NIDA
Network for Information and Digital Access

Supporting Societies' Needs: a Model Framework for Developing Library Policy

Part 1: Background from literature search

Preface

The attached paper was written as part of a six-month research project leading to the development of a framework for library policy for which the following key activities were included:

- desk research leading to preparation of a background paper on the history and current best practice in preparation of library policy[1];

- development of case studies to illustrate forward-thinking/innovative national or sub sector library policy[2];

- development of a draft library policy framework;

- facilitation of consultative meetings and workshops to discuss and finalize documents;

- publication of a model framework for library policy[3].

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[1] NIDA*Supporting Societies' Needs: a Model Framework for Developing Library Policy: Part 1: Background* , 10pp, 2011
[2] NIDA *Case Studies of best practice in library policy: Colombia, Finland, Namibia, New Zealand,* 2011
[3]NIDA *Model Framework for Library Policy,* 2011

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What is a national policy for libraries?

In simple terms a policy is a plan of action or a statement of aims and objectives providing a framework for practice. That is, a policy is developed with the intention to guide, influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters. A national policy is a pronouncement of a government's perception and commitment to a particular sector. A policy is therefore a means to an end. A national library policy is then a framework for the planned and coordinated development of a country's libraries. It is a plan of action and a statement of ideals proposed or adopted by a government.

A national library policy differs from library legislation. The latter lays down statutory responsibilities. Of course any national library policy must conform to this law and any other relevant current laws, for example on discrimination or Internet access. Changes in the law usually necessitate the updating of an existing policy. A national library policy also differs from manuals of procedures, guidelines and regulations. The procedure manuals and guidelines provide guidance on the best and most efficient ways of implementing policy. Regulations describe what must be done to support a policy.

National library policies may form part of wider policies, e.g. National Information Policies, National Information Technology Strategies, National Education Policies, and National Book Policies. But their development and interconnection do not require the pre-existence of these wider strategies. National library policies exist as one element of the wider mosaic.

Library policies can of course be developed, either additionally or independently, for specific types of libraries (e.g. public or university libraries) or individual library systems (e.g. of a specific town or regional authority). 'National Libraries' (which in many countries also have responsibility for public and other types of libraries) may develop policies covering these areas but they are not national library policies *per se*.

Trends post-WW2

In the period post-WW2, library development planning under the umbrella of a national policy framework became an idea much favoured and debated. In the UK, for example, the McColvin Report of 1942 and the Roberts Report of 1957 both stressed the necessity of setting up a truly national library service under central government control, with minimum standards and periodic inspections. The 1964 Act – albeit restricted in scope to public libraries and museums - set up a Library Advisory Council and a Library Division in the Ministry of Education. The advantages of having a central controlling and coordinating body for libraries in the machinery of government began to be recognized. These ideas were adopted in the post-colonial world, as countries there began to develop library services.

In African countries, unlike in UK, Europe and USA, there were no pre-existing administrative library structures, so it was possible to set up really national library systems as part of independence settlements. In both Ghana and Tanzania an attempt was made at the outset to create a centrally organized and administered, integrated library structure for the whole country. In reality these national library systems tended to become public library networks.

Trends in 1970s and 1980s

From 1970 onwards UNESCO began to promote the idea of fully integrated library and information systems, planned through a national information policy. This was the NATIS programme. In 1977, NATIS was swallowed within the General Information Programme (GIP) of UNESCO, which also aimed to achieve a world scientific system (UNISIST) as well as creating national information systems in each country. IFLA contributed to the UNISIST programme by promoting Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) and Universal Access to Publications (UAP). During this period, the role of libraries and library services in providing information was dominant. In 1985, UNESCO produced its *Guidelines on National Information Policy: scope, formulation and implementation*. It provided a step by step approach to national information policy but left users to decide which parts of the concept were relevant to their situation.

In Africa (Rosenberg; Sturges), the NATIS concept was launched at UNESCO's 1970 meeting of Experts in the National Planning of Documentation and Library Services in Africa held in Kampala. This led to almost 20 years of expert missions, regional and country seminars, workshops, reports and draft plans and policies. These were supported by the German aid agency DSE (German Foundation for International Development), which ran a series of seminars to create a dialogue between librarians and decision makers. In 1989 UNECA

called on all African states to formulate a National Information and Communication Policy. Despite all these efforts, practical results were virtually nil. Although there was hardly a country, which did not have a NATIS-inspired model applied to it, NATIS contributed almost nothing to the development of Africa's information environment.

Tanzania did enact new legislation, the 1975 Tanzania Library Services Act, which gave Tanzania Library Services a coordinating role in library development and was heralded as a step forward in national planning. Some National Documentation Centres, e.g. in Sudan, were set up and some national bibliographies produced. But these initiatives were not followed through. Policies for developing libraries were not included in national development plans. African governments failed to be convinced of the value of libraries and of committing funds to setting up library systems. The library professions in Africa remained poorly perceived.

The concept of NATIS was driven by international and bi-lateral aid. It largely ignored Africa's information environment and proceeded as though political and social conditions were irrelevant.

Trends in 1990s

These years saw the development of information technology in facilitating access to information, as well as a growing awareness of the importance of information for development, the concept of the information society.

In the mid-1990s, IFLA (Niegaard) recognized that the information society generates and consumes enormous amounts of information and that IT has made it easier to produce and access this information. New actions were called for from all types of libraries and also from authorities in the way that they include libraries in national planning. It concluded that national information policies (of the sort promoted by UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s) but also addressing IT strategies (including informatics and telematics) were required more than ever.

IFLA subsequently conducted a survey in 1996/97 to find out which countries had National Information Policies (NIPs) and/or National Information Technology Strategies (NITSs). Of the 135 countries contacted, 55 replies were received: 34 had NIPs or NITSs, 10 were discussing these and 11 gave a negative response. The positive responses indicated that libraries were seen as important instruments, as public access points to knowledge and information and as information centres towards national IT development. However many countries indicated that it was easier to adopt a policy than to implement it. The survey concluded that IT was forcing the agenda and leaves no nation untouched: NIPs and NITSs were definitely an issue of interest to the library sector and indicated that libraries should play an active role.

Of the African countries responding to the survey, two countries (Morocco and Nigeria) said that they had NITS, Zambia claimed to have a NIP (but this was one produced in the 1980s under NATIS and never implemented), while Cape Verde and Namibia said that they had draft NIPs to be implemented shortly. Angola, Burundi, Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe all gave negative replies. There was, however, a growing awareness among African governments of the need to address telecommunications and to develop telecommunication infrastructures. Many such projects were directed and supported by international organizations, which provided funding.

During these years the need for the library sector to contribute to other policies became a matter of discussion in Africa. There was a call for national book policies, to ensure that the book chain is recognized, supported, nurtured and maintained as a matter of national importance. This was discussed from 1996 onwards at many of the Indabas (e.g. McCartney), held at the Zimbabwe Book Festivals. In 1997 UNESCO published *National Book Policy: a guide for users in the field.* It was generally recognized that library development must be integrated into book policy development. However, at the same time, some commented that developing a national book policy required commitment from an enormous range of players. As a result very little came of these initiatives.

The transformation of education in South Africa in the 1990s led to the formation of the Library and Information Services Research Group, one of 12 research groups set up as part of a research project into education and educational policy (Nassimbeni).

The trends of the 1990s lead one to question whether it is productive to develop national library policies in the context of wider policies, like Information, Technology, Books or Education, or whether a national library policy should first stand alone, to be subsequently integrated into other policies.

Trends, 2000 onwards

The early years of the new century saw emphasis placed on how ICT advances had brought about changes in knowledge management leading to the development of the global information society. This was evidenced by the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in two phases, 2003 and 2005. Its objective was to establish the foundations for an Information Society and to put in motion a concrete action plan, both of which are still in progress. One result was the development of national ICT plans.

There was an obvious 'digital divide' between developed and developing countries, with the latter having low levels of human capital, local content creation, ICT infrastructure and ICT access. UNECA recognized this in 1996 with its adoption of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), which encouraged African governments to embark on the process of developing national information and communications policies and plans. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the action plans of WSIS gave African governments further impetus in this direction. IST-Africa (ICT policies), a multi-stakeholder initiative focused on reducing the digital divide in sub-Saharan Africa, now compiles a repository of ICT policies in Africa and most countries have written and/or revised them between 2000 and 2010.

The problem for the library sector is that most if not all the African ICT national policies give no role to libraries within the ICT framework. Technology is overemphasized and no mention of libraries is included in the issues addressed. An example is the ICT Policy of Tanzania (Tanzania. Ministry of Communications and Transport). Special emphasis is placed on universal access to ICTs but no mention is made of developing the already existing network of public libraries as access points. At the same time libraries are not seen as providing gateways to and creating content.

A similar situation exists in the other parts of the developing world. A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Information Network (APIN) in 2007 complained that libraries were missing from their countries' national information policies, agreed that the library component should be spelt out in all NIPs and suggested that a set of standards for NIPs should be promulgated (Sin Joan Yee).

It is this lack of recognition of the role that libraries can and do play in the information society and in bridging the digital divide that has led to a renewed interest in the establishment of national library policies.

In Europe EBLIDA (European Bureau of Library, Information, Documentation Archives) Naple (National Authorities on Public Libraries in Europe) held a joint conference in 2009 to discuss the importance of a library policy for Europe. It has established guidelines on library legislation and policy in Europe (Mauritzen), which emphasize that national policy measures should recognize that libraries are essential bodies in sustaining and developing democracy. A number of European countries have or are in the process of formulating national library policies. In Finland the Ministry of Education is responsible for outlining national library policies and has an ongoing programme of policy statements and strategies, concentrating on state and public libraries. Latvia and Lithuania are countries at present in the process of formulating policies. Lithuania has a law on libraries, many regulations and a long-term programme for the modernization of public libraries. Government changes in strategic planning methods and guidelines for cultural policy issued in 2010 has led the library sector to review the content of existing documents and develop a national library policy. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for the process and hopes to discuss drafts at a stakeholder meeting in 2011.

In 2009 the results of a survey into public access technology in 25 developing countries was published (University of Washington). Its scope was obviously limited to finding out how people around the world access and use information and computers in public settings like libraries, telecentres and cybercafes. Libraries do play a crucial role in most countries and the situation would be greatly improved if countries had established and implemented a national library policy addressing access needs.

In South America, several countries are working towards national library policies, starting with an emphasis on public libraries. Colombia passed a law in 2010 through which the National Network of Public Libraries is to be organized (Colombia. Ministry of Culture). The Law defines all technical, financial and institutional instruments as well as the necessary planning and coordination spaces to do it. However it is a national policy only for libraries operated by the state. It does not cover other public libraries or networks, community, school or university libraries. But other types of libraries are included in a technical committee stipulated by the law, to give advice and counsel. Chile is also considering passing a similar law.

In Africa UNECA in 2003 felt it necessary to publish a paper on the value of library services in development and counter the argument that they were being swept away by the digital revolution (UNECA). It shows what

libraries contribute to economic and social development. The role of the library in e-government and local-global networking is explained. In the final section policy implications for Africa are discussed.

Apart from Namibia (discussed below), countries in Africa have not yet established national library policies, but some are in the process and many are intending and keen to do so.   In Ghana, the Library Association in 2006 called for the establishment of a National Council on Libraries and Information (NCLI) and sent a proposal to the Ministry of Education. The proposal was accepted but the Association was asked to first formulate a national library policy. A Ministerial Committee of Experts was set up to do this. Since then a stakeholders' meeting has met to discuss the reports on the NCLI and the National Library Policy presented by the Committee. The reports were validated and presented to the Minister of Education. The policy has now been returned to the Association for additional information, which a committee of three has been set up to provide. At February 2011, this is the current state of play in Ghana.

Malawi started work on a national library policy framework a few years ago but did not finish the process. Zimbabwe and Kenya confirm that they do not currently have any national library policy framework but are keen to get one established. A Nigerian librarian writing in 2008 (Uhegbu) favoured setting up a national information policy to ensure that information is provided to all Nigerians through properly equipped libraries and information centres. He recommended setting up a committee to set this in motion. Zambia started the process of writing a national library policy as far back as 1985 and in 1998, the Ministry of Education embarked on a renewed effort (Lungu). This did not succeed and the failure has affected library development and the development of the library profession. Lungu argues that it is only through a NLP that ways will be found to harness, store and disseminate information resources to combat poverty and illiteracy. Information cannot effectively play a role in the attainment of the MDGs without a NLP. Zimbabwe has a National Library and Documentation Service (NLDS) Council set up by Act in 1985 but as yet no national library policy. Currently the NLDS barely functions as key posts are vacant.

Three examples of countries who have completed national policies for libraries

Finland

In Finland responsibility for operating public library services falls mainly on the municipalities (with financial assistance from the state) and for those in universities on the universities (although the National Library is also the Helsinki University Library). The Ministry of Education is responsible for outlining national library policies and has developed a national policy, albeit with an emphasis on state and public libraries. In 1998, through a Library Act and Decree, public libraries were given shared responsibility for citizen information services in the digital environment but library standards started to deteriorate together with access to information. A Library Policy Programme 2001-2004 was set in motion and this led to the policy described below (Finland. Ministry of Education), covering the years to 2010. It presents visions and objectives regarding access to knowledge and culture; it identifies challenges and developmental needs; it details measures aimed at securing information services for all citizens including pupils; and it outlines the roles of local authorities and the state. It emphasizes the need for cooperation between all types of libraries. More recently, the Ministry has published a public library policy document for the years to 2015.

The 2003 policy document had two main sections: Library Strategy 2010 – Starting Points and Measures; and Suggested Steps. Section One examined the basic values of the information society and how libraries promote these values. The contribution of libraries to society is described in detail, in particular through the hybrid library, expanded services and collections and new services. Challenges to realizing this vision were listed, e.g. lack of sufficiently skilled staff, poor quality library systems, no national library network. Section Two included the Library Strategy, its Action Plan and the policy for division of labour between local authorities and the state. Then tasks for municipalities and measures for the state are given.

A talk given in 2009 (Sulin) discussed how Finnish library policies could be continually updated. The author thought that the legislation could be strengthened by including competency requirements for public library employees. Society is rapidly changing and public library services need to reflect better the way people now read, write and search information. The fact that some municipalities are very small makes it difficult to offer equality of access. There is a need for agreed Finnish Public Library Standards to provide a more exact evaluation framework to be used in local, regional and national evaluation work. He also explains how the library policy outlined by the Ministry is carried out through state grants – the Ministry makes annual and performance contracts with the libraries it supports and directs the implementation of strategic goals though funding projects.

The Finnish Public Library Policy 2015 was published in 2009, updating previous strategies and programs in order to correspond with changes in the operations environment.   It covers new user expectations and the

fact that libraries for the first time are in a situation where they have to compete with other actors in the field of information provision. The importance of a highly qualified library staff is again emphasized. An "action plan" is provided.

The Policy 2015 and an amendment in the Library Act came into force in January this year enacting tightened competence requirements. "Libraries answer to future challenges by focusing on expertise and emphasizing quality". At March 2010, updating of the legislation has started, and the Ministry has published national criteria for quality, the English version will be available in the coming months.

The advantages of having a national library policy are obvious in the continuing development of and important role played by Finland's public libraries (Wigell-Ryynanen). These exist to help implement the citizen's right to information and knowledge. Strategies and policies for public libraries are frequently updated. They direct the annual allocation of state grants for public libraries and are included in national projects. They justify amendments in library legislation, e.g. staff skilled and qualified at a high level are now required by law. Responsibility for library legislation, the state budget for public libraries, national policies and programmes, state subsidies and grants and other library matters lies within government and is managed by civil servants who are themselves librarians.

Namibia

In 2009, the National Libraries and Archives Service (NLAS) of Namibia solicited bids to assist in the renewal of Namibia's national library policy, as Phase 2 of a strategic assessment and economic analysis of the LIS sector. The previous policy was written in 1997 (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education). In the intervening years far-reaching changes have taken place in the national and global information environment, not least the emergence of ICT. In addition Namibia has produced Vision 2030, a new strategy for national development, which will require the transformation of the economy, with the education and training sector, including continuing education and libraries, playing an important role. The ideas of Vision 2030 are incorporated into the latest national development plan and ETSIP, the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme. A new national strategy for libraries is now needed to demonstrate, guide and plan the contribution of the library sector to this vision.

The London-based consortium of MDR Partners and the Network for Information and Digital Access (NIDA) was chosen to undertake the work. A consultancy team began research on the ground and its reports became the basis for a draft national policy document for the library and information sector, submitted to NLAS in 2010 (MDR/NIDA).

The proposed national policy consists of four sections:
• *The context:* need for a new policy, national development objectives and major objectives of a strategy for Namibia's libraries;
• *Key strategic elements:*
- Coordination, leadership and marketing: the roles and relationships of the Namibian Library and Information Council (NLIC), NLAS and professional bodies like the Namibian Information Workers Association (NIWA)
- Legislation: need to renew the 2000 Act in the light of changes brought about by ICT and decentralization within Namibia
- Human resources: meeting the needs of actual and potential users; adequate supply of skilled staff, including improvement of staffing structures and training opportunities;
• *Resources:*
- information resources for library and information services
- Namibian content
- information for development
- funding
- ICT;
• *Policies for individual library and information sectors:*
- National Library of Namibia
- National Archives of Namibia
- specialized and research libraries
- community libraries
- school libraries/media centres, BIS and resources for teachers
- higher education libraries.

New Zealand

The National Library was formed in 1965 when the Alexander Turnbull Library, the General Assembly Library and the National Library Service (formed from the Country Library Service and the School Library Service)

were brought together. Since then the National Library has integrated with Archives New Zealand and the Department of Internal Affairs and the General Assembly Library has separated to become the Parliamentary Library. It is governed by The National Library Act of 2003, amended in 2010. Among other things, the Act established a new advisory body, the Library and Information Advisory Commission. Library services in New Zealand are also provided by a number of other administrative structures – for example local authorities provide public library services and there are university, college and school libraries. These are independent of the National Library, but the latter is committed to collaboration with and support of them.

In 2007, the National Library produced a new policy document (National Library of New Zealand). A strategic repositioning of the library was felt necessary to bring it into line with the potential and opportunities of the new digital environment. The policy document is divided into five areas:
• *a vision of the information environment in 2017* and the role of libraries in this digital world;
• *four strategic priorities*, each listing what the National Library will do to ensure their success:
- accessing New Zealand's digital memory
- inspiring knowledge creation and economic transformation, through encouragement of lifelong learning
- sharing our nation's stories, by collecting and preserving all records of cultural heritage
- enriching the user experience, through improved services;
• *four value propositions*, which are customer-focused methods to deliver the strategic priorities:
- partnering with the libraries of New Zealand and others in the information sectors
- delivering digital library content for New Zealanders
- library services for young New Zealanders
- library services for researchers;
• *four supporting critical areas,* on which the Library will concentrate so as to achieve the strategic agenda:
- Maori heritage and services
- strategic alliances and especially working to strengthen and develop national frameworks within the library and information sector
- people learning together, promoting workplace skills
- sustaining the organization, through optimizing efficiency and effectiveness, providing sufficient resources and investing in infrastructure
• *key focus areas*, for delivering the strategic directions in the first year: a plan of action for Year One.

Conclusions

From the above discussions, we can conclude:

- National policies for libraries are part of a larger mosaic of both information-related and other national policies, e.g. education. They contribute and relate to these other policies but are not dependent on them. They are best developed separately and independently in the first instance. They will need to be updated as a country's conditions and policies develop and change.

- National policies for libraries arise out of the political, economic and social needs and conditions of a country. They grow out of the existing library infrastructure and practices. They reflect a country's library priorities.

- Library legislation authorizes the existence and responsibilities of a country's libraries. A national library policy ensures that libraries operate in accordance with this legislation and in the most effective way possible.

- National policies for libraries, once in writing and formally approved by government, provide a framework for the delivery of library services. Being underwritten by government is an assurance of financial support and subsidy.

- The existence of a body within government responsible for all library development within a country facilitates the formulation of a truly national library policy.

- National library strategies and policies give libraries credibility and political visibility, something that is often lacking for the library sector. The important role that libraries play in development and general well-being of society is recognized and incorporated in all government policies and projects.

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