

WORKSHOP ON DOCUMENTING THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM (WSF)

**EAST AFRICAN SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE
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Day One 12th Dec 2006

Morning Session

The workshop kicked off on Tuesday 12th Dec 2006 a little behind schedule with many of the participants arriving late. The workshop was attended by 27 librarians. There were several Librarians from the NGO world, Various universities, Parastatals, Medical library, and other training institutions. We also had two professors from Makerere University School of Library and Information Studies who fully attended the w/shop.

The facilitators, Rosemary [Gitachu] and Esther [Obachi], started off by taking the participants through the explanation of why it is important to document the World Social Forum. Next there was a session on library activism facilitated by Godfrey Luyimbazi.

It was explained that the WSF is a mammoth event that brings together thousands of people from all over the globe annually to deliberate upon issues that affect humanity and as such, needs to be documented and put in libraries. At a WSF Africa meeting in Bamako, Mali in 2006, a website designer from Finland noted with growing concern that the meeting was only attended by five librarians, three of whom were local librarians from Mali. Since the next WSF was scheduled to take place in Nairobi in January 2007, the East Africa Book Development Council was approached to help with sourcing of funding to finance a workshop on documenting the WSF for librarians in Kenya. The funds were secured through the Finish Embassy in Nairobi which was also later approached to fund a similar workshop for librarians in Uganda.

It was discovered that the NGO Forum of Uganda is the WSF secretariat in Uganda and could be approached for sponsorship for other members that may not be catered for.

Since the WSF focuses on real issues affecting the common man, the facilitators explained that the sole objective of the workshop is to have librarians document information on WSF for the people that deserve and desire the information. The resolution on this was:

- To have librarians gather, store, organise and disseminate WSF material. On this note a question was posed as to how many librarians are actually involved in information gathering and to what extent they are involved in the formulation of content of the information materials and not just taking what is already in existence.

Realising that this is not being done by majority of librarians, there is a need for librarians to behave like journalists and be involved in gathering information, formulating content and disseminating it to the people that need it. However, the distinction here would be that whereas journalists employ a style of sensationalism, the information gathered by librarians would not be having information that's here today and gone tomorrow.

To be able to do all this effectively, participants noted that librarians should have the political will to participate in the process. They should also be able to use more facilities like Internet and digital equipment to gather information i.e. it is imperative that they be part of the ongoing technological changes in the information sector world wide.

Participants shared some of the social injustices that characterise their communities

- In Kalangala district, an island on Lake Victory for example, people are faced with a lack of access to information. There is only one library, one radio station and these people are isolated from the rest of the world. They are disadvantaged because they cannot access information.
- In other parts of the country, people are faced with situations of low levels of education, refugee status, war, floods, exploitation by world intellectual property organisations, some of who are making information access even more expensive for Africans.
- Injustices against librarians include the activities of multi-national publishing companies like McMillan and Longman who are suffocating local publishing industry by importing their own books and having national/local labels on them.

However, it was also realised that, in spite of all the opportunities to document social issues, librarians in Uganda have not taken centre stage in storage/keeping of information for access by those who need it. This fact was heightened by the fact that an online law library had been initiated without any involvement of librarians. It was noted that librarians need to become

proactive and have self initiative to become information entrepreneurs; multi-skilled and talented people.

Librarians cannot afford to remain the same. The challenges of the time are demanding us to reinvent ourselves. The greatest concern is how do librarians make themselves useful before they are 'deleted from the map'. Librarians should overcome the 'silence in the library, silence every where' notion. There are too many threats for librarians as professionals but we must turn these into opportunities. It is important for librarians to aspire, always to learn new things since 'in the world you do not get what you deserve, you get what you bargain for'

Still, not all hope is lost. Just as WSF believes that 'Another world is possible' participants agreed that 'Another information professional is possible'

All this has to be done with involvement of the community for example finding out from the community what should be done about the problem i.e. emphasising participation and ownership of programmes meant for them.

What do we mean by community?

The place where I live, work or stay. A social system, with different people, having common traits within the same space.

In the context of the WSF, prioritisation will be in terms of social issues pertaining to our region i.e. East Africa e.g. issues of 'injustices' against homosexuals would not necessarily be a priority to us.

How do we make the people wake up and how do we address the issues?

There is need to have a deliberate documentation strategy that covers the following points keeping in mind that 'adults learn what they want to learn'

The possibilities are endless, all that librarians have to do is 'take it beyond the four walls of the library' and not accept things the way they have always been.

Afternoon Session

Participants were asked to form discussion groups and assess the impact of globalisation in the last five years in their work and personal lives.

Questions that were discussed: What do participants understand on globalisation as a concept? Does globalisation mean that we are moving towards equality?

- We don't have equal access to information much as we are benefiting from globalisation, this is only for a few considering that majority of the people can not use a computer let alone use the Internet. There is need

for Governments to invest in technological skills to address this. Unless we have the necessary infrastructure then globalisation remains a dream.

- An example of a contradiction of globalisation is that 'when it comes to ICTs Africa is ahead with mobile phones but when it comes to other ICTs Africans are behind every thing else'
- Another thing to be cautious about is the context of information spread using ICTs. I.e. is it timely, relevant and in the right dosage? What about issues of computer literacy, computer viruses, costs, security, plagiarism and the ability to support and maintain the ICT infrastructure vis-à-vis Government support?
- The divide is not only global; it is also regional, national, sectoral. Gender, ethnical, village, family etc.

To address some of these issues participants felt it important to know 'who draws the agenda?' It comes from the developed world which uses it to exploit the developing world which supplies the information that the developed world processes and use for its own benefit. This is because the developed world has the advantage of the power of information. You do not exist if you are not reported; this is the disadvantage that the developing world faces.

Day Two

Morning session

The morning session started late at 10:00, mainly due to disorganisation by the rain.

Management of the WSF information (Presentation by Esther Obachi)

[the content of this presentation is covered in Esther Obachi's article above, under "Training the trainer's"].

The difference between tacit and explicit knowledge (Presentation by Prof. Ikoja-Odongo)

The weakness of human mind made libraries come up.

Tacit knowledge – the wisdom within ourselves – it can not be seen or touched, it is indigenous knowledge but once we transfer it from our minds to holders like computers then it becomes explicit knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is knowledge with the people bound to geographical area. It is specific to people within a certain location, traditional ecological knowledge, and folk knowledge e.g. traditional knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge relies on ordinary objects of the world – earth, food, water, human being. It is contained in community customs e.g. taboos, story telling, informal education (networking on way to well)

Classes of tacit knowledge

- Ecological
- Spiritual
- Astrological timelines

Indigenous/tacit knowledge occupies very important part in our daily lives for survival.

It's a method of conserving our traditions yet today's libraries don't use it as they should use it to supplement explicit knowledge. People in villages are not ignorant; they have a lot of knowledge.

Names are tacit knowledge; they tell us where we belong. The basis of knowledge world wide is on indigenous knowledge got through observation of nature and the world as it is.

Our role – appreciate that knowledge which is not written should be captured in our resource centres in the local communities.

Indigenous knowledge is a source of commerce.

What other countries have done

- Uganda Geographical indicators bill on conservation from plants that aren't any where else in the world.
- Poem recitations are recitations of wisdom

Afternoon session

Journalistic Skills (Presentation by by Rosemary Gitachu)

Why should we as librarians be concerned with journalistic skills? Why journalistic skills?

- Journalists collect information and report it, we as librarians are going to an event to report an event and document it. Its important how we gather the information and best package it for dissemination
- Highest quality of news reporting of the WSF to the public
- Timely distribution of information in service of the public interest even as the conference proceeds where it will be posted on websites

Ethics

It is the study of value or quality and covers the analysis and employment of concepts such as right, wrong, good and responsibility (gather information responsibly)

'Public enlightenment is the forerunner for justice and democracy...the duty of the journalist is seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues'.

Be conscientious and strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty and integrity is the cornerstone.

Journalism Ethics and Standards

Ethical concepts: Freedom of access to information for all, Honesty, Privacy, Truth and

Objectivity but even these ethical questions focus on one issue: maintaining the quality of information.

Core ethical values:

- Objectivity: separate news and opinion. We are not going to the WSF to share our opinions, we have to delete ourselves. Document the knowledge as you get it, don't add your opinion.
- Make a separation between advertising and news, don't fall into the trap of people trying to popularise themselves
- Avoid conflicts of interest – avoid incentives to sell someone's story, no taking bribes, avoid stories that affect the reporter's personal, economic or political interests. For us this is different because we are getting information for posterity and the stories must be really valuable.

Sources:

- Written and electronic sources as well as interviewing, you should keep confidentiality of anonymous sources
- Avoid anonymous sources because you can be pinned down for it. Also how impeccable or reliable is your source
- Accurate attribution of statements made by individuals or other news media
- Pictures, sounds, quotations for comprehensive coverage. However, these may not be taken in a misleading context. Avoid simulations, re-enactments, alterations, and artistic imaginations must be clearly labelled. E.g. if you take a picture of two people talking and you say they were negotiating a deal yet you don't really know.
- Get permission before you take any one's picture – privacy of individuals
- Ask yourself 'if I used this story, what is the effect out there?' you might be opening a can of worms. Avoid infringing on people's personal rights because you might be sued for defamation. (A right is behaviour that is acceptable within a prescribed community)
- It's a forum from all corners of the globe, we should be sensitive towards what other people believe, condone or are acceptable in their communities. We are to report things as they are but we should stick to our prioritisation.
- Plagiarism is illegal, don't get tempted
- Actual and factual reporting
- Events with a single eyewitness should be reported with attribution. Events with two or more independent eye witnesses may be reported as

fact. Controversial facts are reported with attribution. (your report is attributed to someone's statement or another situation...also be able to justify your statements)

Legal considerations:

- Avoid mud slinging, slander and libel. Reporting the truth is never libel but you have to be accurate and make clear attributions.
- Private persons have privacy rights that must be balanced against the public interest as long as you have the facts (activities that you are doing in public will negatively affect the public) in reporting information about them. Public figures have fewer privacy rights because as public figures they are accountable to the public
- Harming limitation principle: Some weight needs to be given to the negative consequences of full disclosure, creating a practical and ethical dilemma. Should one report every thing learned
- Presentation: don't confuse ethical standards and standards of quality of presentation which are:
 - Correctly spoken or written
 - clarity
 - brevity
- Violations and Contractions: Each country is governed by its own laws but there are several charters that are global or regional.
- Laws with regards to personal privacy, official secrets, and media disclosure of names and facts from criminal cases and civil lawsuits differ widely from country to country, and journalistic standards may vary accordingly.

Journalistic skills

- Research skills through internet, libraries, about the subject (WSF), know who is doing it and their background
- Reporting: Look for news of value with the aim of informing the public, objectivity
- Accuracy
- Listening skills
- Writing skills
- Critical analysis skills – be able to read between the lines
- Responsible reporting – have responsibility to the society to point out social injustices so people are empowered to get out of their circumstances.

The three main goals of a journalist are to inform, educate and entertain. At WSF the librarians will be to inform and educate. Decide how best you can present the information.

Group discussion

What does it take to cover a real big/major event?