

The logo for BOBCATSSS features the word "bobcatsss" in a bold, black, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is centered and overlaid by two thick, orange, curved lines that sweep from the bottom left towards the top right, framing the text.

bobcatsss

BOBCATSSS 2010 @ Parma, Italy

Dates: Monday 25th, Tuesday 26th, Wednesday 27th January, 2010

**Bridging the digital divide:
libraries providing access for all?**

“A library for Bukoba”
Addressing the divide in Tanzania

Christina Buckles

Department of Library and Information Science, St. Catherine University, Minneapolis, USA

Christina Buckles

cbuckles@hotmail.com or cmbuckles@stkate.edu

The Bukoba, Tanzania community is embarking on an extraordinary journey – its first library. This paper was written to document Community Solutions for Africa’s Development’s (COSAD) story and experience, a non-profit organization working to bring a library to Bukoba. It is a qualitative case study, completed through discussion, online research, a semester long independent study, and library consultation, exploring the following: sustainability for libraries and community programs; electronic access and its challenges (including available access programs, such as HINARI and AGORA); and the very foundation of this library’s aim and purpose – addressing the vast information and digital divide, both of which influence the current standard of living in Tanzania.

The literature discusses the difficulties of establishing libraries in countries and communities without pre-existing library traditions. Clearly, transplanting one model of a library to a new country will not do, as addressing the needs of the particular community are necessary to sustain a library. Sustainability has been addressed in different ways for libraries around the world, and these solutions are also discussed, as they relate to tailoring a library to the community and to the environment. The effectiveness of free information programs is considered, with the Bukoba, Tanzania library as a current recipient. Lastly, the library as a community center and gathering point is crucial, and this is the continuing hope for the Bukoba library.

The findings of this work are practical in nature, and provide a fresh perspective on the complications and considerations of establishing a library in a country with limited resources. They relate the struggles and opportunities presented, as well as suggestions for those assisting with or attempting similar projects.

The practical implications of this study are of value to students as they begin to consider their role in librarianship. As Internet access continues to expand, the likelihood that new librarians will have some international connections, exchanges, or experience heightens. Librarians must consider their role as professionals in an international network of libraries, between countries with differing resources and expertise.

Christina Buckles has been a student at the Department of Library and Information Science at St. Catherine University since January 2008. Her research interests include international librarianship, sustainability and libraries, literacy efforts, and special libraries.

Address:

Christina Buckles

2509 Dupont Ave S, Apt. 208

Minneapolis, MN 55405

USA