

Mr. Christopher Merrett
Deputy University Librarian
University of Natal, P.O.Box 375
Pietermaritzburg, SA 3200

Dear Christopher Merrett,

Joseph D. Reilly, a progressive US librarian has been corresponding with us, and he recently supplied us with a copy of your article In a State of Emergency: Libraries & Government Control in SA, which we found very interesting. He also urged us to contact you.

I am a Finnish volunteer librarian working at the ANC Library at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, Tanzania. At the moment, a volunteer librarian at Dakawa and I are the only professional librarians working with the ANC, but nine SA students are presently undergoing studies in Library Science in various parts of the world, and more will be sent this year.

The ANC has established its Central Library at Somafco, where a building of 800 m² was inaugurated for use in 1986. There are other smaller libraries at Dakawa, Tanzania and in Lusaka.

The funds for the ANC Library Project are nowadays mainly coming from the Finnida (The Finnish Development Aid). The Project consists of three main components: the personnel, the material and the staff training.

A special emphasis has been laid on training the library personnel. There is a great need for trained personnel to run the ANC libraries, but we feel that also the future requirements of the SA libraries have to be taken into consideration.

We have also attempted to raise the issue of SA libraries at international meetings. Several progressive librarians have long been battling at the IFLA meetings to exclude the SA libraries from its membership. An ANC librarian, presently attending further studies in UK, attended the IFLA meeting in Paris last year, and besides gaining considerable experience for herself, managed to make some progress in the SA issue, too. The matter will again be taken up at the Stockholm meeting this year.

Since some changes have now taken place in SA, both the ANC and the Finnida feel that we should try to start getting new ideas to plan for the future. We would be very grateful if we could establish a contact with librarians inside the country and receive more information about the present state of libraries in SA. We are interested in for instance the following matters:

- 1) What is the situation for educational and working possibilities for black librarians in SA?
- 2) Is any external help (from for instance the Finnida) needed in extending proper library services for the whole population? If so, which type of assistance is needed (organizing meetings, sponsoring delegates to meetings, scholarships, funds for other purposes? ~~etc~~)?
- 3) Is there a chance of arranging a meeting between the ANC library staff members and librarians from inside the country? The meeting should take place outside SA.
- 4) Any other information you can provide or suggestions on how we should function.

I know that it is difficult to give definite answers to the above questions right now, but any ideas related to the development of SA libraries would be very welcome and of great importance for us.

All our staff members are extending their warm greetings to you, and hope to hear from you as soon as possible.