

# LESOTHO

**A country report for the IFLA 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code  
(IME ICC5)**

**written by 'Mabafokeng Makara**

**Assistant Librarian (Cataloguing), National University of Lesotho Library**

## **Background**

National University of Lesotho, being the only university in the country, started as far back in 1945 as a college called Pius X11 which belonged to the Catholics under the University of South Africa. From a college in 1964/65 it became a tripartite university of the three countries; and it was then called University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (U.B.B.S.). After Lesotho and Botswana gained their independence from Britain, the name changed to the University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (U.B.L.S). This was in 1966. Lesotho withdrew from these other countries in 1975; the university was then referred to as The National University of Lesotho (N.U.L).

It is said that the N.U.L. Library is as old as the University itself. It was founded by, among others, a very hard working and devoted member of the Grail, Miss Josefa Gall. It used to be manned by the Catholic Fathers who organized the collection the way they found it easy for them to retrieve the materials. In 1969 the then Vice Chancellor saw a need to bring the Library Catalogue to the state of consistency and efficiency, so he wrote to the Inter-University Council (IUC) requesting the services of a well qualified and experienced Cataloguer/Classifier. However, there is no evidence that his request was answered.

The library had no professional staff and it was only in 1970s when three new graduates were recruited as Library Trainees. They were to be send for further training to become professional librarians. These were Mrs. M.M. Lebotsa, Mrs. M. Makatse, and Mrs Ntsinyi.

The government was also approached to assist the library with professional staff; instead, the library was given two young American Peace Corps who joined in December 1976 and January 1977. They worked on reclassification which they found very boring.

This report therefore is prepared by a university staff member in cataloguing section of the library. Information included here is for some and not all the libraries in Lesotho. Some Librarians did not know exactly when their libraries started since they are not professionals and they do not have any skill whatsoever in library work. Hence, the background is based on the bigger institute (N.U.L) which is supposed to be the eldest of them all. These others followed as the country developed and they did as the university does.

### **Cataloguing in Lesotho Libraries**

Cataloguing is as old as the library itself; it is a very important process in a library management system. All books need to be classified, and catalogued as per the needs and demands of the subject. This is a very complicated process which follows very rigid rules and various complicated conventions. However, the first people who organized the library collection, especially at the University, did it in such a way that it was easy for them to access it. They were not following any rule whatsoever. There was no

professional cataloguer up to 1970s when the first professional local Librarian joined the Library after completion of her Bachelor's Degree Programme in Library Science.

With special classification schemes, libraries classify some special materials like South African History, African Languages, and African Writers in European Languages. This special classification scheme is based on the special classification schemes of the University of Cape Town.

Lesotho, as a small country with only two official languages being Sesotho and English, does not have major problems in cataloguing in regard to other languages. As such there is no cataloguer who could translate other languages into either of the two mentioned above. Apart from that there are no other languages taught in schools or spoken.

For the purposes of resource sharing there used to be a Union Catalogue where the libraries would send their records. This was done by sending a record of each and every item on a card to the Union Catalogue in South Africa. This was during the manual cataloguing where there was a card catalogue.

### **Staffing**

Cataloguing as a major activity in libraries is not given a full support when it comes to staffing. For instance, at the University there are only five cataloguers who are expected to do all the activities involved in cataloguing from classification, indexing, to record creation. If there is a need for human resource in one section of the library, one would be taken from cataloguing to fill the gap in other section. Institutions however, ignore the fact that there is a need for adequate, skilled, and competent staff in cataloguing. Hence,

cataloguing section is always understaffed. As a result catalogue records are not consistent and there are always unnecessary backlogs.

### **Cataloguing Standards used in Lesotho**

In Lesotho almost all the libraries, especially those of big institutions like the National University of Lesotho (N.U.L), Lesotho College of Education (LEC), Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management (LIPAM), State Library and others, use the same standards. They all use the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR), Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), and The Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC). However, with the MARC, Lesotho is still using the SAMARC for its machine readable cataloguing.

It is regrettable to mention that since there are no skilled librarians these standards are not used effectively. Some are just decorations on people's desks. Mention of some cataloguing terms like "uniform title", "access points", ISBD, FRBR, are strange to them. This means that these standards may be used, but not religiously. In Lesotho we do not have professional cataloguers who are: Intensely passionate about cataloguing, Geared towards information and the organization, Brilliantly knowledgeable on learning and knowledge- sharing benefits, Innovative in problem solving, and Seasoned in cataloguing rules, standards and tools.

### **Current situation**

Most libraries in Lesotho, more especially those of the Institutes of Higher learning are automated. However, they are using different software. For instance, the University is using the Integrated Tertiary System (ITS) software; and the state library has just started this year, and its about three months now with (INMAGIC) software. Some of the

systems used in the country are not designed for libraries; therefore they give a lot of problems to cataloguers. One example is the ITS at the university. This system does not allow us to send our records to the South African Bibliographic Network (SABINET) because it is locally web based.

### **Consortium**

In Lesotho the librarians started their own Consortium. This was triggered by the need to acquire a software which is designed specifically for libraries; Millennium/INNOPAC. This has no progress. There are many small libraries than big institutes, so it is difficult for them to join in due to finances. The small ones maintain their way of doing things rather than engaging in spending more on something which they think is not of great benefit to them. Only the University paid some fee two years ago and up to now nothing is going on.

### **Resource Sharing**

With these different systems it is difficult for Lesotho libraries to share resources among themselves, let alone with other libraries internationally. Most of these systems are not compatible to each other so much so that there is even no chance to send records to South African Bibliographic Network (SABINET) in South Africa which is the only one very close to Lesotho. SABINET serves a number of African libraries fully while some of them are partial members who do not receive full services of the network.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion one would say that there is still a long way Lesotho libraries have to go in order to be able to provide good services to their clients. Library association has to play a major role to see to it that Lesotho libraries are also recognized globally. There must

be a local network to start with within the libraries in Lesotho. There is a need for National committee on cataloguing to monitor the cataloguing process in the country so as to maintain consistency and religious use of cataloguing standards.