

The Role of  
the Librarian  
in the  
New Africa

*An Inaugural Lecture*

GIVEN IN THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF  
RHODESIA AND NYASALAND

D. H. Varley

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*An Inaugural Lecture  
given in the University College of  
Rhodesia and Nyasaland  
on 5 October 1962*

*by*

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## THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARIAN IN THE NEW AFRICA

TWO years ago almost to the day my predecessor in office, Mr. Derek Clarke, delivered his Inaugural Lecture in this Theatre on the responsibilities of the college library to the community, and more particularly on the relationship between the community of this Federation and the Library of this University College (1). As the founding librarian he was well qualified to speak on this subject; he had waited five years to do so, and after the first five years of any enterprise it is good to take your bearings, especially if the policies you outline are your own.

As it happened, Mr. Clarke's Inaugural turned out to be his Valedictory, for shortly afterwards he succumbed to the siren calls of the River Mersey, and was appointed Librarian to the University of Liverpool. A year later his Deputy, Mr. Harry Fairhurst, who had most ably shared with him the pioneering work of establishing this College Library, was raised to the power and office of Librarian to the new collegiate University of York. Apart from the oblique compliment paid to our University College by the seduction of its two founding librarians, there is a nice Shakespearian symmetry about their respective destinations. To quote the Earl of Richmond in the closing scene of *King Richard the Third* (2),

We will unite the white rose and the red—  
Smile Heaven upon their fair conjunction!

In essence, Mr. Clarke maintained, this College Library has three major responsibilities in descending order of urgency: to the College staff and students, for purposes of

study and research; to the wider community of learning, through the broadest possible measure of co-operation; and, as its only general learned library, to Central Africa as a whole. He went on to describe the different kinds of services that were needed to fulfil each of these responsibilities, services which it has been the task of his successors to encourage, expand, and consolidate.<sup>1</sup> The functions and responsibilities of a college library have been the subject of several important and thoughtful studies recently, one of which, written by the Librarian of the University of Western Australia, is likely to become a minor classic in its field (3). It would be work of supererogation to go over the ground covered by Mr. Jolley in his claim for the recognition of the scholarly and positively educational functions of the professional staff in an academic library. I have chosen instead to take a different and perhaps more controversial line, in which the relationship between the college library and the wider world may not appear to be obvious or immediately relevant, except to those of us who have chosen to live in this 'fiery continent' of Africa.

My theme follows, in effect, the implications of the third and, for his argument, the least pressing of the library's responsibilities as stated by Mr. Derek Clarke in his Inaugural Lecture: the field of external relations. For even

<sup>1</sup> One such development has been the compilation of a 'union catalogue' of scientific, technical, and learned periodicals held in the libraries of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, as recommended in the Kingwill Report of 1957. The basic volume, edited by Mr. James Hutton, was published in loose-leaf form in 1962, covering about 4,300 titles and 7,000 entries in more than ninety libraries in the area. Although necessarily incomplete, it is the first attempt to record the detailed holdings and whereabouts of the research libraries of Central Africa. It is being maintained in card form in the College Library, and will be supplemented from time to time as part of the work of the Scientific Information Service maintained with government support at the Library.

since he spoke, in 1960, the pace of African change has quickened, and all our time-tables have had to be revised. Even in the traditionally pensive world of a university college we have been caught up in the dynamics of a rapidly changing society—no one reading the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference on the Development of Higher Education in Africa held at Tananarive in September 1962 can have any doubts about that (4). In brief, therefore, now that this College Library is comparatively well established, it is time to ask what part it should play on the larger African stage. To what extent and with how much conviction should the librarian in Africa lean out, so to speak, from his so-called ivory tower, and not only take cover, but take part?

My own thoughts on this far-ranging subject, not unnaturally, are governed by the experience of half a working lifetime spent in libraries chiefly in Southern Africa, for although London-born, most of my library life has been spent in this continent, fossicking bibliographically around. Twelve years ago, in 1950, I was fortunate enough to be given a roving commission in the Rhodesias of pre-Federation days. My assignment was to sum up the library situation in these three territories, and to recommend ways in which the existing facilities could be usefully transformed into what one was rash enough, even then, to call a national library service for all races at all levels of comprehension. Alas, soon afterwards prosperity set in, and the Report that was produced on that occasion has already aged into Rhodesiana—a sure case of death by pigeon-holing (5).

By way of contrast, twelve *days* ago I was quartered on the University campus at Enugu, the regional capital of Eastern Nigeria, again cogitating on library problems.

This time they were the problems not of a single country, or even of three, but of the whole of Africa between the Tropics, with a generous overflow each way. The occasion was a Seminar on Public Library Development in Africa organized by Unesco in co-operation with the Government of Eastern Nigeria. It was in fact a follow-up to the first Regional Seminar organized at Ibadan in 1953, as a result of which Enugu had been chosen as the centre of a model public library service in an emergent West African state (6). Much had happened in the years between. At Ibadan, the participants were chiefly African by adoption: fewer than a third were Africans by birth. At Enugu, in a slightly larger group, more than half the participants were French-speaking, five-sixths were black or brown, and the rest of us, according to the climate, various shades of pink. Between us we represented, not 'moonshine', but men and women from twenty-eight African states facing the great question-mark in Africa today: how to equip the people at large, *and in time*, with a progressive understanding of the cataclysmic social and technological changes which they are fated to undergo in the second half of this already cataclysmic twentieth century—a forbidding and challenging assignment.

In this task the libraries and librarians of the universities and colleges of Africa will be called upon to play a leading part. This indeed is the main justification for my choosing this subject for this Inaugural Lecture, and the thread upon which my arguments will be strung tonight.

One last interpolation: in the title of this lecture, it is the *librarian*, and not the library, the person and not the institution, with whom we are chiefly concerned. For in Africa it is the *librarian* whose character and enterprise will

determine to a large extent the success or failure of the library as a genuinely effective social institution. Moreover, while all professions and callings have their oddities and eccentrics (and the librarians seem to have had more than most), the public image of the librarian in Africa is not yet stereotyped, and we therefore have a fair chance of avoiding the situation percipiently observed by Dr. T. T. Pater-son in his much-studied report on the restructuring of the Public Service in Southern Rhodesia (7): that in the general estimation there are two kinds of public servants—the ‘good’ and the ‘typical’. In real life, librarians are people, too, and in Africa they have the opportunity of helping to shape the future of a continent. Thomas à Kempis, it is true, once prayed to be delivered from the temptation to meddle with things beyond his charge (8); but a worse sin would be to stand aside like Gallio (9), and disclaim any responsibility whatsoever.

## II

Africa as a whole, and more particularly those parts of it which are undergoing this period of intense change, is inhabited by people of diverse backgrounds, customs, languages; and homelands. To generalize in this way about a continent is doubtless sheer folly, but in the estimation of its own leaders this continent has certain areas of common cause, one emergent state with another. The common factor may be ignorance, and the impulse to replace it by knowledge; or poverty, and the common impulse to raise standards of living by transforming the structure of whole economies. The patchwork history of Africa between the Tropics, especially during the past 300 years; the legacies of invasion, whether military or economic, and of colonization, for motives high or low, or both at the



same time: all these have contributed to the contemporary surge of social change. Add to this brew the technological revolution which tolerates no boundaries, not even space, and the telescoping into a decade or so of changes which took our grandfathers half a century to assimilate, and you have the bare elements of the African situation with which we who live here have to deal.

Of the 250-odd million people who inhabit this comparatively thinly populated land-mass it is thought that 100 million still cannot read or write or take part in those activities we rather arbitrarily describe as 'literate'. Economists, educationists of the wider world, conscious of the gigantic effort needed to leaven the lump of illiteracy, have attempted, however improbably, to calculate firstly the extent to which these people can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps; secondly, how much technical aid from outside they will need; and thirdly, how the whole problem can be broken down into areas, periods, phases, and tolerably achievable programmes.

One such exercise is an attempt to teach the 100 million present illiterates in Africa how to read by 1980, within an educational programme which is intended to be 'a means for promoting the economic growth and social progress of the Continent' (10). But if this statement is to have any real impact on daily living, it seems clear that the key to this part of the master plan is the educational process. If 100 million people who cannot at present read or write, or indeed if only 100, are to be taught how to do so, some means must surely be found to keep them reading. What is more, there are the other 150 million who can already read a little, or some of them, perhaps, a good deal: they must be kept reading, too—not to mention the generations of readers yet unborn (11).

Given the fact that, with a couple of notable exceptions, few of the newly independent African states yet have organized library services, and many have nothing at all, and that both the trained and trainable manpower and the means of training the librarians to put this part of the programme into effect, are almost entirely wanting—then the dimensions of the problem can be seen in something like their true proportions. But it is a challenge that must be met, and it is to a large extent in the African universities that a start will have to be made, and has indeed already been made, to bridge the yawning gulf.

### III

In general, librarians tend to divide themselves into two groups: those with a flair to collect and conserve, and those with an urge to distribute, disseminate, and, in brief, communicate the materials and tools of their trade. This is of course only partly true. There are many excellent librarians who contrive to collect and distribute, conserve and disseminate, without losing either their heads or their equilibrium.<sup>1</sup> But on the whole the distinction is a valid one, functional as well as temperamental.

In this matter of *conservation*, every librarian, in his grander moments, can afford to regard himself as a modest custodian of the corpus of human knowledge. From earliest days this was his prime function: the *armarius* of the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Justice (later Sir Perceval) Laurence, in his inaugural address to the first (and abortive) Conference of South African librarians in Johannesburg on 5 April 1903, called for the training of librarians with 'a combination of wide literary knowledge, practical training, businesslike habits and a good deal of what has been described as flexibility of adaptation'. Appealing for the happy mean in these matters, Laurence quoted the Chairman of an important institution as complaining somewhat plaintively: 'I can't get my librarian to take any interest in incunabula: his mind is engrossed by the question of umbrella stands' (*Report of the Association for the Advancement of Science for 1904*, pp. 526-37).

medieval monastery had duties not at all unlike the basically administrative ones of a college librarian today. But in Africa, as always, there is still something new: in this case, a strange gap in our evidence about the spread of knowledge in this last of all land-areas to be explored and exploited. It is a gap that is rapidly being narrowed, but the history of the book in Africa, as a cultural medium, has still to be written.

It is, of course, a distinguishing feature of peoples in the 'old' Africa that they did not feel the need to set down their thoughts in written form. As one modern writer has put it, taking into account the climate and the fragility of written documents, writing would not have had much purpose: what would have been the sense in confining the thoughts of men to a material substance whose physical life was known to be so transient? Hence one might expect the corpus of wisdom to be contained very largely within the boundaries of what is now, sometimes painfully, being reconstructed as 'oral tradition'. At the same time, the indications are that we exaggerate the 'booklessness' of Middle Africa, if by this term 'book' we mean 'records of all kinds'.

We know, for instance, that many books and manuscripts found their way into the interior from the 'literary fringe'. Leo Africanus, who for nearly three centuries was accepted as the infallible authority on the interior of the western part of the continent, has much to say on the traffic into the interior: exports to Timbuktu of European cloth, wearing apparel, horses, and books, in exchange for gold, slaves, and civet, while in the city itself he saw 'divers manuscripts or written books out of Barbarie, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise' (12). A similar story will no doubt be told of the

east coast when the many Arabic sources, now being sifted for the first time, have been thoroughly examined.

Historians of Africa, indeed, are constantly discovering new evidence that disproves the old conception of a completely unlettered continent. At one time it was imperative, if you were seeking the original source-materials of African history, to ransack the inventories in the archives and libraries of the metropolitan powers—in Lisbon, Paris, London, Brussels, Copenhagen, and The Hague, and, if you thought of it in time, in Cairo. It is symptomatic of the new Africa, or at least of those states which have already acquired a sense of the continuous past through long association with the outside world, that the processes have begun to flow in the reverse direction. While one may still have to travel to Europe to consult the administrative documents of the former colonial powers, you may now see well-directed and well-constructed national and regional archives in Africa itself, such as those at Ibadan, Enugu, Accra—and indeed, at Salisbury, Lusaka, and Zomba—centres of indigenous historical research, and the most cheering sign of national maturity. Indeed, for the first time and through new eyes it has become possible to see Africa in a total historical perspective, and in this task the historians, the archivists, and the librarians have all contributed their share.

This process, however, is still in its early stages, and in the field that concerns librarians most closely—that of printing, and above all, indigenous printing—there is still much to be done. For the printing-press, constructed for the first time with movable type in fifteenth-century Europe, and subsequently used as a proselytizing instrument by missionaries and administrators alike, seems to have played a comparatively minor role in the life of the people of tropical

Africa—not least because printing presupposes a literate reading public, or at least one of sufficient dimensions to make the effort worth while.

Even now we know curiously little about the earliest imprints in Central Africa north of the area comprised within Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Professor C. R. Boxer of King's College, London, recently unearthed a reference to the arrival of a German missionary printer in the Congo estuary in the early 1500's—contemporary with Leo Africanus's account of Timbuktu; and he may well have produced there some of the earliest printed material in that part of Africa. But this continent is full of mirages, both climatic and bibliographic, and whatever evidences there may once have been of printing activity in those parts have long since fallen victim to the all-conquering termite and the omniverous African bush.

One consequence of this literary drought is that the main *printed* sources for African studies still have to be sought elsewhere. Speaking on the great need for local documentation services at the International Seminar on Inter-University Co-operation in West Africa, held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in December 1961, Mr. John Harris, librarian at Ibadan University, commented on the fact that until there is, in each country, some centre where people, interested in national development, aspirations, and ideas, can find the full range of that country's resources in terms of books and thought, it is still, so to speak, in intellectual servitude. Referring to the lack of local resources of original material to support the study of African languages, Mr. Harris said that he knew of nowhere in Nigeria where one might get nearly as complete documentation as in the School for Oriental and African Studies in London (13). This situation is rapidly being remedied, largely through the judicious

use of photocopying facilities, but even here it is salutary to remember that the ephemera of African indigenous printing are not always to be sought in Europe alone.

It is, for example, an interesting side-light on the chequered history of European penetration into Africa that, in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century, what is probably the finest collection of mission imprints in this continent was being built up in Cape Town at the instance of the Governor, Sir George Grey. Many of these items were at that time of prime interest not so much for their content as for the fact that they recorded for the first time—and sometimes for the last—the indigenous vernaculars, as interpreted by the missionaries in East, West, Central, and Southern Africa, before the invention of the phonograph or the tape recorder. Many of these imprints, therefore, are in the original sense of the word, unique.

Dr. W. H. I. Bleek, a predecessor of mine as Curator of the Grey Collection at the South African Public Library in Cape Town, busied himself with these African incunabula relating to territories as far separated in space as Madagascar and Mauretania. When Mr. John Harris visited Cape Town a few years ago, trying to re-create the printing history of Nigeria, we were able to show him a number of West African imprints—the incunabula of the jungle—which could in no wise be found on the market today, nor even in the great libraries of Europe (14). The migration of indigenous materials, and their recovery at least in facsimile if not in their pristine form, is a subject that still awaits its chronicler in Africa, and a fascinating story it will prove to be.

In this way, and on this level, the librarian may find that his task as a conservator leads him into strange places. He may

not be teaching the multitude to read, it is true, but in a small way he is contributing to their collective heritage of self-knowledge. In the process he has learned a good deal about the physical aspects of conserving the records of the past—whether written or printed—and while no book is really at its best after having been taken to pieces and sprayed with insecticide, we at least now have the climate and the termite reasonably under control in the tropical areas. Of man the primary and ultimate destroyer, one could say much, but not in terms that would be appropriate to the present occasion.

#### IV

I shall now turn to the librarian as *communicator*. His first function being to assemble and conserve, his second must be to arrange, organize, and effectively communicate the essence of his wares. Reduced to its essentials, what is communication but the putting of people into touch with one another, the living with the living, and even the living with the dead? What else, indeed, are librarians trying to do for most of their working lives?

But there is nothing simple about communication, even between people who speak the same kind of language and wear the same kind of clothes. I was sharply reminded of this recently in a review of a work by the American critic Mary McCarthy, who was being compared with another writer with whom at first sight she seemed to be harmoniously attuned.

They are both educated, English-speaking ladies; they belong to approximately the same generation; they write books; they are liberal-minded in matters of politics and society. Yet if they were put into the same room together, it is impossible to imagine that any communication could take place between

them. If they were put into a room together *for a long time* (adds the reviewer rather ominously) the possible consequences are dreadful to contemplate, for the fact is, of course, that they belong to different species.

Allowing for journalistic licence (the two ladies, surely, and especially in England, could have talked about the weather), this does demonstrate in a highly unscientific way the complexity of the communication process, and this, in Africa today, and within the rather limited focus of the inquiring librarian, is further complicated by barriers both linguistic and psychological.

In his delightfully lucid and authoritative exposition of these matters published under the title, *Linguistic Barriers to Communication in the Modern World* (15), originally delivered in lecture form at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the Swedish phoneticist Professor Bertil Malmberg makes the point that a host of factors govern the effectiveness of the spoken word, and to a lesser extent the written or printed word. They include such factors as differing traditions, ideologies, political and religious attitudes, quite apart from variations in the sounds themselves, all of which make nonsense of an otherwise plain and straightforward message from one human being to another.

The possibilities and indeed probabilities of misunderstanding between the most well-meaning exponents of two cultures, are the subject of a number of serious and scientific studies, well outside the scope of this lecture. The close reader of pioneer studies such as Leonard Doob's *Communication in Africa* (16), apart from deriving a good deal of legitimate mirth from the many comic situations recorded by missionaries, explorers, educationists, linguists and others in a vast and hitherto uncoordinated



literature, finds himself acquiring a healthy respect for the extent to which communication between members of African societies already exists, and the inappropriateness of much of the book-production aimed in earlier days at the new African reader.

Translated into more concrete terms, it may be said that the librarian in Africa has to be concerned with far more than the face value of the books (or films, or other media) he chooses to handle. The material he selects for his readers, especially in a public library service, must be comprehensible in the fullest sense of the word. So far as the general reader is concerned, much work has already been done in the main regions of tropical Africa to encourage African writing and publishing, both in English and French, and in the most important 'mother-tongues'. The Literature Bureaux have done excellent work both in discovering and encouraging new writing, and in disseminating cheap and readable texts. But the most eloquently and frequently expressed need in all emergent African states is for books in African languages by African writers about Africa; for children's books with illustrations suitable for African conditions, printed in parallel texts—the African language on one page, and English or French on the facing page. In some parts of Africa, one tends to forget that there is a similar request for a parallel text in German, or Portuguese.

These are the hard-core problems which are primarily the concern of educationists, publishers, and linguists, but they are also very much the concern of the librarian, who, as in Ghana, where many school books are now provided free, is constantly experimenting with new methods of helping his potential readers to literacy, and *keeping them there*. At a rather higher level—in the provision of

university texts, for instance, the problem is less acute, since students schooled earlier in English or French are better able to comprehend the available texts and background material. The main problem, then, is not so much the organization of the means to learn and to read, as the provision of material which can be read and comprehended.

It is tempting to try and draw conclusions in these matters from the still slender evidence of reading preferences expressed in questionnaires and surveys such as that compiled by the staff of the Regional Central Library at Enugu, Eastern Nigeria, in 1962, and presented as part of a reassessment report on Unesco's 'pilot project' to the Seminar to which I have referred earlier in this lecture. Much more evidence needs to be assembled from a far wider sample of readers before anything but a localized conclusion can be justified. Indeed, one cannot safely assert more than the belief that in Eastern Nigeria there is a driving need for the writings of gifted Africans in whatever medium comes most readily to them; but the material complications of publication and distribution are such that it will need state and perhaps international aid and action to bring them into their own. Nevertheless it was noted that in the reading records at Enugu over the past five years, the writings of Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, and (some distance behind) Amos Tutuola were high on the list, although still outclassed (why, is anybody's guess) by the works of Marie Corelli, which were leading by a short but *Mighty Atom-ic* head.

The publishing and writing situation in Africa is changing all the time, and in some cases more rapidly than one might suspect. In a recent survey on this subject, Mr. John Harris (whom I have already quoted as a knowledgeable observer) has noted that, of the printing centres in Nigeria

whose products are being received under the legal deposit arrangements at Ibadan, the market city of Onitsha, on the eastern bank of the Niger, is by far the most prolific. No one who has visited this city will ever forget the great covered market, crammed to the roof with serried ranks of stalls full of familiar branded and packaged goods from Europe and America, with gay cotton prints made in England and Holland, and not even the usual locally made 'art'. But in his surprise and even disappointment at finding the exotic so familiar, the visitor may overlook a manifestation of change which Mr. John Reed, of our own University, has aptly called 'the Onitsha Market literature' (17). Spread out on the pavements outside, rubbing shoulders with paperbacks and glossies, one may find several hundred locally printed 'chapbooks', almost entirely by Nigerian writers, and rarely in the vernacular. Their titles vary from the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* and booklets on how to write successful courting letters to your future wife or wives, to political tracts and biographies of local political figures. *Mutatis mutandis* one was reminded of the flood of ephemera poured out by the earliest printing-presses in the Rhine Valley 500 years ago, when for the ordinary man the mysteries of knowledge (if only in the form of 'Old Moore' or its equivalent) gave hope of a fuller life. With thoughts of this kind, on the occasion I myself am describing, the delegates from twenty-eight African states swept back to the college campus at Enugu in four spanking ministerial Jaguars generously put at our disposal by a sympathetic Regional Government, and most of the delegates sat down with a sigh to enjoy an evening of 'high life', the twist, and part 1 of Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone* on that modern marvel of communication, Nigerian television!

## V

If there is an urge for the librarian in Africa to conserve and a compelling demand for him to learn how to communicate, the circumstances of many African states make it even more imperative that he and his fellow-librarians shall devise speedy and effective means to *co-operate* with one another, especially at the stage where technical aid and advice is already available and even plentiful. Like other individualists, librarians do not always take readily to co-operation, which is often admired in the abstract; but with Africa's need to conserve both her high-grade manpower and her economic and financial resources, the sharing of ideas and enterprises becomes a matter of great urgency.

In practical terms this will amount to the sharing of certain common professional services, such as the East African universities have been attempting: the training of indigenous binders; library training at University level, possibly with a finishing-off process overseas for the leaders and 'top administrators'; practical courses for school and community work at lower levels. In some countries the machinery and legislative framework for a network of library services (as in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika) already exists. In others, such as Northern Rhodesia, a good beginning has been made, but the service will need to be strengthened with increased financial support if it is to be fully effective. In other states, such as Nyasaland, the library services are in their formative stages, while in yet others (and Southern Rhodesia is still one of them) the light has yet fully to dawn. Each country can learn from the mistakes and successes of the others, and there is room for much interchange and sharing of ideas

and experience. If this holds for 'English-speaking' African states, it is even more relevant for the 'French-speaking' states, most of which have even farther to go with library organization generally.

It is crystal clear to the library observer as he moves around in this changing continent, that the emergent states desperately need the information on which to base their developing economies, and the investment in organized knowledge that this implies. Outside aid will not last for ever. The interchange of information about one another's publications, scientific research, administrative experience, training methods; reliable and up-to-date documentation centres, using the latest techniques of the library world—all these are the business of the librarian as well as of the administrator. Through regional information bureaux and inter-University co-operation (18) it may yet be possible to avoid the mistakes of the past, and help the new Africans to walk into what one of them has termed 'the World of International Men' (19).

For us in this part of Central Africa this presents a particular opportunity and challenge. Whatever the political shape of things to come, the need for providing technical and professional aid from this University College in particular, will remain. There already exists a non-racial Library Association covering the area of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, representing a fund of goodwill and professional skill, to whose members the library needs of Salisbury, Lusaka, Blantyre, are of common urgency and importance, transcending political boundaries and linguistic differences. Everywhere in the new Africa, the training of librarians at all levels is a major need. In Nigeria it is estimated that 300 trained librarians will be required within the next ten years; the Graduate Institute of Librarianship

at Ibadan is beginning to produce good material for the country's five existing universities, and the demand in other states is equally pressing.

It may therefore turn out that in our own part of Africa the most significant contribution we can make to this gigantic problem is to serve as an example; to build up and conserve teaching and research materials for use on a regional scale (using always, where appropriate, the machinery of photocopy and inter-library loan); to study and conduct research into the best means of effectively communicating the world's knowledge to people who are feverishly eager to learn; and to help in the training of librarians in Africa, for whom a new career and indeed a new world is opening ahead.

These may be over-ambitious objectives, and some may argue that a university college should look first to its own needs and clientele. But a university in Africa today cannot escape wider responsibilities. In training the leaders in Central Africa in the fields of education, medicine, the law, administration, and similar professions, we can hardly afford to ignore the rapidly growing field of librarianship. Some librarians, it is true, tend to become bookmen and nothing else. Others become beguiled by the gadgets and the mechanism of the thing, and go to the other extreme. The truth in Africa, as always, is along the middle road.

The Indian poet and mystic, Rabindranath Tagore, once complimented a Cambridge don on the contents and extent of his book-lined study. Then he turned to his host and remarked: 'You have a great many books here. Do you ever find time to think?' By the same token, I suggest, the final test of a college library's usefulness, and of ours in particular, does not lie in the number or the range of its bookstocks, or even in the splendour of its accommodation

and equipment; but rather in the extent to which it is actively able to help and encourage each individual student to treat books not as sources of authority, but as instruments to think with—and to impart this discipline to all those with whom he may come into contact throughout his life.<sup>1</sup> Beyond this, the college library has a duty to participate and lead, and its librarians should be professionally committed, ‘boots and all’. For whether guides, philosophers, or friends, or all three at the same time, they have a significant and purposeful part to play in the building of the new Africa. It is a task that will tax their skill, ingenuity, and enthusiasm to the utmost. And it is here, and in the other universities and colleges in Africa, that much of their basic thinking will inevitably have to be done.

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Keynes records that Alfred Marshall, the distinguished economist, working before the days of specialized libraries for students, provided his own library resources for his pupils, and devised his own means ‘to lead the raw student from one reference to another until, if he persevered, he became, for that week at least, a walking bibliography on the subject’ (quoted by L. Jolley, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–6, from Keynes’s obituary notice of Mary Paley Marshall, in the *Economic Journal*, vol. 54, pp. 268–84).

6. An account of the Enugu Regional Seminar and its final recommendations to Unesco and governments appeared in the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, Supplement to vol. 17, pt. 2, March–April 1963, pp. 106–22. Many of the findings endorsed the recommendations of the 1953 Ibadan Seminar, published in book form as *Development of Public Libraries in Africa* (Unesco Public Library Manuals, no. 6), Paris, Unesco, 1954. 155 pp.
7. *First Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Organization and Development of the Southern Rhodesia Public Service*, 1961 (C.S.R. 9—1962), p. 214. The Commissioner was Dr. T. T. Paterson.
8. Quoted by Miss Elizabeth Taylor in her article, ‘What is a librarian?’, in *South African Libraries*, vol. 21, pt. 3, Jan. 1954, pp. 61–70.
9. Acts xviii. 17.
10. *Final Report of the Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa*, Addis Ababa, 15–25 May 1962. Paris, Unesco, 1962.
11. ‘Regional Seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa’, in *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, Suppl. to vol. 17, pt. 2, Mar.–Apr. 1963.
12. Quoted from Leo Africanus’s *Description of Africa*, by E. W. Bovill in his *Golden Trade of the Moors*, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 125 ff.
13. *The West African Intellectual Community*, Ibadan University Press, for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1962, pp. 303 ff.
14. O. H. SPOHR, *Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel Bleek: a bio-bibliographical sketch*, University of Cape Town Libraries, 1962. 78 pp.
15. B. MALMBERG, *Linguistic Barriers to Communication in the Modern World*, Ibadan University Press, 1960. 22 pp.
16. L. W. DOOB, *Communication in Africa: a Search for Boundaries*, Yale University Press, 1961. 406 pp. See especially Chapters VII, VIII, and IX.
17. JOHN REED, ‘Chapbooks on the Market’, in *Central African Examiner*, Jan. 1963, pp. 22–23.
18. The Tananarive Conference of 1962 recommended the setting up in Africa of a documentation centre on African studies,



with Unesco help, to be made available to member states, equipped with photostatic facilities, and including reproductions of bibliographic and other source-material primarily for the use of university studies, through the maximum co-operation between university libraries and such documentation centres (*Development of Higher Education in Africa*, pp. 22, 26).

19. It is worth noting that in the emergent states where the political leaders have acquired their formal education in the Western world, and have come to appreciate the value of books and libraries as media of self-education, the library services are comparatively well advanced. See, for instance, the *Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, and his address at the opening of the Accra Central Library in 1956 (recorded in the *Annual Report of the Ghana Library Board* for the year ending 31 Mar. 1957, p. 16).

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