

A decade of cooperation



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December 2021

Design: A. Olas

Text: Björn Orring

Photos: Stefan Engström, Leif Mårtensson, Björn Orring.

Preface

At the closing of 2020, a more than 10-year collaboration between the Kenya Library Association (KLA) and the Swedish Library Association (KLA) was concluded. Based on IFLA's program "Building Strong Library Associations", this collaboration aimed to create a long-term stable and sustainable library association in Kenya. This report is a short summary of the project's scope, goals and what results have been achieved.

The final year of the collaboration did not turn out as we had hoped. The corona pandemic has affected the library system in both Sweden and Kenya, but it has hit Kenya harder, where large parts of society, including libraries, were shut down for much of 2020. Due to the pandemic, there was also no opportunity to meet physically at the associations' annual conferences and formally put an end to the collaboration.

It has been ten years of fruitful collaboration. We have gained new experiences, broadened our perspectives and increased our understanding of the importance of libraries. It has been a unique exchange of experiences between two countries with different conditions but with the same task: to strengthen the freedom of expression and broaden the access of information and knowledge through stronger library organisations. All international library cooperations share the vision of this freedom as a cornerstone for democracy. The issues are often the same globally, but the challenges differ, and the answers vary. The differences have merely sharpened the issues and widened the perspectives. And made us stronger together.

Introduction

Library associations all over the world play a crucial role in the development of a reading culture and the information society. This particular bilateral partnership involved the exchange of ideas and experiences between the Swedish Library Association (SLA) and Kenya Library Association (KLA), the most important objective being to strengthen the KLA for the benefit of library development in the country.

SLA has always maintained a strong international commitment. The choice of supporting a developing country, and especially Kenya, came from a discussion in what was then SLA's International Council and was made on the grounds that it was a focus country for both the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), at the time.

The cooperation between the two associations has taken place with close links to IFLA, the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users, in general and with their Building strong Library Associations (BSLA) programme in particular.



Kenya in facts

Capital: Nairobi

Official languages, English, Kiswahili

Government: Unitary presidential constitutional republic

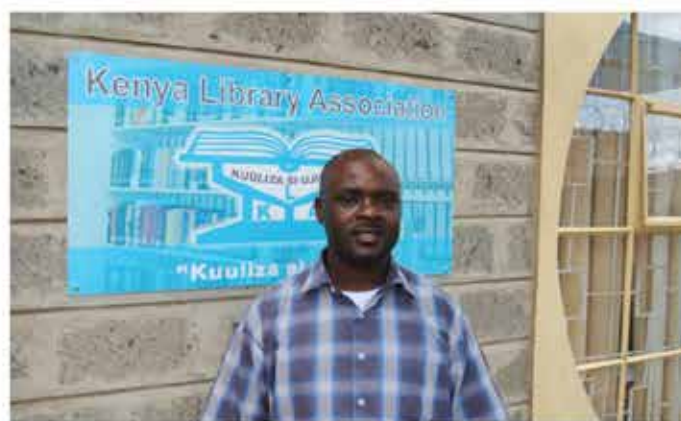
President: Uhuru Kenyatta

Area: 580,367 square kilometres

Population: 54,985,698 (est.)

GDP per capita (PPP) 5274 usd.

Literacy: 81,5 %

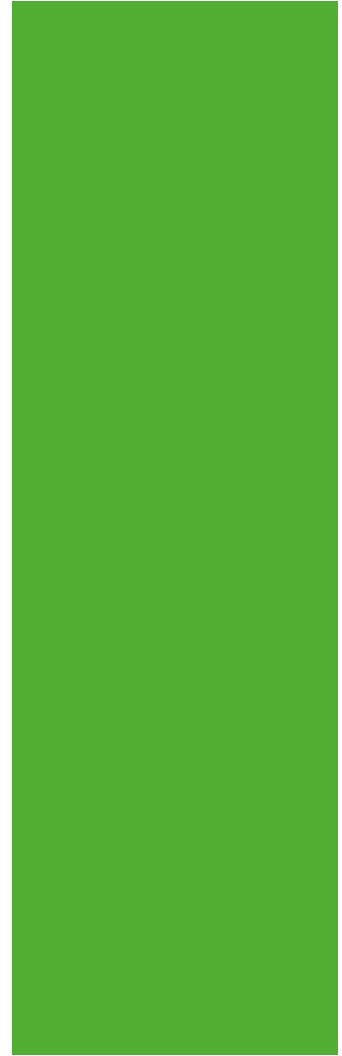


Kenya Library Association (KLA) - A historical background

KLA was established in November 1974 after the dissolution of its precursor, the East African Library Association (EALA), which was founded in 1956 comprising Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (now Tanzania) as members. In 1964, for purposes of increasing membership, it was decided that each country should form a national association but become a member of EALA, which was finally dissolved in 1972 because of the lack of initiatives, commitment and dedication.

The famous Hockey Report, produced by S.W. Hockey, made important recommendations, notably for the establishment of the East Africa School of Librarianship in Makerere, Uganda, and in highlighting the importance of university-educated librarians and the feasibility of developing librarianship as an academic discipline. Support was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation and UNESCO. After 1972 KLA grew as a national library association and inaugurated *Maktaba*, (which still exists today) as its official journal. The Tanzania Library Association hosted the first Standing Conference of East Africa Librarians, which later grew to draw membership from Central and Southern Africa, to create the present-day Standing Conference for Librarians and Information Services in East, Central and Southern Africa (SCECSAL).

Since its inception in 1974, KLA has grown in strength both in membership recruitment and training librarians and in 1984 it became capable of hosting the 50th IFLA, the first to be held in Africa. However, KLA like any other library association in Africa, continued to face the enigmatic challenges of low membership recruitment and the status of librarians. Owing to this KLA fell into the doldrums for almost two decades from 1980 - 2000. Ironically this was also a period of concentration in developing library services in the country. Thereafter there were initiatives and efforts made to strengthen KLA through international efforts which eventually culminated in collaboration and partnership projects such as the Building Strong Library Association (BSLA).



Libraries in Kenya

This section does not have the ambition to give a comprehensive view of the library system in Kenya, but only a brief overview of how they are structured and highlight some development trends.¹

Public Libraries

At the time of Kenya's independence, the Kenya National Library Services Board (KNLS) was established in 1964 with the task of establishing, equipping and developing a domestic library system. The first public library was started in 1969 in Kisumu. Today, KNLS has the double task of being responsible for both the operation of Kenya's 57 public libraries, and also to be a national library with responsibility for national bibliography, legal deposit etc. A new national library in central Nairobi was inaugurated in November 2020 by President Kenyatta. This building also contains significant areas intended for public library activities.

In connection with Kenya adopting a new constitution in 2010, Kenya was divided into 47 counties which, among other things, were given responsibility for public libraries. However, this decision has not been implemented by a majority of the counties, which is why KNLS continues to operate public libraries. Another difficulty is that the financing of, for example, new public libraries is haphazard which means that it usually takes a long time to complete them. There is also a fear that a decentralized responsibility will lead to greater regional differences depending on each region's ability to finance the libraries and also a varying interest in library issues with the local political leadership. Here, KLA can play an important role.

University and college libraries

In 1970, there was only one university in Kenya, the University of Nairobi, with about 3000 students. Since then, higher education has grown incredibly fast and today there are about 60 public and 12 privately run universities. In addition to this, there are also a number of other institutions of higher education. Kenya today has one of the largest higher education systems in Africa with around 500 000 students. All universities are responsible for their own libraries that support teaching, study, research and scientific publishing. Compared to public libraries, higher education libraries in Kenya have a stronger position, but development is hampered by the same problems as higher education in the rest of the country. The rapid expansion has not been met with by corresponding resources, which risks eroding the quality of teaching and research, and making investments in libraries, for example, more difficult. The private universities that are mainly financed by tuition fees find it easier to maintain and develop these facilities.

School libraries

Compulsory schooling (eight years) has been provided free of charge in Kenya since 2003. However, there has been a turnaround from 2008 when the Government of Kenya (GOK) declared subsidized fees for learners to attract them to attend secondary school education (a four years programme). There are currently three types of institutions for these schools; National (GOK), Extra-County (GOK), Sub-County (GOV) as well as private fee-paying schools, often with a religious, family or international (usually British) orientation.

1 Development of Libraries in Kenya and Their Role in Economic Development (Joseph B. Ojiambo & Judy S. Kasalu), presented at IFLA WLIC (2015)

Although basic education is free of charge, more than one million Kenyan children, according to Unicef, do not attend primary school. The differences between different types of schools are large in terms of access to teachers, teaching materials, premises and school libraries. In some cases, larger public schools and private schools have well functioning school libraries, while many lack this resource altogether.

The school libraries in Kenya are thus a neglected sector. There has been a lack of sufficient funding for many schools to establish school libraries, access to media is poor and there is also a lack of trained school librarians. The latter means that many school libraries, where they exist, are run by teachers as a side assignment. There are also no comprehensive statistics on how many school libraries there are in the Kenya's over 40 000 primary and secondary schools. KLA has for many years raised the need of improved school libraries, and in 2018 the Kenyan Ministry of Education for the first time established national guidelines that make it clear that every school must have a functioning and adequately equipped school library. KLA also participated in the development of these guidelines, which are partly based on IFLA's school library manifesto. Despite these guidelines, there is no legally binding requirement for schools to have a school library and given the situation today, there is much to be done for KLA to influence decision-makers to set aside sufficient resources for the country's school libraries.

The library system in Kenya has developed rapidly since the country became independent, and there is no lack of ambition from librarians or of political will for libraries to contribute to the country's development. A further proof of this is that the libraries are highlighted in Kenya's Vision 2030, the country's official development program, which was drafted in 2008. However, there are obvious problems that must be addressed for the library system to be able to play the role pointed out in keynote speeches. Some of these are:

- Insufficient and patchy funding. In times of economic crises, libraries often suffer from reduced funding.
- Lack of media. Even today, Kenya's libraries are dependent on donations and gifts from organizations that do an impressive job but are not always based on the needs of the libraries and their users.
- Lack of trained librarians, especially in school libraries.
- Continued need for basic internet access and modern IT equipment.
- Lack of collaboration within the library system to make better use of resources, develop standards and share experiences.

In all these areas, a strong library association with the ambition to work with both professional development and advocacy has a very important task. It has also been the main focus of the collaboration that KLA and SLA have had for more than ten years.

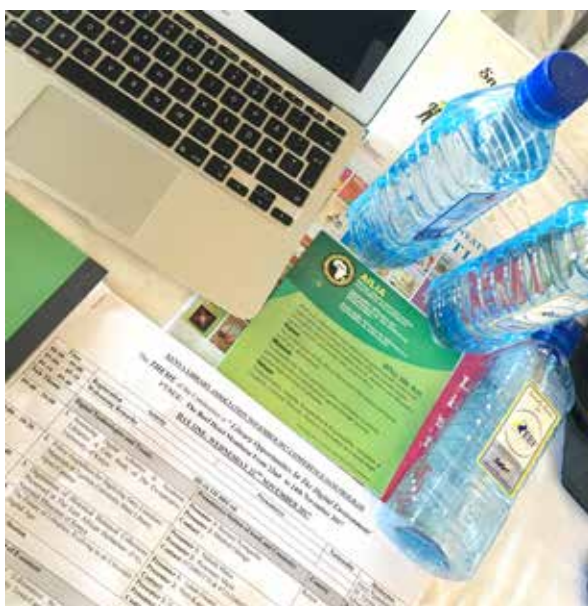


Stronger together

The first plans for the joint project were discussed at the IFLA WLIC in Gothenburg in 2010 between the chair of KLA and the then International Council of SLA. The following years, these discussions intensified and meetings between SLA and KLA were held in Kenya and Sweden, before a five-year cooperation agreement starting the project named Stronger together was signed in August 2012 at IFLA WLIC in Helsinki, Finland.

Although based on the BSLA programme, *Stronger together* did not use the entire BSLA programme but focused on three main areas – *Libraries on the Agenda*, *Library Associations in Society* and *Sustaining Your Library Association*. The programme's detailed and applicable evaluation process has also been used at regular intervals during the lifespan of the whole project. IFLA has drawn attention to this particular use of the BSLA programme as a role model for other countries that prefer their own project design.

More specifically, *Stronger together* had a number of key objectives: engagement from stakeholders, adoption of a strategic plan, a staffed office and finally dissemination. SLA agreed to support KLA with funding during five years with a reduction during year four and five. The financing consisted of three parts: the annual membership fee to IFLA, the participation of one representative from KLA at IFLA WLIC and finally a grant for partly funding the project and a staffed office.



Major Achievements

During the project, representatives from KLA and SLA have met annually during KLA's annual conference and Annual general meeting (AGM), normally held in November each year in various locations in Kenya. This has also given the project team from SLA the opportunity to visit a number of local libraries to get a first-hand view of library development in Kenya. Likewise, representatives from KLA have visited the annual conference and AGM of SLA to hold meetings and discuss the development of the project. Finally, meetings have also taken place annually at IFLA WLIC.

Stakeholders

The commitment of many different stakeholders was important for a successful project. Consequently, members from SLA and KLA have, together, several times met representatives from national and regional Government offices, KNLS and other important decision-makers. The purpose has been to secure extensive and broad-based commitment to the project.

Strategic plans

The aim to establish a strategic plan showing how KLA would build a stronger library association was met in 2012. The plan contained detailed plans on how the KLA would work with dissemination, advocacy, marketing, development, long-term financing, stakeholders, working groups, different libraries, as well as KLA's endeavours to gain approval for its work in society from library members and others. The first strategic plan covered the period 2012 - 2015 and a revised plan was adopted for 2016 - 2020.

A staffed office

The other major goal was to establish a staffed office in Nairobi in order to have the means to develop the organisation, work with marketing, advocacy and dissemination of information to stakeholders, members of the association and citizens throughout the country. The office and its manager have been in place since January 2013, located in the KNLS Buru Buru branch in Nairobi. This has enabled attainment of effective communication like the ability to write funding proposals to support international conferences and Maktaba Awards. With the available administrative support, KLA's Executive Committee was able to meet regularly to conduct business including hosting annual general meetings to present reports and conduct elections for the sustainability of the KLA leadership. Important documents such as the constitution and strategic plan 2016 - 2020 and writing internal policies were either revised or drafted anew. The KLA website has also been maintained and regularly updated.

Other achievements

In a report with a limited scope, it's difficult to fully include the entire development of KLA during the period of the project. However, some other achievements are worth mentioning.

Explicit international interest

A growing interest from IFLA has been noticeable in this particular form of joint project. The Secretary General of IFLA mentioned the cooperation between Sweden and Kenya and their tailored use of the BSLA programme as a role model from which other countries could learn and find inspiration in her annual report in Singapore 2013.

Attention has also been drawn to Stronger Together by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in its engagement in Global Libraries and networking in different parts of the world within the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI).

Finally, representatives from other countries in Eastern Africa have taken part in the KLA's AGMs during the project period, among them Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan.

Increased number of activities

The current half-yearly reports from KLA indicate that its Executive Committee has conducted several meetings and conferences during the years, which have enabled the association to be promoted locally and internationally. These activities were facilitated through funding from SLA and self-generated income.

Regional development

From SLA's point of view, one of the most important and appreciated achievements concerning libraries in Kenya during the project time appears to be the development of regional branches around the whole country. It was possible to organize through the KLA office meetings for librarian, workshops and training sessions within these branches to enable training, networking and enhancing the association. The number of librarians and information professionals attending regional workshops has more than doubled.

Maktaba awards

The national achievements and impact include the branding and sustainability of the annual (since 2010) Maktaba Awards, the national competition for libraries and information services where winners are awarded attractive prizes.

Higher level of services, training the trainers

The reports have also shown that more people are registering as members of the association. The level of service delivery in libraries has risen and branch members are calling for more activities within the branches.

Act of Parliament

KLA's leadership realized during the period under review that a lot would be achieved with the enactment of an Act of Parliament, hence the commencement of drafting a bill to be presented to parliament.

Evaluation

Impact evaluation has been an important requirement during the whole project and the results were thought to be useful for the two national library associations as well as IFLA in the long run. Three questionnaires with recurrent questions to explore expected developments have been distributed and analysed throughout the project timeline. In addition, several interviews have been conducted, some planned, some carried out more occasionally, inside and outside KLA. Seven structured in-depth interviews with key persons were held in 2015 in Meru and Nairobi.

In Kakamega in 2013, the first questionnaire, *How do we proceed?* about the impact of the project, was introduced as part of the ongoing evaluation process referred to. It was distributed to the AGM participants and sent out afterwards to all members of KLA and the results were analysed and discussed together in a project seminar at the annual SLA meeting in Umeå in 2014. The responses of KLA's members expressed satisfaction with the development of the project and revealed great expectations for the future of the recreated association.

The second questionnaire *Do we still proceed?* was distributed at the 2014 AGM in Eldoret. The response rate to both these questionnaires was only around 20 %. Nevertheless, these answers to the same questions within a one-year interval helped us draw conclusions about developments, successes and challenges during the project period and were formative in that they enabled necessary changes.

The third and final questionnaire focused on successes. The response to this questionnaire was 71 % of the participants at the 2016 AGM in Thika. It was also presented to the attendees as extremely important, as it was the last one and concerned the impact of the entire project as well as the possibility of future cooperation.

After the two first questionnaires and the year before the final questionnaire, the same kind of evaluation tool was replaced by in-depth interviews in Meru and Nairobi in 2015. The BSLA programme suggests this method with key stakeholders, such as representatives of the association, the Government and other major relevant institutions. These interviews provided detailed and exhaustive information about the development in Kenya since the beginning of the project.

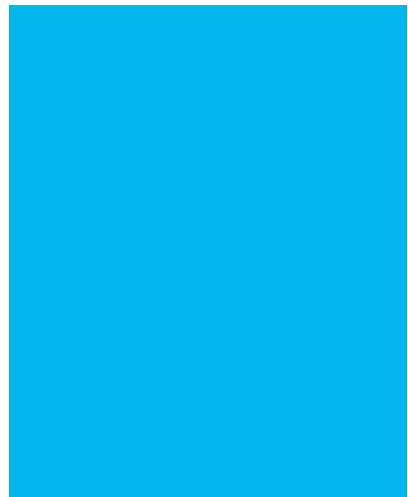
It's worth noting that, during this collaboration, a number of KLA members achieved Government recognition and others became top University managers.

- **Government Recognition**

1. Mrs Jacinta Were; Former Deputy University Librarian, University of Nairobi and IFLA Governing Council Member was awarded "The IFLA Scroll".
2. Dr. Tirong Arap Tanui; Former University Librarian, Moi University, Eldoret and KLA Chairman - National Hero Award.
3. Richard Atuti; Former, Kenya National Library Services - Silver Star of Kenya.

- **Universities**

1. Prof Constantine Nyamboga; Vice- Chancellor, Lukenya University, and also President, Kenya Library Association (to date).
2. Prof Joseph Kiplangat; Former, Deputy Vice-chancellor (Planning), Technical University of Kenya.
3. Late Professor Joseph Ojiambo; Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic & Student Affairs), Kabianga University.
4. Prof Ochola; Deputy Vice-chancellor, University of Kwa Zulu Land, South Africa.



The next frontier 2018 - 2020

As the project Stronger together came to a close, both associations agreed that although the cooperation had been very fruitful, there was still much to be done. Discussions began in earnest in 2016 and continued in 2017 before a new project was finalised and signed in Mombasa in 2017. It was decided that the new project would run for three years with the overall aim to continue the strengthening of KLA, with support from SLA, in order to further promote the development of the library sector in Kenya.

SLA agreed to support KLA with funding during three years with an annual reduction during year two and three. The financing consisted of three parts: the annual membership fee to IFLA, the participation of one representative from KLA at IFLA WLIC and finally a grant for partly funding the project and a staffed office. This would enable KLA to stabilise their operations and to become a stronger advocate for libraries in Kenya and neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and South Sudan.

Main objectives and results

More specifically, the project contained a number of key provisions for cooperation.

Member recruiting plan

Committed members are the foundation of a successful library association. It is also vital in order to build a financially viable organisation. During the project KLA's aim was to have 200 paying members. In order to achieve this aim it was deemed necessary to establish a member recruitment plan. The plan was to be developed and approved at the annual conference in November 2018.

The recruitment plan was approved by the KLA executive committee shortly after the annual conference in 2018. By the end of the collaboration, KLA had more than 235 active professional members and 20 institutions. When the first project started KLA had about 35 active professional members and 10 institutions. Still, this is only a fraction of all trained information managers currently active (Certificate to Doctorate degrees).

Marketing plan

KLA's aim is to be recognised and natural speaking partner and representative for libraries, librarian and other information specialists towards authorities, and other stakeholders in Kenya. To fulfil this goal it was vital to establish a marketing plan. This plan would also be approved at the annual conference in November 2018.

The marketing plan was approved by the KLA executive committee shortly after the annual conference in 2018.

Stakeholders

Engagement from the many different stakeholders was considered important in order for KLA to be successful in the long-term. Therefore, during, or in connection with the annual conference 2019, SLA and KLA would hold a joint meeting with stakeholders like the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Kenya National Library Services, Governor's Advisory Board, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, Goethe Institut and other relevant partners in Kenya. The aim was to discuss how a widespread engagement for KLA in the future, beyond the timeframe of this project, could be secured.

The stakeholders' meeting was held in Nairobi in November 2019 in connection with the annual conference.

Strategic plan

A vital issue for KLA within the framework of the project was the continued work with the Strategic plan. The Strategic plan should demonstrate how KLA works to build an ever- stronger library association. The plan would in detail outline how KLA would work with dissemination, advocacy, marketing, development, long term financing, stakeholders, working groups and different libraries, but also gain approval for their work in the society, by its members and others.

Before the end of *The next frontier* is completed, a Strategic plan for the period 2021-2025 would be developed and approved.

Due to the pandemic and the major effects it has had on Kenyan society and the library system, current issues have dominated the agenda in 2020. Work on the strategic plan for KLA thus remains to be finalised.



Other aims

Maktaba Awards

KLA, the Goethe Institute and The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation have organised the Maktaba Awards (Library of the Year Award) for a number of years. It aims to recognise excellence in the provision of library and information services in Kenya.

The Maktaba Awards are an important step in marketing the libraries, both towards authorities, governors, counties, stakeholders and the public, as well as between the libraries. It was therefore an important aim for KLA to secure the awards for the future.

The Maktaba Awards have continued to be awarded in 2018 and 2019, but due to the pandemic it could not be awarded in 2020.

National Library Bill

KLA would continue to work actively with the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts to promote the approval of a parliamentary National Library Bill, which, among other things, would confirm KLA's status as the leading accrediting professional body for librarians in Kenya.

Despite a long-term lobbying work, KLA has not yet managed to get support for the desired bill, but the work continues.

Dissemination

Finally, it was considered vital that experiences and knowledge were to be disseminated to the whole of Kenya. This project would also enable KLA to share knowledge and experiences within library development outside Kenya, for instance through Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern Library Associations and Institutions (SCECSAL) and African Library and Information Associations (AfLIA). Since the inception of this project, KLA has engaged and worked with a number of other organisations; Network of Information Professionals of Kenya (NIPK), Christian Library Association (CALA), Association of Government Librarians (AGL), Kenya Libraries and Information Services Consortium (KLISC), and Kenya Universities Library Committee (KULC).

One of KLA's successes has been that it has succeeded in building up regional chapters within Kenya in order to spread the effects of its operations throughout the country. This has continued during the second phase of the project. KLA has also continued to uphold its international activities, including in the above-mentioned organisations.

Evaluation

During the project The next frontier, representatives from KLA and SLA have continued to meet annually during KLA's annual conference and AGM, normally held in November each year in various locations in Kenya. This has also given the SLA project team the opportunity to visit a number of local libraries to get a first-hand view of library development in Kenya. Likewise, representatives from KLA have also visited the annual conference and AGM of SLA to hold meetings and discuss the development of the project. Finally, meetings have also taken place annually at IFLA WLIC.

In connection with KLA's AGM in Machakos, a questionnaire was distributed among KLA members and 45 were returned. The questions were:

In your opinion, what are the biggest achievements KLA has made since you became a member?

Many of those who responded to the survey mention that KLA has contributed to their own professional development and strengthened the library profession through training, workshops and conferences. Several specifically mention the Maktaba awards as a good way to strengthen and market the libraries. Others point out the regional development and that the association has contributed to gathering the different types of libraries so that the members can exchange experiences. Finally, several point out that the membership has increased.

What do you think is the most important issue for KLA today?

The absolute majority emphasized the need for KLA to work more with training in order to strengthen librarians and contribute to their professional development, not least because of the rapid digitization. Many also point out the need for lobbying the government and parliament to strengthen libraries and the library profession. Attracting more members would also make it possible to continue to develop the association so that it becomes strong and independent. Finally, several point out that the association must be more transparent and professional in its operations.

Which are the greatest challenges for KLA in the future?

A number of respondents raised the need for continuous professional development to strengthen librarians. But almost everyone wants to see an increased focus in the association on finances, member recruitment and leadership. Some respondents opined that poor participation in conferences organized by KLA was because of exorbitant fees charged. It was also observed that many of the attendees are not sponsored. Finally, several respondents address the need for increased advocacy to strengthen the library sector in Kenya.

What makes a library association strong?

A successful association attracts many and active members from the entire sector and can be a strong voice for libraries in Kenya. The association must also be able to offer training, conferences, networks and exchange of experience throughout Kenya and also internationally. Finally, the association must get national recognition. An official recognition as a professional body would contribute to this, many members thought.

Overall, we share the views expressed by the members in this survey. There are many tangible examples of how KLA has developed in a very positive way over the past 10 years. The project definitely helped to develop a stronger working relationship between KLA, Ministry Sports, Culture and the Arts, KNLS, and some County Governments. The project also helped to forge friendship and cultural exchange among individual project partners.

Alas, it is also clear that there are major challenges for KLA to become a stronger voice for libraries and librarians in Kenya, a challenge that has become significantly greater after the Corona pandemic. KLA has come a long way, but now have to take the next step on its own and our hope is that they have the energy and stamina needed for this important work. It is worth mentioning that during the pandemic, KLA managed to organize an annual virtual conference and attracted speakers globally led by the IFLA president and the president of Namibia Information Workers Association. The annual conference was also graced by the presence of Senator Sylvia Mueni Kasanga, Chairperson COVID Committee/National Assembly of Kenya. Besides, KLA has been hosting chapter workshops and University Librarians return to work formula during the pandemic workshops via Zoom.

Final words

SLA has always had a strong international focus. The statutes state, for example, that the association shall “strengthen and develop international collaboration in the library and information area”. The international work is mainly channelled in the bodies we are members of, such as IFLA, EBLIDA and LIBER. The idea for the collaboration between KLA and SLA also comes from IFLA, which saw a need for strengthened library associations in more countries. Implementing the project has been an extensive work that has involved members, the board and the SLA office. It has also been a great commitment from SLA financially, as it has been entirely funded by SLA without any outside grants. It was clear from the beginning that the collaboration had a clear end date because the stated goal was for KLA to develop into a strong and independent organization. This was also why the financial support for KLA was gradually phased out during the latter parts of the projects.

As we now reflect on these ten years, there is every reason for members of both associations to feel proud about what has been achieved. The associations have demonstrated great strength and perseverance to implement such a comprehensive and long-term commitment - which have brought many positive effects.



kenyalibraryassociation.or.ke



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