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SESSION 3

LIBRARIES NETWORKING FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF JAMAICA (NLJ)

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Libraries Networking for National Development: The Role of the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ)

The givens of this presentation are that until proven otherwise:
1. Libraries do indeed contribute to national development;
2. Libraries working together rather than alone are in a better position to make a contribution to national development goals;
3. The National Library of Jamaica has been and will be key to libraries networking in the national interest.

In examining the role of the NLJ to libraries networking for national development I will begin with asking the question what do we mean by national development, then review the role of the NLJ in library networking in Jamaica, past and present and finally make proposals for NLJ’s future roles in development of our National Information System.

National Development, what do we mean?
As we will hear more of tomorrow, national development in the Jamaican context means that by 2030 we will

1. Have achieved relatively high levels of per capita GDP (between US$ 13,000 – US$ 80,000) Present (GDP is $4, 200. as per 2005 stats)
2. Possess advanced productive sectors (including service and high technology industries)
3. Enjoy high quality infrastructure and social services (the most appropriate, effective and up-to-date)
4. Undertake relatively high levels of research and innovation (R&D which focuses on quality and relevance of the technological, industrial, economic, social and cultural aspects which include quality of life and management of living resources; user-friendly information society; competitive and sustainable growth; promotion of innovation and encouragement of participation; improving human research potential and socio-economic knowledge. <http://www.pioj.gov.jm/dev_country_status.aspx>

The above suggests that our national planners accept the not so common notion that development is both an economic and a social equation. This perspective recognizes that development, to quote Mahbub ul Haq Founder of the Human Development Report is

“more than the rise or fall of national incomes.. The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible” http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/

Further to advancing our concept of development I want us to also consider the key principle of the World Summit on the Information Society which declares our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Development then from the preceding means higher GDPs; better quality of life and a state of national being and consciousness in which information and knowledge are both cause and effect. It is truly impressive that the rationale and recommendations and plans for library networking in Jamaica presupposed the key principle of the WSIS, presupposed the goals for Jamaica VISION 2030 and the UNDP perspective on development.

So you may ask. What do we mean by information and knowledge? The short answer: ingredients for development personal and national and which are the purview of libraries: that is the recorded data, facts, thoughts, ideas, wisdom of the ages, local and global and which are the subjects of the Dewey Decimal, Library of Congress, Universal Decimal schemes for the classification of knowledge.

The next question then is, what has been NLJ’s contribution to Jamaican libraries working together for development?

In answering this question I hope to show that, by way of its reason for being and by way of its functions the NLJ has from day one been the key stone in the construction of the national information system. NACOLADS was the architect and NLJ the key stone.

Let me remind you of the definition of keystone: the central principle of a system, policy etc on which all the rest depends. (The Concise Oxford Dictionary) and in case you think I may be biased in asserting the NLJ to be the key stone for the construction of networked libraries into a national information system, I am referring you to the first plan for the development of a national integrated library system which declared that:

“the most important and immediate action necessary to launch the national information system is the establishment of the National Library of Jamaica based on the re-structuring and expansion of the West India Reference Library of the Institute of Jamaica and with its functions and responsibilities clearly defined...”. The defined responsibilities included the charge “to assist through the provision of essential information materials and services the search for new solutions to satisfy national aspirations and the need for social and economic reconstruction”.

To indicate how NLJ has sought to rise up to that keystone responsibility I will use the framework of the roles of national libraries as codified by Peter Lor. These roles are: Heritage; Service to End Users; Infrastructure; International Cooperation.

The Heritage role is realized through, on one hand the collection, conservation of national publications and documents and on the other hand the creation of bibliographic records describing those documents and publications. The legislation which established the National Library of Jamaica, the Institute of Jamaica Act 1978, stated the NLJ’s mandate to be the collection, preservation and ready availability of all materials in any medium and which is of cultural, scientific, historical or national interest.

- Collection and ready availability

That the NLJ was established on the comprehensive, world renowned collection of the WIRL gave it a solid foundation in the direction of heritage collection and conservation. With that solid foundation the NLJ advanced its collecting function by way of a registration service for authors
in the 1980’s and by way of an understanding with publishers that in exchange for an ISBN issued by the NLJ they would donate a copy of the publication to the National Library. This collecting of the national imprint was boosted with the enactment of the Legal Deposit Act in 2002 which came into force in 2004. The Legal Deposit Act requires every publisher in Jamaica to deposit two copies of a print publication and one copy of an audio visual publication to the National Library. Ensuring a comprehensive collection of national publications is NLJ’s unique contribution to the national information system as this collection is assurance to libraries that the NLJ will have in its collection that publication which it either could not afford to purchase nor which does not immediately fit its immediate collection parameters but is likely to be needed for consultation at some future time.

Further to the legislated mandate of ready availability the NLJ earlier this year signed an agreement with Jamaica Social Policy Evaluation (JASPEV), and the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies to host an Internet based database of policy and research documents which emanate from government; thereby making readily available material of national significance. An added benefit of this exercise is that as the material is being collected from the various government agencies, government officers are having their consciousness raised about the need to share information and of the need to make government studies public.

Additionally, the last three years has seen a very healthy acquisitions budget for the NLJ which is enabling the NLJ to fill gaps in its collection and to be more assertive in its purchased acquisitions. In this latter regard the NLJ has just signed to a subscription to JSTOR the online resource of scholarly journals thereby providing one more access point to studies and reports on Jamaica and making available for consultation material not easily available at other access points.

- Conservation

The newest initiative of the NLJ to strengthen libraries and to make all sources of information more readily available is the establishment of the Audio Visual Information Network (AVIN) which has its focal point in the Audiovisual department of the NLJ. A not so well known fact of the NLJ is that it has an extensive collection of film which it inherited from the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation(JBC) and an extensive collection of vinyl records and audio tapes. In managing those resources the NLJ has developed expertise in audio and film conservation and so established AVIN in keeping with our role in assisting library networks to efficiently and effectively organize resources. Institutional members of this network are in the public and private sector and include the Jamaica Archives and Records department, media houses, the Radio Education Unit at the UWI and the Creative Production Training Centre and others. Services provided to this network include development of a database system AVIDA for the management of film and sound resources and as recently as last week a workshop in the use of AVIDA. (Creation of bibliographic records the other half of the Heritage role is closely aligned to our infrastructural support role so will be discussed there.)

**NLJ’s Service to End Users** in the interest of building the national information system as a tool for national development has been a feature of its organizational life since inception. In the context of our topic the end users are the library and information units which make up the NATIS. Two of the early programmes for end users were the Library Extension Services (LIBES) and the Referral Service (JASIN)
The Library Extension Services (LIBES) and its fore-runner the Library Development Team (LDT) which operated between 1981 and 1992 assisted the embryonic special libraries in government ministries and departments with the physical reorganization of their collections; classifying and cataloguing; design of forms and procedural manuals; encouraging and assisting departments to identify and employ librarians; training of staff. This support enabled these units to be up to a standard to participate in the National Information System (NATIS). The original aim of the Library Extension Services was to develop and maintain libraries in the public sector but this was eventually expanded to include private sector libraries in response to demands and in anticipation of the contributions which private sector libraries can make to the information resources within the NATIS. By 1986 ninety two (92) libraries had benefited from the Library Extension Services. Libraries which benefited from the service included the Schools of Art, Music and Dance, forerunner to the Edna Manley College of Visual Arts; the College of Agriculture and the Jamaica Police Academy. LIBES was suspended in 1990 for want of staff.

The other service of note in the early years was JASIN (Jamaican Access to Sources of Information.). This was a referral service provided to libraries. The referral service was facilitated by the subject profiles created for the thirty one (31) participating libraries. Should any one of those libraries not able to answer an information request the request would be passed to the Referral Centre which would then search its profiles indices and refer the requesting libraries to the library or libraries most likely to have the information needed. The requesting library and the library owning the material would make arrangements for obtaining the material, either through loan, photocopying or referring the user to the location. This programme was in keeping with the goal of NATIS to minimize duplication of resource and to realize economies form sharing of scare resources. (National Library of Jamaica.Report For the Five Year Period April 1, 1979 – March 31, 1984.)

Infrastructure support for library network development

The Infrastructure roles of NLJ are to the building of a national integrated library network what perimeter walls, columns and beams are to house construction—they frame and contain the house. The infrastructure roles as identified by Peter Lor are:

a. the provision of access to bibliographic tools (printed bibliographies and indexes or computer databases) that describe the world's output of documents.
b. the provision of cataloguing and other services to the country's libraries.
c. the provision of leadership and advice to the country's libraries.
d. planning and coordination of the country's library and information service system.

Access to Bibliographic Tools and provision of cataloguing services is one of the legislated functions of the NLJ. The NLJ is required by law to provide a central cataloguing and other bibliographical service relating to the needs of the National Library of Jamaica and other libraries whether in Jamaica or elsewhere. Further to this mandate the National Library of Jamaica publishes the list of national publications, the Jamaica National Bibliography, hosts the union catalogue of the SECIN units and is experimenting with hosting the catalogue of library catalogues—the national catalogue. The latter has been stymied by the scarcity of cataloguers. The National Library of Jamaica has two cataloguers where the need is for three times that number. Mrs. Brown and Mrs.Ononaiwu in their presentations will speak to the challenges with creating this national catalogue which is a necessary tool for enabling the country to access national information. Other more successful bibliographic services provided by NLJ are the issuing of ISBN since 1983, CIP since 1985 and ISSN since 1993.
The hallmark of NLJ’s infrastructure development is its distribution and maintenance of the Unesco database management system CDS/ISIS. Recognizing CDS/ISIS’ potential for library networking in Jamaica the NLJ sought and obtained permission from Unesco to distribute the software to Jamaican libraries. Over the years the Information Network Services department of the NLJ has developed tools for acquisitions, cataloguing, lending, and serials tracking on the very bare bones CDS/ISIS program. Since 1989 the NLJ has distributed the cataloguing module to over 300 libraries and as a consequence is on call to these libraries regarding the product. In addition libraries which receive CDS/IIS agree to allow the NLJ to collect their cataloguing records for inclusion in the national catalogue—still under construction. The collection of cataloguing records has been ongoing, but as you will hear in Mrs. Brown’s and Mrs. Ononaiwu’s presentations there are challenges with the incorporation of all the collected records into the master catalogue.

Provision of leadership and advice to the country’s libraries and the planning and coordination of the country's library and information service system has been implied by the legislated mandates and facilitated through the mechanism of the library’s location in the national information system. NLJ’s roles in national library development received another dimension in 2001 when the Cabinet Office on the dissolution of the National Council on Libraries, Archives and Information Services (NACOLAIS) mandated the NLJ to:

- Collaborate with the Jamaica Archives and Records Department to develop policies and standards for proper management of information resources in the electronic environment.
- Coordinate and advise the government on the continued development of an integrated National Information System.

To implement this mandate the NLJ established the Advisory Committee on the National Information System (ACNIS) in 2001. This committee is made up of heads of the four focal point units and the heads of the six NLJ sub networks AVIN, COLINET, JADIN, LINET, SECIN, STIN. The terms of reference of this advisory committee include:

- Provide advice to government through relevant Ministries regarding policies and plans for the development of libraries, archives and documentation services within a coordinated National Information System.
- Promote network activities within the National Information system to heighten availability of information.
- Encourage research to ascertain information needs in support of national development.
- Promote recognition of the value of information and knowledge as important resources and encourage their use for nation building.

The last of national library roles; International Activities, which accrue benefits to network development include NLJ’s membership on the local UNESCO Information For All Committee which allows us some input in UNESCO decisions which may have implications for libraries. NLJ as a member of the IFLA’s Conference of Directors of National Libraries have and continues to enable connections and insights for local application.

**Future Roles for NLJ in library networking**

1 AVIN, Audiovisual Information Network.; COLINET, College Library Information Network; JADIN, Jamaica Agricultural Information Network; LINET, Legal Information Network; SECIN, Socio Economic Information Network; STIN, Science and Technology Information Network.
For ease of presentation I will again use Peter Lor’s framework of the roles of national libraries and the recommendations of the Second Plan for a National Documentation, Information and Library System for Jamaica to indicate the future roles for the NLJ.

**Heritage**
To remind: the heritage functions are those to do with collecting and recording and describing collected resources to enable access. Future NLJ support will be focused on ensuring a collection to support decision making towards attainment of Vision 2030. In that regard the strategy will be:

1) **Strengthening our capacity** to ensure that no publication covered by the Legal Deposit Act is lost to the national collection. Public education on the value of information will be a vehicle towards this objective as well as in the medium term activities to ensure the harvesting and archiving of internet publications of significance to Jamaica which we anticipate will be implemented in partnership with the Jamaica Archives and records Department (JARD).

2) **Collaborating with our partners** in the networks and experts outside the networks to devise and implement solutions to counter the present constraints which have delayed development of the Jamaica Bibliographic Database. One solution may be cataloguing and CDS/ISIS workshops for library staffs.

**Future roles in services to end users** will see a continuation of the consultancy services related to use of CDS/ISIS through the one-on-one trouble shooting we are frequently called upon to do; continuation of the annual users network meeting and the quarterly network coordinators meetings. Present situation suggests that those less developed and firm footed networks will need priority attention through the mechanism of the Advisory Committee.

**Infrastructure**
Future roles to provide leadership, planning and coordination of Jamaica’s library and information system will continue within the ambit of Advisory Committee on the National Information System. Strategies for consideration by ACNIS may be:

1. **Strengthen the capacity of the Advisory Committee** on the National Information System by including (as original to NACOLADS) representation from outside the library community

2. **Formalise focal point agreements.** It may well be time for the networks to consider a shift from a voluntary agreement paradigm to formal agreements paradigm. The voluntary arrangement has had its successes, but it is time to consider that without formal agreements the network will be akin to that of a couple courting for years and not prepared to make the commitment for better or worse but keeping open the choice to opt out. Formal commitments would require mainstreaming of processes and resources from all the partners towards further development of the network Goodwill, good friends, good intentions, good plans are not sufficient for advancing effective library networks.

3. **Undertake Research** A recommendation of the Second Plan for a National Documentation Information, and Library System for Jamaica was that the National Library of Jamaica be equipped to conduct the required research and studies which will facilitate improved services. In that light it may be prudent for the NLJ in partnership with the major focal points commission and underwrite a study similar to the one undertaken by the British Library in 2003.
to prove the British Library’s worth to the British economy. The study found that proved that for every £1 of the government’s grant to the British Library the national economy earned £4.4. It may not be coincidence that last year the British Library had its grant increased. Other recommended research would be for updates of the 1990 Carl Stone *Study of Information Use and Users* and the Sybil Iton *1985 Survey into the Reading Habits of the Jamaican People* and most importantly to act on the findings of the research.

4. Develop a programme for cooperative cataloguing. That cataloguers are the rarest of librarians and that the NLJ itself only has two cataloguers is enough for one to lay down arms and call it a day except for the sure knowledge we have in information being key to sustainable developed communities. NLJ does not have the answer to this problem except to suggest that it is urgent for the entire network to place this matter as item number on the library development agenda and to collectively seek to identify solutions.

In conclusion
The overview presented indicates that the NLJ’s responsibility to the National Information System and its delivery on those responsibilities has been in four distinct phases.

1. **Preparatory NACOLADS-directed Phase** which called for the establishment of a National Library of Jamaica as the most important and immediate action necessary to launch the NATIS.

2. **The Pioneering Phase**; the amendment to the Institute of Jamaica Act which made good on the NACOLADS recommendation and mandated the library’s Heritage and Infrastructure roles as evidenced by programmes such as author registration; library extension Services and the referral service JASIN.

3. **The Developmental Phase**; developing and distributing CDS/ISIS; lobbying for Legal Deposit; assuming the coordinating duties formerly performed by NACOLAINS and strengthening of the collection by purchase and legal deposit.

4. **The Reviewing for Renewal Phase**; this present stage. It is now twenty years since the *Second Plan for a National Documentation, Information and Library System for Jamaica* and although some may scoff at the age of the plan there is none other for library development in Jamaica and it is an excellent plan. In keeping with our keystone role today’s conference therefore is intended to begin the reviewing process for the plan as prelude to a revival of the national integrated library network for the grand purpose of development, personal and national.

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