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The educational role of national libraries - a case study of the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago

Joan Osborne

Director

Heritage Library Division

National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS)

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

ABSTRACT

Examines the educational role of national libraries in the development of societies, within the context of the educational service initiatives being undertaken by the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago.

PAPER

INTRODUCTION

Libraries form a vital part of the world's system of education and information storage and retrieval. They make available – through books, films, recordings and other media – knowledge that has been accumulated through the ages. The existence of a national library signals a country's dedication to establishing itself confidently in its cultural and literary heritage, while providing its citizens with a sanctuary of last resort in the pursuit of knowledge and information.

A national library is not only regarded as a source of national pride but also as a symbol of nationhood, representing the collective memory of the nation.

A country's national library becomes the world's leading documentary resource for learning about and understanding that country. It provides a focal point for developing a highly effective network of libraries, thereby providing citizens access to the full resources of library and information services throughout the country. The development of national libraries has, not surprisingly, followed a variety of patterns. The National Library of Trinidad and Tobago evolved from the desire of the government of the day and library personnel to integrate the three (3) public library authorities, which had existed in the country. In considering national library planning for Trinidad and Tobago the key functions which are ascribed to a national library are carried out by a number of divisions within the umbrella Authority called the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS). Today the national library through its network of libraries has positioned itself to provide national information policy leadership suitable for the e-world.

BACKGROUND

Societal institutions do not exist in a vacuum, they exist within certain physical and historical contexts which impact on how they evolve and develop, and so it is with libraries. Throughout history, the development of strong libraries has depended upon the social, political and cultural climates of the societies to which they have belonged. Strong libraries have always flourished in strong societies with stable cultural and economic climates. The physical space we call Trinidad and Tobago, the geography, the history, the economy, and the people have all influenced the national library which, has evolved.

PHYSICAL SETTING AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago is located at the most southerly part of the Caribbean chain of islands or archipelago. The islands together, cover 5,128 square kilometres (Trinidad 4,828 square kilometres, Tobago 300 square kilometres). Trinidad and Tobago has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the Caribbean, comprising Europeans, Africans, groups of mixed ancestry, Chinese, Indians, Syrian/ Lebanese people. The population today stands at 1.3 million people. It is located at 60° to 61° West longitude and 10° to 11° north of the Equator, off the coast of Venezuela. Its capital city is Port of Spain. It has gained world wide recognition not only as the birth place of calypso, carnival and the steelpan - the only musical instrument invented in the twentieth century, but also as the homeland of an Olympic champion runner, a world record holder swimmer 2004, the current greatest batsman in the world of cricket, and two Miss Universe title holders 1971 and 2000. A dynamic and vibrant country, the islands were separate British colonies until 1889 when they were linked administratively. Trinidad and Tobago became independent in 1962, after 165 years of British rule which was preceded by a long history of over 300 years of Spanish rule.

ECONOMY

The economy has moved from a centuries - old dependence on sugar production to a reliance on petroleum and petroleum products in the second half of the twentieth century. Today, Trinidad and Tobago has a thriving energy based economy with natural gas playing a very important role in the economic fortunes of the country. Its manufacturing sector is growing steadily while the production of sugar and other agricultural crops and tourism now play a minor role. It is the vision of the Government of Trinidad for the country to attain developed status by the year 2020.

GOVERNMENT

Today, Trinidad and Tobago follows the Westminster model of government inherited from Britain. General elections are held every five years. Legislative power lies with the House of Representatives, which, comprises thirty -six members, and the Senate, which, has thirty-one members. The Executive power lies with the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. An Electoral College comprised of members of Parliament, elects the president of the Republic who is the Head of State.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has had a long history of library services dating back to 1851, when the first public library was established on the island. The establishment of another public library the Carnegie Free Library followed this some 67 years later in 1919, to serve the southern area of San Fernando. In 1949 the Central Library services was founded to provide library services to the rural districts.

The idea of a national library in Trinidad and Tobago grew out of the desire by the then government of Trinidad and Tobago, from as early as 1959, to integrate the three (3) public library services which existed. It was felt that the foundation laid by the three public library services would obviously be more cost effective if they were integrated to form one national library. The period 1959 to 1993 was marked by the production of many diagnostic studies, working papers, and feasibility studies, undertaken by many administrations, on what form the integration should take. Perhaps, the lack of political will, and funding resulted in sporadic, uneven development of each library sector and militated against successful implementation of all the well-laid plans.

Finally in 1993 Cabinet gave approval to integrate the public library services, and from 1994, the staff, services, and collections of the three entities were physically integrated. The West Indian Collections of the Public Library and the Central Library services were integrated to form the Heritage Library Division of the National Library. The collections and the staff from the other Public library and the Central library services were integrated to form the Port of Spain Public Library. The Carnegie Free Library continued its role as the South Regional headquarters for the integrated system. In 1998 the National Library and Information System Authority Act was approved by Parliament and this Act formally integrated the three existing Public library entities, the Carnegie Free Library, the Public Library of Trinidad and the Central Library Services.

The National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) was mandated “to provide for the development and coordination of all library services in Trinidad and Tobago and related

matters.” The National Library and Information System Authority therefore, administers the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago and also, has responsibility for, the public, special and school libraries. The Act also established a Board to ensure the “proper and efficient performance of the functions of NALIS”. The structure of NALIS comprises the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Director, heading five major divisions of NALIS: the Public Library Division, the Heritage Library Division, the Finance Division, Human Resources Management Division and the Information Networks Division. Each Division is headed by a Director.

The NALIS Act, No 18 of 1998, established the National Library and Information System Authority, to provide for the development and coordination of all library and information services in Trinidad and Tobago. NALIS is therefore the umbrella body, which has been empowered through legislative instruments to provide a permanent framework for the future development of and co-operation of all library and information services in Trinidad and Tobago.

OBJECTIVES OF NALIS

The Principal Objectives are:

- To advance the achievement of national goals, economic development and adequate resources, through the provision of relevant and timely information;
- To promote and develop the nation’s cultural heritage;
- To promote literacy;
- To achieve national goals in the field of library and information services;
- To be cost effective in its attainment of its objectives;

The Principal Functions are:

- To collect and preserve from all available sources, all formats of materials on our national and regional heritage;
- To manage the national human resources of library and information science personnel in Public Service Bodies;
- To provide a central co-coordinating point for research in library and information science;
- To provide a national information service for the benefit of the physically disadvantaged and persons in institutions;
- To promote literacy skills and awareness in the use of library material and information services within the community;

- To provide the focus for an international document supply service;
- To act as a national depository and resource for material published by the government;
- To provide a national referral service for information, library material, material in other libraries, public and private;
- To assume responsibility as a designated legal depository for the purposes of the Publications (Legal Deposit) Act, 1985;
- To provide and arrange for the provision of educational, advisory and informational services relating to the development and conduct of a library;
- To provide consultancy and management services to the public and private sectors, in respect of matters for and in relation to the establishment and conduct of a library;

NALIS is governed by a Board comprising eight (8) members and the Executive Director who is an Ex officio member. NALIS is a unique blend of a hybrid organization that operates as a full-fledged National Library of Trinidad and Tobago, but through its divisions and network of libraries, performs the functions of public and special libraries also. Unlike other countries its major libraries in the area of heritage and public libraries, are now housed in the same building, the National Library Building of Trinidad and Tobago.

In the new National Library building are housed: four (4) libraries - The Port of Spain Adult Library, The Young Adult Library, the Children's Library and the Heritage Library; the administrative Offices of NALIS; and the centralized Technical Services Department. The number of branches under NALIS now stands at twenty-three (23). The Technical Services is fully automated, the circulation system in the Port of Spain branch of the National Library is also fully automated, there is a full service for the differently-abled, there is a self service photocopying service, a self check out system, a one hundred per cent increase in the internet service, a printing service and a scanning service. In the new purpose built National Library Building, with its spacious attractive surroundings, public libraries and the Heritage Library housing the national collection for reference and research co exists.

EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Almost all libraries see their contributions to society in educational terms. At the start of the twenty - first century life long learning is set to become the policy agenda for all nations. The whole enterprise of education is perhaps mankind's most ambitious effort. Bringing up the young and showing them how to survive is a central concern of every animal species, with human beings this is a long and complex affair. Every human community small or large has ideas

regarding what it would like its members to be, there are norms, which, though not always realizable, are accepted as ideals. This process involves every member of the society, apart from the formal institutions, which are established to do so.

Libraries have always been identified as playing a pivotal role in education. It is J.D.Foskett who made the point that “Information by itself is nothing, even if it comes from a computer, it is only when that information is assimilated into a human mind that it becomes transformed into knowledge; only when it is refined by experience does it become wisdom. Wisdom far more than information, is what the nations most need today; and libraries as repositories of information, knowledge, and experience, have a special contribution to make towards that.”(Sited in the Draft Library Development Plan for Trinidad and Tobago. 25]

The achievement of Independence in 1962 by Trinidad and Tobago provided the people of the country with the challenge to work towards the realization of the social, cultural and economic transformation synonymous with Independence. It was realized that education was the main medium through which this change could be achieved. The existing education system, however, was one that was geared to the needs of a colonial society and therefore could not be relied upon to effect the desired change. What was required was a reformed, restructured education system that would help to make independence a political, social, cultural and economic reality and one that would strive continuously towards the creation of an egalitarian society. It was in this context that the plan 1968 – 1983 for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago was conceived and formulated. Provisions for a National Library formed an integral part of that educational plan, signaling governments’ recognition of the role of a national library in the process of education. We have come a long way since Independence. The paradigms have shifted dramatically.

Today we live in a knowledge-led society and information has become a commodity that can be sold like any other. Apart from this, the process of globalization is impacting to a great extent on small states in a dramatic way. These changes have resulted in major changes in the nature of education. Education has now become lifelong. In this scenario the National Library has an even greater role to play in creating the optimum condition for the total development of the individual who is required to operate in this globalize highly technical environment, without losing his/her intrinsic heritage, as he /she comes into contact with more sophisticated and powerful cultures. The National Library as the bastion of the preservation of culture and heritage and the things which make the society stand out as a unique entity has an even more critical role to play. The following Four (4) Divisions under the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) carry out the educational functions of the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago.

- The Heritage Library Division
- The Public Library Division
- The Educational Libraries Division
- The Information Networks Division

THE HERITAGE LIBRARY DIVISION

The Heritage Library Division evolved from the integration in 1994 of the West Indian Reference Library of the Public Library of Trinidad, which dates back to 1851, and the West Indian Reference Library of the Central Library Services, which dates back to 1949. These two rich collections formed the nucleus on which the Heritage Library is built. The Heritage Library is the flagship library of the National Library and Information System Authority. Its aim is to become the major reference library of material relevant to Trinidad and Tobago. This library acquires and preserves for posterity, all print and non- print material on or about Trinidad and Tobago by nationals of Trinidad. The great C.L.R. James, one of the literary scholars of Trinidad and Tobago, once said “while our literature may not be impressive in bulk, it is crucial to our understanding.” It is the aim of the Heritage Library Division to nurture an understanding of self, through its collections, programmes and services.

Functions

The Heritage Library Division is responsible for the collection, preservation and exploitation of all that is written by and about nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

- ❑ The collection, preservation and exploitation of Trinidad and Tobago information regardless of format;
- ❑ The collection, preservation and exploitation of a collection of information on the wider Caribbean;
- ❑ To become a catalyst for research
- ❑ To become established internationally as the last word in Trinidad and Tobago literature;
- ❑ To have a collection that while it reflects the most modern technological advances, ensures no contradiction with our traditions, and in fact uses the technology to give our traditions recognition and reverence;
- ❑ To encourage a familiarity with and appreciation for our literary patrimony and our heritage library generally;
- ❑ To be a critical point of information gathering on every aspect of our heritage, by establishing data banks of resource persons and institutions;
- ❑ To establish and maintain a core collection of Caribbeana at libraries throughout Trinidad and Tobago;
- ❑ To pursue initiative for the return of important aspects of our literary heritage from other countries and; failing this, to establish relationships for library co-operations, acquisitions of bibliographies, internships so that materials become known and consequently exploitable;

Educational Outreach Programmes

The Heritage library recognizes that “the literature of Trinidad and Tobago reflects the emergence of a national spirit that has been cradled by a specific history and culture. Studied conscientiously, it helps us to understand ourselves as a people and to promote a deeper understanding of where we have been and why we are who we are. Our future depends upon our having a better sense of our literary culture. It is in this context that the library has an aggressive acquisition policy to collect all Trinidad and Tobago information, and makes acquired collections available, and promotes them through exhibitions, guides, bibliographies and indexes. We have embarked on programmes to nurture young authors through our ‘meet the authors programme’, hosting of book launches, and lectures on the literary tradition of Trinidad and Tobago. We provide question and answers on the history and culture of Trinidad and Tobago for Local Television. The Heritage Library has been and still is noted for its cultural outreach programmes catering to the diversity of the population of Trinidad and Tobago. Apart from this the library has participated actively in mounting exhibitions in the region and internationally.

National Oral History Programme

The Heritage Library has recognized the need to supplement the written records of the history of Trinidad and Tobago by the oral history records, which are critical to research and study. The Library is about to design and launch a national oral history programme, in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, other Divisions within NALIS and the Library Association of Trinidad and Tobago, The History Association of Trinidad and Tobago and other cultural activists and stakeholders. In collaboration with the information Networks Division the Heritage Library is involved in building a National biographical database of Trinidad and Tobago. This valuable collection will certainly advance the conduct of research in Trinidad and Tobago.

We are aware that the arts are the strongest and the deepest of educative influences. The creative arts serve the function of opening up people’s minds, encouraging self-expression and providing an opportunity for the individual to try out his powers, and to be opened up to some understanding of himself. In this regard the promotion of art and culture forms a major part of the educational programmes of, not only of the Heritage Library Division, but the Public Library Division and the Educational Libraries under the National Library and Information System Authority. The following programmes are undertaken, art exhibitions, photographic exhibitions, lectures, seminars, workshops, and special collection based exhibitions, to generate interest in the arts across all ethnic groups.

Citizenship Education

“Citizenship is involvement in the groups’ organizations and voluntary associations that connect citizens with the life of their communities. To act as a good citizen, individuals need to be informed, have a voice (which includes both being willing to speak out and having something to say) and work together. Citizens according to Benn (cited in Bernard, p.291) should possess ability, confidence and knowledge.

The following abilities should be acquired:

- To negotiate and co-operate with others
- Deal with difference and conflict
- Listen constructively to others
- Obtain information
- Voice ideas and opinions

The confidence to:

- Be proactive
- Have codependent opinions
- Act independently
- Assume that their voice will be heard and taken into account

Have the following knowledge

- How society is structured
- How local government works
- How national government works
- The basic ideas of the main political parties
- Political philosophies and ideologies

Citizenship Education has always been an objective of The National Library of Trinidad and Tobago. This is achieved through networked information provision and several planned public education programmes. As the repository of all published government documents the Heritage Library Division in collaboration with the Information Networks Division has embarked on a programme to make this information available in digital form. Services are in place to benefit every citizen including the differently-abled community. The VIP services are provided through assistive technology products and computer aids which enable differently-abled persons to access information for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Life-long Education and Life-long Learning.

One of the major roles of libraries is to facilitate learning. There is a vast body of literature on this subject. Today education is viewed as a process from the cradle to the grave, by which “the

entire educational potential of the individual is enhanced, nurtured and developed outside the formal education system. It includes all skills and branches of knowledge, using all possible means, and giving the opportunity to all people for full development of the personality (UNESCO 1977 2)” Current discourse among the educational planners in Trinidad and Tobago is the need to put systems in place to facilitate lifelong learning. The National Library of Trinidad and Tobago is organized to support life long learning of the citizenry. This is achieved at several levels through the network of Divisions. At the Heritage Library Division it is recognized that lifelong learning must be in context of a Caribbean selfhood. As a result, it works with the Public Library and the Educational Library Divisions to ensure that Heritage collections for all age groups are maintained at these service points, to support storytelling and other outreach programmes, curriculum needs, reference and research and entertainment. Lectures, workshops, seminars, and exhibitions highlighting national, political, social, and cultural issues and generating discussion form an integral part of the activities of the Heritage Library Division.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY DIVISION

By the second half of the twentieth century there was general agreement around the proposition that the public library fulfilled three interconnected roles: education, information and entertainment. It enabled users to undertake informal learning as well as provide a place for study; it provided access to organized sources of information on all subjects; and it provided entertainment primarily through lending fiction.

Within these roles the public library developed many specific services such as children’s libraries, business information services, music libraries, audio and video collections even toy libraries. Apart from these services, the public library developed all kinds of specific programmes: lectures, book talks, seminars workshops, exhibitions, self education to name a few for which the public library has been famous.

In Trinidad and Tobago from its inception the public library ordinance empowered the committee “to provide exhibits indicative of the resources of the colony and its industries at their various stages and may arrange for lectures and classes to be held for instruction in scientific and other subjects.

The library was empowered by its legislation to host a range of outreach activities such as lectures and other adult education programmes, At all the Public Library Authorities public education has always been part of the thinking and from time to time educational programmes would be arranged. The period 1952-1974 was most noteworthy for the library’s Adult Education Programme, which commenced under the direction of Carlton Comma in 1944. The programme was conceived and designed as a method of education and uplifting the citizenry of Port of Spain via the media of lectures, public forums, film shows and concerts, so visionary was the programme that the library received the prestigious Letter Award. During the period 1950-1960, the programme had expanded tremendously; Eric Williams first Prime Minister was appointed a consultant on Adult Education programme in the Public Library in 1950. During this period prominent people in the society delivered several prominent lectures. During his tenure Comma visited the United States on a biannual basis to source lecturers.

After Comma's tenure, other such outreach programmes did continue and the same could be said for the Carnegie Free Library and the Central Library of Trinidad and Tobago. Now that the public libraries have been integrated the strategic agenda of the public library is to facilitate lifelong learning and enrichment and a range of public education programmes has evolved. Its web page on the NALIS website gives a range of information for all ages. This medium continues to be explored positively as a source for public education.

Literacy

While Literacy is the concern of all Divisions in NALIS it is the Public Library, which carries out the functions to impact on literacy. The public library is seen as the "local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups." As a result the public library is recognized as the place where books are disseminated for people to read to tackle the problem of illiteracy.

Apart from all this, public library authorities in Trinidad and Tobago has had links with the Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA) since 1995. The relationship with ALTA was twofold, the libraries facilitated registration of students and housed the classes, and the libraries acquired support reading material, which could be used by students. Apart from this, the library encourages and sponsors staff members to do the training programme for tutors, conducted by ALTA. ALTA classes are held at the following libraries, the National Library Building, Arima, St James, Belmont, Princes Town, Point Fortin, San Fernando, Carnegie and Siparia. The public library supports ALTA in its work by providing permanent collection of special high/ low readers and other enriching texts to support the literacy classes.

The library has been recognized as having a distinct and vital role to play in supporting emergent literacy, because it functions as the place where books and information are available in various formats. It is the primary community institution available to individuals and families no matter their age or economic status. The public libraries in Trinidad and Tobago are aware of current research in the area of emergent literacy and the role that the libraries can play in this regard and have responded by the institution of 'books for babies' collection. Today, in response to the current research on language development in children, registration is opened to babies from birth and parents are encouraged to register their children at the library from an early age. Workshops on "reading development and the child: the libraries role," for parents, caregivers and teachers are held at the library. Similar workshops have been held for staff members, to train them to conduct similar programmes in their communities and talks are given at maternity clinics to encourage parents to be aware of the development of the baby and reading.

In 1984 the public library of Trinidad initiated an annual quiz competition for children who had completed the Common Entrance Examination. This competition focused on books and authors, verbal ability, social studies and general knowledge. For the first ten years of its existence it was held at the three public library branches, since 1994 when the services were integrated it has been held on a nationwide level.

In 1990 an annual storytelling competition was started by the Public Library. The aim of the competition was to keep alive the art of storytelling. In 1992 it became national in scope incorporating all public library branches in the country. Apart from this, attempts are being made to have story hours as an ongoing and regular programme.

NALIS is proud of its introduction of two new important facets of library services. These were to babies and disadvantaged communities. The books for babies programme was designed to encourage reading from the womb. Babies can be registered to become members of the library from birth. Baby collections are available at all libraries and are promoted by workshops for pregnant, nursing mothers and caregivers.

Disadvantaged Communities

For disadvantaged communities the library services for Visually Impaired Persons (VIP's) was introduced at the Regional Headquarters in San Fernando in 2001. This service was limited to training the VIP's in computers, utilizing the JAWS software but was the catalyst for the disadvantaged service now available in two (2) areas in the Children and Adult Libraries of the new National Library. There are special collections for the blind and the visually impaired (VIP). These include Print Braille, Recorded Books and Digital Talking Books. Other equipment for the blind are Close Circuit Television (CCTV) and Braille. At the National Library Building, the differently-abled are also served through the availability of "net talk" software for the hearing impaired and specialized furniture and equipment for the physically challenged. The building is user friendly and provides access through ramps and elevators for this group.

Other critical educational services include books for geriatrics through a housebound service for geriatric homes in Port of Spain and its environs to encourage the adult population in special circumstances to use the library.

THE EDUCATIONAL LIBRARIES DIVISION

The Educational Libraries Division is responsible for libraries in schools, teachers' training colleges, schools and all other government educational institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. These libraries are also managed and controlled by the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS). They, along with the other divisions play a critical educational role in the development of the society.

Since before the 1950's there had been some level of library services at both primary and secondary schools, ranging from classroom collection to small areas set side with shelves for books. The "prestige" secondary schools at the time could better afford collections for their students, usually helped by donations from affluent parents. Few schools if any had full-time library staff or adequate accommodation.

With the expansion of the education system in the late 1960's and the extensive school building programme supported by the 'oil boom' in the 1970's, the Junior Secondary and Senior Comprehensive schools which were constructed at that time had purpose built accommodation for libraries.

This expansion and growth placed increasing demands on the public library system to plan, develop and manage school libraries since no staff positions had been created to manage libraries in schools.

In 1978 an important move was made to develop libraries in schools with the creation of the School Libraries Division (SLD) as part of the Central Library Services which was mainly engaged, until then, with the development of public libraries, except for bookmobile services to some schools.

This School Libraries Division was mandated to plan and develop the secondary school system, but because of a great need, soon found itself involved in the development of libraries in primary schools as well.

A number of senior professional staff positions were created to manage this Division and at the same time positions of School Librarian and Library Assistants were put in place for Sixth Forms and Senior Comprehensive schools. Unfortunately only one position of Library Assistant was created in Junior Secondary Schools and that to cover two shifts, a situation which has not yet been addressed.

The Ministry of Education, with a loan from the Inter American Development Bank (IDB) in the 1980's embarked on a primary school expansion programme, which saw most primary schools being provided with accommodation for libraries and with small collections of books as well as library furniture. All new primary schools since that time have been provided with purpose built libraries. To address the management needs of the primary schools, the School Libraries Division has been undertaking short training programmes for primary school teachers in the basic organization and management of the primary school library. The SLD now called The School Library Services provides technical services support for school libraries. Special designated supervisors visit and give advice and assistance in setting up libraries to staff in both primary and secondary schools. The staff also provides professional and technical advice to the Ministry of Education on all matters pertaining to school library development.

Today there are some 497 primary and 137 + Secondary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago. As part of the plan for development of primary schools, the Ministry of Education under a new loan arrangement with the IBRD, recently embarked on a project called the School Improvement Programme (SIP). Money is allocated to principals for school improvement under the SIP, and it is to the credit of principals that most are using this money for developing their schools libraries, both the infrastructure and media resources. Many primary schools, because of the SIP, now have better libraries than secondary schools, which is a new occurrence for schools libraries.

At the secondary level, the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) of the Ministry of Education funded through an IDB loan aims to ensure that all children of Trinidad and Tobago get quality education. The library provision component is given much attention under the SEMP. This programme has been benefiting school libraries tremendously.

Provision is made within this modernization programme for library infrastructure upgrade in existing schools (SEMP Technical Upgrade) and for library accommodation in new schools, with the library as part of a larger Multi Media Learning Centre. All of the recently built schools now have appropriately furnished air-conditioned libraries.

Funds have also been allocated under the SEMP for professional development of school librarians, as well as for school library media resources, and for library and information management technology, both hardware and software for School Library Services and for school libraries.

Information Literacy

The major focus of the School Library Services at present is the integration of library and information skills across all subject areas of the school curriculum to ensure that students are taught the skill so necessary for coping in the age of information.

An eight lesson course on audiocassette for the primary school level on integrating information skills into the curriculum was developed by the staff of the School Libraries Division in collaboration with the School Broadcasting Unit in 1997.

The response from the pilot school as well as from those schools, which tuned in to the broadcast was overwhelming. A Teacher's Handbook, a Student's Workbook and a "Big Six" Poster were produced as part of this course. A review at the end of the pilot project indicated that some adjustments needed to be made, but overall it was a very successful programme. Subsequently, there were numerous requests for copies of the tapes from principals and teachers wanting to use them in the classroom. Constraints of time and funding affected the amendments to and distribution of these lessons to all schools.

A Library and Information Literacy Curriculum has been developed by the School Library Services with the help of school librarians and the Division of Curriculum of the Ministry of Education, and is now ready for implementation. This curriculum has been accepted by the Ministry of Education and will be piloted in 10 new schools in the near future. This curriculum can stand on its' own; however, it will be integrated across all subject areas of the school curriculum. The National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) through its Divisions, each making its impact within its special area of expertise and responsibility, achieve the promotion of literacy, lifelong learning, and information literacy. It has a firm place in the society as an enabler of the educational needs of the society at all levels, utilizing both traditional and state of the art technology.

Professional Education

The National Library and Information System Authority is mandated by the NALIS Act to provide a central co-coordinating point for research in library and information science. Directors from the Heritage Library, Public Library, Educational Libraries Division and Information Networks Division work closely with the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTATT), the University of the West Indies Mona (UWI) School of Library and Information Studies, the University of the West Indies St Augustine, the Library Association of Trinidad and Tobago (LATT) and a host of professional Associations regionally and internationally. NALIS Directors and Senior Librarians have been responsible for developing the following courses for the Associate Degree in Library and Information Studies COSTATT: Information Literacy, Caribbeana, Public Relations and Marketing, User Services: Reference Sources, User Services: Information Services, Computer Literacy, Literature for Children and Young Adults.

The Information Networks Division of NALIS, which is responsible for the distribution of the WINISIS software, conducts courses for users and provides the professional support for the users of the software. This division is responsible for the NALIS website and maintaining the portal for Trinidad and Tobago information.

The workings of the various Divisions within NALIS is an indication that learning is not passive and part of learning is learning how to share, to go beyond the educational consumer into membership of what might be called a 'learning network'. While technology may be in the forefront of the headlines as information is shared using information communication technologies, people still live in real places, eat real food and use real objects. The physical places remain extremely important, to the nation. The National Library Building of Trinidad and Tobago in Port of Spain symbolizes a pyramid of knowledge and is in itself an educational tool. The tours, which are conducted almost on a daily basis, are a lesson in the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. Its welcoming arcades, the scale and quality of the interior of the building are shining symbols of its role in preserving the intellectual Heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.

CONCLUSION

National Libraries by their very nature are established to fulfill an educational role in the societies in which they are developed. At times the planners who are responsible for its establishment are not even fully aware of the pivotal role, which the library could play in the development of the society. For many involved in planning they just know that it is a good thing to have, which may be responsible for the chequered history of so many of our National Libraries worldwide. Perhaps it is for these reasons that there is always so much public debate when money has to be expended on the lofty buildings which are constructed to house them and to provide staffing and all the other amenities for their long term development. A case in point is the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago. As early as 1959 it was recommended that the existing public library authorities be integrated under one body to create a national library. Integration was achieved thirty- five years later and the building to house the service was achieved forty - five years later. There are information professionals in Trinidad and Tobago who have spent their entire professional careers working for the development of the National

Library and the development of the service. One must never waste time in vainly regretting the past; it is a good and exciting time for the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago. What is very good about it is that we are now operating in a knowledge - led society where, space and time have been realigned and knowledge about us can be packaged and marketed globally. We are in the position to make an even greater impact in the lives of the global citizenry as information intermediaries.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon for people of the Caribbean. The many waves of migrants beginning with the Atlantic slave trade brought millions of people in a vast trading network that had as its major tenet the exploitation of land, labour and capital. It is based on a global market place production, distribution and consumption of goods and services as the key to development. Physical work is being replaced by intellectual work, and the future standard of living in the Caribbean region will depend on the ability of the population to sell its labour power in a global market. Therein lies the challenge for all institutions in small nation states such as Trinidad and Tobago. This borderless, seamless and free- learning society driven by economics will require a strong nation state and in the case of the Caribbean, strong regionalism in the highly competitive global game.

The National Library through its many Divisions above all other institutions is ready and has created the optimum condition for the total development of the individual who is required to operate in this globalize, highly technical environment, without losing his/ her intrinsic heritage as they come into contact with more sophisticated and powerful cultures.

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Joan Osborne
Director Heritage Library Division
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