Reader Development and Reading Promotion

Recent Experiences from Seven Countries in Africa


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The promotion of books and reading, through displays, booklists, author visits and other such tools, has long been an activity carried out by libraries. But active involvement by librarians in the reading development of children, young people and adults is something that has become part of library programmes only within the last decade. And although reader development has dramatically increased in recognition and growth in recent years, it is not yet universally regarded as a core aspect of service provision in libraries. What is meant by the term ‘reader development’ in libraries can be unclear. One definition offered by Rachel Van Riel, a director of one of the UK’s first reader development agencies, is ‘active intervention to open up reading choices, increase readers’ enjoyment and offer opportunities for people to share their reading experiences’.¹ It thus differs from book promotion in that it is not just the book that is promoted but also the reading experience: it sells the reading experience and what it can do for you, rather than selling individual books or writers. It recognizes that reading has a crucial role to play in creating independent learners, underpinning literacy skills and educational attainment, and helping people understand themselves and others better. It starts with librarians introducing very young babies to books and carries on throughout the ages. Reader development services are essentially pro-active. It is acceptable for librarians to actively encourage reading and help with reading choices.

Carnegie and SCECSAL
The Carnegie Corporation of New York’s current programme supporting the development of public libraries in Africa recognizes that it is critical to establish a reading culture in Africa. Reader development lies at the

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heart of the programme. Therefore the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) – which is contracted by Carnegie to provide technical support and advice to the public library programme – saw the meeting of the Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African Librarians (SCECSAL), which took place in April 2002 in Johannesburg, as an ideal opportunity to raise the profile of reader development in Africa. SCECSAL meets every two years and is key to library networking in Africa. It attracts large numbers of librarians from both the host country and the rest of Africa.

An afternoon workshop on Reader Development and Reading Promotion was therefore organized. Its aim was to showcase some of the reader development initiatives taking place in the Gauteng Province of South Africa and it was ably facilitated by the Gauteng Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts, Culture, Library and Information Services, through its officers, Branham Francis and Adrienne Warricker. They arranged for the delivery of four presentations, each covering a different age group or aspect of reader development, together with displays of reading and promotional materials. The workshop proved very popular and attracted over 160 participants. These included public librarians from eight other countries in Africa and librarians from public libraries in receipt of Carnegie grants from within South Africa, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. The original intention had been to follow the presentations with group practical projects. The numbers attending made this impractical, so each presenter led the audience through a practical project and discussion followed.

The enthusiasm generated by the workshop, and requests for a follow-up, has led to this publication. It includes accounts of the four South African projects presented at the workshop. In addition, the librarians who were sponsored to attend from outside South Africa were invited to write about a reader development project organized by their own library system. Six have submitted chapters. The SCECSAL workshop allowed librarians from many countries to learn about and discuss some of the reader development activities taking place in South Africa and return home with new ideas and plans. It is hoped that this book will widen that audience and give the rest of the world an indication of what African libraries are doing in this area.

Reader development in Africa
Finding out about reader development activities that are being undertaken by or with public libraries in Africa is not easy. The Indaba held at the
Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 2001 had as its theme ‘Changing Lives: Promoting a Reading Culture in Africa’. Discussion revolved around publishing, writing and scholarship as well as three sessions, sponsored by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Books and Learning Materials, on strategies for targeting readers, strategies for promoting readership, and policy implications for developing a reading culture. This all-embracing approach gave ‘a daunting picture of what needs to be done to encourage book reading by young people especially and adults as well’. The ADEA Books Working Group has also started a Compendium of Successful Reading Projects in Africa; it was reported at the beginning of 2002 that over 30 entries had been made. Once the Compendium is made available, it will be used to promote African exchanges of information about strategies that have proven to be effective in the promotion of reading.

The experiences recorded in the chapters that follow cover predominantly work with children. The range includes:

- a reading awareness programme aimed at mothers, their new born babies and toddlers (Born to Read);
- reading competitions for primary-school children (Want to Read and Zambia’s Readathon);
- a reading enrichment scheme for various age groups (Want to Read);
- implementation of book-based literacy instruction in South African schools (READ);
- a five-day reading clinic in Ghana;

A project in Uganda shows how libraries can develop a love of reading in children, even when library facilities are very limited.

Reading tents are an increasingly popular way in Africa of encouraging reading for pleasure, both among children and adults and often in conjunction with book fairs and library weeks. Two experiences, from Tanzania and Zambia, are recorded here.

Only three of the chapters cover adult reader development:

- ways of promoting reading to adult learners (Project Literacy);
- Women’s Reading Corners, organized by Zambia Library Service;
- the Bagamoyo Community Reading Tent, aimed at both young and old.

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Availability and accessibility of relevant books

Limited in number though these experiences are, some commonalities can be noted and conclusions reached. One is that the precondition and base of all reader development activities is the availability and accessibility of relevant and appropriate books and reading materials. It is impossible to inspire interest, involvement and confidence in reading without the right kind of materials being available. Such books must first be written and published, distributed widely and then made accessible through libraries or other outlets. Only then can a reading culture begin to be fostered. All the programmes featured here see this as a challenge and a major problem.

The schools book-box service of Kenya and Oyo State Library Board in Nigeria have therefore concentrated their initial energies on making resources accessible. Lack of appropriate reading materials, especially in local languages, is raised as a problem by nearly all the programmes. In Zambia women stopped visiting the Women’s Reading Corners because there were no materials there in Zambian languages. In Kenya, the need to acquire or to translate more materials into local languages was recorded. The needs of those attending the reading tent in Bagamoyo were not adequately met by the resources available. READ in South Africa has long recognized that quality reading material is essential and therefore embarked on its own book development and publishing programme. To keep adults reading, supplementary materials in local languages is a must. The chapter describing the work of Project Literacy records the difficulties faced in persuading commercial publishers to get involved in a market where it is expensive to develop original material and sales are low.

Partnerships

The importance of building partnerships with other interested sectors is also revealed by most programmes. The library is only one player or stakeholder in reader development. There is a need to form alliances with all those who promote reading or reap the benefits of a literate population. Activities directed at children rely on a strong relationship having been created with the education sector. Library/school co-operation is at the heart of Want to Read’s programmes to develop and enhance reading skills. Teachers as well as library staff acted as resource persons in Ghana’s reading clinic. The book-box service to primary schools in Kenya relies on class teachers to assist in the selection of appropriate materials and organize their use in the classroom. It is the schools that organize
the groups of children which attend the Saturday library sessions at Mbale Library, Uganda, and also act as resource persons.

But it is not only the education sector that is important. For work with infants, partnerships need to be made with the health sector. The Born to Read programme was launched at a hospital and follow-up was made at clinics. Health providers and community librarians worked together. The publishing and book-trade sectors are obvious partners. In Tanzania the library service joined with the Book Development Council to organize the Bagamoyo Community Reading Tent.

Partnerships with the commercial sector are not so apparent in the programmes described. But this could be an important avenue to explore, since most programmes itemize lack of funds as crucial in limiting the effectiveness of their work. Elsewhere – for example, in UK – reader development partnerships with business have proved successful. Certainly the Born to Read programme sees its partnership with the corporate sector as bringing many benefits. Community libraries established a programme with the Star newspaper to assist mothers in reading. In addition the baby products company, Johnson and Johnson, sponsored the programme and agreed to conduct workshops on pregnancy, breastfeeding and general health-related issues.

Training

It is sometimes considered that librarians and teachers by virtue of their professional education already have the skills necessary to engage in reader development. But the need to provide training in this area is evident in many of the programmes described. Indeed, lack of appropriate skills is often cited as a limiting factor. The head of Oyo State Library Board summed up the feelings of many when he said: ‘Our librarians are already trained and know what to do in public librarianship, but they still need workshops and seminars to share experiences and perfect their arts.’

The account of the Want to Read project includes issues that must be considered when designing a programme to train librarians involved in reader development activities with children. Such staff must have both book knowledge and programme-specific training. It is necessary to have read a book before one can promote it effectively. Yet it is surprising how few librarians themselves actually spend time reading and enjoy it. In addition, any training programme must include knowledge about child development as well as recognize the limited time that is available in a busy library system to devote to training.

The experience of READ shows that making relevant books available
and accessible in schools is not enough to achieve success in literacy education. Its approach depends on a rigorous teacher training and monitoring programme, including both pre-service and in-service training. It works with whole school communities instead of individual teachers. The full continuum of courses is implemented over a period of two years. To assist teachers implement and sustain the book-based approach after training, READ has also set up a monitoring and mentoring programme.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

It is important to be able to measure the outcome of any reader development activity. Only if a framework for auditing outcomes is established and performance indicators devised will there be an opportunity for librarians to reappraise their activities and consider options for doing things differently. Without being unfair to those programmes that are still in their infancy, it would appear that rigorous monitoring and evaluation of reader development activity in Africa is generally lacking. For this to take place, measurable outcomes must be established at the start of any programme, indicators devised to measure these outcomes, and quantitative and qualitative data collected on a regular basis, allowing for a final evaluation. Then it will be possible to conclude that a particular activity has effected change in reading habits and abilities.

For example, reading tents have become a very popular type of reader development activity in Africa. Yet accounts usually concentrate on describing the various activities that took place and the numbers of people attending. Actual tangible outcomes are rarely analysed.

There remains, therefore, a need to develop ways of measuring the effectiveness of different reader development strategies.

**Policies**

It would appear from the accounts collected together in this book that few libraries have established reader development policies. Too many initiatives are one-off events and are not integrated into other elements of the library’s agenda and services. Rarely have libraries developed a holistic approach to both children’s and adults’ reader development. Oyo State Library Board’s account of its activities emphasized the problem caused by not having a separate unit of the library charged with undertaking reader development. Instead, staff have to shift from their normal schedules to undertake ad hoc responsibilities. In other parts of the world, libraries have established Reader Development Librarian posts so as to formalize the centrality of this work in the structure of the library.
Introduction

Networking
A recent conference on reader development in the UK concluded how important it was for librarians to be able to meet colleagues having similar issues and concerns in relation to reader development activities. This sort of networking is much more difficult to effect over the continent of Africa, but it is by sharing experiences and learning about successes (and failures) elsewhere that librarians will be enthused to try something new. Such a result is recorded by Zambia Library Service. The idea for a reading tent came from a member of staff who attended the International Zimbabwe Book Fair and saw such a tent in operation. It was then introduced to Lusaka in 1997 and the following year spread to two other provinces.

It is hoped that this book will also assist in the sharing of reader development experiences and result in new initiatives.

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A reading nation is a winning nation. Are South Africans a reading nation? South Africa currently finds itself in a serious struggle against illiteracy, which affects our economy and our chance to compete globally. Why, we may ask, is the situation like this?

Our children do not see us reading as parents, as educators, as health providers, or as librarians. Most people regard reading as something connected to school or formal education; that is the reason why we have a generation of non-readers. Students use many of our community libraries predominantly as study facilities. This sometimes poses a problem for other library users who want to read for leisure or who seek to access information from resources in the library.

Statistics show that 45 per cent of South Africans are illiterate. A study by the Joint International UNESCO–UNICEF Monitoring Learning Achievement Project found that South Africa’s Grade Four pupils ranked lowest in numeracy, literacy and life skills when compared with their counterparts elsewhere in Africa.

Faced with this situation, and based on our vision of having a literate, informed, creative and active society proud of its cultural heritage, the Department decided to implement the Born to Read programme. A literate and informed society is a society that can read and write.

What is the Born to Read programme?
The Born to Read (BTR) programme is a reading awareness programme aimed at promoting the culture of reading among children while they are still young. It is a programme that helps parents raise children with healthy bodies and minds to become creative and active members of the community. The programme builds partnerships between parents, educators, health providers, librarians, the business sector and the community at large since it deals with the development of children in all spheres. Studies have proved that the majority of reading problems faced by adolescents and
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adults today could have been avoided or resolved in the early years of childhood.

Why should we all be part of the programme?
Efforts to promote reading habits will be effective if they involve all segments of society at every level – from the family, community and school, through local, intermediate and national levels of government. We are all involved in the common interest of promoting a culture of reading. We owe this to our children and to ourselves as South Africans.

What are the objectives of the programme?
It is expected that the programme will lead to:
• an increase in mothers becoming new library members;
• regular visits by mothers and their children to the library, enquiring about their children’s reading needs;
• a greater public awareness of health and parenting and other reading resources available in libraries.

Who is the target group and why?
The target groups for this programme are: mothers; mothers to be; their new-born babies; toddlers; and pre-schoolers (two to six years).

Parents are children’s earliest teachers, and strengthening mothers’ ability to stimulate their children and encourage them to learn can set the stage for adult success. Fathers are not excluded because in some cases fathers have shown immense interest and have been involved in the programmes. According to research the first five years of a child’s life are important and crucial for the child’s development. Learning seems to peak between the ages of 3 and 10, and continues throughout life.

What has research shown?
The programme is based on research done on the development of the brain. A burst of research activity in the past few years is giving us a whole new understanding of how the brain develops and the crucial role of early language experiences, including reading. An infant’s brain structure is not genetically determined. Early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of a baby’s brain.

Life shapes the brain’s development. Warm touches and care-givers who talk positively to the infant allow the brain to take in all things around. Severe stress that goes on for many months or years in early childhood can actually affect the development of a child’s brain. In one
of the articles that I have read it was found that gently massaging premature infants three times a day for 15 minutes helped them to gain weight, be more alert and cry less.

Unconditional love and acceptance are still the most important building stones for developing a baby’s brain at any age. A health-care worker from the Johnson and Johnson company that is in partnership with us teaches the parents about the importance of touch and how to massage children. This emphasizes what I alluded to earlier, that the programme builds partnerships between librarians and other stakeholders. How many of you thought that a company like Johnson and Johnson could play a part in promoting reading in this way?

Each person is born with over 100 billion brain cells called neurons. There are enough brain cells to learn about anything. Brain cells that are not used wither away.

A child-care provider reads to toddlers and, in a matter of seconds, thousands of cells in these children’s growing brains respond. Some brain cells are turned on, triggered by this particular experience. Many existing connections amongst brain cells are strengthened. At the same time new brain cells are formed, adding a bit more definition and complexity to the intricate circuitry that will remain largely in place for the rest of these children’s lives.

Children’s minds can absorb any amount of information. It is often said that children’s minds are like sponges, soaking up as much information as is possible. Parents should therefore use this time as an opportunity to read to their children, because:

- children who are introduced to books at an early stage go on to be confident readers when they start school. These children, however, outperform their peers not only in language-based subjects, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, but also in mathematics;
- development of literacy is a continuous process that begins early in life and depends heavily on environmental influences.

How were the objectives achieved?

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives the programme comprised three stages: the launch, the roll-out to community libraries, and monitoring.

Launch

The programme was launched on 3 August 2000 at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, Gauteng. The Department reached out to about 2,000
mothers and their babies throughout the month of August in the hospital. An integrated programme with the Health Department took place at the hospital during that month. The first baby born on 9 August, which coincided with Women’s Day, became our BTR Baby and received a special gift. BTR resource packs were issued to mothers throughout the month of August.

Mothers were given resource packs containing the following:

- A T-shirt and bib for the babies to show that these are special BTR babies. Parents could treasure these so that they could serve as a reminder to their children to continue to read as they grow up.
- Two books, one for the mother and one for the baby. These books were published by READ and are excellent reference material of a very informative nature. The book for mothers highlights ways on how and when to prepare your child to read. The book for babies is a colourful picture book with little text. It is a user-friendly book and even parents who cannot read or write can use it. A mother can tell a story just by looking at the pictures, which promotes traditional story-telling. One aim was to instil the culture of ownership and to teach children to take good care of the books.
- A rattle in the shape of a book with text:
  - These rattles come in four different titles, which teach babies different animal sounds. The mother can use this rattle when bathing the baby or changing diapers (nappies). It naturally has a value for a child, but, to build up and establish vocabulary, the baby must look at one picture for some time and talk about it. The book will encourage mothers to read or tell their babies a story at bedtime.
  - The brightly coloured rattle can also be used as a mobile above the baby’s bed. Parents were advised to make their own mobiles by using items of different colours and cutting them into different shapes, and these can be changed regularly. The mobiles stimulate the baby’s eye movement and muscles. The skills developed in this way are visual perception, eye co-ordination, and the development of eye muscles. We also found that already by the fifteenth day after birth, the baby prefers colour to form. It is therefore appropriate to start almost immediately after birth to establish the baby’s perception of colour.
  - As the rattle is used, the baby can develop the skills of observing and listening effectively.

All these ideas were explained to the mothers individually. A work-
shop was held by the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture and mothers were given a talk on pregnancy, exercise and fitness. A second workshop was held at the Antenatal Clinic in the hospital during the month of August on the importance of reading and the merits of joining a library. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the mothers were taken down in order to follow up both the mothers and the progress of the babies.

Story-telling and puppet shows were presented to the children in wards. This was a joint venture by the staff of the Department and the community librarians in Soweto. Story-telling was one of the activities of the roll-out programmes because, from research, we found that as a learning tool it can encourage children to explore their unique expressiveness and heighten their ability to communicate thoughts and feelings. Colouring-in was also one of the activities that was done with the children, and it linked with a story told. Children were given coloured pencils and colouring books and encouraged to draw anything that they could remember about the story, and they enjoyed this immensely. Two books in two languages for toddlers and pre-schoolers were also included later in our resource packs after we discovered that most of the children could not read or understand English. We chose Zulu and Sotho books because we have found that most of the children in our province speak these languages.

Display of Born to Read resources at SCECSAL 2002.
Roll-out of the programme at community libraries
Community librarians were sent a circular letter inviting them to send business plans to the Department on how similar programmes could be held in their communities. The programmes could be in hospitals, clinics, libraries, etc.

Twenty-two community librarians launched their programme in the financial year 2001/2002. Most of the launches were held at clinics in order to target mothers that never visit libraries since this would provide an opportunity for librarians to market their libraries to the community. The launches differed from community to community. In some libraries the launch was very informal while in others it was formal, with even senior officials from local structures and politicians attending. Librarians also obtained the contact details of mothers or expectant mothers so that the necessary follow-up work could be done.

Monitoring/follow-up work
Various modes of communication were used to reach out to the mothers:
- Spot checks by the health providers when the mother returned with her baby for immunizations, etc., especially in communities where the health workers were involved in the programme from its inception. Health providers formed groups during antenatal and postnatal classes for the mothers. The health providers used this time for feedback from the mother about the progress of the programme.
- The community librarian contacted the mothers by phone where possible and enquired about the progress of their babies and the problems that they encountered. In some cases the mothers telephoned and enquired further about the programme.
- Home visiting by community librarians and provincial staff, and in some cases by both health providers and community librarians working together, was another possibility. The librarians kept in contact with mothers by conducting programmes in the libraries and inviting them to attend.
- Forming BTR clubs or support groups which met regularly. In one of the libraries parents meet once a week.
- Through suggestion boxes so that mothers’ opinions could become part of the programme.
Feedback/results

Responses from the mothers

- ‘I could not come to the library because I could not afford the membership fee.’
- ‘I want to wait for my baby to be old enough before I can visit the library.’
- ‘I thought libraries were for the school children and the educated; I did not realize that I can also use the library even if I cannot read.’
- ‘I did not know that this big green building was a library; I thought maybe it was one of those government offices.’
- ‘My child can recognize the book you gave him and he will always cry when somebody takes the book away from him.’
- ‘I knew that I had to read to my child but I never got to force myself to do that; thanks to this programme, I always feel guilty if I don’t read to him.’
- ‘I thought that it is the work of the school to teach a child to read; now I can help my child myself as well.’

Internal factors affecting monitoring

Several issues were identified:

- Limited human resources resulted in monitoring not being done as regularly as it should be.
- Owing to the restructuring of local government and movement of librarians who were involved in the programme, no follow-up was undertaken in some libraries.
- Relocation of some members from informal settlements to RDP houses made it impossible for the librarian to make follow-ups.

External factors influencing the behaviour of mothers

In our interviews with the mothers we found that several external factors influenced their behaviour towards BTR.

Educational level of the mother

Some of the mothers, especially those that came from previously disadvantaged areas, are not well educated, and they see preparing a child as the work of the school. They do not see themselves as their children’s first teacher. They had misconceptions like, ‘It is the work of teachers to stimulate and teach the children because they get paid to do so.’ These mothers did not see reading as a priority; their only concern was to provide food for their children.
The BTR programme was therefore a waste of time for them. We received comments like, ‘I hated school and did badly; how can I be of help to my child?’ ‘I did not come back to the library because I thought that since I cannot read and write, the librarian will force me to attend classes and reading sessions.’ These mothers felt intimidated by the librarians and did not want to come back to the libraries. In some cases, out of desperation to be left alone, mothers would end up giving librarians false contact details.

Some mothers from the same group knew what was expected of them; they could read and write but still expected the school to prepare and teach their children. Reasons such as a lack of time were given. ‘We don’t have time as we have to prepare food, wash the kids, clean the house’ was a common excuse.

Another group of mothers were also influenced by this educational factor, but in a positive way. From our studies we found that mothers who were educated were mostly from townships, and although the BTR was a new concept for them, they could immediately understand what was expected from them. They carried out the instructions as they were told and came back to the librarian with positive feedback. They wanted to know more tips on how to help their children.

**Socio-economic status**

Most of the mothers who came back to join the library with their children were those from the middle and working classes, and they were mainly from the townships and suburbs because they could afford the membership fees. Then there were mothers who wanted their children to be part of the Born to Read programme but who were from informal settlements and previously disadvantaged areas and could not join because they were unemployed and could not afford the membership fees.

**Geography**

In most cases the programme was launched in a hospital or clinic, and most of the target groups came from areas where there were no libraries at all. In order to get to the nearest community library, which in most cases was in town, the mother had to use public transport, i.e. a taxi or bus. This created a problem because the mothers could not afford transport costs as well as the membership fees. Some mothers who attended a launch resided a long distance from the libraries or did not have a library in their area at all.
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Culture
Africans used to sit down as families around the fire and tell stories. When we told the parents to tell stories to their children they were very happy because for them it was going back to their cultural upbringing. They saw this as an African Renaissance, a rebirth of our culture, the culture of traditional story-telling. They did not feel intimidated, as was the case with reading.

We emphasized that they could tell a story that they knew, or they could tell a story just by looking at a picture. They could start by using the picture book that we gave their little ones. It was found from the studies that, when a story is read to a child, the child actively creates a picture in its own mind and will also learn to listen. The basis of being ready to read is the following: the toddler/child must learn to look not merely see, and to listen not merely hear.

Stories often build a positive attitude towards reading and learning to read. Research has shown that babies start to benefit from story-telling immediately after birth. Reading aloud to children and allowing the children to play with books stimulates their motor, emotional, and intellectual development. All these help strengthen a child’s readiness to begin school.

Partnership
From the discussion above it is clear that partnership is very important for the success of the BTR programme. It is through working together and the participation of other stakeholders (like the Star newspaper, Johnson and Johnson, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Sunday Times newspaper’s ‘Read Write’ supplement, and parents) that the programme is still sustainable. We could have not managed on our own as the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture to promote literacy in our province. As the saying goes, ‘in unity there is strength’.

We have one common interest and goal with the Star newspaper, that of promoting the culture of reading. The Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture is trying to promote reading for leisure. Since we have newspapers in all our community libraries, we came up with a joint programme with the Star for the BTR mothers. Mothers are taught how to read newspapers by officials from the Star. The workshops might be held during the launch of the programme or could be a form of a follow-up programme for the mothers.

The Johnson and Johnson baby products company is also playing a
role in the success of the programme. Like the Star, an official from the company will also give a talk during the launch of the programme or will conduct workshops on pregnancy and breastfeeding and general health-related issues.

Most of the programmes are held in clinics, and from the start the planning session is done by both the community librarians and health providers. There are places where health providers and community librarians come up with joint follow-up programmes for the mothers. In some cases, the health workers continue to work with the mothers when they return to the clinics for vaccinations and monthly check-ups.

Success stories

- Bonearo Park Community Library in Kempton Park has designed a programme for the year 2002. A group of mothers who attended the Born to Read launch meet with the librarian on the morning of every second Thursday of the month. They usually start with a formal meeting where they discuss the programme and share ideas. Programmes such as story-telling and, with the older children, creating bookmarks are some of the activities planned. The group decided that each mother would contribute R5.00 at every meeting towards tea and some light refreshments, which they could enjoy after the meeting.

- Vanderbijlpark Community Library is another library that has a success story to tell. Its Born to Read programme was launched in December 2000. The librarian targeted mainly expectant mothers. Before the librarian could do the follow-ups, the mothers brought their babies to the library four months after they were born. The mothers and their babies were also involved in the last Library Week celebration, and the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture was invited to be part of the Vanderbijlpark Born to Read follow-up programme. This was a wonderful experience because we could sit and discuss the programme with the mothers, and it was so wonderful to see mothers involved, joining hands with us to safeguard the future of their children.

- At the Tsepiso Community Library, mothers who attended the Born to Read launch last year have formed a support group to motivate each other and they meet once a month in the library to share their experiences.

- The Born to Read baby from the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital launch is now one and a half years old. The mother is very happy
with the development of her daughter. She has agreed to be involved in the Orange Farm Library that is about to open soon. When we went to visit them, we brought some books for the child, who was very happy to receive them. She was particularly interested in one picture book. She looked at it for a long time without tearing the pages. When the child got to a picture where there was a woman carrying a child, the child looked at the page for a long time, then smiled. As we were wondering why the child was smiling, she said ‘mama’ and pointed to the woman, and then pointed to the little baby and called out her own name. At that age the child could identify herself with pictures in the books.

- Bodibeng Community Library is another area where the BTR programme is really progressing. Mothers not only visit the library for their children’s reading needs, they also visit to seek advice regarding their children’s social problems. The librarian has referred some of the mothers to psychologists and social workers, and they were very happy with the referrals made by the librarian. Some of the mothers there have nicknamed their babies Born to Read. They say that the children enjoy the books we gave them during the launch; they do not allow other children to touch the books and, if there are visitors, they will always take the book out just to ‘show off’.

- We have also received numerous telephone calls from mothers who are happy with the programme. One of the mothers phoned to thank us because she believes that her little boy is now developing a critical and analytical mind. She was reading a book to her four-year-old son that she got from the launch of the programme. In the book was written ‘the little brother’, but the child stopped the mother reading. He was not happy with his mother, accusing her of lying to him. What he saw on the picture was not a little brother but a little sister, because the child in the picture had long hair. To him, girls are usually the people who have long hair.

- The Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture also received an invitation from Rustenburg, North West Province, LIASA\(^1\) branch to present the programme, and to motivate libraries in its province to implement a similar programme.

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\(^1\) Library and Information Association of South Africa.
Other programmes
In order to sustain the programme the Department has bought educational toys for all the regions. Staff members from these regions were given a workshop on how to use these educational toys, and on the skills developed from playing with them. The regional staff, together with community librarians, are presently running educational toy library programmes. Two similar workshops on toy libraries will be organized this year to complement the BTR programme.

Two workshops on story-telling were also organized last year. A storytelling manual has been compiled and is available on request. Two booklets, *Books I Have Read* and *My Family Storybook*, were designed and are also available on request. These booklets give children a chance to use their imagination and motivate them to read more books in order to be able to write about what they have read.

Conclusion
From the discussion above it is clear that librarians from all spheres should join forces to promote the culture of reading. We now understand that we play a crucial role in applying what we know about brain research and it is our duty as professionals to educate parents in our community libraries about the role they play as their children’s first teachers.

In addressing the problems of mothers not being able to read, community librarians must join hands and form partnerships with other organizations that present ABET\(^2\) and literacy classes. Mothers must also be made aware that there are Easy Reading for Adults (ERA) books available in some libraries. The Department has also developed family literacy workshops, which are presented to community libraries on request. We would therefore urge libraries to take advantage of these opportunities.

Addressing the problems of a lack of library facilities, joint mobile library services by the provincial and local governments and other stakeholders should be investigated. Factors such as membership fees that act as a deterrent to people joining the libraries should be further debated so as to ensure access by the majority of the people to information resources available at libraries.

\(^2\) Adult Basic Education and Training (see page 25 of this volume).
The provision of adult literacy has been beset by numerous obstacles within the South African context over the past years. These have ranged from a lack of interest within the public sector in the face of much larger socio-economic problems such as HIV-AIDS, inadequate budgeting by the government, and a lack of sufficient resources and research in the field.

Project Literacy has, however, been fairly successful over the years in providing literacy education to adults across the country in the face of these obstacles. The methodology used to teach adults to read is not so different from that used for teaching children, yet managing to sustain adult interest in developing this skill has always been a challenge to educators. The methodology we have adopted of outcomes-based, interactive, group-oriented classes has worked well with adults. It has inspired confidence in their ability to continue learning. It is also an empowering experience as learners contribute to the learning process by drawing on their own experiences.

Adults enter literacy classes with varying degrees of skill in reading and writing through their experiences as members of society. Adult learners do not, however, spend enough time in the classroom to perfect the skills learnt, and therefore supplementary work done at home is important for their continued development. The additional work reinforces outcomes that are practised in the classroom. Unlike children, adults, especially women, have a large number of responsibilities that do not often allow them time to themselves.

Leisure time is a prized commodity, and adults have obligations that infringe on their leisure time, such as their children and spouses. Leisure time is often taken up by regular activities such as watching television.

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1 Adult education and training in South Africa is undertaken within an agreed framework, known as ABET. Appendix 1 (p. 25) gives some information about ABET.
and listening to the radio. In order to further their education adults need to use their leisure time as study time. Any process to promote reading has to compete with the electronic media and its ability to attract potential readers’ attention.

In order to ensure that adults use their time to improve their skills by reading, there has to be a concerted effort to create processes to encourage adult learners to read.

Historical background
Over the years there have been many conferences that have dealt specifically with getting adults reading, one of which was the Conference on Literacy and Basic Adult Education in Southern Africa in 1990. Subsequent Department of Education workshops and various internationally sponsored conferences and seminars have dealt with adult reading skills. At all these gatherings the general consensus has been that there is a need to get adults reading in order to improve their skills, which will, in turn, improve their conditions of living.

What motivates an adult to want to learn to read and write?
When adults enter a literacy programme they are asked what motivates them to want to learn to read and write. The answers range from a religious need to read the Bible to helping their children with homework. Some cite work-related incentives where they need to study for certain qualifications in order to get a promotion. For others it is a desire for self-improvement by learning skills previously neglected.

Key players in getting and keeping adults reading

Adult literacy providers
Adult literacy providers are perhaps in the best position to determine the needs of adult learners. Many providers, including Project Literacy, have course material to address the skills that adults need to function adequately in a literate society. Further, Project Literacy developed a set of readers as supplementary material for ABET’s Language and Communications course. The books, which were developed with funding from USAID and published by Kagiso, have been very successful in the classroom. However, sales of these books have been poor, as companies and organizations are willing to spend money on course materials but see spending on readers as an unnecessary expense.

An additional set of readers was developed in mother-tongue lan-
languages: isiSwati, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi (Northern Sotho), Setswana. These were also produced with external funding, but sales are dismal and publishers no longer see publishing books in mother tongues to be feasible.

Although the Constitution gives all eleven languages equal status, this has not been the case in most sectors of society. The recent 14th International English Academy Conference held at the University of Pretoria in 2002 concluded that it was not feasible to educate people in the other nine African languages as there was not enough interest and funding to carry it out.² English was considered the primary and dominant means of instruction in education.

**Recommendation**

In the face of such reports it is difficult to sustain reading at the primary levels of ABET education where the learner is taught to read and write in his or her mother tongue. It is the resourcefulness and skills of the educator that provide additional material for adult learners starting to read. The trend identified at the Conference has to be addressed so that the ABET market is supplied with reading materials in both mother tongues and English.

**Published materials**

There are a fairly small number of publishers producing material for ABET. Appendix 2 contains a list indicating the current publishers of readers for adult literacy, together with the percentage each takes of overall production. Whilst this list is dated, it is in general terms still applicable today. As mentioned above, Project Literacy, with funding from USAID, published a set of readers from Level 1 to Level 4, as well as a set of mother-tongue readers in four languages. Appendix 3 contains a list of these readers. They were published by Kagiso Publishers, which was later taken over by Maskew Miller Longman. MML has cited many reasons for the unfeasibility of producing more readers for the adult literacy market:

- Lack of sales: There is insufficient money in the field to facilitate the purchase of these books. Large amounts of funding are required to make sure that the books get to the readers.

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- Research conducted to ascertain the needs of the audience has found that providing books to a relatively small audience was not feasible owing to the diversity of needs.
- Adults are taught basic literacy skills in their mother tongue and therefore any reading materials to augment their skills would need to be written in or translated into all the eleven official languages. This obviously involves large costs. The pie charts opposite show (a) the different languages in which readers are produced and the percentage they take of the overall market, and (b) the different kinds of material produced.
- The purchase of core materials to cover the literacy classes is a large portion of a company’s or provider’s budget, and there are therefore not enough funds left over to buy readers that are considered to be ‘supplementary’ materials.

Recommendation
Most importantly MML has identified that there is a dire need to provide these supplementary reading materials to adult learners to improve the skills that they are learning in the classroom. Funding is the obvious solution to ABET’s need at the moment.

Other, smaller, publishers and providers involved in producing readers were consulted to ascertain their opinions, but unfortunately they did not respond before the submission of this chapter. It is possible that in the context of the small size of this market these providers are protective of their own interests and are unwilling to participate in endeavours that seek to share information.

Libraries
Libraries play an integral role in providing materials for adult learners. All of our learners come from the lower end of the economic scale and often do not have extra money to purchase books. Books are very expensive owing to the diminishing value of the rand against other major currencies and the price of paper, which, although made in South Africa, is bought back in US dollars. (It is interesting to note that half of the unit price of a book is the cost of the paper it is made from.) Most of these communities rely on the service of libraries to provide free access to books. Therefore libraries need to stock books for this new audience to allow them to further their skills. Libraries also need to advertise the fact that they have books for the newly developed reading audience.
Languages in which support materials are produced.

Different types of support materials produced.
Johnson, Robbins and Zweizig identify five ways in which libraries can assist in encouraging this group of readers to get reading:  
• identify and provide print materials for the audience;  
• provide print materials for tutors and educators of adults;  
• compile bibliographies of relevant reading materials;  
• generate publicity about literacy providers;  
• provide community library tours on a regular basis. This would involve the library arranging with interested members of the community to be bussed to a nearby library and given a tour of its facilities. This visit could be followed up with a programme to allow these people to use the books in the library.

Community centres  
While community centres provide reading materials and opportunities for adults to interact with books, their attempts are often impeded by a lack of money and skills. In partnership with nearby libraries and organizations they can set up regular reading groups in the evenings for adults either to listen to books being read or to read the books themselves – organized in a similar but more economically feasible way to book clubs for a middle-class audience. These sessions could be followed by interactive group activities where readers demonstrate their newly learnt skills, whether it is from do-it-yourself manuals or newspapers. The community centre could co-ordinate mentors in reading to assist new readers to improve their reading skills.

At present greater interaction is therefore needed between literacy providers, corporate companies, libraries, publishers and community centres in order to ensure that adults:  
• have access to adequate, suitable materials;  
• are given sufficient opportunities and places where they will find these materials;  
• have a range of reading materials to cover their interests and needs.

FACTORS THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN PRODUCING READING MATERIALS FOR ADULTS  
Helen Lyman in a 1973 report said, ‘a major obstacle to teaching and providing guidance to the adult who is developing his reading skills and

habits is finding appropriate and interesting materials related to the new reader’s interests and needs’. 4

Factors to consider include:

• Multi-lingualism: South Africa currently has eleven official languages, nine of which are indigenous African languages.
• Needs: a multiplicity of needs.
• Readability: fonts must be large enough, clear and legible.
• The content must be interesting.
• It is a highly specialized market.
• Books must have vocabulary and grammar suitable for the audience. Also the themes and illustrations must suit the age group as some illustrations may be too childish.

Problems providing materials

• The availability of suitable materials.
• The needs of readers are not met.
• There are too many languages into which these books must be translated. Sometimes the context is inappropriate after the books are translated – for example, a book written in coastal KwaZulu Natal about the activities that take place on the coast may have no relevance to an inland Venda population.
• Government policy, such as the concept of the African Renaissance, has had no impact on the creation or production of books in mother-tongue languages. It has merely highlighted the existing gaps found in ABET.
• The cost of developing original material is much too high.
• It is a small market that publishers do not want to produce for.
• Some books are written in a simplistic, childlike manner, suggesting that the audience is being ‘written down to’. 5
• The diversity of themes required to satisfy the demands of this small market makes the materials difficult to produce.

Reading skills and reading interests

In everyday life a number of reading skills are required. An average adult has to perform many functions in both his or her personal and work

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environments. These require specific skills in which basic literacy is required. Some of these activities are:

- completing job applications;
- reading bank statements;
- reading signs on buses and train tickets;
- reading and completing income-tax forms;
- reading manuals for operating appliances;
- reading instructions on medicine bottles;
- reading advertisements;
- reading statements;
- reading maps;
- following recipes;
- registering to vote;
- reading warranties and guarantees;
- reading airline tickets;
- filling out forms at work;
- reading labels on grocery items;
- writing cheques;
- reading and writing letters;
- reading road signs;
- reading do-it-yourself manuals;
- reading contracts;
- reading notices;
- reading newspapers;
- reading memos from a supervisor;
- reading danger warnings;
- helping children with homework.

The reading interests of adults encompass a number of genres, and the kinds of books that adults read can be broken down into three major categories:

- stories: real incidents, character-based, philosophical, social and historical;
- self-help books or manuals, learning, religion, financial and sport;
- newspapers and periodicals.

Learners are interested in books that cover experiences similar to their own, and within African rather than European contexts.

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PROJECT LITERACY’S FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

The project started in 1999 as a brainchild of Project Literacy. The actual running of the project is a partnership of Project Literacy and the University of South Africa (Unisa). The underlying premise for the project is that parents would like the opportunity to assist their young children with their schoolwork and to spend quality time reading with their children. The project seeks to assist these parents without putting them through rigorous adult literacy programmes.

How does the programme work?
The project targets both the rural and urban areas of Gauteng. The townships of Mamelodi, Winterveld and Katlehong were proposed as pilot sites. Parents of children between one and six years old are recruited from these communities for the project. Existing créches in these areas are used as sites for the training. The turnout of parents was quite high, with about 80 participants in the beginning, which has now increased to 168. Qualified trainers from Project Literacy conduct the classes in their own time on Saturdays. The training consists of six one-hour workshops. The training manual was developed by Project Literacy and will be reviewed and edited once the results from the year-long pilot are established.

There was no form of assessment or entrance requirement except that the parents have children between the ages of one and six. The parent is not required to have literacy skills; rather, they are taught how to ‘read’ books to their children. If the parents cannot read, then they are taught to read the illustrations in the book. Two books were selected for this purpose: *The Principal’s New Car* and *Bana bo Sego*. The parents will finally learn to read these books to their children, but the first interaction has been made where they teach their children to work with books. Parents are taught skills that they can later transfer to other books. Included in the handouts is a summary of the anticipated outcomes of the project. The last four pages of the handout are part of a report and a questionnaire that was used to determine whether parents were interested in the project or not.

Interim evaluation
The project will run in its pilot phase until the end of 2002. To date there have been a number of problems:

- There has been a shortage of books for parents to use. The project depends on sponsorship to continue.
South Africa: Project Literacy

- In the Mamelodi site, numbers of parents dropped dramatically until it had to be closed down. A possible reason for this was that Saturday, when participants meet, is also often the only day that working parents can do things such as shopping and paying bills. Another reason cited in a report was a lack of interest in their children’s development.

There have also been many successes in the project. One of these successes is the keen interest shown by parents. This interest is so great that a new site has been established in Heidelberg. Parents and children have shown a marked improvement in their use of vocabulary. It is hoped that the children will show an improvement over other children when they enter school as a result of their exposure to regular interaction with books via their parents. Another success has been the involvement of local high-school children in the project. The school children assist the trainers and parents by also reading to the children in the crèches.

Ideas on how to keep newly literate adults reading

Activities
- Organizing group tours to local libraries and community libraries on a fortnightly or monthly basis.
- Creating a section on library shelves that is clearly marked as ABET or is similarly categorized.
- Through a church or other community organization, arrange reading groups that get together and swap books and review books that are read. These activities allow for some research into the kinds of books that adults really want.

Integrating reading into other activities
- In the classroom, ask learners to brainstorm ideas about the meaning of the title and illustrations in a book.
- Suggest that learners do ‘sustained silent reading’ and then make oral presentations by recommending a book, story or article to the other classmates.6

Using the existing range of books

Project Literacy materials
Project Literacy has a range of readers for each ABET level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) 1 in English. Educators use

these books as supplementary material to the comprehensive course materials that cover the language and communications unit standards. These books cover themes that are relevant to the learner’s lives, i.e. crime, superstition, transition from rural to urban areas, feminine empowerment, life in a squatter camp, love, lobola and politics.

The mother-tongue books are written at a much simpler level as they target an audience that is not yet fluent in English.

Educators attend language and communications training courses in which they are instructed in the methodology and ways that the books can be used to their full for educational empowerment. Similar themes are covered in the course material, so the readers are often used as a discussion platform.

The Viva book collection
These books were developed by a group of writers as a series of easy-to-read books in English. These books target an ABET Level 1 and 2 audience. The books deal with stories about people and their experiences in the townships, and always end with moral or educational advice for the reader.

What is interesting about this set of readers is that they work in conjunction with a facilitator’s manual. The manual gives the educator advice on facilitating reading in the classroom. It also looks at ways to use the stories to encourage learners to improve their other skills such as word recognition or numeracy abilities. For example, The Gift (as well as the other books) has such word activities. Another book, My Cousin Thabo, asks learners to work out their opinions on rural and urban lifestyles. It looks at different ways of presenting text – in this case, cartoon-style text with speech bubbles. The manual gives the educator further reinforcement activities, such as getting learners to construct projects based on the stories.

The English Learning Project (ELP)
The ELP basic course uses another range of ABET books that assist educators in improving learner’s reading skills. In the modules that deal with reading skills, the reading material is incorporated within the course material to promote reading skills. Each chapter begins with pre-reading activities that include discussion-type activities that introduce readers to the theme of the story. Then learners either read or listen to the stories.

ELP has also produced a number of readers based on the language experience development model, i.e. a collection of learner/worker stories
around particular themes. Learners work through the exercises that
determine whether they have understood the story. Finally learners
complete writing activities that check their understanding of the story.
They also have an opportunity to practise writing skills.

Discussion questions
• With these materials in hand can you come up with ways to get
  adults reading?
• Do you think that adults would give up the time they use to watch
  television in the evening to read a book? Why? Or why not?
• Can everyday reading materials such as newspapers and maga-
  zines provide sufficient reading stimulation for adults?
• Can the electronic media be a substitute for reading in adult
  learners’ lives?
South Africa: Project Literacy

Appendix I: Understanding ABET

ABE stands for Adult Basic Education and T stands for Training. Before the transformation in adult education, which began in the early 1990s, education for adults had little application to their lives and their work, while training meant drilling for routine jobs with no attention paid to knowledge and values. By combining adult basic education with training there was a commitment to making both education and training more meaningful and appropriate for adults. Today ABET offers a route to a general education that is aimed at making significant improvements for adults both in the community and in the workplace.

A National Adult Basic Education Conference in 1993 established the following minimum requirements for ABET:

- ABET is the basic education phase in the provision of life-long learning.
- ABET should be aimed at adults who have had little or no formal education.
- The exit point of ABET in terms of certification should be the equivalent to the exit point from compulsory school education (Grade 9/10).
- ABET should contain core skills, knowledge and values.
- Like formal education, ABET should have levels of learning.

The South African constitution considers ABET as a human right. It states: ‘everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.’ At the same time as these structural changes to adult education were in progress, donors, non-governmental organizations, publishers, corporations and government education departments also made huge strides and invested a lot of money to create policy, curriculum, materials and systems for ABET.

Launched in February 2000, a National Skills Development strategy was set up by government legislation. This strategy aims not only to redress inequalities in skills provision, but also to improve productivity and the competitiveness of our industry, business, commerce and services through increased skills training. An important component of this is the provision of ABET. Through ABET adult learners are able to move on to other fields of interest or study.

Both formal and informal ABET education falls within a larger education framework called the National Qualifications Framework. There is a general syllabus provided for ABET. The final qualification for this is called a General Education and Training Certificate. There are two fundamental subjects to the qualification: Language and Communications, and Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy. Learners can choose from a selection of courses to make up the rest of their qualification, which would depend on their fields of interest.
**APPENDIX 2: LIST OF ABET PUBLISHERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heinemann Publishers</td>
<td>16.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juta &amp; Co.</td>
<td>13.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagiso Publishers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viva Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Readers Project</td>
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<td>Sached Books</td>
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<td>Old Mutual</td>
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<td>Adult Literacy Unit, Rhodes University</td>
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<td>Environmental Development Agency/National Languages</td>
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<td>Y-Press</td>
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</table>
### APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PROJECT LITERACY READERS

#### English readers

**Level 1**
The girl with the golden tooth  
Waiting for Lerato  
The Spaza  
Magweya  

**Level 2**
People call us Bosslaapers  
We wait for Elandskloof  
The adventure of a bus driver  
Time to sit in the sun  
The ring  

**Level 3**
We remember District Six  
The missing goats  
The building  
Amadlozi  
Sizamile: The story of Desmond Davids  
Hard to get life  
Congo days  
Nhlanhla  

**Level 4**
True love at last  
Voices in the backyard  
The lesson  
Denzil’s con  
Elizabeth’s garden  
No more stars in my roof  

#### Mother-tongue readers

**Sepedi**
Lengwalo la Mahlodi  
Manta  
Dikeledi  
Mmatswale  

**Setswana**
Kutlwano  
Tsoga  
Bodila  
Go jela betlhalo teng  

**siSwati**
Luhambho Lwagogo Motsa  
Sibangani  
Inkhukhu Yababe  
Emlindzelweni  

**isiZulu**
Ugogo Ushintsha Umqondo  
Epulazini  
Imfundo Ephakema  
Imihlangano  

**isiXhosa**
Izikolo zale mihla  
Imfundo Likamva Lakho  
Zinga ziya labana nje  
Azihlabani  
Icebo Lokuziphilisa
The goal of this paper is to outline a model of book-based literacy instruction, present arguments for its effectiveness, and demonstrate how it can be practically implemented in South African schools. READ’s literacy programme has been developed over many years through research and practice, as well as by adapting, to South African conditions, the instructional models that have proved highly successful in other countries.

Defining literacy
Literacy is commonly understood as the ability to read and write. The traditional South African school curricula regarded literacy education as learning a set of discrete reading and writing skills. The ability to decode printed words to spoken words qualified as ‘reading skills’; writing was also rather loosely defined and often equated with penmanship – the ability to copy strings of letters neatly and legibly. However, the conception of literacy as the ability to put sounds and letters together is grossly inadequate for the demands of daily life in today’s technologically sophisticated world.

Literacy is associated with a wide range of contextualized skills that are determined by the needs of the society. Today, being able to read and write effectively is an essential life skill. To serve its practical purposes, literacy must go far beyond the ability to put letters and sounds together. Information-age literacy must be defined as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate messages through print. Thus, a literate person is able to make predictions about the content and purpose of a book (or other printed resource) on the basis of its format, internal organization, graphic design and even the type of paper on which it has been printed. He or she can locate and retrieve information from a variety of resources, interpret its meaning and function, and determine its relevance to his or her purpose. A literate individual is also able to convey meaning effectively through writing. It is no coincidence that South Africa’s outcomes-
based (OBE) curriculum defines literacy in a similar way. The need for a broader definition of literacy is recognized and a range of literacy skills is outlined in Curriculum 2005.

**Benefits of book-based literacy instruction**

Literacy skills need to be taught in practical contexts in which they can be applied for real purposes. Literacy cannot be acquired without regular interaction with meaningful print. Therefore, an environment rich in printed resources is indispensable in the process of learning to read and write. Books are a vital element of such an environment.

Research in the area of linguistics and psychology over the last twenty years has consistently offered valuable insights into the nature of literacy and literacy acquisition. It has been demonstrated that young children who are exposed to books and literacy activities in early childhood have an understanding of the functions of print and manifest literate behaviours long before they formally learn how to read. This stage in the child’s literacy acquisition, called emergent literacy, is an essential part of the process of learning to read before the child is actually taught the symbolism of letters and their correspondence to sounds (i.e. decoding). Children who, through exposure to books, have developed some literacy concepts before they are formally taught to read learn to read faster and with greater ease than the children who have had no previous experiences with books.

Book-based approaches are effective with young learners because they are holistic: they do not segment meaningful educational experiences into isolated concepts for mindless skill drills. Books and stories stimulate not only children’s cognitive and linguistic development but also their affective and social growth.

Immersion in a book environment has been shown to correlate with both verbal and reading skills of children from the age of five up; no other single variable (social class, family income, etc.) can be shown to carry the same significance. A recent study of reading ability of children around the world shows that one of the factors that positively influence children’s reading achievement is the accessibility of books in their immediate environment: at home, in the classroom and in the school library. Pupils who were good readers in high-scoring countries (such as Finland, the United States, Sweden or France) cited ‘having many

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books around’, ‘having a lively imagination’, ‘liking reading’ and ‘having lots of time’ as the key factors in becoming a good reader. These readers did not perceive factors such as sounding out words or doing language exercises as relevant in becoming a good reader. By contrast, readers in low-scoring countries (such as Indonesia, Venezuela, Botswana or Zimbabwe) attributed reading achievement to sounding out words, regular drills and much reading homework. These two views appear to reflect two different attitudes to reading. In high-scoring countries, reading is treated as a pleasurable activity that has little to do with formal classroom instruction. In low-scoring countries, reading is perceived as hard work that requires a lot of disciplined effort. Thus, the successful fostering of positive attitudes towards reading within the school curriculum was shown to be the single most important variable in predicting success in reading. Similarly, studies of literacy skills in the United States report a strong connection between the amount of pleasure reading and the achievement levels in both reading and writing.2

A major UK project focusing on reading development in 1981 discovered a strong connection between the amount of personal reading and the reading progress of learners. The study revealed that classes which had made most progress in reading were those in which the teachers allowed relatively more time to uninterrupted sustained silent reading; in these same classes teachers talked to children about the books they had read.3

A book flood approach, coupled with appropriate classroom strategies, has also proved extremely effective in teaching language and literacy to second-language learners. The reading of real books as a stimulus for the development of both oral skills and literacy in second-language learning has become standard practice in many second-language instruction programmes. The results of studies in Fiji4 and elsewhere5 demonstrate that non-mother-tongue learners who followed book-based programmes performed much better on language tests than those taught by more traditional, structured methods.

Many adult readers who were taught to read on phonics primers are not convinced that book-based methods make any significant difference. Most of them underestimate the influences from outside the school – reading parents, the presence of books and other print resources at home, easy access to a neighbourhood library. They may have been taught the principles of sound-letter relationships working through the Dick and Jane readers, but it was more likely to have been the outside-the-classroom reading that helped them develop fluency.

The reality is that a high percentage of South African children, especially in rural areas, come to school from illiterate or semi-literate home backgrounds; many of them have never seen a book before they enter school. Rural children typically have very limited exposure to environmental print. For these children, the classroom provides the only opportunities to interact with the printed word. If reading instruction is limited to a textbook and a skills-based workbook, these children never have a chance to do any real reading and so do not develop and reinforce even the little that they are being taught.

There are several important reasons why book-based reading programmes are more successful than more traditional textbook-based skills-oriented approaches. One of the most important ones is the sheer volume of reading that can be done in a classroom with its own well-selected resource collection; no textbook can match the number of different texts available to a learner throughout the year. Numerous studies show that all aspects of reading – word recognition, linguistic comprehension and world knowledge – improve with more reading. One often hears a comment that children who are good readers read a lot because reading is easy for them; in fact, the logic here works in the opposite direction: children become good readers because they read a lot. The good news about the positive correlation between the amount of reading and reading success is that, barring serious developmental (physical or cognitive) impairments, any child can become a good reader. ‘Slow readers’ are not born; they are school-made.

The second reason why a book-based reading programme is superior to textbook-based instruction is that classroom resource collections can be custom-made to meet the needs of learners with varying levels of language and reading skills, cultural backgrounds and interests. For example, different selections can be made for rural and urban schools. A typical resource collection contains book titles reflecting a wide variety of genres and topics. The books within each selection represent several reading levels to match a range of reading abilities in an average classroom.
READ's balanced literacy programme
In order for books to fulfil their literacy teaching function, they must be mediated by the teacher who applies effective instructional strategies and provides continuous support to the learners as they grow as readers and writers. Over the years, READ has developed and successfully implemented a book-based literacy programme that stimulates a holistic and balanced growth of all aspects of literacy.

Since reading and writing are essential learning tools, READ’s programme extends literacy practices into other areas of the curriculum. The inclusion of non-fiction books on topics relating to areas such as science and technology, social and environmental studies, arts and business allows learners to acquire the terminology and also to learn to understand how concepts and relationships typical of each learning area are expressed in language and presented in print. They also acquire crucial information skills such as the use of reference sources and extracting and interpreting information from charts, tables, diagrams and other graphic representations.

Following from the belief that no single method can sufficiently develop all necessary skills or be equally effective with all children, we employ a variety of instructional strategies which jointly comprise a balanced literacy programme. The four pillars of the programme are reading aloud, shared reading, group and guided reading, and independent (also referred to as personal or silent) reading. Each strategy has its own specific objectives and requires suitable reading resources. Each strategy is accompanied by pre-reading and follow-up activities that respectively introduce and reinforce new concepts and skills; these include appropriate writing-development techniques.

Reading aloud
There is growing evidence that reading aloud to learners, both in beginning grades and later on, when they are able to read on their own, has numerous linguistic, cognitive and academic benefits. For example, the significance of ‘book talk’ and understanding the conventions of story reading and the story-reading event in literacy learning has been well documented. Children who are regularly read to become better readers compared to those who do not have that experience.

Reading stories to children also provides a bridge between familiar oral discourse and new written discourse. Reading aloud enables children to enjoy stories that perhaps they cannot yet read by themselves. Listening to stories familiarizes children with different types or grammars of stories;
they are consequently able to predict some of the events in stories and their possible outcomes. In the cognitive domain, listening to stories helps children to understand temporal and causal relationships among events. Listening to stories that are read to the class impacts on language development in the area of vocabulary, syntax and discourse structure, and is especially important to second-language students as it provides them with a wealth of real language input and exposes learners to conventions and components of different written genres.

A teacher reading a story aloud to the class models the reading for the children in terms of pronunciation, stress and intonation. Simple dramatization techniques, such as using different voices and ways of speaking for different characters, make the story more comprehensible and enjoyable for the children. A teacher who reads books and enjoys them also becomes a role model for the pupils, who are then likely to develop a lasting positive attitude toward books and reading.

Shared reading
The second strategy is shared reading. This method is really a strategy which supports a beginning reader. It is designed to eliminate the potential sense of failure on the part of the child and the possible development of a failure mentality in the learner. In the classroom situation, shared reading involves the whole class and a teacher reading together from a Big Book. The teacher reads aloud while pointing to the words and the learners join in whenever they feel comfortable to do so. In shared reading, a learner is never asked to read aloud alone, and can choose to listen while following the text silently with his or her eyes. Since there is no pressure for learners to perform, they can relax and enjoy the story while absorbing important literacy knowledge that they will need to apply when they begin to read by themselves.

Group and guided reading
Group reading is a classroom reading strategy that allows children to enjoy a more intimate contact with books while relying on peer support within a small group. In group reading, children take turns to read aloud to their group mates. A group reading strategy requires not more than six copies of the same book per class (rather than providing a copy per each pupil); thus, more titles can be purchased from the same budget and children are exposed to a wider range of books. For many learners, group reading is less stressful than reading in front of the whole class, so pupils read with more confidence. Group reading strategies enable the teacher
to spend more time on weaker readers and to offer more attention and guidance to individual pupils. Group reading has emerged as the most common and most successful form of classroom reading in senior primary grades in the schools that have adopted the READ programme.

Guided reading is essentially group reading with the assistance of the teacher. While all groups are engaged in reading, the teacher works with one group, guiding them through discussion towards a better understanding of textual, linguistic and extra-textual (world knowledge) dimensions of the material. Guided reading activities may also include specific language, reading and writing skills (phonics, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, etc.).

Independent reading
Independent reading is the most advanced of the reading strategies promoted by READ. Independent (silent) reading is viewed by theorists as the most mature type of reading; it allows the reader to move through the text at his/her own pace according to his/her own needs and purpose. Going backwards and forwards, skimming, looking for details and taking notes while reading are all techniques that can be employed in silent reading.

Independent reading is most beneficial for readers who are past the decoding stage and are able to read more fluently. Research has demonstrated that learners who are allowed time for personal reading in the classroom make faster and better progress in reading than those who spend their classroom time doing workbook exercises.

The choice factor is an important aspect of independent reading because it allows individual pupils to select materials according to their reading abilities and personal interests. It thereby also helps them to discover that reading can be a personal pleasure and to develop their own, individual reading tastes. Over time, reading becomes not only a classroom routine, but also an activity of choice.

These four instructional pillars of the programme enable learners to progress from listening to and enjoying stories read by the teacher, to reading together with the teacher, to reading with a peer group or a partner, and eventually to selecting their own books to read independently. Books are read, discussed, critiqued and dramatized; new stories are created through the concerted efforts of brainstorming, composing, illustrating and publishing a class-made book to read and share proudly with other classes. Books are also used as information and reference sources in cross-curricular explorations and as models of written formats
and styles to be followed in writing tasks. During these engaging, purpose-oriented activities, learners’ literacy skills expand and mature. These broad literacy skills, as opposed to the narrowly defined reading skills in skills-oriented approaches, extend beyond phonics, word recognition and spelling to include elements of literary analysis, genre analysis, stylistic considerations. They also embrace reference skills and interpretation of non-prose print (for example, charts and graphs), known collectively as information skills, which are vital in today’s data-based world. Such a wide spectrum of print-related expertise can be aimed at and achieved, only if interaction with printed resources becomes the learners’ and teachers’ daily bread.

Preparing the teachers
READ’s book-based approach could not be successful without a rigorous teacher training and monitoring programme. Its teacher education programme includes both pre-service and in-service training. The important aspect of READ’s in-service training is its emphasis on working with whole school communities instead of selected individual teachers. We found out, through our experience of working in schools, that training one or two classroom teachers in resource-based methods did not work. The school principal in particular must be convinced that there are gains both for the pupils and the teachers if the book-based approach is adopted. The new approach must be embraced and supported by the whole school community to ensure a lasting change in attitudes to reading and reading practices.

Another training policy that came out of our field experience is working in geographically close clusters of schools, and not in single, isolated schools. Clustering enables more cost-effective use of resources and time, especially in rural areas distant from the READ regional offices or training centres. Training teachers in a number of schools that lie a relatively short distance from one another has a strong team-building effect. After the training is completed, the schools form a support network for each other and develop professional ties, which positively effects not only the schools themselves but also the lives of their communities. We have observed much better results in teacher and pupil performance in schools that have been trained in clusters than in schools that have been isolated in their training.

The training programmes for schools follow from READ’s broadly designed continuum of courses. Over the years, as our practical training experience has accumulated, the courses have been evaluated and redesigned to ensure their optimal effectiveness.
### Continuum of courses

The content of READ’s training programme concentrates on effective classroom strategies for language and literacy development. All the courses promote book- and resource-based literacy education and instruct teachers in practical ways of teaching reading and writing, as well as expanding and enriching oral expression through the use of real books. Our core courses deal with age-appropriate methodology for teaching language and literacy across the grades, from the Foundation to Senior Phase. These core courses deliver the content and skills necessary for implementing specific instructional strategies as well as for organizing and managing a classroom resource collection. The course content includes reading aloud to children, shared reading, group and guided reading, independent reading, developing writing, reading and writing for real purposes, using books across the curriculum (with special emphasis on non-fiction books) and selecting books for various instructional purposes. All the READ courses have been developed in a modular format, which ensures their flexibility. In addition to multi-modular courses, READ offers workshops that deal with more practical issues, such as making one’s own teaching resources.

The classroom resources used in the training have been developed or adapted by the READ staff. This parallel development (training material and resources) guarantees the same underlying philosophy and instructional methods. It also means that the resources are easily available to teachers and can be immediately put into use in schools.

The implementation of the full continuum of READ’s courses is planned for approximately three years. At the outset of the training programme, a one-year plan is typically developed to meet the most urgent needs of a particular school or school cluster. The selected courses are implemented and resources are simultaneously delivered, so that the teachers begin to implement the book-based approach in their classrooms almost from the very beginning of their training. During that time, as well as for a period following the training, teachers receive the full attention and support of the READ trainers and have opportunities not only to use in practice but also to adapt and expand what they have learnt in the courses. After the initial bulk of the training is completed, schools have the option to continue with further courses. Since training funds are usually limited, some schools have developed their own fund-raising strategies to afford further training or to purchase more resources. This is encouraged, as it proves the schools’ own motivation to improve their performance as well as their commitment to effective educational practices.
Mentoring, monitoring and Leader Teachers

Teachers’ completion of training courses and their willingness to use book-based methods in their classrooms do not guarantee effective implementation. Left on their own after the training, teachers often lack confidence in their ability to follow the programme and cannot always solve practical or methodological problems and queries which may occur during implementation. As a result, they tend to revert to their old ineffective practices simply because they know how to handle them.

To help schools with the actual implementation of the book-based approach after the teachers have been trained, READ set up mentoring and monitoring systems. READ monitors, who are predominantly recruited from among previously trained, high-performing teachers, pay visits to schools in order to observe, show how, suggest improvements and generally support less experienced teachers in their endeavours to do their best. This friendly professional exchange about concerns, solutions, observations and ideas not only serves as a confidence boost to newly trained teachers but also provides the READ monitoring staff with valuable insights into the process and alerts them to potential problems or areas of difficulty. Feedback from monitoring visits allows READ to identify and improve the imperfections of our system.

However, the programme could continue successfully only if the schools felt confident enough to assume responsibility for its implementation. To help schools achieve independence, a Leader Teacher programme was established; it remains one of the most successful READ initiatives to date. Leader Teachers – professionals with outstanding leadership abilities, skills and commitment – serve as channels of ongoing communication between READ and the schools in which they work. They are directly updated, through regular Leader Teacher sessions, on the current developments within READ, such as instructional innovations or publications, and disseminate the information throughout their school communities. They also lend assistance to new or less confident teachers to improve the quality of instructional practice at their schools.

To ensure that the READ literacy programme is sustained in the school after the training has been completed, READ selects a small group of teachers in each school who appear to be highly motivated, committed, and demonstrate excellent teaching and leadership qualities. These teachers are offered further training as Leader Teachers. READ continues to work with Leader Teachers for about five years after the whole school training has been completed. Leader Teachers are trained in a number of additional courses and workshops and they take responsibility for
organizing further training for the teachers in their school. Thus, READ programme innovations and new resources are disseminated and incorporated into schools at minimal cost. Leader Teachers play an instrumental role in building capacity and transforming the culture of their schools by providing support to their colleagues, encouraging a collaborative approach to teaching, and maintaining links between READ and the school community.

**READ’s resources**

The quality of the materials that we make available to potential readers is as important as the methods we use to foster reading growth and the sophistication of taste. The content, genre, language and style, format and graphic design, all contribute to the quality of reading material and determine its attractiveness to readers. Educators and librarians bear primary responsibility for applying high standards in the process of selecting reading materials for learners and potential library users.

As it became virtually impossible to fill classrooms with high-quality, attractive, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate books, READ embarked on its own book development and publishing programme. READ’s materials development programme formulated as its objective the origination, production and provision of high-quality, relevant and low-cost resources, with emphasis on readable books, in order to foster the development of pupils’ language and reading skills across the curriculum, stimulate cognitive growth and facilitate the acquisition of information skills.

Over the years we have developed an extensive collection of low-cost, high-quality books, posters and resource packs for classroom use, and for pleasure reading. Our publications include Big Book packs at four reading levels, sets of group readers, stories for reading aloud to children, and wordless books for fostering oral narrative and writing skills.

READ’s primary goal in resource development is to make the materials relevant to the readers. Our book development projects rely on research, testing and co-operation with school communities as we aim to create materials that are original and firmly anchored in African cultures and lifestyles, both urban and rural. The topics and plots derive from folklore, history, contemporary events, family anecdotes and real people’s life stories. The stories are originated and written by READ staff with assistance and input from teachers and learners. In addition to fiction genres, we have also developed and published informative books, posters and complete thematic packs. All material is thoroughly tested in both
rural and urban settings before it is put into production. Individual teachers’ and schools’ contributions are acknowledged in the publications, which gives the school communities a sense of ownership in the final product and motivates them towards their own literacy endeavours.

Apart from creating our own resources, READ has developed partnerships with commercial publishing companies that specialize in educational materials. Partner publishers collaborate with READ in adapting some of their publications to meet the needs of South African learners; cultural and linguistic considerations are given priority in the selection and adaptation process. New titles have also been published through extensive collaboration between commercial publishers and READ. Publishing partnerships have allowed READ to increase dramatically the number and range of high-quality selections that we can offer schools, which, in turn, allow schools to choose from pre-selected lists the materials that most closely match the instructional needs of teachers and the interests of their learners. The freedom to choose materials for classroom use is very important within the OBE curriculum, which stresses teachers’ input and decision-making in selecting topics and designing learning activities.
The City of Johannesburg was established after the local government elections of December 2000 from the four local metropolitan councils and the metro council that had come together to form Greater Johannesburg, together with some outlying areas like Midrand that did not previously fall into Greater Johannesburg. The metropolitan area has been divided into eleven regions, and services are delivered through the regional structures according to policies set by the centre. The new city includes old established areas with well-developed library and other services as well as older formerly disadvantaged areas and newer areas that do not have a well-developed infrastructure and services. Library provision is unequal across the city and there is little or no reading culture in many areas.

Both the library and the city as a whole have targeted children as an important focus point, so the library was excited at the idea of being able to apply to the Carnegie Corporation for a grant to revitalize children’s services in neglected areas. As the project is a city-wide one, it is being co-ordinated from the centre under the directorship of Bongi Mokaba, the Director of Social Development. The Project Leader is Sue McMurray, who reports directly to Ms Mokaba regarding the project.

Why? The project goal
The goal of the Want to Read project is to ensure that the children of Johannesburg and, in particular, those children who are at a disadvantage because of historical inequities and current socio-economic circumstances are not deprived of the opportunity to learn to read fluently, to enjoy reading, and thus to prepare themselves for meaningful participation in society. The emphasis of the project is on encouraging reading for personal satisfaction rather than reading only for utility. There is an urgent need for intervention owing to the unequal facilities and exposure to books and reading that exists over the new City of Johannesburg.
South Africa: Want to Read

How? Strategic objectives
The strategy that is being employed to achieve this objective is the creation of opportunities for children to get to know books and develop the reading habit in a stimulating and enjoyable way. This is being done by:

- systematically resourcing 15 appropriate and strategically located libraries [the project libraries] throughout the geographical area of Johannesburg with sufficient numbers of appropriate books and skilled staff in order to actively support and promote the development of reading skills;
- offering programmes in and from these libraries that will assist children in the particular community to develop and enhance reading skills, and develop a lifelong love of reading.

How? Proposed activities
The major activities to support the strategy that are now under way are:

Collection development
- Embarking on a collection-development programme employing the knowledge and skills of experienced children’s librarians to replenish and revitalize the stock of children’s books which has suffered severely because of unprecedented budget shortages over several years.

Staff and training
- Employing five additional staff members as project assistants who are being trained as children’s librarians and to assist in organizing and implementing programmes at the project libraries over the three-year life span of the grant.
- Training and redeploying existing staff to become dedicated children’s librarians in the project libraries.

Programmes
- Story-telling and introduction to the library for pre-schoolers.
- Story-telling and introduction to the library for Grades 1, 2 and 3.
- Reading Enrichment for Grades 4 and 5.
- The Story Skirmish, a book-based inter-school knockout quiz for pupils in Grades 4 and 5.

These programmes are being offered in all the project libraries in cooperation with local pre-primary and primary schools.
Story-telling and introduction to the library for pre-schoolers

**Aim**
To introduce as many young children as possible in the particular community to books and libraries.

**Activities**
- Story-telling using picture books. Activities include the use of rhyme, drama and story-telling by children themselves based on the stories that have been read to them.
- Introduction to the library by library staff.
- Regular borrowing by the children from the library.

**Benefits**
- It will stimulate the desire in the participants to learn to read for themselves.
- It will develop language skills.
- The children who participate should become aware of the facilities offered by the library and comfortable about using them.
- The children will experience the library as a fun place with interesting book-related activities.

Story-telling and introduction to the library for Grades 1, 2 and 3

**Aim**
To promote the love of reading and the library’s resources to young users in the community.

**Objectives**
To hold story-telling sessions to groups of children after school or to school classes during school hours, whichever is most convenient for the participants. In this way new users can be brought into the library, making them aware of the facilities and exposing them to books and stories, thus laying the foundation for an interest in reading for fun.

**Activities**
- Story-telling, mostly using picture books so as to relate the story to books.
- Basic library education.
- What are libraries?
South Africa: Want to Read

- How are libraries organized?
- What the librarian can do to help.
- How to find a good book to read.
- How to find information.
- How to look after library materials.
- Puzzles, games and worksheets to reinforce the message.

**Benefits**
- Children’s desire to learn to read for themselves will be stimulated.
- Language skills will be developed.
- The children will experience the library as a fun place with interesting book-related activities.
- The children who participate should become aware of the facilities offered by the library and comfortable about using them.

**Reading Enrichment for Grades 4 and 5**
This programme has already been run with success in some libraries in the past. It widens children’s reading experience, and so plays an important role in the development of a reading culture. A high percentage of South African children’s books are used and recommended to foster an awareness of South African literature and develop a pool of readers for good local titles.

**Aim**
The aim is to promote reading for fun and the library as a source of leisure reading among young users in the community it serves.

**Objectives**
To get groups of children into the library, either in a class or as members of a Reading Enrichment Club, to read, borrow and talk about books in a friendly environment, thus promoting reading for fun. This will lay the foundation for easy access to books and academic success, as well as form the basis for the appreciation and enjoyment of literature.

**Activities**
- Story-telling and reading aloud.
- Reading practice.
- Group book discussion and review.
- Library education.
South Africa: Want to Read

A public library in Johannesburg.

Display of Want to Read publicity materials at SCECSAL 2002.
Programme
The programme will be run, depending on needs and circumstances in the particular community, either after school with a group of children who join a Reading Enrichment Club or with school classes during school hours. The club members or classes will be asked to commit themselves for approximately an hour and a half at a convenient time once a week for a seven-week term.

The level of activity is adapted to the age of the children and the amount of exposure to books that they have experienced. Ideally it is hoped that they will come for more than one term. In that case the activities will become more challenging as the learners progress. The emphasis will always be on fun and enjoyment, leading to exposure to books that the children would not otherwise have encountered.

The Story Skirmish
The Story Skirmish programme is based on the highly successful Battle of the Books for Grades 6 and 7 which has proved to be so effective in encouraging reading for fun, broadening reading experience, and turning non-readers into readers while effecting a noticeable improvement in participants’ reading and comprehension skills. The Story Skirmish is a much easier competition for younger, less skilled readers, especially targeted at second-language English speakers.

Aim
To establish the reading habit in young readers in Grades 4 and 5 for whom English is a second language.

Objectives
The Story Skirmish will be a book-based inter-school knockout quiz for pupils in Grades 4 and 5, which is designed both to encourage cooperation between schools and libraries and promote reading for pleasure, thereby helping to establish a reading culture which is the foundation of lifelong literacy and learning.

Activities
Schools will field a team of six learners who have between them read the twelve books on a prescribed list. Teachers may either choose children to be in the team or, preferably, run intra-school play-offs to select the team. Activities will involve:

• Reading from a list of books that has been carefully compiled to
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include interesting, appealing, easy-to-read books from South Africa and abroad.
• Participating in a series of quizzes in the library. Questions will be based on the books on the list.
Prizes and a floating trophy will be awarded.

Expected outcomes
It is expected that the Want to Read project will lead to:
• An increase in the borrowing of children’s books from the project libraries.
• Improvement in reading skills and enthusiasm for reading of participants in the programmes.
• Participants becoming active borrowers of library books, and eventually also users of other library services.
• Accelerated development of children’s services throughout the library system.

Discussion session: Designing an ongoing in-service training programme in reader development for children’s librarians

Issues
• What experience of children’s books have most new librarians had?
• What do children’s librarians need to know about books and reading before they can actively promote them?
• What do children’s librarians need to know about children, their development and their response to books?
• What kinds of people (e.g. librarians, authors, etc.) can be used to transmit book knowledge?
• What is/are the best way/s to promote books and reading to children? Individually or in groups?
• What training is needed to be able to devise suitable book promotion activities and programmes?
• If both book knowledge and programme-specific training are needed, how can they best be scheduled in large library systems where staff is in short supply and large distances make regular meetings difficult to organize?

Outcome
Agreeing on a set of priorities for training so as to make the most effective use of the time and resources available.
School Reading Clinics: A Programme Organized in Accra

Adjei Apenten

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

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

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

Activities
The children were taken through:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Funding

This was sourced from the following:

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

Some organizations also donated towards the programme:

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Karatina Community Library
Karatina Community Library was established 1991 in line with the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) policy of setting up community-based libraries. The policy involves the establishment of libraries by KNLS in partnership with local communities. Although the KNLS Board has the mandate to establish library services countrywide, this proved not feasible owing to budgetary constraints. Therefore, Phase II in the development of libraries was through partnership with local communities, as outlined and stipulated in a memorandum of understanding between both parties. The Karatina Community Library was realized in this way.
The book-box programme
This is one of the reader development and reading promotion programmes run by KNLS. It is operated from the Karatina Community Library. The service takes books to schools on a rotational basis, using a motor cycle. The benefiting schools contribute funds towards the purchase of books. It is a resource-sharing programme for the schools in Mathira.

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

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

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

Justification
There are 17,360 primary schools in Kenya. One in every 10 schools has a library and these are clustered in towns and schools serving the elite; there are 76 schools in Mathira Division. Given the long distances
from schools to the static libraries, many children are unable to use their facilities. Consequently, the Mathira community in collaboration with the KNLS Board pulled resources together and introduced an innovative pilot reading programme whereby books are made available to children using boxes.

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

The government, through KNLS, provides: policy guidelines and

*Sketch map of Mathira Division, Kenya.*
Books are transported by handcart, bicycle and motorcycle.
Kenya: The Book-Box Programme of Karatina Community Library

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

Programme activities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Human resources
For the implementation of the programme, three categories of manpower are involved.
Librarian/library personnel
This group has the basic skills in library and information management. There is, however, a lack of personnel trained to work with the community.

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

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

Outcomes

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

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

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

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

Participation
With increased awareness, community participation has also increased.
Kenya: The Book-Box Programme of Karatina Community Library

Challenges

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

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

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**Mean score in the national examination**

*English language performance in public primary schools in the Division.*
Kenya: The Book-Box Programme of Karatina Community Library

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

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

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

The following methods of evaluation have been used:
- face to face interviews;
- focused group discussion involving teachers, Board members and community leaders;
- observations on how the community is participating;
- reports from the teachers;
- language performance in national examinations.

The statistics available indicate that the programme has proved to be very popular:
- The community appreciates the programme and other communities have also shown interest – for example, the Marakwet community of the Rift Valley Province has ordered boxes to start their own programme.
- The local community has identified itself with the programme, claiming total ownership.
Kenya: The Book-Box Programme of Karatina Community Library

Conclusions

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

Emmanuel Adebayo Oyegade

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Readership campaign programmes

Why?
Professor Chukwuemeka Ike, president of the Nigerian Book Foundation (an NGO concerned with promoting reading in Nigeria), identified the following reasons why Nigerians are said not to have a reading culture:³
• Millions of Nigerians – male, female, young and old – are completely illiterate and consequently rendered incapable of reading.
• Millions of Nigerians judged literate, including pupils completing primary education in the public education system, lack functional literacy to enable them to read, understand, and enjoy books in any language.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Creating awareness and arousing interest in reading

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

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

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

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Nigeria: Readership Promotion Campaign Activities of the Oyo State Library Board

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

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

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

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

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

Film shows/video library
It was observed that the public cherish watching films more than reading books. The Oyo State Library Board has taken advantage of this by developing a rich collection of locally produced entertainment films as
well as subject-based video-cassettes. The strategy has paid off as most patrons of the video collections have been attracted to the book sections of the library. Similarly, international soccer screenings have attracted the public to the library, since events such as the World Cup and the African Cup of Nations are loved by the majority of people. In an environment where not everyone owns a television set and where electricity is unreliable, the public appreciates the Library Board providing the opportunity to watch these global events. Such events have proved advantageous to the library in winning over clients as users of its resources.

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

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

Factors affecting effective readership promotion activities of the Board
The readership campaign activities of the Board are regarded as library extension programmes. The Board is generally short-staffed and, in this situation, any of the staff of the Board from the various departments are tasked in the various promotion activities of the Board. It would have paid off better if a unit of the library had been charged with the main responsibility of readership promotion campaign activities. Most often
other areas of the service suffer when staff have to shift from their normal schedules for *ad hoc* responsibilities.

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

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

**Conclusion**

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

Hassan N. Nsubuga

In Tanzania, a number of organizations work together to promote a reading culture among children and adults. Notable among these organizations are:

- Tanzania Library Services (TLS), which operate a nationwide public library service (covering 18 regional centres, 12 districts and 2 divisions);
- Children’s Book Project (CBP);
- Book Development Council (BDC, or BAMVITA in Kiswahili);
- Tanzania Library Association (TLA).

Over the years, book festivals and reading tents have been organized in various regional/district centres in Tanzania, the purpose being to stimulate and promote a reading culture in the country. The Bagamoyo Community Reading tent, held for two days in 2002 (5 and 6 June), is one such reading programme run annually.

Bagamoyo is a small township with a population of some 32,000 inhabitants. It is situated 70 km along the coast north of Dar es Salaam. At one time, and for a brief period, it was the capital of Tanganyika under German rule. Now it is both a historic and tourist town, with a lot to show from the past centuries. Bagamoyo is among the poorest districts in Tanzania, with a low literacy rate and a low level of development. Recently, TLS, in collaboration with the local district council, established a district library in one of the old buildings. Funding assistance to renovate the building so that it could be used as a district library came from the UNESCO National Commission. The library has become a centre that people of different age groups can visit and read books for information, knowledge and leisure. So the idea of conducting a community reading tent at the newly established Bagamoyo District Library, coupled with the provision of Kiswahili books, was geared at bringing change to the inhabitants of Bagamoyo and at promoting a reading culture among a people who had previously known no library services.

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Objectives
The Bagamoyo Community Reading Tent, jointly organized by TLS and BAMVITA, had the following objectives:

- To promote and cultivate a reading culture among the members of the Bagamoyo community.
- To provide the Bagamoyo rural community with the opportunity to have close and easy access to books and other literature available in the District Library.
- To promote interest in books among the people of the Bagamoyo community, both young and old.

Funding
Funding for the community reading tent at Bagamoyo was made available to TLS by BAMVITA. The amount provided for this activity totalled US$1,500 (equivalent to 1,450,630 Tanzania shillings at that time). TLS administered this fund and used it to meet various obligations for the reading tent programme, including the purchase of books and stationery, hire of tents and chairs, publicity and contingencies.

Mobilization
With the help of the Bagamoyo District local authority, up to 70 participants were mobilized to participate in the community reading tent. The participants ranged from the ages of 10 to 95. Invitations at the local level were sent to those who had shown interest in participating in the community reading tent at Bagamoyo. It was launched by the District Executive Director and closed by the District Commissioner on the second day.

Activities

Reading for leisure
In reading for leisure, each participant was given an opportunity to select a book of their choice from a range of books they had selected with much interest, and to read it. At the end of the day some participants were able to re-tell to each other the stories they had read, while others inquired about the meanings of words they had found difficult when reading the story they had chosen. The difficulty encountered by some readers was solved by their being guided to the glossary at the end of a storybook, and the participants then enjoyed their reading more.
Story-telling
Another activity conducted in the community reading tent was story-telling. Participants of different ages found it amusing to re-tell stories that they had read in the morning. Some stories were folk-tales, which were re-told especially by the older participants, who were trying to recount stories of the past to the younger generation.

Reading competition
On the first day it was difficult for the whole group to participate in the competition for various reasons, including lack of enough time. Only 15 interested participants were finally chosen to compete in this activity. Each competitor was given one selected text to read, and a mark was awarded based on fluency, punctuation, syllable, pronunciation, and intonation.

The competition produced three winners, all women. This raised some complaints amongst the male competitors, wondering how it was that none of their group had won. The organizers and judges of the reading competition had to explain to them that judgement was done fairly and that each competitor had an equal chance of winning, irrespective of whether they were male or female.

On the second day, the competitors were divided into groups – one for the elderly and another for young people. The elderly group produced one winner and the young group produced two winners. Though this arrangement was done purposely to avoid or at least minimize the complaints from the elderly of the previous day, it coincidentally happened again that all the winners were women.

Finally, all the winners from the two days’ of competition were awarded prizes of two Kiswahili storybooks each. This was done deliberately as a way of encouraging them to continue reading books that provide education, information and leisure. In addition, every adult participant – not just the winners – was given a book on HIV/AIDS, and school children were given picture books as well as easy readers – all donated by TLS.

Other activities
Apart from the reading competitions, time was also allocated for indoor games such as the local bao, which is played on a chess-like board with 64 (sometimes 32) holes for squares, and seeds or pebbles for counters. This bao game is very popular among the elderly as it is based on mathematics and deep thinking and is a good relaxation and pastime activity. One reason why time was allocated to bao was to train the
An old lady reads a storybook.

Old people enjoy reading storybooks.
Tanzania: The Bagamoyo Community Reading Tent

A lady reads a storybook to her blind friend.

A schoolchild enjoys reading a story-book.
participants to plan their time properly for their activities other than reading.

As for the school children, they sang some songs and recited poems, all relating to the benefits of reading and of education in general.

Observations
When evaluating the events of the two days of the community reading tent held for the first time in Bagamoyo, it can be safely said that the whole exercise was very successful. The turnout was quite satisfactory, even on the part of the elderly. The community itself was well represented, participants ranging from children of 10 years of age to older people of over 90. Even disabled people were represented. For example, there was a blind lady with another lady acting as a guide who read some storybooks to her.

Moreover, the community reading tent at Bagamoyo revealed that women there had shown the greatest interest in reading by coming out winners in the reading competition, and that men, especially the elderly, had shown the greatest interest in story-telling. This fact certainly cannot be taken to represent all other communities, but at least this is what was revealed at Bagamoyo. Perhaps it is a challenge to be followed up in other communities in future reading tents.

Conclusions and recommendations
• The promotion of a reading culture must go hand-in-hand with the provision of relevant books to the community. The community reading tent held at Bagamoyo has shown that there is a great interest in reading among people of various age groups – but only if efforts are undertaken to provide interesting and appropriate books for them.
• Bagamoyo town, itself a historic town, has vast resources, both human and material. The human resources include the elderly people (most of whom have links to the past, including the slave trade). They are in a position to narrate historical matters, which, if carefully collected, could be recorded and preserved at the District Library to benefit not only the present generation but future ones as well.
• The interest in reading shown by the visually handicapped participant at the community reading tent shows that there is a need to establish library services to cater for such disadvantaged members of society. Fortunately, TLS has realized this, hence the launching
Tanzania: The Bagamoyo Community Reading Tent

of a library for the blind recently at the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam.

• There should be regular readership surveys so that those involved in the production and distribution of appropriate reading materials at different levels can ensure that their activities better satisfy evolving reading needs.
The Children’s Interactive Programme at Mbale Public Library, Uganda

Ruth Mwayi

Mbale Public Library is located in Eastern Uganda and serves the municipality of Mbale and the surrounding sub-counties. The library, like all public libraries in Uganda, has recently been passed over to the control of the local authority, Mbale Municipal Council. However the Uganda Public Libraries Board retains responsibility for:

- development of national policies on public libraries, in consultation with the local government agencies;
- issuing advice, standards, norms, work manuals and guidelines in respect of library premises, staffing, stock, information processing, storage and retrieval;
- inspection to ensure that libraries conform to national policies, guidelines and standards;
- provision of technical, professional and advisory services in the field of library and information services, including carrying out advocacy at the local and international level in matters relating to library and information services.

The library serves the district of Mbale, which has a population of 958,100 (year 2000 estimate). Records show that there are 31,195 regular users of the library, not including casual users who drop in once in a while to browse and read newspapers. Total primary school enrolment in the district is 331,100 (year 2000 estimate) and, of these, 36% are in the upper primary section, i.e. classes P5 to P7, aged between 10 and 14.

The library occupies rented premises and the space is inadequate to cater for the growing number of adult and child users. The children’s section occupies a very small section of the library and this has greatly affected the growth of services to children. The librarian has, however, been eager to develop a reading and information-seeking culture among children so that they can grow with it into adulthood.

Because of the limited space, lack of furniture in the children’s section, and the need to avoid inconveniencing other library users, the staff, with
support and backing of some schools around, started an interactive children’s programme at the library. The programme runs every Saturday, from midday to 4.00 p.m. – that is, at a time when the library has closed to the other (adult) users. Children are encouraged to use the library during the normal opening hours of the library but, in addition, special programmes are arranged for them for Saturday afternoons.

**Aims and objectives of the programme**
To provide children with an opportunity to access information resources that enhance their awareness of the environment in which they live, and to develop in them an interest in reading and using library resources.

**Elements of the programme**

**Activities**
- Story sessions, which include group reading from a selected book, listening to readings or audio-tapes, as well as story-telling, including folk-tales.
- Training in information search techniques, which is done both in groups and as individuals. This exposes children to the library stock.
- Showing educative and informative documentaries (films), which are discussed afterwards.
- Independent reading, sometimes using guided questions.
- Hosting guest speakers, who talk to the children and answer questions on topics of interest selected by the children, including career guidance by professionals in different fields.
- Games, songs and plays.

**Target group**
The programme is for children in upper primary schools in the municipality of Mbale. Children in the lower primary schools are served by a school book-box service. The book boxes contain 150–200 books each, and the teachers at the respective schools are expected to help their pupils use the books.

**Reading materials**
The programme uses books, audio-tapes and videotapes stocked in the library. More are sometimes borrowed from other sources to add variety and meet users’ demands.
Currently, the library has to borrow equipment to play back the audio- and videotapes since it does not have its own.

**Promotion and publicity**

This is done through the following:

- Sensitization visits by the librarian to schools.
- Regular interaction between the librarian, the local library committee members and the policy-makers. Some of the library committee members are influential at the municipality and district level, and they are the link between the general public (users) and the library administration.
- Book fairs are organized annually during the National Book Week Festival. A children’s reading tent is always part of the activities of the Book Week Festival, and these tents are hosted at a different primary school every year so as to take services nearer to the people.
- The media is used to publicize the activities of the library and of the Book Week Festival, as well as the children’s reading tent in particular.

**Implications for staff**

Library staff have used their skills in working with children; some have learnt skills on the job. Sometimes schoolteachers offer their expertise to run sessions, and guest speakers are always qualified and experienced people in their fields.

**Attendance**

Only schools in Mbale municipality participate in the programme at the moment. Of the 24 schools in the municipality, with a population of over 6,000 pupils in upper primary, only four schools have taken advantage of the arrangement.

The programme is jointly organized by the schools and the library. The schools organize the children and bring them to the library in school groups. Each school brings 30 pupils per session, making a total attendance each Saturday of 120.

**Costs and source of funding**

Most of the materials used are acquired through donations and most come through the Public Libraries Board.

Children have had to be charged a nominal fee of 200 Uganda
Uganda: The Children’s Interactive Programme at Mbale Public Library

shillings (US$0.12) per child per Saturday to cater for the facilitation of guest speakers. This money is collected by the respective schools.

Outcomes

• The programme is very popular with the children and the schools.
• Children have been able to develop more interest in the library and to borrow more and more books for reading at home.
• More people have become aware of the existence of the library and its benefits. This includes both children and adults (parents).

Problems faced

• Children, once mobilized, become avid readers. With just over 4,000 children’s books in stock, there is need for continual replenishment of stock to satisfy the demand. The library does not have a sound revenue base for this.
• The library does not have electronic equipment to enable it to integrate ICT resources fully. Even simple equipment such as a radio, television, projector or VCR are still lacking. They are currently being borrowed whenever they are needed.
• The physical space and furniture is inadequate to cater for the whole child population in the town. Numbers have to be limited in order to fit into available facilities.
• The inadequate space also makes the diversification and expansion of activities difficult.

Future of the programme

There are plans to start an outreach programme to take similar services to other areas on the outskirts of the town. However, the library will need funds to do this.

The programme is not generating any funds. However, it is hoped that the Municipal Council will support the funding of a library development project, already submitted. Services to children form a component of the project.
Zambia Library Service (ZLS) came into existence in 1962 as a department of the Ministry of Education. It is a public library system that provides library and information services all over Zambia through provincial and branch libraries and library centres. It also assists and promotes school and community libraries.

Mission statement
To inculcate a culture of reading and using information for personal and national development through the provision of library and information services throughout the country.

Objectives
• To establish and manage a public library network throughout Zambia.
• To establish and co-ordinate libraries in learning institutions in Zambia.
• To provide timely and relevant information in various formats.
• To assist other organizations providing library and information services to the public.

Reading programmes
ZLS has long played a role in promoting children’s reading through the children’s sections of libraries; the service has also been instrumental in promoting school libraries throughout the country and in training teacher-librarians.

ZLS noted a problem of low reading levels among primary-school children. The problem of poor reading levels in Zambian primary schools had been worrying authorities in the Ministry of Education, parents and the general public for some time. This has been attributed to, among other things, a lack of exposure to books and reading materials. A good number
of schools in Zambia have no libraries. It is hoped that reading pro-
grammes such as the Children’s Reading Tent and the Children’s Reading
Competition will expose children to books.

The level of illiteracy in developing countries is apparently higher
among women than among men; this is especially so in the countries of
Africa. It limits the participation of women in development projects and
programmes, because they cannot access important information. The
ability to read gives individuals access to a wide body of knowledge. It
was for this reason that ZLS started women’s corners in its libraries.

The general objective of the reading programmes is to inculcate a
reading culture in women and in children at a tender age. More specific
objectives are:

• to provide an attractive environment in which children can enjoy
  reading;
• to demonstrate to teacher-librarians how their school libraries
  should be run;
• to encourage children to use libraries;
• to allow more children to experience the enjoyment of reading;
• to make appropriate reading materials available to women and
  young mothers in a conducive environment;
• to encourage young women who drop out of school, together with
  older women, to continue using the library services available in
  order to maintain and improve their education, health and eco-
  nomic status.

Children’s reading programmes
In 1997, ZLS started a reading programme that offers a Children’s
Reading Competition and a Children’s Reading Tent. The programme
aims at encouraging children to develop an interest in reading, thereby
drawing them closer to the library in order for them to supplement
knowledge gained from their teachers. It is intended that the children will
develop a sense of independent research, which will prove useful later
in their lives as they grasp issues and develop survival skills in a
competitive world. The target group covers nursery level through to Grade
Nine.

Children’s Reading Competition
The competition is in the form of a ‘readathon’. Children write a short
report on the books that they have read during a given time, and prizes
are awarded to those who read the most. The competition might also be
of a form in which children are asked to read a lot of different books and, on the last day, the panel of judges selects the books that each grade has to read aloud. They set a number of criteria that a good reader should have, i.e. pronunciation of words, gesture, speed, intonation and pitch. Each criterion is allotted five marks, giving a possible total of 25 marks from each judge.

Examples
A small reading competition was run in conjunction with Zambia’s National Library Week in 1999, in the form of a readathon. The competition was for pupils in Grade One through to Grade Nine. It required pupils to write a short report on the books that they had read during that time, and prizes were awarded to those who had read the most. These prizes were parcels of books, including dictionaries, given by Oxford University Press, and were presented at provincial celebrations during National Library Week.

A reading competition also took place during National Library Week in Solwezi on the final day of the Reading Tent in 2000. Five schools took part in the competition: Rodwell Mwepu Basic, Solwezi Modern, Kikombe Basic, Kimsala Basic and Solwezi Basic schools. The 27 participants were divided into two groups: Grades One to Three, and Grades Four to Six. There were prizes for the best three in each group.

The reading competition started in the afternoon. The morning had been set aside for the participating pupils to prepare, and most of them were engrossed in different books, since they did not know which books would be used for the competition. The reading of the books was enjoyable for all, as it caused the pupils who were watching to laugh and notice the mistakes that their friends were making whilst reading.

There was a panel of five judges, who awarded marks out of a possible total of 125. In the first group, the top prize went to a Grade Two pupil with 97 marks, the second prize to a Grade Two pupil with 87 marks and the third to a Grade Three pupil with 77 marks. In the second group, the top prize was awarded to a Grade Five pupil with 110 marks, the second to a Grade Six pupil with 108 marks and the third to a Grade Five pupil with 104 marks.

Children’s Reading Tent
This is a tent that offers library facilities to children in schools as well as to those who are not in school. It aims to attract attendance by children so as to encourage them to read on their own and to develop a keen
Zambia: Reading Programmes of Zambia Library Service

Drawing.

Story-telling.

Netball.

Reading.

Painting.

Winners of the reading competition.
interest in reading. The programme has proved inspirational in introducing children to the thrills of reading. It has also encouraged interaction among teachers, parents and librarians. This three-way process enhances better and improved information provision to the child.

The idea of a reading tent came from a member of staff who attended the Zimbabwe International Book Fair and saw such a tent in operation. It was introduced in Lusaka in 1997 and in 1998 spread to Choma in Southern Province and Solwezi in Northern Province.

Activities that take place in the tents include: story reading; storytelling; making flowers from toilet tissue; cutting out paper dolls; colouring with paints, felt-tip pens and wax crayons; drawing and painting; and playing with Plasticine. Outside the tent, ball games, team games and skipping take place.

**Women’s Reading Corners**

Women’s reading corners were designed to promote reading among women in Zambia. Pilot projects from 1998 to date are being carried out in four provincial libraries at Choma, Mansa, Mongu and Solwezi. The corners are run by ZLS librarians, with the assistance of Women’s Corner Committees.

**Strategies**

Information is disseminated by:

- providing reading books and other printed materials;
- making practical demonstrations;
- assisting women with reading; and
- collaborating with other organizations dealing with women’s affairs.

**Major constraints**

The major constraints experienced by the committees are:

- lack of appropriate reading materials, especially those written in Zambian languages;
- lack of funds (there is a need for money to carry out demonstrations as this consolidates the theory);
- lack of incentives;
- lack of transport; and
- a lack of skills on the part of the ZLS staff and the women’s committees to deal with women issues.
Example
During the official launch in Mansa, it was stated that it was only when women were empowered politically, socially, culturally and economically that their potential could be realized.

The women made five visits. At Musumali village, the Women’s Corner Executive talked to the headman and made an appointment to meet the women of the village. The Women’s Corner could not make it to the first visit because of a lack of transport and funds. On the second visit to the same village, a lot of women attended. The Women’s Corner women carried out demonstrations on health and taught the women about human rights. The village women showed interest in visiting the library but later stopped because there were no Zambian (in this case Bemba) language books. At Kabuta village, demonstrations were made to girls who had dropped out of school. No follow-up was made.
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