

Country report : Namibia

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Country

Namibia, officially the Republic of Namibia, shares borders with Angola and Zambia to the north, Botswana to the east, and South Africa to the south. It gained independence from South Africa in 1990 and its capital city is Windhoek. Namibia is a member state of the United Nations (UN), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU), and the Commonwealth of Nations.

At 825,418 km², Namibia is the world's thirty-fourth largest country. Namibia with a small population of about 1.7 million is after Mongolia the least densely populated country in the world (2.5 persons per km²). However, the population distribution is very uneven, with the densest population in the far north of the country; 46% are younger than 15 years.

Libraries

A co-ordinating body for a large section of libraries in Namibia is the Namibia Library and Information Service (NLIS), a directorate in the Ministry of Education. It has the Namibia Library and Information Council as an advisory body at its side. NLIS has five subdivisions: the National Library, the National Archives of Namibia, the Community Library Service, which currently caters for 46 public libraries with centralised book acquisition, cataloguing and processing, and staff training, the Education Library Service, which caters likewise for school libraries and

teachers resource centres, and the Ministerial Library Service, which oversees the staff of special libraries established by other government ministries.

Other libraries not under the NLIS directorate are:

the University of Namibia Library, the Polytechnic of Namibia Library and various special and/or NGO libraries.

According to the latest Directory of Namibian Libraries there exist 256 libraries of all types in Namibia.

Catalogues, cataloguing and classification

Card catalogues are still very much in use in all of the Namibian community libraries. Although many of libraries have their databases stored on CDS/ISIS, library users have to utilize these card catalogues. Only the larger libraries in the country as well as some special libraries give access through their stock via a web-based OPAC.

The cataloguing standard used in the country is the AACR2. UNAM library and Polytech Library use the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Some smaller libraries make still use of Sears Subject Headings and many of the special libraries use thesauri in their field of specialization. For classification purposes the Dewey Decimal Classification System is used. So far known only one library in Namibia is making use of the Library of Congress Classification System.

The standard form of bibliographic description is the ISBD format usually the second level of description.

The following national bibliographic databases are available. They fall under the auspices of the National Library of Namibia,

- Namlit

This database aims at contributing towards universal bibliographic control by making Namibian and Namibian related published materials, periodical articles and theses electronically available. At present this database contains over 60 000 entries.

- OPAC (Joint catalogue)

The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the National Library contains records of all the databases in the National Library of Namibia. These include the Namibian Literature (NAMLIT) database, Namibia National Bibliography (NNB) database, including additional databases such as National Library Periodicals (NLP), National Library Catalogue (NLC), Last Copy Collection (LCC) and National Library General Collection (NLGE). There are over 95 000 entries on the National Library of Namibia OPAC.

- Namibian National Bibliography (NNB)

The objective of the NNB is to contribute towards universal bibliographic control by cataloguing the Namibian published materials according to international bibliographic standards. The arrangement is by Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC 22) and cataloguing is according to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR II). The Library of Congress Subject Headings are used in the preparation of entries. Indexes to the NNB include Author, title, series, subject and publisher.

National ISBN agency

The National Library of Namibia is the national International Standard Book Number (ISBN) agency for Namibia and thus, issues ISBNs to all publishers and provides the International ISBN Agency publishers information for their world directory.

The National Library of Namibia also facilitates on behalf of the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) Agency the issuance of ISSN. Publishers in Namibia who are producing a periodical for the first time should request for the ISSN through the National Library.

Data formatting standards

There exist only a few libraries that have a commercially-acquired library management software like Millenium/Innopac at the University of Namibia (UNAM) as well as ITS at the Polytechnic of Namibia libraries which are capable of handling MARC bibliographic records. Only the UNAM library uses the MARC21 format; the Polytech Library uses SAMARC. Most of Namibia's libraries work on CDS/ISIS which makes use of UNIMARC formatting standards.

Conclusion

There is a serious shortage of trained and experienced cataloguers in Namibia. The few trained librarians are often not ready to render their services in government organisations and hence opt to serve in the private sector or academic institutions at tertiary level where salaries and other conditions of service are more competitive and attractive.