

## Why decolonisation and re-Africanisation of Librarianship is not an option but a necessity for Africa?

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### Abstract:

*This conceptual paper investigates African Librarianship's role in decolonising the three key areas: library resources and services, education, training, and associations in Africa. The focus is more on how women professionals have contributed to the decolonization of libraries through their practical and literary work. Findings revealed that the cry for the re-Africanisation of libraries in South Africa can be traced to the "Zaaiman Report" of the 1980s. The results of the Zaaiman Report lamented the domination of Western ideologies as a deficiency in LIS resources, services, education, and training, hence the need for decolonisation. It was imperative that African Librarianship decolonises in line with the contextual needs of the library communities served, particularly indigenous communities of Africa; hence, Africology, UNESCO Declaration on Indigenous languages and IFLA Indigenous Matters Action Plan (2021-23) were adopted for this study.*

**Keywords:** *Decolonisation; African Librarianship; re-Africanisation; indigenous knowledge; and indigenous languages.*

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### Introduction and background

*Decolonisation* is used to describe a historical period that marked the withdrawal of the direct control of colonial administration of the colonial empires from their colonised states. In Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa became the last colony to decolonise in 1994 from apartheid domination (Le Grange 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). In 'post colonies' coloniality continues to affect the lives of people long after direct colonialism was removed (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:10) as we continue to inhale and exhale coloniality in our everyday environments, including academic spaces (Le Grange (2021). For Le Grange (2021), decolonising should be an individual and collective responsibility. There is a need to self-unlearn to re-learn new ways of doing things (Le Grange 2021).

*Decoloniality* is born from the realisation that world order is asymmetrical. It is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies and epistemologies that continue to produce Africans who are perpetually alienated from their African identity but associated with Western knowledge systems that alienate them (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:11). *Decoloniality* is anchored on three interconnected concepts: coloniality of power; coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being. *Coloniality of power* questions how the world order has been constructed into an asymmetrical modern power structure. *Coloniality of knowledge* questions epistemologies in terms of who generates knowledge, for what purpose and why indigenous knowledge systems, including languages, have been pushed to the margins. *Coloniality* questions processes that led to the objectification, thingification and commodification of human beings. It questions the hegemonic perpetuity of white ontological existence that overpowers and superseded blackness. Chisita (2011) argued that the colonial government embarked on cantankerous vituperation and desecration of everything indigenous, creating a state of cultural disorientation amongst the indigenous people, especially concerning identity, knowledge, food production and conflict resolution, among other issues.

### **African Librarianship and why the need for decolonisation?**

African Librarianship is anchored on Western ideologies. Many studies agree that the colonial empires created western-model libraries to serve their interest and those of the local people were considered subservient if they were ever considered (Young, Lynch, Boakye-Achampong, Jowaisas & Sam 2021; Strand & Britz 2018; Tise and Raju 2015; Raju & Raju 2010; Nyana 2009; John-Okeke 2009; Stilwell 2007, 1989; Sturges 2001b; Alemna 1994; Mchombu 1991)

In South Africa, the cry for decolonisation received more attention after students' protest campaigns of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall campaigns of 2015 and 2016 (Le Grange 2021). Then, in October 2015, at a Higher Education Summit (HES) which was convened by the Ministry of Higher Education and Training, the Minister at the time, Dr. Blade Nzimande, requested all Universities to Africanise/decolonise (Le Grange 2021). Amidst rigorous debates on decolonisation, the voices of libraries, especially academic libraries as university support structures, have been viewed as muted (Molepo 2018). Yet, the IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) views libraries as a gateway to knowledge, including cultural knowledge.

The lack of decolonisation concerns, as in libraries, the cry for the re-Africanisation of Librarianship can be traced back to the "Zaaiman report" of the 1980s and according to Strand and Britz (2018) and Walker (2006) Zaaiman report firmly pushed for transformation in libraries. It was commissioned by the South Africa Institute of Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS) to investigate the role of libraries in development. The first draft of the Zaaiman Report was produced in 1987 (Strand & Britz 2018). Some of its essential recommendations were that the new libraries provided for Blacks at the time must be Africanised and not maintain the status quo. They must be apolitical and not offer biased and propagandistic materials (Strand & Britz 2018). Zaaiman (1985), cited by Raju (2005:71), lamented the domination of Western ideologies as a deficiency in LIS education and training in South Africa, hence the cry for the decolonisation of the curriculum.

After the Zaaiman report, a vast body of literature emerged supporting the re-Africanisation of libraries in Africa. In 1989, Stilwell's paper on 'Historical origins of community libraries in South Africa' lamented Western-model libraries that were not user-oriented and lacked acceptability. In Stilwell's (1989) paper, the late *Mary-Lee Bundy* is cited as a notable library

school professor from the University of Maryland who invited librarians to reach out to the disadvantaged communities as they needed them most. The former President of Tanzania, Nyerere, as cited by Raju and Raju (2010), reiterates that taking libraries to the people is critical for national development. Furthermore, Stilwell (1989) recommended impactful, consultative library services relative to an instructive top-to-bottom approach. Mchombu's (1991) article titled '*Which Way African Librarianship*' has mapped challenges facing African Librarianship, and John-Okeke (2009), in her paper titled 'African Librarianship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' has alluded to how information famine and limited or lack thereof use of indigenous languages in the library collection have informed limited visibility and accessibility in libraries in Africa. This study argues that libraries as storehouses of information, facilitators of access to knowledge and promoters of democratic rights (Hart & Nassimbeni 2014; Raju & Raju 2010) cannot remain muted during the cry for epistemic justice against epistemicide, linguicide and culturecide.

### **Purpose and objectives**

This paper aims to establish African Librarianship's role in decolonising the three key areas: library resources and services, education and training and associations in Africa. Therefore, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Explore the role of African Librarianship in decolonising the three key areas: library resources and services, education and training and associations in Africa.
2. Make recommendations based on the findings of objective one.

### **Library collection and resources**

It is now more than five decades of African librarianship existence, more than three decades since Mchombu's (1991) paper titled "Which Way African librarianship" was written, but challenges regarding many lacks in public and community libraries in Africa are still a concern such as lack of resources that cater for the diverse library users including black, indigenous communities (John-Okeke 2009; Mchombu 1991). For example, library policies have not sufficiently transformed to cater to the various library users. Language policies of Information Literacy (I.L.) Training and cataloguing rules in many libraries are still biased and irrelevant to the African context (Molepo 2018:25; Tise and Raju 2015; John-Okeke 2009). Many studies agree regarding the dearth of relevant information and paucity of data on indigenous languages in libraries (Mhlongo 2018; Tise and Raju 2015; Raju and Raju 2010; Nyana 2009; John-Okeke 2009). For Mchombu (1991), the two critical challenges include issues of the book industry that has failed to supply sufficient materials in indigenous languages and Africa's oral culture and authoritarian transmission of knowledge that does not favour the development of libraries. Because of the highlighted challenges, African libraries are seen as places for the formally educated, hence the lack of use and appreciation (John-Okeke 2009).

But it must be declared that one of the authors is a member of the South African National Library Portfolio Committee, including academics, educators and publishers. Publishers have raised concerns regarding the under-market and under-utilization of many storybooks written in indigenous languages. The statement above confirms Sisulu's (2022) view that we have become consumers of what we do not produce and producers of what we do not consume. Under this premise, Mukwevho and Ngulube (2022) recommend using public programmes (P.P.). P.P. entails the use of various advocacy methods such as publications, exhibitions, tours, seminars, workshops, school visits and different social media platforms (Mukwevho & Ngulube 2022:5 as cited in Zimu-Biyela 2022:4). Mukwevho and Ngulube (2022:5); Dick

(2013) have lamented limited visibility, accessibility and use of the small relevant African collection including audio-visual oral archives that is available in heritage institutions. Kibakaya (2000) reiterates that special groups, such as African collections in academic libraries, especially in the so-called Third World countries, have been suffering from visibility accessibility due to financial constraints in digitising it, hence the importance of government support.

It is not like nothing is happening, but more needs to be done; in 2007, the South African government, through the Department of Arts and Culture, strived to redress the past inequalities in libraries by introducing the conditional grant aimed toward transforming urban and rural community library infrastructure, facilities, resources, and services with particular emphasis on previously underprivileged communities (Mojapelo 2017; Stilwell 2016; Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu 2015). Although there is still a backlog regarding the number of libraries per province (Mojapelo 2017), Stilwell (2016) asserts that in South Africa, the conditional grant has helped all nine areas make some progress in establishing and upgrading libraries. The Department of Arts and Culture (2014) did not indicate where new and upgraded libraries were located after 2011 and 2012; hence, Table 1 does not indicate the numbers for those years (Stilwell 2016).

**Table 1**

**New and Upgraded Public Libraries in South Africa: 2011-2014 Provincializing**

Number of Public Libraries	Newly Established				Upgraded				Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Province</b>									
Eastern Cape	1				32				186 (6m+)
Free State	4				18				171 (2m+)
Gauteng	3	1			4				233 (12m)
KwaZulu-Natal	4	1							220 (10m)
Limpopo	2	4			15				21 (5m+)
Mpumalanga	3	2			13				108 (4m+)
Northern Cape	3	1			12				236 (1m+)
Northwest	4	4			22				105 (3m+)
Western Cape	1								347 (5m+)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1627</b>

Adapted from Stilwell (2016); Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu (2015); Portfolio Committee on Arts and Culture (2014)

However, the effect and sustainability of the community library projects implemented through the Department of Arts and Culture grant have not been sufficiently documented, hence the recommendation for continuous monitoring and evaluation of these projects (Stilwell 2016;

Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu 2015). Stilwell (2016), Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu (2015) recommend more qualitative studies that can provide a holistic assessment of the Department of Arts and Culture's conditional grant project and whether it has contributed to the improvement of indigenous resources, projects, and services, including indigenous languages.

Zwane (2019:28) underscores that the English language's dominance is one of the vital polarizing issues at South African education institutions, including libraries. For Zwane (2019), history reveals that English is a powerful tool for teaching a feeling of inferiority in the psyche of black people. Zwane (2019:29), Shava and Manyike (2018), as cited in Zimu-Biyela (2019:43), indicate that English, Portuguese, and French are languages that were imposed as languages of education and commercialization to the African people, thus robbing them of the cultural identity embedded in their speeches. Language and culture are inseparable for these scholars, as language defines and revitalizes one's cultural identity.

Some scholars have linked limited or lack of improvement in African Librarianship to the inappropriate and weak library education and training sector in Africa (Tise & Raju 2015; John-Okeke 2009). Mchombu (1991) reiterates that in Africa, the LIS education sector is not producing graduates needed for national development, hence the need for decolonisation.

### **LIS education and training**

In South Africa, LIS education and training began in 1933, with the University of Pretoria and the University of Cape Town as the pioneers. Zaaiman (1985), as cited by Raju (2005:71), lamented the domination of Western ideologies as a deficiency in LIS education and training in South Africa. The limited range of specialization has been raised as a concern (Raju 2005). The National Education Policy Framework (NEPI) of LIS Services Group (1992) has lamented curriculum offerings in South Africa that neglected local and African contexts (Raju 2005:71). Underwood (1996) and Rosenberg (1999) as cited in Raju (2005:71) both agreed on the need for the LIS education and training sector to take cognizance of indigenous cultures or to indigenise LIS curricular.

The South African National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) Library and Information Services Group (1992) came after the Zaaiman Report (1987); the NEPI-LIS Group highlighted areas that needed attention for the LIS education and training sector in South Africa, including (Raju 2005):

- i) Lack of differentiation and specialisation among teaching departments.
- ii) Lack of articulation of programmes between institutions results in limited mobility for students.
- iii) LIS Curriculum offerings that neglect the local and African context (Raju 2005).

Tise and Raju (2015) and Raju and Raju (2010) have reiterated that the failure of African Librarianship to develop oral tradition and oral history is viewed as a severe indictment. Many regard the African oral tradition as the primary source of information for researchers and scholars, which should be an advantage to Librarianship rather than a nuisance (Tise & Raju 2015).

Another concern that Zaaiman (1984) and Alemna (1994) raised is that the LIS training and education sector was slow in recruiting students from the Science, Engineering, Technology, and Mathematics disciplines who can help enhance the integrative approach in the LIS

profession. It is envisaged that they can play essential roles in extensive data management-related matters, digitisation and other innovative technological projects. For Raju (2005), technological imperatives in South Africa and other parts of the world have informed curricular revisions in the LIS education and training sector. For Minishi-Majanja (2009), it is time for the library education training sector to produce a new calibre of graduates required for the current job market. These graduates must be able to integrate indigenous knowledge and technology systems, hence the importance of intensifying work-integrated learning programmes, cooperative education, and experiential and apprenticeship training programs.

According to Raju (2005), at various degrees of success, the LIS schools have begun to take initiatives of decolonising and transforming African Librarianship, archives and heritage resources. The findings of Van Brakel's (1992) survey of the LIS teaching departments in South Africa recommended that LIS departments ought to specialise in line with their unique environments, such as information technology, public or community libraries, school libraries, museums, archives, indigenous pieces of knowledge, indigenous languages, agriculture and others. The libraries should cater to the local needs, and the LIS education and training sector at the University of Northwest (South Africa) specialized in information services for Agriculture (Raju 2005). Unisa, the Department of Information Science, the academic library and the Gauteng Provincial Archives have collaborated on a project that collects sports memories of South Africa (Ngoepe, Mbuyiswa, Saurombe & Matshontshwane 2023). It is apparent that something is being done to decolonise knowledge, but more still needs to be done, hence the importance of collaborative solid projects.

The view is that the LIS sector must harness technological innovations for curriculum enhancement, particularly in Africa. This study cannot agree more with these views that although something is being done, more needs to be done in decolonising the curriculum. The following section briefly overviews the historical evolvement of library and information science and its contribution to the profession's development.

### **LIS professional associations**

Alemna (1994) asserts that the primary aim of a library association is to encourage the professional development of libraries. A professional association should protect the interests of its members, help determine the standard of education and training required for its members, the professional performance expected of them, and ensure that its members live up to the expected standards. According to Mchombu (1991), in Africa, professional associations are considered weak, fragmented, and not sufficiently contributing to the production of skilled personnel needed for the national development of the continent. However, it cannot be ignored that there has been progress made as professional standards are continuously being improved. In addition, associations that strive to unite the library profession have been created, such as the Standing Conference of Eastern Central and Southern Librarians (SCECSAL), which was formed in Tanzania in 1974; the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) which was established in Ghana in 2013 and the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) which was formed in 1997.

It is assumed that associations such as AfLIA and SCECSAL have strived to respond to Alemna's (1994) call to unite African associations. The SCECSAL was a successor of the East African Library Association, dissolved in 1972. The vision of SCECSAL is to organize a biennial conference whose purposes are to promote and support the development of libraries

in member countries; forge, maintain and strengthen professional links between librarians in member countries; and discuss matters of mutual benefit and interest (Raseroka 1992).

The AfLIA was registered as an international non-governance (NGO) under the laws of Ghana in October 2014. AfLIA's objectives are to advance research and development of relevant services to indigenous knowledge as well as information on local communities and preservation of cultural heritage; to support the establishment and strengthening of regional and national library and information associations in Africa; and to embrace the principles of freedom of access to information and expression as articulated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the article on African Charter of People's Rights (AfLia.Net, 2019).

In South Africa, the South African Library Association (SALA) was formed in the 1930s. It was a 'whites only' association. It followed the British library models. SALA was replaced by the South African Institute for Library and Information Science (SAILIS) in the 1960s (Walker 2006). SAILIS was considered a graduate professional body open to graduate librarians of all races. However, because of apartheid laws, many black African librarians did not trust it. Very few of the small number (slightly over 200) black-qualified librarians joined SAILIS, and only one, Professor Seth Manaka of the University of the North, was active in its executive council and held office as president in 1990-1992. Most black African librarians remained in ALASA (Walker 2006).

Furthermore, Walker (2006) indicates that in 1970, there was an unsuccessful attempt to disband SALA and form a united association. Instead, a separate association for blacks emerged, the African Libraries Association of South Africa (ALASA). Patience Maisela was the first woman president of ALASA. She was a dedicated leader in the sector. But her life was cut short when she died in 1997. However, very little is known and documented about her. The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) was born on July 10, 1997, from the racially segregated associations of South Africa (Strand & Britz 2018; Satgoor 2015; Walker 2006).

As already indicated, the first draft of the "Zaaiman report" was produced in 1987. It called for the Africanisation of Librarianship. It strongly influenced the push for transformation in libraries (Strand & Britz 2018; Walker 2006). In 1933, with the help of the Carnegie Corporation, SALA created the first issue of its journal, 'South African Libraries.' 1980, the journal's name changed to 'Journal of South African Library and Information Science (JSALIS)'. Today (2023), the journal title continues as the 'South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science' (SAJLIS) (Walker 2006). SALA and SAILIS influenced the issues of professional standards development and scholarly publishing (Walker 2006). Some standards became steep and difficult for black indigenous librarians, such as academic publishing standards and peer-reviewing policies and procedures.

Although gradually improving, Ocholla's (2007) study on analyzing publishing trends in the SAJLIS journal between 2002 and 2005 confirmed that black indigenous academic cohorts were lagging. The results revealed that regarding population groups, 54 % of whites were leading, followed by 37% of black Africans, 6% of Indians and 3% of coloured (Zimu-Biyela 2020:162). Similar findings were reported by Murray (2014) for the publication trend between 2004 and 2008. Results revealed that men were more productive than women. Staff who were older were less effective than younger. Black African and Indian researchers were less productive than whites (Zimu-Biyela 2020:162).

Furthermore, Ocholla and Ocholla's (2007) study revealed that authors from African countries other than South Africa were more visible in journals indexed by the ISI Web of Science as evidenced by South African authors' tendency to publish most of their articles in local journals (Ocholla and Ocholla 2007 as cited in Zimu-Biyela 2020:163). This study believes that the impacts of racialised LIS education system and associations cannot be totally isolated from the highlighted negative consequences. It cuts even deeper with indigenous women researchers in South Africa (Zimu-Biyela 2020).

It cannot be argued that the cry for epistemic justice ought to focus on redressing the inequalities of the past. It has to do with integrating indigenous knowledge systems with the Western ones, taking cognisance of or instead putting indigenous women researchers into a leadership position as they have been sidelined for a very long time. For example, it is concerning that very scanty information was retrieved about Patience Maisela. Yet, she was instrumental in taking libraries to the biggest township in the Gauteng Province, such as Soweto. She influenced the profession as a practitioner and through publishing. Her article titled 'Libraries Belong to All' is featured in the library magazine titled 'Speak' dated May 1994. In that article, she reiterates the importance of reading literacy and that libraries are not only for the elites but all community members.

It has been noted that the LIS sector seems to be lagging in terms of preservation projects of knowledge about the LIS indigenous and non-indigenous scholars in Africa, especially women who have been at the forefront in the campaigns of decolonizing African Librarianship. Among many, a few indigenous and non-indigenous practitioners and academics may be highlighted, such as Patience Maisela, the first African indigenous woman to become ALASA President; Kay Raseroka and Ellen Tise, the first African indigenous women to become Presidents of IFLA and the other indigenous and non-indigenous LIS women professionals Africa and South African who through their work have been instrumental in fighting against colonisation of libraries such as Professor Emeritus Stilwell; Professor Geneive Hart; Professor Mary Nassimbeni; the late Ms. Clare Walker and many others. For example, Professor Geneive Hart and Professor Mary Nassimbeni are part of the technical team developing the LIASA Transformation Charter published in 2014.

## **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a constructivist or interpretivist approach. The advantage of using the constructivist paradigm is that it allows the researcher to engage in a naturalistic, in-depth inquiry and interpretation of the studied phenomenon (Creswell 2008; Creswell & Creswell 2018). Qualitative document or content analysis of scientific articles was used to gather from the Google Scholar database (Creswell 2008; Creswell & Creswell 2018). Access to the database was through I.P. authentication, which allows access to all registered employees and students of the institution. An analysis of documents is viewed as a qualitative research method that enables the researcher to use records to gain insight, elicit, and develop empirical meaning (Bowen, 2009; Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2015; Zimu-Biyela, 2020). Leedy and Ormrod (2010), Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu (2015), and Zimu-Biyela (2020) assert that the review of documents can help researchers to determine patterns, themes or biases within the papers.

Grounded theory (G.T.) design was adopted for this study. The advantage of using the G.T. design for this study was that the researcher had more direct control over choosing relevant articles to be studied and then further engaged with them in the process of data collection, coding, analysis and theory construction (Charmaz in Denzin & Lincoln 2011:360-361).



## **AFRIKOLOGY, UNESCO Declaration on Indigenous languages and IFLA Indigenous Matters Action Plan (2021-23)**

This article draws inspiration from the theory of Afrikology. This theory is an all-inclusive epistemology of knowledge generation and application rooted in African cosmology or science (Akinwale 2012). Nabudere (2011), as cited in Akinwale (2012:9), advocated for this theory based on his recognition that mainstream scientific knowledge cannot fully explain the crisis facing humanity. He, therefore, called for developing new knowledge that can be used for contemporary needs, given the shortcomings of the old epistemologies of knowledge inherited from the Enlightenment (Akinwale 2012:9). It is important to note that there are a variety of research paradigms around the world, despite the dominant paradigms being influenced by Euro-Western thought, such as positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, transformational, and indigenous paradigms based on their ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Chilisa, 2012).

Nabudere (2011), as cited in Akinwale (2012:9), asserts that "the task of African scholars is to explore, trace and investigate the role ancient African knowledge systems contributed in laying the ground for the institutions of knowledge creation and their application to human needs throughout history. [...] This can help to overcome the current famine by creating a new 'synthesis' in which the original African contribution makes a further contribution based on new understandings, called Afrikology". Afrikology seeks to initiate and promote a long-term solution to the African crisis by producing knowledge based on an African heritage. A key focus in Afrikology is developing a new science for generating and accessing knowledge for sustainable use. The digitisation of I.K. is crucial for managing oral traditions and various forms of knowledge systems for posterity. Digitisation supports integrating traditional and modern knowledge creation and application systems.

This study is also inspired by the UNESCO Declaration on Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) and the action plan of the IFLA-Indigenous Matters section (2021-2023). The objectives of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages are to integrate indigenous languages and multilingualism into global sustainable development framework and individual countries' policies; preserve, revitalize, and promote the use of indigenous languages multilingualism in the future post-2030 international sustainable development plans; ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education, including mother tongue-based, bilingual and multilingual education; support indigenous peoples in safeguarding their intangible heritage, indigenous languages and oral traditions; create an enabling environment for indigenous entrepreneurship and small business development; support equal and inclusive participation of women and men in organizing the International Decade of Indigenous Languages; and support public and private funding and direct investments in the revitalization, access and promotion of indigenous languages (UNESCO 2020).

IFLA Indigenous Matters Portfolio Section aligns itself with the following:

1. IFLA Strategy Key Initiative 1.4 of encouraging public debates, open access, intellectual freedom and human rights
2. UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages with projects and events emphasising the role of libraries in promoting the rights of indigenous peoples to language

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

In the introduction of this paper, it was indicated that the Zaaiman Report was produced in 1987 (Strand & Britz 2018) and made recommendations that the new libraries for Blacks must be Africanised and not maintain the status quo. They must be apolitical and not offer biased and propagandistic materials (Strand & Britz 2018), and the LIS education and training curriculum in South Africa must cater to the indigenous communities' local needs. Given that, the recommendations for this study are made in line with the objectives of the study and the Zaaiman Report's (1985 / 1987) recommendations.

## **Language policies, library collections, and library policies**

The themes that emerged as dominant include information famine in terms of resources written in indigenous languages in libraries, especially in public libraries in Africa. There have been lamentations regarding the limited lack of policies to address the scarcity of indigenous materials in libraries, such as information literacy policies written in indigenous languages (Molepo 2018). For John-Okeke, these challenges inform the high information illiteracy rate in Africa. The other side of the coin is that the little available indigenous and oral archival collection in libraries is under-utilized due to limited visibility (Mukwevho & Ngulube 2022; Dick 2013) hence the importance of public programming (Mukwevho & Ngulube 2022).

In circumventing the challenges of information famine, the South African Library Association's LIASA Transformation Charter (2014) recommends using an ecosystem collaborative approach, for example, the partnership between universities, government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Ilifa, the South African NGO promoting the use of indigenous languages. Sisulu (2022), during her presentation at the Unisa Seminar, indicated that the aim of the Ilifa Initiative for Advancement and its 'Buang Nithini' Campaign is to fulfil the mandate of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages of increasing inclusivity through multilingualism, using various knowledge systems and languages to understand the world, for peacebuilding and reconciliation, human rights and freedom of access to knowledge for indigenous people and appreciation of cultural diversity and heritage. She advocated for multisectoral collaboration with various institutions and leading experts in the indigenous language ecosystem to fulfil this mandate. She indicated that 'Buang Nithini' uses the United Nations Declaration as a tool and framework for a defined period of the International Decade of Indigenous Language Campaign (2022-2032) and as a valuable reference for what the rest of the world is undertaking. Furthermore, she warned African and South African writers on indigenous languages to consume what they produce and limit their indulgence in what they do not have.

In South Africa, the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) Conditional Grant's role in improving the state of libraries cannot be disregarded. As highlighted, DAC embarked on this grant in 2007 (Stilwell 2016; Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu 2015). However, the concern raised is that the concerted effort has focused on infrastructural resources such as structural buildings and human resources at the expense of relevant library collection (Mhlongo 2018; Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu 2015). Libraries need to provide spaces to promote intergenerational dialogues among library users. They must facilitate managing and repackaging oral traditions and history (Chisita 2011).

Furthermore, he argues that African libraries do not have sufficient technological skills to manage oral traditions (Chisita 2011). Because of the above limitations, some Indigenous Knowledge scholars recommend an endogenous multidisciplinary collaborative approach in

I.K. management activities (LIS Charter 2014; Ngulube 2002:96-97). Eason, Brady and Fryberg (2018) urged indigenous communities to resist non-recognition, misrecognition, and exploitation. Librarians should be a vanguard for social change in reaffirming indigenous peoples' sovereignty over their culture, including indigenous knowledge, in the age of combative decolonization (Chisita and Kadu, 2023). A decolonial ontology must be derived from African thinking and practice to counter the colonial development paradigm of violence, underdevelopment, and exploitation( Mpofu, 2018).

The literature revealed that academic libraries as components of universities are linked to research libraries, production and management of knowledge, especially indigenous knowledge systems, including indigenous languages (Molepo 2018). Therefore, libraries must develop policies that will accommodate the socio-economic needs of their clientele.

### **Library training and education sector**

Chisita (2009) traces that the development of Library and Information Science (LIS) education and training in Africa has its background in colonialism, leading to the establishment of libraries in Anglophone Southern Africa. Ochola and Bothma( 2007) noted that Library and Information Science Education in Africa dates back to 1960, even though in South Africa, it started earlier. Many studies agree that the Western model has presented many challenges to the sector, such as a lack of differentiation, specialisation, and curriculum offerings that neglect the local and African context (Raju 2005). The LIS education and training sector can collaborate with professional associations to map indigenous knowledge that libraries and curriculum transformation must digitise. Dube (2012) asserts it is concerning that universities in Africa take pride in presenting themselves as Western models. Yet, they face many challenges, such as irrelevant curricula, obsolete methods, high dropout and repetition rates, and overcrowding, hence the reflective title for this study. Bangani and Dube (2023) assert that the library education sector and academic libraries must engage in community outreach projects to promote social justice and the spirit of humanness.

Notwithstanding challenges, it has been observed that the LIS sector has not sufficiently heeded the call (Molepo 2018). This study adopted Afrikology because it advocates for the integration of indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge. Nabudere (2011), as cited in Akinwale (2012:9), asserts that the advantage of Afrikology is that it promotes the development of new science necessary for sustainable development. This tallies with Nyerere's view of educating for self-sustenance and national development. This initiative also responds to the mandate of the UNESCO Declaration on Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) and the IFLA-Indigenous Matters Section Action Plan (2021-2023).

### **Library associations**

The legacy of colonialism exists in the library professional associations through various ways, such as silo mentalities that undermine collaboration among associations in Africa (Mchombu 1991) and little or lack thereof documented information about black indigenous and non-indigenous librarian activists who contributed and continue to the decolonisation of libraries. Afrikology and the IFLA Indigenous Matters Committee underscore the importance of I.K. digitisation projects. Creating a database for the LIS sector legends is a critical leg of decolonising knowledge. These records can help fulfil the mandate of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) four for quality education as students can be educated about the historical evolution trend of the African librarianship profession.

The library profession is constantly changing due to seismic shifts in the information and knowledge landscape and hence the need to futurise it in sync with discourses on technical progress, decolonisation, ownership versus access to resources, digital transformation, rethinking and re-strategizing services in an era of Decoloniality and spatial configurations, among other issues (Sturges, 1999b; Chisita and Fombad, 2020). Leitner (2018,4) argues that there is no library on an island, hence the need to rethink, re-profile and re-strategise the way forward in building a united library profession. Library professionals in Zimbabwe can draw lessons from the IFLA Global Vision to strengthen the profession amidst myriad economic and political challenges. The IFLA Global Vision (2018), cited in Chisita and Chibanda (2019), argues that irrespective of space and time, the world over, library professionals generally share a common denominator about strengthening their practice for professional growth. The report also highlighted that libraries should collaborate through strategic partnerships to adapt to the ever-changing environments (IFLA Global Vision Report, 2018, p.1-152).

Therefore, in line with the objectives, this study recommends the following:

1. For the LIS resources and services, it is imperative that policies must be developed that will cater to the needs of the local black, indigenous communities who have been neglected for a long time, exceptionally orally literate indigenous communities. The partnership between libraries, the LIS education and training sector and the associations are imperative in mapping the knowledge that must be prioritised for the decolonisation and digitisation projects.
2. Minishi-Majanja (2009) asserts that the LIS education and training sector must produce graduates needed for the current market, hence the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge with technology. Technology can help facilitate regulated accessibility and visibility of knowledge, hence the need for an integrated approach.
3. The associations in Africa, including South Africa, must influence the development of the curriculum in line with local needs; hence, the LIASA Transformation Charter (2014) recommends the use of a collaborative or ecosystem approach among the libraries, the LIS education and training sector and the associations.

## **Acknowledgements**

IFLA Indigenous Matters Section and its initiative to support the IFLA Strategy Key initiative of committing to shaping public opinion and debates around open access and library values, including intellectual freedom and human rights, and its support of the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages campaign of enhancing the usage of indigenous languages. University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Durban University of Technology (DUT) for their commitment to the Vision and Transformation Agenda of advancing African epistemologies and languages in line with the country's Constitution and the National Development Agenda.

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