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# Library Development in Lusophone Africa

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Portuguese explorations of the African coast began in the era of Henry the Navigator (d. 1460). By the mid-1500s, Portugal's African outposts ranged from Cape Verde, a group of islands in the Atlantic 400 miles west of Dakar, to much of the coast of East Africa. Following World War II most British, French, and Belgian territories in Africa gained their independence between 1957 and 1963. In contrast Portugal clung to her colonies, which were renamed "overseas territories" in 1951, despite armed struggles. After the Portuguese revolution of 1974, first Guinea-Bissau (1974) and then Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Sao Tome e Principe (1975) finally won independence. Civil wars between rival political groups continued to devastate Angola and Mozambique, however. The five nations of lusophone Africa include 805,873 square miles (2,087,202 square kilometers), with a total population in 1988 of about 26,147,000. Literacy rates ranged from 19% in Guinea-Bissau to 33% in Mozambique in the 1980s.

The first archives and libraries in Portuguese Africa were created to meet the needs of Portuguese officials. The earliest known archives in Luanda date from 1603. They were destroyed when the Dutch took possession of Luanda in 1641. After the Portuguese retook Luanda in 1648, the Governor General created an official archive in 1654 which continues to this day as the Arquivo Historico de Angola. During the 18th century other archives for the customs house and the legal courts were created. The Biblioteca Municipal de Luanda was established in 1873 to serve the needs of the public. In the early 20th century a number of scientific libraries were created in the Portuguese territories as adjuncts to commercial enterprises and government sponsored research institutes.

A period of ferment within the library profession began in the late 1950s and 1960s, both in Portugal and in the African provinces. The library journal, *Cadernos de Biblioteconomia, Arquivistica e Documentacao*, was founded in Lisbon in 1963. The editorial staff of *Cadernos* became a vocal protagonist for library support, library education, the status of librarians, and the improvement of libraries in the African provinces. They sought permission to create a national library association for all professionals, although there was some desire among the documentalists in scientific libraries to create their own association separate from the librarians and archivists. Librarians and archivists at the time held degrees in librarianship from either the University of Coimbra or the University of Lisbon while documentalists were non-degreed.

The Portuguese Ministry of Overseas Territories established the Centro de Documentacao Cientifica Ultramarina in 1957. The principle function of this Center was to coordinate scientific documentation within all of the Ministry's libraries, including seven documentation centers in Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde. Its first director, Dr. Zeferion Ferreira Paulo, was vice-president of the International Federation for Documentation from 1960 to 1963. He tried to bring library practices into conformity with FID and UNESCO standards. During the 1960s the Centro de Documentacao began work on a union catalog for all 46 libraries under the Ministry; it also gave short courses in documentation, and it gave technical assistance and organized seminars for the scientific libraries in Angola and Mozambique.

In 1965 the editorial staff of *Cadernos* proposed to the Ministry of Overseas Territories that short training courses be conducted in Angola and Mozambique in order to raise standards in cataloging and classification and to bring the practices in Africa in line with those in Portugal. The Instituto de Investigacao Cientifica de Angola accepted the proposal, but Mozambique declined to host such a course. In November and December of 1966 professors from the library programs of the universities of Coimbra and Lisbon gave an intensive course in Luanda. A subliminal theme in the whole enterprise was to show a need for a library school for lusophone Africa similar to the one being founded in Dakar for francophone Africa.

Apart from the missionary zeal emanating from Portugal, there was a grassroots movement among documentalists in lusophone Africa to promote cooperation in scientific documentation. A series of round table discussions began as early as 1963 and continued throughout the decade. Their goals included the creation of union files of holdings and standardization of cataloging and classification. The session held in Mozambique in 1966 resulted in a decision to create a union list of serial holdings for Lourenco Marques within the Instituto de Investigacao Cientifica de Mozambique, and to establish a union catalog of books in the Biblioteca Nacional de Mozambique. In 1968 the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the Associacao Industrial de Mozambique organized a symposium on scientific information. The purpose was to establish closer cooperation of the documentation centers of the two countries. Although the cooperative spirit was generally supported, Dr. Jorge Couveia e Cro, Director of the Biblioteca Nacional de Mozambique, raised the issue that such cooperation at the scientific level should not be allowed to create a division between librarians and documentalists.

Angola in the late 1960s had a national library, municipal libraries in eight cities, five lycee libraries, and around 50 small specialized libraries. The national library was officially created in 1968, but it had existed since 1938 as an annex to the National Museum for receiving deposits of books published in Angola. The decree to create the Biblioteca Nacional de Angola came as something of a surprise to the library community, which had not been consulted in its planning. The new library was attached to the National Library in Lisbon, but also made a part of the educational services in Angola. The Centro de Documentacao Cientifica of the Instituto de Investigacao Cientifica de Angola was the focus of scientific documentation in Angola. In 1972 it began a union catalog for scientific publications housed in seventeen Angolan libraries, and it agreed to participate in the *Catalogo Coletivo das Bibliotecas Portuguesas*.

Mozambique in the late 1960s had a National Library, municipal libraries in eight cities, three lycee libraries, and around 35 smaller specialized libraries. The Biblioteca Nacional de Mozambique, created in 1961, held 80,000 volumes at the time. In 1967 Cape Verde had two public libraries, one lycee library, and eleven smaller libraries. Sao Tom, and Principe had a municipal library and twelve other libraries. Guinea-Bissau had one lycee library and fifteen other libraries.

The governments which came to power in lusophone Africa in 1974 and 1975 were for the most part Marxist in orientation. This reinforced the view that library services should be centrally planned and that their missions should focus on literacy and technical activities. A National Department of Libraries was created in Angola in 1977 to oversee the National Library, public libraries, and special libraries. Academic and school libraries were placed under the Department of Education. In 1978 a representative from UNESCO

was invited by Domingos Van-Dunem, Director of the National Department of Libraries, to help plan library services. As part of a national literacy program the Department began the creation of a network of public libraries in rural areas and worked with the MPLA Party committees to improve literacy. The Department was also asked to create a national union catalog for Angola and to centralize the acquisition of books in order to reduce duplication. Other lusophone countries experienced similar reorganizations of library services.

In the 1980s libraries in lusophone Africa have reached out to form links with regional library networks. Angola and Sao Tome and Principe participate in the Centre International des Civilisations Bantu (CICIBA). CICIBA is a documentation network created in 1983 to improve documentation efforts in central Africa. Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau participate in the Senegalese regional network of the Banque International d'Information sur les Etats Francophone (BIEF). In 1990 institutions in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique were participating in the Sub-Saharan Africa journal distribution program sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Council of Learned Societies.

### **SELECTED SOURCES**

*Cadernos de Biblioteconomia, Arquivistica e Documentacao*, Vols. 1-11; 1963-1974. passim.