.

My afternoon began with a tour around the library building. Situated by the left hand side of the building are a unique garden that speaks volume, the lush greens and little brook that ran a beautiful course holding some rare fish species, with relaxation concrete benches scattered around, is a sight to behold. The garden ascended to the rooftop of the building, giving a good aerial view of the environs sprawling with skyscrapers tourists.

This was a stimulating session, mostly focusing on digital aspects – access to records and the online catalogue and finding aids, digitization, and use of social media. It gave me a much better appreciation of the difficulties involved in providing and improving access online and how those are affected and shaped by the practicalities of managing and providing access to archival records.

It was illuminating to learn about the Virtua System in the library, which has a database of 906,218 bibliographic records and patron record of 154,133. They are only using three modules of the VTLS/Virtua System for cataloguing, circulation and OPAC. Other library works such as acquisitions are done in external programmes which are created by the IT department staff is MS Access programmes.

I next visited the NUKAT Centre. NUKAT Union Catalogue came into existence in July 2002. It is based on the idea of shared cataloguing a union database intended as a source of ready bibliographic data to by freely copied by libraries. This due to a widely recognized need for rationalization of cataloguing, protection against work duplication and construction of national source of consistent data available for automatic modification. The union catalogue is provided with buffer – a working space that protects the catalogue against any uncontrolled modification of its content.
Learning Point:
1. The UW library doubles as University and Public library, with half of its 150,000 registered users being student and the other half from the host community and other users.
2. 18yrs and above after secondary school use the library to prepare for maturity examination.
3. A library card is valid for 2 years.
4. Internet and photocopy services are personal services which requires a prepaid card to operate.
5. 24hrs library service 1 week before an during examination period.
6. Orientation for freshmen and other enquiries are handled by the Information Desk.
7. Traditional card catalogue is still in use for books from 1801 – 1997, while 1998 to date data are online.
8. Students can borrow 6 books for 30 day initially, Post-graduate students 10 books for 60 days and lecturers (Dr./Profs) 30 books for 90 days.
9. Books in open stack are marked with red and blue labels, only books with red labels or red dot can be borrowed.
10. The use of OPAC to access and make online requests, reservations etc.
11. Staff and students of UW have on-site and remote access to e-books and e-journals.
12. The library provides access to computers with MS Office software without Internet availability. Papers may be printed or saved on USB flash drives.
13. Digital library for public domain and digital reproductions of documents published by the University staff.
14. Digital Books Library for persons with disabilities is manned by volunteers who do audio recording of printed text as requested, using digital technology which allows users to select specific chapters, pages or footnotes.
15. Participation in Union Catalogue.
16. Faculty libraries have their own budgets and funding separate from the main library although they all together form the UW library information system.
17. The library is a repository by law of Polish publications.

Friday 10th May, 10am – 12pm
Mediateka START – META (Multicentrum); Szegedynska
I was greeted by a support staff of the library who took me to the Librarian, Ewa Bukowinska. This is a public library that serves a community of both children and adults. Children’s and young adults’ culture exists in multiple forms and media, from nursery rhymes and oral storytelling to videogames, from printed books to eBooks... As we know, libraries play a key role in preserving this cultural heritage and in giving access to it. How are they doing this? What must they do now so that this heritage is not lost and cultural diversity is preserved? How are they giving young people access to their cultural heritage? I was shown its collections and playground for children in a section of the library, its extra-curricular activity area (IQ Ring), cinema, which answered the questions. The library is fully automated.

Learning point:
1. Automated systems, books borrowed can be returned to the library even when the library is closed through an ATM machine attached to the library building and automatically processed on the users library card (electronic)
2. All information materials have an electronic card affixed to them that contains the bibliographic description of the book and information of the particular book circulation
3. Children who are not eligible to borrow books can do so under their parents account.
4. The library’s audio visual section has audio books and the facility to access them, so too are video films, audio CDs etc.
5. The library is unique for providing facilities for library users to practice scientific creations and music making (IQ Ring).
6. Preservation of cultural diversity and heritage

Meeting with the Polish Librarians Association, 2pm – 3pm
My visit ended with a lunch and meeting with the President, Mrs. Elzbieta Stefanczyk and a member of the General Board of the Polish Librarians’ Association, at the National Library. Actually, a meeting with members of the general board was scheduled for 12.30pm, but logistics meant a little delay the meeting was held by 2pm without the entire members.

Talking Point:
1. The PLA is 45yrs older than the NLA
2. The PLA General Board is the NLA’s Executive Committee
3. The PLA’s National Congress of Delegates is the NLA’s Council
4. Membership strength of the PLA is over 9,000 while that of the NLA is over 5,000
5. Membership of PLA is by registration while the NLA is open to all library staff.
6. PLA General Board is elected every four (4) years while that of the NLA is for two (2) years.
7. The PLA’s operations are based on its members’ voluntary activity
8. Membership is free
9. The PLA generate funds for its statutory activity primarily from sale of books and magazines offered by its Publishing House run by the Association’s General Board as part of its business activity. It also gets fund from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Book Institute, advertisements at conference sites, in publications and on PLA’s digital platform. The NLA is also getting funds from those channels except having and running a Publishing House.
10. The PLA’s “Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professional” is in a book form and made available to all members of the Association
11. The PLA has no body like the LRCN
12. The PLA’s National Congress of Delegates, equivalent to the NLA’s Council, elects the President from its members.
13. The PLA has all about it in print titled “Sharing Knowledge and Skill” for free distribution to all for easy knowledge about its modus operandi.

**General Learning Points**

One of the unexpected benefits of a trip such as this is the parallels that it enables you to draw between libraries which may seem more or less similar on the surface. All the libraries I visited are computerized. My visits underlined for me however just how small a drop in the ocean the digitized material really is, and how inconsistent the online representation for different subjects and time periods. While it is increasingly possible to conduct substantial primary source research without travelling to libraries and archives in the United States, Europe, Asia, South America, beyond a certain point there is no substitute for visiting in person. Seeing the magnificent collections and so many treasures up close as I was privileged to be able to do, I learnt to appreciate more than I had previously what you learn from the physicality of the items and collections themselves.

On a more mundane level, I gained a much greater understanding of the processes involved in visiting the various libraries, which will enable me to pass on information and tips to students and researchers here on how they can access foreign databases and locating information.

I also found the trip thoroughly stimulating in terms of both my personal and professional interest in and understanding of best global practices, which can only strengthen my ability to provide a high quality research support service to library users at the Niger Delta University Library and other libraries in Bayelsa State.

**Digitization:** In my discussions with the various librarians and other staff that I met, I found striking similarities in their approach to their collections, accessibility, and digitization. There is a real desire to open up their libraries and their collections to the public and anyone engaged in academic and social research and an enthusiasm in the benefits of the web to enable them to reach new, diverse and distant audiences. From the point of view of remote researchers, the amount of material becoming available online, often freely, is a real and genuinely transformative advantage, and even though what is available in this way is only ever going to be a drop in the ocean of the vast and rich collections held in libraries worldwide.

Digitization and availability online and in other formats is the best way libraries can assist researchers and students in accessing rare materials, century old books, maps, illustrations or files on loose sheets of paper, microfilms etc., irrespective of time, space and number of users while retaining the original copies in safe storage.
**Preservation of Culture and Heritage:** most books in Polish libraries especially the National and public libraries are of Polish extraction as they are documents of the country’s long history and provide important commentary on their intellectual achievements and participation in universal culture. The National Library is using biological means and other measures such as digitization to preserve old books, photographs, microfilm etc. from the 16th century to 1940 and make them available to library users in different formats.

**Concentration on Polish Publications:** the priority of the Polish libraries in book collection is Polish publications (publications in Polish, by Polish authors and about Poland) and very few about other countries and in other languages. In Warsaw Public Library there is only one magazine that carried the story of Fela and Femi Anikulakpo Kuti’s music exploit and Lagos, among all the libraries visited even the University Library.

**Internet and Social Media:** I also learnt a great deal from my wider discussions about the changing research environment and the role of the Internet and social media, and these have provided food for thought both in terms of my approach to my role as academic Librarian. Facebook, Blackberry messenger, linked-in, Netlog, Blogging etc are used to make announcements, communicate to users about library activities and events, community awareness, feedback from users, suggestions for purchases or acquisitions of information materials.

**Library and Book Security:** One unique thing I found out was that all the libraries have electronic anti-theft, not easily visible to the eyes, security mechanisms in-build in each copy of the books. It is extremely difficult for a staff or user to move out of the libraries with a book or any other information material.

**Union Catalogue:** the development and use of a National Union Catalogue is of great importance for many cooperation libraries. This saves cost, time and prevents duplication of a particular information resource that is readily available to all.

**Recommendations/Suggestions**

1. The NLA should partner the NUC to encourage all academic libraries that are yet to computerize their operating system for users to access their catalogue online and request to use books in storage which are not shelved due to lack of space. The first Law of library science says “books are for use” and most library users these days prefer browsing with the computer than browsing the physical card catalogue.
2. Digitization of information materials project is not for all libraries given the present economic structure and situation of our country. It is highly recommended that the National Library should take up this costly project. Secondly, digitized information materials must be made available in different format to all interested researchers in the country irrespective of discipline.
3. NLA/LRCN should step up training of librarians on the effectiveness of computer in library operations
4. NLA/LRCN should encourage States on library networking
5. The National library should design and host a National Union Catalogue to help less funded and small libraries (academic, public and special) to save cost and time and prevent duplication of physical description of a particular item.
6. The use of social media for library and information services should be encouraged to build sustained interest in the users towards the library.
7. Libraries should concentrate on the acquisition of Nigerian books (published in Nigeria, by Nigerian author and about Nigeria), with will help in preserving and transmitting our culture and heritage.

8. NLA/LRCN should publish in book form the code of Ethics of Library and Information Professional in Nigeria and make same available to members.

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