# Libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa: colonial origins and development trajectories

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## Introduction

In this paper I reflect on some aspects of the colonial and post-colonial influences in Africa south of the Sahara, to which I shall refer as "the region", [1] I'll be looking mainly at aspects of library development in the former French and British colonies, and paying attention to competing Western influences on the colonial and post-colonial development of libraries in the region. The emphasis is on the colonial period and the formative first two decades following independence. South Africa will be touched on only fleetingly. I have to admit that I know more about Anglophone Africa than about Francophone Africa, and very little about library development in former colonies of other European countries. I hope that this audience will help me to fill in the gaps in my knowledge. I will concentrate on the development of public libraries, because it is here that differences are most striking.

There were libraries in Africa well before European colonization. Libraries first made their appearance on the northern fringes of the African continent during the first millennium BCE. The ancient Library of Alexandria is frequently cited as the most important example. South of the Sahara, African culture was predominantly oral (cf. Amadi 1981, 69–70; Kotei 2003, 17). Over twenty indigenous African scripts and related writing systems such as syllabaries, many of great beauty, have been described by Mafundikwa (2006). Some of these scripts, such as the Meroitic and Ge'ez scripts, are of ancient origins, while others were invented during the 19th and 20th centuries in response to colonialism (Le Quellec 2011). However, the indigenous scripts are not thought to have been widely used (Sturges and Neill 1998, 80). Arabic script was widely used in North and West Africa. Under Islamic influences centres of learning were established, and from the 15th to the 19th centuries books were collected and traded throughout the Sahara and the Sahel, from Mauritania (Krätli 2004a; Krätli 2004b) to Nigeria.

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[1] According to the United Nations Statistics Division, "[t]he designation sub-Saharan Africa is commonly used to indicate all of Africa except northern Africa, with the Sudan included in sub-Saharan Africa" (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm, accessed 2014-12-18).

**The colonial influences**

Turning now to the European colonial influences, I argue that library development in the region has been primarily influenced by two factors: (a) the library situation in the colonizing country, and (b) the style of colonization. For the former I limit myself to two colonizers, France and Britain. Library development in the colonies of Portugal, Belgium and Spain has been described as minimal or non-existent (Ochai 1984, 13–14; Lajeunesse and Sène 2004, 369), although country reports submitted at the 1953 Ibadan Seminar (on which more below) suggests that there were public libraries in the Belgian Congo and in certain Portuguese colonies (Olden 1995, 13–14; UNESCO 1954, 138–147). However, it is indisputable that it was in the former British and French colonies that more substantial library development took place. Although many languages are spoken there, and these labels raise some fundamental problems (Olden 2015, 146–147), they are referred to here as Anglophone and Francophone countries respectively for the sake of economy.

In considering the style of colonization, the distinction made by Mufwene (2002, 10–14) may be useful. Writing about the fate of African languages in the 21st century, Mufwene distinguished between trade, settlement, and exploitation colonies. *Trade colonies* were the first to develop, and in Africa were found on the west coast of Africa from the 15th century onwards, when European explorers set up trade relations with the local inhabitants. In this part of the region, the climate was not hospitable to Europeans. Europeans came for trade-related purposes, and then went home. From the mid-19th century onwards, trade colonies tended to evolve into *exploitation colonies,* where Europeans came to control and exploit natural resources for the benefit of the colonizing nations but did not generally stay, or *settlement colonies*, where Europeans went to establish permanent homes. Mufwene distinguished between *plantation settlement colonies*, based on slave labour, and *non-plantation settlement colonies*, characterized by substantial European immigration. The demographics, social structures and interactions in the various types of colonies determined the language situations that developed there. I would take this further and say that it also had a big impact on library development. For this purpose I simplify by distinguishing here only between colonies with and without substantial European settlement.

**Library development in Francophone Africa**

The development of libraries in Senegal specifically and in Francophone West Africa more generally has been discussed by Maack (1980; 1981; 1982). Sène (1992) discussed the colonial period up to 1958. Balock (1997) described the situation in Cameroon, while Lajeunesse and Sène (2004) dealt specifically with library legislation in Francophone Africa. Saunders and Saunders (1994) wrote an overview of library development in 23 former French and Belgian territories in Africa.

Much of the library development in Francophone West Africa was centred on Dakar. French colonization of Senegal started in 1659 with the establishment of a trading post in St Louis, but the French presence was exercised through chartered companies which failed to establish administrative institutions. Thus the history of books and libraries in the French West African colonies dates from the 19th century (Sène 1992, 306), which saw a new wave of French colonial expansion in West and Central Africa. It is known that by 1803 there was a

municipal library in St Louis, which had probably been established a year or two earlier. It may have been stocked with confiscated books as was the case in France after the French Revolution, when confiscated books were used to build municipal libraries. The potential clientele for the French library in St Louis was very small. The library served a twofold need: professional (scientific research and administration of justice) and recreational (boosting the morale of homesick colonists). A second library was set up in Gorée in 1855 (Maack 1981, 11–16).

Collections of scientific books were formed during the 19th century, as well as collections of legal works and archives. Archivists played the leading role in these early colonial libraries (Maack 1981, 17–20). Thus the emphasis was on libraries in the service of the French colonial administration. The latter half of the 19th century saw increasing interest in the scientific study of the peoples and resources of the various colonial empires. Research institutes were set up not only in the capitals of the colonial powers but also in the colonies. During this period a few influential *conservateurs,* who had followed the French government's elitist training programme and passed the examinations admitting them to civil service positions, played the leadership role in Senegal's libraries, often combining library and archival roles. The first permanent research institute in French tropical Africa, *l'Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire*[2] (IFAN, French Institute of Black Africa), was founded in 1936.

By the 1950s there were a number of academic and special libraries in Dakar. The University of Dakar[3] was opened in 1959, and IFAN was incorporated in it as an institute. With assistance from UNESCO, the first library school in Francophone Africa, the *Centre regional de formation des bibliothécaires* (Regional Centre for the Training of Librarians) was established in Dakar in 1962. In 1967 it was renamed *École de bibliothécaires, archivistes et documentalistes* (EBAD, School for Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists) and integrated into the University as a professional school (Maack 1981, 193–195). It was intended to promote libraries and reading for the population, but due to the lack of jobs in public librarianship, it had to concentrate on preparing students for other fields such as research libraries, documentation centres and archives (Maack 1981, 221).

While the French colonial authorities were prepared to make more significant investments in libraries and documentation centres supporting scientific research, library services to the public lagged behind. In the early 1900s the Governor General of French West Africa, Jules Brévié, urged his lieutenant governors in the territories comprising this federation to foster the development of libraries for work, culture and education. These were mainly used by colonists, but occasionally opened to educated Africans (Maack 1980, 210–214). Library development in the other colonies followed more slowly (Sène 1992, 320). In the 1930s libraries came to be seen as a means of propagating French culture. Although the number of Africans receiving schooling was small, the need was felt to provide good quality reading matter to counteract the impressions of European culture that literate young people might form from light popular reading matter. This was seen in the context of France's *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission) and a humanistic view of colonization, which emphasized solidarity between the French and African peoples and sought to promote a Franco-African culture. The initiative to spread popular libraries through French West Africa came to a halt due to the outbreak of WW2 (Maack 1980, 215–217).

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[2] Renamed in 1966 *Institut Fondamental de l'Afrique Noire*. (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institut_Fondamental_d%27Afrique_Noire, accessed 2014-12-18).
[3] Renamed in 1987 Université Cheikh-Anta-Diop (Wikipedia, http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universit%C3%A9_Cheikh-Anta-Diop, accessed 2014-12-18.)

After the war the theme of cultural synthesis was taken up by a group of African intellectuals led by Léopold Senghor (Maack 1980, 217). The period between the war and 1960, when all the French West African territories achieved independence[4], was a formative period as the colonial power sought to put in place institutions that would serve to maintain French influence after independence (Maack 1982, 199–200). French leaders and officials placed much emphasis on the role of French language and culture. However, ideas for building a coherent system of public libraries did not come to fruition due to lack of support from administrators. Maack attributes this to the fact that the senior officials had been influenced by their own experiences of French public libraries, which were poorly developed. At independence there was no system of public libraries in place in the newly independent nations, and no tradition of government support for public libraries (Maack 1980, 217–220).

Nevertheless a movement for public libraries developed in the region. The leading spirit in this movement, E.W.K. Dadzie, received a UNESCO fellowship which enabled him to travel to Europe during 1955-6. He was deeply impressed by the potential of free public libraries he saw in Scandinavia (Maack 1981, 70; Maack 1982, 119–220), and was instrumental in the founding of the *Association pour le développement des bibliothèques publiques en Afrique* (ADBPA). It subsequently extended its scope and changed its name to *Association internationale pour le développement des bibliothèques en Afrique* (AIDBA, International Association for the Development of Libraries in Africa) (Maack 1981, 185). Persons without professional qualifications could play leading roles in this association. However, this was not to the liking of some members with professional qualifications. In 1973 they formed the *Association Nationale des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes Sénégalais* (ANABADS, National Association of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists of Senegal), in which non-professionals were excluded from leadership positions, allowing the professionals to concentrate more on "technical interests" (Maack 1981, 211). This reflects both the elitism and the gulf between the scholarly libraries and public libraries that have characterized French librarianship. Maack (1981, 220) commented:

> Although the discussion of technical concerns among colleagues is important in upgrading the competence and knowledge of practitioners, it reflects a turning inward rather than an innovative approach to those social and political factors that have inhibited library development in the region.

This illustrates the continuity between colonial and post-colonial policies and practices that is emphasized by Maack (1981, 78–79). French policy towards its former colonies in Africa was to tie them as closely as possible to France, politically, economically and culturally. This was made easier by the relatively amicable transition to independence. There was little political pressure to change, so that policies of the colonial government were continued in the newly independent countries. A telling example is found in the University of Dakar,[5] which continued to follow French structures and policies, to the extent that the initial plan for its new library, constructed after independence, followed the standard plan for university libraries in France in accordance with a regulation going back to 1878 (Maack 1981, 124).

Promotion of French language and culture was central to French development aid, which was significant (Maack 1981, 148). During 1959-1975 a number of French cultural centres were

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[4] Guinea became independent in 1958 after refusing to join the French Community. All the other sub-Saharan French colonies, including those in French Equatorial Africa, achieved full independence in 1960.
[5] Later renamed Université Cheik Anta Diop.

set up with circulating libraries. The aim was to increase access to French books and to encourage African authors to write in French. A *Bureau du Livre*, set up in 1963, distributed nearly 600,000 books to 25 of these cultural centres in Africa. Book clubs were organized and prizes offered to young African writers with the aim of creating a culture "inspired by France but rooted in African experience (Maack 1980, 217–218). Throughout, during the colonial period and after, the emphasis was on French language and "civilization" – to the exclusion of any other, be it vernacular or from elsewhere. The French saw libraries as a means of extending French cultural influence (Ochai 1984, 313–314).

In spite of efforts by Dadzie and his colleagues in the ADPBA to emulate the UNESCO-promoted model of a national public library service which I shall describe below, it proved impossible to sell this idea to French officials or to Senegalese officials educated in France. A widespread system of free public libraries did not exist in France and officials had not been exposed to this concept (Maack 1982, 218–220).

This is not merely an Anglo-American criticism. In the years following the Second World War awareness spread through the French library profession of the *retard français*, the backwardness or deficit of French public libraries in comparison with the "Anglo-Saxon" public libraries. This theme has been discussed with great insight and sensitivity by Anne Marie Bertrand (Bertrand 2010). Given the state of public libraries in France, it is not surprising that Francophone Africa fell far behind Anglophone Africa in this respect (Maack 1982, 230). However, in the decades following independence some innovative developments occurred there in a somewhat different context, that of cultural promotion. Sturges and Neill (1998, 198) reported on an "ambitious network of centres", known as *centres de lecture et d'animation culturelle en milieu rurale* (CLAC). There being no exact English word for the French *animation*, this term can best be translated as "rural reading and cultural promotion centres". By 2009 some 212 of these had been set up in 16 Francophone African countries with technical assistance and funding initially from the French *Agence de cooperation culturelle et technique* (ACCT, Agency for cultural and technical cooperation), and later by the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*. It is interesting to note that books provided to the libraries of these centres are not limited to publications in French published in France. Locally published materials, including those in local languages, may be purchased as well (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie 2009).

French influence on library development in its former African colonies is immense and pervasive. It has persisted well after these colonies became independent, thanks to development aid and programmes aimed at promoting French language and culture. Resistance to this influence has been low. From the detailed study of Senegal by Maack (1981) it is evident after two decades of independence a number of characteristics of librarianship in that country – and by extension other Francophone African countries – mirrored those of librarianship in France:

- The low priority accorded to public libraries but, on the positive side, the emphasis on reading and culture
- The primacy of scientific libraries, which in some respects were more highly developed than in Anglophone Africa
- A high degree of centralization, with instructions emanating from the capital
- A hierarchical and elitist staffing structure
- A cumbersome bureaucracy
- The modelling of library training on the French pattern

- The presence of documentation centres, rather than Anglo-American special libraries
- Various aspects of library administration and services: closed stacks, shelving of books by size and accession number, and the payment of fees for library membership

However, over time awareness has grown of the need to depart from the French model, and to recover and preserve indigenous culture (Maack 1981, 224).

**Library development in Anglophone Africa**

In discussing library development in Anglophone Africa, it is necessary to bear in mind that the territories concerned are quite diverse. Here the distinction between colonies in which there was significant European settlement and others in which this was not the case is especially useful. Olden (1995, 1–3) argued that relations between the colonialists and the native populations were different in the two colonial situations. The climate of West Africa was not conducive to European settlement. As a result, European presence was limited to colonial and military officials, traders, missionaries and the like. In Nigeria, for example, relations between Europeans and Africans were somewhat more relaxed than in Kenya. The cooler climates of East, Central and Southern Africa, such as the "white highlands" of Kenya, Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) and South Africa attracted permanent European settlement. White settlers who had settled permanently on land (in most cases taken originally by conquest or subterfuge) were more likely arouse the resentment of the dispossessed, The settlers "had more to gain from keeping Africans down" (Olden 1995, 2), and they tended to exhibit more racist attitudes than those whose sojourn in Africa was temporary. In countries of significant European settlement liberation struggles were protracted and bloody. In his book, which deals with library development in Nigeria, Ghana and East Africa, Olden (1995) showed how this phenomenon affected library development.

In colonies of European settlement both the development of free public library services for the entire population and the development of higher education for Africans was delayed until shortly before or after independence. Small public libraries were set up at an early stage, "almost invariably for the exclusive use of Europeans" (Sturges and Neill 1998, 80). Racist attitudes inhibited use of these libraries by Africans before independence. As part of their survey for the Carnegie Corporation, Pitt (1929) and Ferguson (1929) visited not only South Africa, but also Southern and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively) and Kenya. In Southern Rhodesia they found small public libraries in six of the larger towns, "all of them of the subscription type, and open, of course, to white people only" (Ferguson 1929, 30). Similar subscription libraries for the settlers were found in Kenya (Ferguson 1929, 33; Pitt 1929, 40–41). Olden (1995, 35) mentions club libraries, some of which were run by the East African Women's League, an organization of British women, who were strongly opposed to inclusion of people other than Europeans. The Carnegie visitors did not mention the Seif Bin Salim Library and Free Reading Room that had been established in Mombasa in 1903. It was open to all but contained only Indian literature. In 1942 the Desai Memorial Library was founded in Nairobi, also by Indians (Musisi 1993, 420).

In Namibia, a German colony which was captured by South African forces in 1915 during the First World War and subsequently ruled by South Africa from 1920 to 1990, libraries were only opened to all races when South African rule ended. South Africa itself is the most extreme example, adopting a democratic non-racial constitution, and opening library services

to all only in 1994 after a long and bitter struggle against apartheid.[6] It is interesting to note that in Kenya (with a substantial settler population) universities were late in developing, since the focal point of university education in East Africa was Makarere University in Uganda, a country without a large settler population.

Turning now to the Anglophone territories without substantial European settlement, the early library development of Britain's four West African colonies followed a similar pattern initially before diverging. Writing about university and special libraries in Africa as the British West African colonies were gaining independence, Holdsworth (1961, 254) noted that library development followed a general pattern of three phases. First to be set up were special libraries: "bread and butter" libraries, i.e. special libraries needed for the government of the colony and for the work of those engaged in industry, trade, and the professions. Next came libraries of colleges and universities, and finally public libraries. Of course there were exceptions to this pattern, such as the founding of the Lagos Public Library, made possible by a gift from the Carnegie Corporation in 1932 (Ekpe 1979, 14). We may also note the establishment by the British Council of a number of reading rooms in Britain's African colonies during the Second World War. This was done as a means of providing information about the war from the Allied perspective, or as Ochai (1984, 315) put it less charitably, of distributing British war propaganda. Neither of these initiatives can be seen as a significant extension of public library service to the general population.

By the end of WW2 it was clear to the colonial authorities in London, as in Paris, that self-government was inevitable. To prepare for the transition, investments in infrastructure, social services, health and education were stepped up, and this was reflected in library development. Harris (1962) described the development of special libraries of research units and institutes as well as college libraries and university libraries, in Nigeria between 1948 and 1962. The founding of a significant number of new institutions (including four universities in addition to Ibadan) stimulated library development but also revealed pressing needs, particularly in respect of library staffing.

The issue of education for librarianship in West Africa is of interest in illustrating the influence of competing British and American influences. Harold Lancour, an American library educator, commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York to undertake a survey of West African library needs (Lancour 1958), advised that education for library leadership was needed and recommended the establishment of a post-graduate library school at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. A substantial Carnegie grant funded the establishment of the Institute of Librarianship at the University in 1960 (Aguolu and Aguolu 2001, 14). In Ghana, on the other hand, it was decided to follow the pattern then obtaining in Britain, where in most cases students were prepared for the examinations of the Library Association in library schools that were not part of a university. In 1960 the Ghana Library Board invited J.C. Harrison, head of the library school in Manchester, England, to make recommendations on the establishment of a library school. Harrison recommended the establishment of a non-university school that would follow the example of British library schools.[7] The Ghana Library School was established in the following year under the Ghana Library Board. As the British system itself evolved towards university-based library training, the Ghana Library School followed suit and in 1965 it was transferred to the University of Ghana as the

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[6] There had been separate but largely inferior and inadequate library services for Black South Africans in certain areas.

[7] Boye (1996) mentions that Harrison did not object to the Ibadan model but did not see the need for two graduate library schools in West Africa.

Department of Library Studies (Boye 1996). Cross-currents arising from American and British approaches to the education of librarians in Africa had long-term effects in various parts of Anglophone Africa, including South Africa and Nigeria as well as in former British colonies elsewhere (Carroll et al. 2013, 127–130).

The period immediately following the granting of independence was something of a golden decade for library development in several of the former British colonies. The creation of new educational and research institutions continued. It was a period of great optimism about the prospects of the newly independent countries and their libraries. National leaders who had emerged from their countries' independence struggles with great national and international prestige appeared to be favourably disposed. At the opening ceremony of Tanzania's new National Central Library in 1967 President Nyerere promised that his government would continue to give the service all possible support, saying, "For the Library Service of this country is important to us; we believe it will play a vital role in the development of a rich and fruitful life for our people and our society" (cited in Olden 2005, 428).

Although the sentiments expressed by Nyerere and Nkrumah were not necessarily shared by politicians and civil servants (Olden 1995, 142), political support, at face value, was reflected in the establishment of national library services in a number of countries, starting with Nigeria (at federal state level), Ghana and Tanzania. Similar agencies, which to a greater or lesser extent combine the functions of both national and public libraries, were set up in most Anglophone African countries (Sturges 2001, 38), with Namibia following suit in 2000 (Namhila and Niskala 2013). The mandate of the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS), which was founded in 1967 after a long gestation period, serves as an example of their ambitious scope. Its mandate was:

> […)] to promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain, and develop libraries in Kenya as a National Library Service. Based on a strong central library, it aimed to develop public libraries first at the provincial or area level and then at the district or branch level, while maintaining postal services to individuals and block borrowing to institutions (Rosenberg 1993, n.p.).

In light of later criticism of these new creations, it is instructive to ask where this idea came from. The much criticized 'national library service' model which was disseminated to most of the former British colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, offers an interesting example of colonial and post-colonial influence. Rosenberg (1993; 1994) has challenged the assumption that the national library services concept was an Anglo-American idea and attributable to Anglo-American influence. Although the idea of the free public library is undoubtedly of Anglo-American origin, nation-wide public library structures have neither British nor US antecedents. Both the British and the American public library systems are decentralized, being locally governed and funded. Who, therefore, should be credited with, or blamed for, this idea? In a paper delivered at the 2015 IFLA World Library and Information Congress Lor (2015) considered a number of "suspects", with emphasis on the influences converging at, and radiating from, the 1953 Ibadan Seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa.

Few general accounts of library development in Africa fail to mention the influence of the "Ibadan Seminar". The Seminar took place under the aegis of UNESCO in Ibadan, Nigeria, from 27 July to 21 August 1953 (UNESCO 1954). It has been widely seen as a significant event in the development of librarianship in Africa (e.g. Anafulu 1976, 397; Kaungamno

1985, 270–272). Aguolo (1980, 404–405) judged that it "laid the foundation for the development of libraries and librarianship in Africa". However, its impact seems to have been felt mainly in Anglophone Africa. Although the course director of the Seminar was Mlle Yvonne Oddon, a French librarian, French influence was very limited. This is evident from the reading lists provided to participants. The works listed were overwhelmingly in English, from the American and British public library literature. At the Seminar three groups were formed to study the three main problems. The first of these was given the theme "Organizing Public Library Services on a Regional or National Scale". The very designation suggests that it was taken as a given that public libraries should be organized at a regional or national level, rather than from the ground up, at community level. This group was led by Edward Sydney, Borough Librarian of Leyton, England. All the "principal papers" for this Working Group had English-speaking authors. They included Miss Evelyn Evans, Director of Library Services, Gold Coast Library Board, about whom more later.

Given this background it is not surprising that the group recommended that the UNESCO Public Libraries Manifesto, *The public library: a living force for popular education* (UNESCO 1949), be accepted, "in principle, as a statement of the basic policy and purposes on which national public library service should be established in Africa" (UNESCO 1954, 25). The Manifesto was a general statement of UNESCO's belief in the value of public libraries. Specifically it stated that

> As a democratic institution, operated by the people for the people, the public library should be: established and maintained under clear authority of law; supported wholly or mainly from public funds; open for free use on equal terms to all members of the community, regardless of occupation, creed, class or race (UNESCO 1949, 1).

In addition to endorsing the Public Library Manifesto, the group recommended

> … that the sole public library authority in African territories should be the national or state agency set up by the government. The devolution of authority will depend on the progress of local authorities and their capacity to provide their share of the costs of an adequate service (UNESCO 1954, 23)

Looking more closely at the Seminar participants, where they came from, their presentations and documents, and their contributions in setting up public library services, the following possible sources of influence can be identified:

First, *UNESCO*: In its early years UNESCO strongly supported public library development worldwide. This push was motivated by UNESCO's concern to establish peace and its belief that information and knowledge would engender international understanding, tolerance and peace. Strong American and British influences dominated UNESCO's library work in its first decades. The Soviet Union only became a member in 1954 and was in no position to exercise any influence in UNESCO in the first decade. There is also little or no evidence of strong Scandinavian influence during this period.

Second, *American* influence via the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The idea of a nationally organized library service may have first arisen in Rhodesia during the Carnegie visit of 1929 (Sturges 2001, 39), but there is little evidence of significant Carnegie involvement in the conceptualization of national library services during the critical period during which the concept emerged.

Third, the *British Council*: The British Council, set up in the 1930s to promote Britain abroad, is frequently mentioned in connection with public library development in Anglophone Africa. It was mainly concerned with promoting British exports and influence, but its influence in promoting library development in the former colonies was significant (Kaungamno 1985, 266–267). The British Council library in Accra, Ghana was handed over in 1950 to the Gold Coast Library Board, which was set up for this purpose. This became the springboard for the development of national library service in Ghana.

Fourth, *Evelyn Evans*: Evans was the British Council librarian responsible for the Accra library. She was transferred to the Gold Coast Board as its first director and on that platform she built up a national public library service which was regarded as the best (and only) one in West Africa  (Olden 1995, 11). Evans was influential well beyond Ghana. She was involved in formulating proposals for a similar national library board in Sierra Leone, and her ideas about legislation for such agencies were widely followed elsewhere in Africa. Participants in the Ibadan Seminar were offered the opportunity to stop over in Accra to see the Scheme. Ten did (UNESCO 1954, 16). It is here, in Ghana, that Paul Sturges (2001) traced the origins of the national library service idea. However, Sturges is highly critical, judging that her ideas were not informed by a well-grounded understanding of the needs of the population to be served:

> She clearly felt that she knew what was needed and sought information that would enable her to provide services of a kind familiar to her from her own experience. Evans' inability to perceive the full significance of the very distinctive social and economic circumstances she witnessed on her journeys and her lack of fresh responses to what she saw was to have long term effects that were disastrous far beyond the boundaries of the Gold Coast (Sturges 2001, 40).

Fifth, other *British expatriates* who came to establish public library services in Africa: A number of British expatriates played leading roles in the development of public libraries in Africa. Like Evans, who had been an inspector of branch libraries in Coventry and deputy librarian in York, England, many of them had come to Africa from a background in British city and county libraries.[8] It would have been natural for them to try to replicate the organizational form with which they were familiar. For a British expatriate the total public library establishment in one of the British colonies would have appeared no bigger (probably smaller) than that of a British county or city. It is not surprising that they would try to apply the organizational structure of such a local library system (with a central library and branches) to the colony as a whole, even though it would be serving a larger population spread out over a vastly larger area.

Sixth, and perhaps surprisingly, *Lionel McColvin*: Surprising because McColvin, described as a visionary, and as the outstanding personality of his generation in British public librarianship (Black 2004), never worked in Africa and was not present in Ibadan. However, he exerted

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[8] For example, B. Barton-Eckett, who came to Nairobi in 1931 as the first chief librarian of the Carnegie-funded Kenya Circulating Libraries, had been the county librarian of Durham, England (Olden 1995, 37). E. M. Broome, the founding director of library services of Tanganyika from 1963, was the former County Librarian of the North Riding of Yorkshire (Olden 2005, 426). F.A. Sharr, State Librarian of Western Australia, commissioned to write an influential report for Northern Nigerian Regional Library in 1962-3 had been the deputy librarian of Manchester Public Libraries (Olden 1995, 103). G. Annesley had left the Westminster Public Libraries in 1948 to run the African Library Service of the East African Literature Bureau (Olden 1995, 90). At Westminster he would have worked under Lionel McColvin (see below), who was the chief librarian there from 1938 to 1961(Black 2004, 904).

enormous influence on public librarianship worldwide through IFLA and UNESCO. He authored two of the UNESCO public library manuals (McColvin 1949; McColvin 1957a). He also wrote an influential book on international public librarianship (McColvin 1957b). McColvin served as chairman of IFLA's Public Libraries Section from 1952 to 1960 (Thompson 1968, 77–80). Under his watch a memorandum, *The development of public library services: a working paper*[9] was drawn up in 1953, and his Section also drafted the first IFLA standards for public library services and public library premises (Thompson 1968, 79). When one compares the proceedings and recommendations of the Ibadan Seminar with the Public Library Section's working paper of 1953, the language used is strikingly similar. Given also that the British county and borough librarians who went to Africa to set up national library services would have been advancing in their careers in Britain while McColvin was the dominant influence in their profession, McColvin must have exercised a very considerable influence on the development of the national library service concept.

Finally, *IFLA*: During this period IFLA was not yet much involved in librarianship in the developing world – being castigated for this by Ranganathan in 1954 (Ranganathan 1954). IFLA was not itself represented at the Ibadan Seminar and no mention was made of it in the Seminar report (UNESCO 1954). Any influence from IFLA would have originated with McColvin, and would have been channelled through the 1953 working paper referred to above.

I conclude that Anglo-American concepts greatly influenced the pattern of library development, and specifically the development of public libraries according to the national library service model. Anglo-American influence was by no means exclusively channelled through UNESCO. From the United States, the work of the United States Information Agency and foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation should not be overlooked. But in tracing the origins of the concept of a national public library service I suggest it is primarily to Britain that we must turn. This influence was exercised through UNESCO, through the British Council, and through the appointment of British librarians to key leadership positions as the British colonies approached independence and in the decade or so that followed, until they could be replaced by local staff. Ultimately, the Anglo-American national library service model seems to have been more Anglo than American. The literature shows that the protagonists were predominantly British.

However, the wide dissemination of the idea in Anglophone Africa cannot be attributed to the influence of one man or woman, a group of expatriate library directors, a Seminar, or the authority of UNESCO alone. Rather, the dissemination of the model should be seen in terms of pragmatic, albeit ideologically coloured, responses to the colonial situation, developed in the context of the decolonization process, the Cold War, and contemporary understandings of development. In the decolonization process the colonizers sought to preserve their economic, political, and cultural influence in their former colonies. For the departing British, setting up centralized national library services would have fitted into this strategy (Rosenberg 1993, 8). Decolonization and post-independence development took place against the background of the Cold War, which pitted the Western democracies (and others) against the Soviet Union and its socialist allies. UNESCO was caught up in this struggle. Initially UNESCO's cultural policies were solely based on the Anglo-American tradition. This also applied to UNESCO's library work. Laugesen (2009, 70) placed UNESCO's library work against the background of attempts by the USA to project "a US vision of a preferred world order" which was tied to its

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[9] Reproduced in McColvin (1957b, 252–263) and in Evans (1968, 52–54).

political ideology and values. In this context rhetoric about education, citizenship and democracy left unstated an underlying aim to counter Soviet propaganda. Finally, during the period under discussion, the dominant theory of development was that of modernization (cf. Laugesen 2009, 70; Laugesen 2014, 3). According to this theory all nations were expected to follow a universal pattern of development. Developing nations were seen mainly as passive recipients of ideas and technology from developed countries. Furthermore, libraries were seen by McColvin and many in his generation as universal, and public library development everywhere was expected ultimately to follow the same trajectory as in the developed nations.

Since the 1980s criticism of the Anglo-American model has become a constant refrain. Inherent in the model is a dualism in respect of the roles of local and national authorities. While public libraries need to be where the people are (which in Sub-Saharan Africa means in the rural areas), a national service needs a national headquarters in the capital city. This had a paralysing effect on the development of public libraries. As Mchombu (1982, 245–246) intimated, national library service headquarters absorbed far too great a share of the available resources. In some cases the establishment of a national infrastructure has inhibited the development of public libraries in all but the largest towns. While the French public library tradition had little to offer Africa, and the Anglo-American national library service seemed an evolutionary dead end.

At the same time, the best energies of African librarianship were being diverted by fruitless discussions and consultations on the construction of national library policies and infrastructures according to UNESCO's misguided NATIS and UNISIST frameworks (Sturges and Neill 1998, 117–128). At least a decade was lost during which more appropriate African solutions could have been conceptualized.

I have to break off the story here. Since the 1980s much rethinking has been taking place. Here I could mention the pioneering project by Aboyade (1984) to adapt library services to reach a poor, rural, largely illiterate community, research by Mchombu (1992; 2004) on information for rural community development, Botswana's village reading rooms (Alemna 2001), and the greater recognition of orality and traditional knowledge in African information work. There is an ongoing search for African librarianship (Sturges and Neill 1998, 129–135; Bowdoin and Lee 2014). Possibly inspired by Thabo Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance and the African Millennium and by the slogan, "African solutions to African problems", African librarians have engaged in a number of pan-African LIS initiatives. Three Pan-African library summits have been held. In 2013 the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA), an umbrella library association for Africa, was launched. It is to be welcomed that this is not a solely Anglophone initiative; Francophone and Lusophone Africa are also participating. All this calls for more detailed treatment, which is not possible here. Instead, I return to the colonial origins of LIS in our region.


**Conclusion**

It is clear that the LIS development trajectories of Francophone and Anglophone African countries diverged significantly. Ochai (1984, 310–311) stated that "...the biggest determinant of library development in Tropical Africa is the European country that colonized the area". I would agree. The differences between Anglophone colonies with significant European settlement and those without such settlement are minor – a matter of the pace and

sequence of development – in comparison with differences between Anglophone and Francophone Africa. In her comparative analysis of the British and French colonial legacy in West Africa Maack (1982) emphasized that the wholesale transplanting of library philosophy, techniques and professional organization from the respective colonial powers, should

> …be seen as one element in a broader colonial legacy that shaped the library environment in West Africa. This legacy included the administrative and political structure of each country, the social agencies created before independence, the economic infrastructure, and finally, the cultural priorities transmitted by the governing power (1982, 231).

These largely determined development aid, language and book policies. The latter particularly affected the development of indigenous languages and the languages chosen for publications. They also determined what emphasis was placed on the roles of libraries (e.g. education versus culture), and what priorities were accorded to different types of libraries (Maack 1982, 231–240). The current Pan-African discussions and initiatives in our field offer potential for the creation of a synthesis of Anglophone, Francophone and other traditions, towards a new African librarianship. I would argue, however, that an understanding of the historical roots of our situation, and of why were are different, is essential for the development of a true African librarianship.

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