

# The National Library of Uganda

Its inception, challenges and prospects,  
1997-2007



*Jane K. Kawalya*

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Jane K. Kawalya

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National libraries have been established in some countries as symbols of national prestige and status and the overall feeling is that every country should have a national library. The National Library of Uganda was established when the need for a national library in a developing country is questionable, and other alternatives such as university libraries have been presented. Uganda is still gripped by social, economic, climatic and political crises. The government priorities among others include education, health and road construction – libraries are not among them. The questions therefore arise: what were the factors that led to the establishment of the National Library of Uganda? What were the politicians' and library professionals' motives, actions and roles that led to the establishment of the National Library of Uganda? What roles does the National Library of Uganda play in the library sector at present?

This study is based on qualitative in-depth interviews of the library professionals, document and content analysis of the parliamentary proceedings (Hansard), legislative documents and records of significant events, and observations. The findings reveal that: the decentralization of the public libraries to the districts reduced the activities of the Public Libraries Board. The Makerere University Library and the Deposit Library and Documentation Centre have weak in-comprehensive legal deposit acts. These libraries have the dual functions of national and academic libraries which affect the limited human and financial resources. Due to the above scenario, the Public Libraries Board library professionals came up with the idea of establishing the National Library of Uganda in order to collect, preserve and disseminate the country's intellectual and cultural heritage, and to continue with the projects that were performed by the PLB. The politicians supported the establishment of the National Library of Uganda as they felt a need for such an institution to supervise the decentralized public libraries. Presently, apart from the collection of the national imprint and publication of the National Bibliography of Uganda, the National Library of Uganda, among other functions coordinates, issues standards and inspects the public libraries.



Jane K. Kawalya works with Makerere University Library Services. *The National Library of Uganda* is the title of her doctoral thesis.

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