

A Library for Bukoba: Addressing the Divide in Tanzania



St. Kate's students at
Books for Africa Warehouse
Photo by Caralyn Champa

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Maps taken from
CIA – The World Factbook
www.cia.gov

BACKGROUND

- Since the United Republic of Tanzania's independence (early 1960's), the government has enthusiastically supported library services.
- In 1967, Julius Nyerere opened the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam by saying, 'The real importance to our nation of this Central Library derives from the fact that it is the hub of a wheel, from which spokes will reach out to towns and villages throughout mainland Tanzania' (Dahlgren, 1994).

- The 1970's brought about a campaign for literacy, which expanded rural library services. However, these services faced a number of challenges, including "high fuel and maintenance costs because of the large land area to cover; poor roads; intermittent and sparse rural attendance at designated stops because of local activities, farming schedules, and adverse weather conditions; [and] lack of sufficient Kiswahili titles" (Dahlgren, 1994).

- The literature has highlighted concerns for libraries in Tanzania, including lack of local publishing, dependence on foreign aid, insufficient library models and training personnel and librarian shortages (Dahlgren, 1994).

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (COSAD)

- COSAD's mission is "to build partnerships that create sustainable community development through the support of projects involving micro-enterprise, health, education and culture in Tanzania" (COSAD, 2010).
- COSAD was formed in 2002, and in just eight short years it has managed to develop a number of programs and opportunities.
- Current projects include the Tanzania Community Enterprise Fund, the Community Health Awareness Initiative Center, Shannon's After-school Reading Exchange, and the Bruce Lane Johnson (BLJ) Community Resource and Learning Center.
- The BLJ Community Resource and Learning Center will be the permanent site of the library. Books on Wheels, an outreach service, will complement the physical library.



Kiteyagwa Primary School
Temporary site of
Bruce Lane Johnson Community
Resource and Learning Center
Photo taken from www.cosad.org

BRUCE LANE JOHNSON COMMUNITY RESOURCE AND LEARNING CENTER

- Books for Africa Warehouse donated a container of books (a container holds over 22,000 books), and COSAD raised the \$9,800 needed for shipping costs.

- St. Catherine University LIS students spent 600 hours selecting, cataloguing and boxing books for the library (Baumann & Buchholz, 2008).

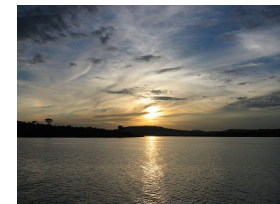
- The BLJ Community Resource and Learning Center was registered for both HINARI and AGORA access; policies and procedures were also drafted.

CONFRONTING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

- Nielsen (2006) breaks the digital divide into three categories: the economic divide, the usability divide, and the empowerment divide.

- While the BLJ Community Resource and Learning Center will most readily address the economic divide, the usability and empowerment divides will necessitate increased literacy and user training.

- Free and low cost access programs have received criticism as of late; HINARI has lost key journal titles previously accessible (Villafuerte-Gálvez, Curioso, & Gayoso, 2007).



Lake Victoria
Photo by Damiano Luchetti

LOOKING FOWARD

- Collaboration has been very successful for COSAD. LIS students, LIS programs, book donor organizations and libraries can seek opportunities to contribute to similar organizations and initiatives.
- Assessment of collaboration and projects is important, as is considering alternative means of evaluation (i.e., visual, oral, etc.)
- The digital divide is complex, stemming from systems of oppression. Libraries are only part of the answer.

References

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Right – Shannon's
After-School
Reading Exchange
Photos taken from
www.cosad.org

