

2009 CDNLAO COUNTRY REPORT

LIBRARY SERVICES OF FIJI

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Library Services of Fiji is a Department within the Ministry of Education, Culture and National Heritage, and the Arts, and Youth and Sports.

Library Services of Fiji provides directions and leadership for the development of libraries and information services, professional development of library officers and planning of future directives for library and information services in Fiji.

Schools, rural/public and special libraries come under the jurisdictions of Library Services of Fiji. The country has 907 schools (168 secondary and 739 primary), 9 rural/public and 35 government agency libraries. All rural and government agency libraries are staffed with fulltime library officers, usually Para-professionals with a certificate or diploma in Library and Information Studies.

The geographical distribution of libraries, the underdeveloped infrastructure in rural areas, the lack of trained professional librarians and the low prioritization of libraries at the national level for funding purposes are some of the challenges we have faced over the years. In turn, these have been detrimental to our struggles to develop libraries to a level commensurate with other developing small islands which have developed and advanced especially in the area of information and communications technology.

Library Services is yet to automate its library systems. All its operations are still manually driven to date. Some government agencies have automated their library systems through financial assistance from similar overseas agencies.

Collection development and acquisitions for schools and rural/public libraries are centrally managed by Library Services of Fiji. Resources distributed from the central Technical Services Division are fully processed (manually) and delivered to libraries ready for circulation. Government agency libraries (special libraries) each have small budgets which are managed by their line ministries/departments.

The Department's (Library Services of Fiji) current attachment to the Ministry of Education has identified both advantages and disadvantages in the way that our national role has been viewed by the parent body. We are seen to be a school library service rather than being a national library service with national responsibilities towards the development of libraries and library officers. This has

been a challenge over the years, especially in competing for government funds and securing funding from donor agencies for proposed development projects.

The future direction for Library Services of Fiji will improve if proposals for improvements and developments are considered favourably by the Ministry of Education in the current Ministry's Sectoral Development Plan 2009-2011.

2. NEW INFORMATION PRODUCTS

The year 2009 and beyond sees Library Services of Fiji fully engaged with partners in the development and packaging of information kits for schools and rural communities, targeting youth and womens' groups.

2.1 Information kits for schools

The objective is to provide additional information resources that are aligned to the curriculum prescriptions to support the teaching and learning processes in schools. Students are able to access extra curriculum resources in multimedia format. These information kits will be available in the school libraries to use during school hours, and in public libraries for after-school learning.

The product is being developed in partnership with Curriculum Development Unit. Library officers are examining the curriculum prescriptions and resource materials produced by the Curriculum Development Unit and then research either online or offline to produce information kits that will complement those resources. These kits will be in various media formats to make learning interesting and exciting for the students.

Many schools in Fiji are rural based and are poorly resourced. Schools in Fiji are predominantly owned and run by communities. The socio-economic activities of these communities are usually subsistence based. Additional funds for teaching and learning resources are scarce.

2.2 Information kits for Communities (Youths and Women's Groups)

At the community level, development initiatives are usually driven by either the Youth groups or the Women's Groups. The objective of the information kits for communities is to provide book-based information resources in multimedia formats that will enhance the lifelong skills of the two groups to be able to generate income from these skills and move out of poverty.

Based on the data already collected through community profiling, the two target groups have common skills /knowledge on horticulture, farming, animal husbandry, screen-printing, needlecraft and sewing, carpentry, weaving, bamboo craft and design. Library Services is researching into these areas and publishing additional information on these activities and production standards to ensure that

the quality and volume meet the market demands. The published materials will be in the two vernaculars - Fijian and Hindi.

3. NEW INFORMATION SERVICES

3.1 The two information products stated above are part of the new information services.

3.2 Fiji National Bibliography (FNB)

The production of the Fiji National Bibliography will resume in 2009 after a lapse of almost 20 years. Library Services will allocate staff to fully engage in research and collection of data entries for the publication in the latter part of 2009. The production of the bibliography will be delayed to late 2010 or even early 2011 due to the amount of entries to be collected.

3.3 Information Literacy Programmes

Library Services of Fiji began a Training of the Trainers Programme (ToT) in 2008. 30 school and public librarians were trained in 2008 and the same number will be trained every year for the next 3 years.

3.4 Reading promotion

A “Read Fiji” Project is proposed for September 2009 to be launched with the National Library Week. This will be a first national read initiative for Fiji apart from the Schools DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) programmes. The “Read Fiji” Initiative will be inclusive of everyone the disabled and the normal, the young and the old the urban dweller and the most remote dweller, the sick and the healthy... Library Services will distribute reading materials in both book and audio forms to all communities prior to the date.

3.5 Reference, Lending including inter-library loans, acquisitions, donations and exchange are all normal functions of our services.

4 NEW AND ON-GOING PROJECTS

4.1 Library Services of Fiji is engaged with the Ministry of Education’s Project on the “School Performance Improvement Project”. The project started in 2007.

The objective of the project is to assist schools which do not perform well in their external examinations improve on their performances. The Ministry assigns a team of education officers to inspect, review and assess the schools and report on their identified needs which will improve teaching and learning, and hence, improve their students’ academic achievements.

As a consequence of the Project, the Ministry of Education has again reinstated the School Inspectorate System which was phased out in the 1970s. The Director,

Library Services of Fiji is a Team Leader for one of the 9 Education Districts School Inspectorates.

Since the School Performance Improvement Project's inception in 2007, there has been an exceptionally high demand for the establishment of school libraries in rural schools. School communities have now realized the role of libraries in teaching and learning. Schools that were assisted with library resources and library management systems showed marked improvement in their examinations results.

In 2007, 10 primary schools were identified as "under-performers". They scored below 50% in their external examinations results. After library assistance, 9 of the schools progressed above 50% in their results. Another improvement that was notable was the quality of passes in each individual subject, especially with English.

In 2008, 71 secondary schools under-performed. Again, after they were assisted, 64 of the schools improved on their results to score above the 50% mark. Again, English was one of the subjects that notably improved on the pass quality.

In 2009, a further 41 schools is to be assisted. For the School Inspectorate Services, some 271 schools will be assessed, reviewed and inspected.

4.2 Seminars, Workshops, etc

These are ongoing up-skilling and capacity building forums for library officers. Funding is usually sourced from Donor agencies through project proposals.

4.3 Local, Regional and International

Partnership with local, regional and international organizations through available volunteer services, training and attachments is encouraged at all times. This partnership agreement is an invaluable forum for sourcing and sharing new ideas, skills and knowledge, experiences and building capacities.

On the local scene, we have partnership arrangements with local municipal councils on the operations of their libraries. Library Services of Fiji provides the staff and library resources while the municipal councils provide the library accommodation and its maintenance and an additional library staff. The arrangements have been in place for years and have proved to be cost-effective and operationally efficient for the two organizations.

Regional and International organizations have assisted Libraries with grants and resources on an on-going basis. Professional Library organizations such as IFLA and CDNLAO to name a couple have been invaluable partners in the exposure and participation of librarians at conferences and meetings. Library Services of Fiji is indebted to all of you. Thank you very much indeed.

5 MAJOR EVENTS

Every year Library Services of Fiji coordinates the National Library Week in schools and the public libraries for the library communities. The week is usually marked by a march through the main Library Week Centre by library stakeholders dressed in book characters. The launch follows and a prominent community figure is normally invited to be the Chief Guest.

Library Week Committees are appointed in each identified centre to coordinate the week long activities. Schools and rural libraries draw up their own activities and programmes for the week-long celebrations. Library Services of Fiji facilitates resources for the various activities as well as prizes.

Reports are sent to Library Services at the end of the week. These reports are studied; analyzed and appropriate recommendations are made for future reference.