Surviving – not Living
A Study of a Library and its Users in Northern Tanzania

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Abstract
This master thesis concerns a library in Eastern Africa and the users of that library. The aim is to describe the situation and try to assess what the users’ needs and wants are. It was my belief that different cultures need different libraries. We need to ask ourselves: can we help if we do not understand the needs?
There is a chapter on what has been written on libraries in Africa and African literature, including one section devoted to giving a broad background on Tanzania and the Tanzania Library Service, including history and a quick glance at Swahili and Arusha.
The chapter on Arusha Regional Library makes use of the statistics from the library regarding the number of visits and the number of members. In the next chapter there is a presentation of the results of a questionnaire grouped around the different areas - literature both written and oral as well as libraries and attitudes toward literature and libraries. Followed by a section on the point of view of the library staff. They express some opinions that are contradictory both to what some of the users think and what the statistics say.
In the conclusion, I bring up the fact that there are many library service needs that remain unsatisfied. The financial situation has forced Tanzania Library Service into solutions that are less than ideal. Furthermore, I make some suggestions based on my observations and on the comments made by the respondents of the questionnaire.

Keywords: regional, bibliotek, users, Arusha, Tanzania, Africa, Afrika
Preface

This essay involved traveling to Tanzania and thanks are due to several people who made the excursion a success. It is impossible to mention them all, but you know who you are. However, I would like to thank my good friend Åsa Kölby, who was my travel companion and listened to my endless raves about my work. I also would like to thank the owner, the staff and the guests at Pizzarusha, the best restaurant in Arusha where I had all my meals. They were an unceasing source of information and always answered my questions with great care and interest.

Also, I would like to thank the staff at the National Library of Dar es Salaam for helping me find important information and answering a lot of questions. Last, but not least, this essay would not have been possible had it not been for the invaluable help that I received from the librarians and the staff at Maktaba ya Mkoa Arusha (Arusha Regional Library). I was received with great warmth and hospitality and they never showed impatience with my incessant questions. Please accept my deepest gratitude.

ASANTE SANA!¹

¹ Thank you!
“To play a part in encouraging the positive use of leisure and provide material for relaxation. To guarantee the right of free expression and intellectual freedom by making available all the library’s public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.”

Ezekiel E. Kaungamno
Director Tanzania Library Services
Dar es Salaam, 1989
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1 Introduction

1.1 Personal background

Preconceptions are more powerful than we realize; my first visit to Tanzania, in 1996, made me understand this. I had just spent two years of academic studies in Uppsala on the Third World and on Swahili, yet, I was not prepared for the Tanzanian society. My Swahili professor came from Zanzibar and in class we had spent as much time on learning about the country as we spent on the language. I really thought I was prepared, but it turned out that my preconceived picture of Africa still was starving children in dusty camps. I had never fully understood that most people have ordinary lives in Africa too, lives that include enjoying literature and using the library.

When I started my academic career I thought that I wanted a large salary and an important title. After a year at the Stockholm School of Economics\(^2\) those plans changed. I applied to the development studies course at Uppsala University and after that I went on to Swahili and African studies. I had finally found my calling when I realized that I needed something more, an education where I could combine my interests, which led me to the Swedish School of Library and Information Studies at Borås University College. This essay is a way for me to tie together both my academic aims.

This master thesis concerns a library in East Africa and the users of the library. The aim is to describe the situation and try to assess what the users' needs and wants are. With this essay I also wish to put the focus on something different than the situation in the Swedish library system. It is my belief that different cultures need different types of libraries. This is an important point even for Swedish libraries since the Swedish society is becoming gradually less homogeneous. But my greatest concern is how we in the western society direct and intend our foreign aid to the Third World. We need to ask ourselves: can we help if we do not understand the needs?

Perhaps I should also explain why I am writing in English\(^3\). The reason for this is mainly that my supposed reader does not necessarily have to be Swedish, I do not even find it likely. Also, it would be rude as well as missing the point to write in Swedish. Choosing Swedish would mean that the people and the library that I investigated would not be able to appropriate the results themselves. Thus my work would be conducted in vain. In this decision, I also lean on the practices at other schools and departments in Sweden that do research and write about the Third World.

“Lete stori” - literally means “bring your story.” It is a slang greeting in Swahili, the national language of Tanzania. In a sense, when you meet somebody, you ask that person to give a full account of his/her entire life. You are only supposed to respond “nzuri” - good. However, it does say something of the cultural climate in the Swahili-speaking community, especially since other phrases used for greeting have similar meaning. This is a culture where the story has a significant place. And here is my story.

1.2 Disposition of this essay

In chapter 1 we find the introduction with a personal background and the reason for this particular subject and why I chose it. It also includes a problem formulation with the thesis, the aim and the questions.

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\(^2\) i.e. Handelshögskolan i Stockholm
\(^3\) I use American English
Chapter 2 presents an account of the method including a description of literature search methods and word explanations.

In chapter 3 comes a survey of some of the published material concerning literature, literacy and libraries in sub-Saharan Africa. The section headed Tanzania gives a background of Tanzania in general and the Tanzanian libraries in particular. The focus lies on Northern Tanzania and Arusha.

In chapter 4 there is a fuller account of the Regional library in Arusha, including my observations at the library and using the statistics from the library as illustrations.

In chapter 5 we find the presentation of the result of the questionnaire and the informal talks with the library staff.

Chapter 6 we find the analysis and discussion. In chapter 7, I offer some conclusions and suggestions. Chapter 8 consists of a summary.

In order to simplify for the reader the appendices contain the questionnaire and the result thereof and most of the statistics from the library in Arusha.

1.3 Problem formulation

Foreign aid to the Third World takes on many different forms. Oftentimes we think of the emergency aid as the most important. It is easy to give money when we see starvation and suffering from natural disasters or war. However, long-term aid is equally important but more difficult to achieve successfully and the results are less obvious. With this essay I wanted to put the spotlight on the sometimes neglected cultural field. Many organizations aim their aid towards education and school systems but few focus on other sources of information and knowledge, such as libraries. Research in this field also seems to be primarily focused on information and educational needs and not so much recreational needs. I was interested in finding out more about literature, reading and library habits in Tanzania. Reading is part of a cultural behavior. In Europe it has been part of the culture for a long time. The traditions in Africa are different. It is not self-evident that adults everywhere encourage reading or library use. One of the things, I was interested in studying, was whether people in Arusha, Tanzania felt they were encouraged to read and use the library. The reason why I chose Tanzania is that I was already familiar with the language and the culture, but also because I think the language situation is both extreme and typical of the African continent. The fact that there are more than 100 languages spoken and two national languages in Tanzania poses many unique problems. Yet, they are problems that most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can relate to.
1.3.1 Aim

My intention is to inquire into habits and attitudes towards libraries and reading and the written story’s, as well as the oral story’s place in the Swahili society. The study will focus on the town Arusha\(^4\). The aim is to describe the situation and to ascertain what the library users’ needs and wants are, as well as, the demands and the wants of the prospective library users, by studying literature habits and library use. This includes investigating how the library in Arusha functions and the service they supply to the users today.

1.3.2 Questions

My starting point is that I assume that reading habits as well as library use is very different in Tanzania compared to western societies. In order to find out about the supposed and prospective library users I have to start by finding out about their attitudes towards literature, both oral and written. I need to paint a bigger picture in order to narrow down to the heart of the matter i.e. library use and the ‘ideal Tanzanian library’.

- What are the attitudes towards oral and written literature among the respondents in Arusha?
- What are the respondents’ literary (story-telling/reading) habits?
- What means do Arushans have to acquire literature? What are the constraints?
- What do the library users conceive the library to be?
- How do the library users use the library?
- How would the users want to change the library?
- What kind of library service would be ideal in Arusha, as well as in Tanzania?

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\(^4\) Arusha is a town in the hinterland of Northern Tanzania
2 Method

2.1 Modus Operandi

Tanzania is a diverse and heterogeneous society with more than 120-130 different tribes and several religions, each with their own language or dialect. According to Polomé there are 109 identified linguistic groups ([Language in Tanzania](#), 1980, p 3-4), not including European or Asian languages.

I went to Tanzania to investigate a library and the climate for reading. In Sweden, I would have considered handing out a written quantitative questionnaire, however this method might mean that the falling off would be large. In short, I thought I would run into a lot of problems with written questions. Firstly, there might be a lot of people who can’t read or write well enough. Secondly, one of my hypotheses is that Tanzanians consider it to be asocial to do things in solitude, having a conversation might make them more open. I decided that the only possible solution is an oral quantitative questionnaire in Swahili or English. It was oral in the sense that I asked the questions on the questionnaire and I put down the answers.

One of my greatest concerns was how to find a representative sample of people to answer my queries. I had to consider infrastructure, the time of year and the weather of the season. To do research along the coast of Tanzania would not be very strenuous, the coastal region is fairly accessible. Going to the truly remote parts would probably turn out to be so great a task that I would have no time to do the survey. Still, I wanted to get away from the coastal area, because the trading culture of the coastal region differs greatly from that of the interior and more rural societies. I decided to focus on one town. A town that has a library and also a lot of outside contact, yet, a traditional structure. I chose Arusha as the town where I would conduct my survey. Arusha is a fairly large town with a mixture of Swahili culture and rural traditional culture as well as a center for Maasais. It is also where lots of groups come together. Arusha is a town where foreigners usually only spend a few days in connection to their safari. Fairly soon after I arrived I was recognized by many Arushans as not being a tourist. Walking back and forth to the library every day meant that I had to start greeting the same people and stop to exchange a few words every now and then. In other words, it was very hard to remain anonymous, although they did not really know my purpose for being in Arusha.

I decided on a questionnaire with less than 30 questions. Originally, my aim was to distribute it to 33 men, 33 women, and 33 school children (both boys and girls), a total of 99 people. Later, in order to fit my schedule in Tanzania, I altered my aim to the more realistic number of 60 people. 18 men, 19 women and 20 school children responded. The falling off was three people who were asked to participate but who declined without giving any reason. There is only a very small group of library users in Arusha and disproportionately many of the respondents are library users (70 % of the adults and all but one of the schoolchildren). However, they do represent many differing opinions and habits. This is also true of the respondents who are not library users. Therefore it is not fair to say that they represent the whole population in Arusha. However, the selection of adult respondents was random both when I asked people to participate at the library and when I asked people in the street. At times, I suspect that they selected me rather than I selected them, not because they wanted to participate but because they were curious of what I was doing. I visited a primary school and a secondary school to include schoolchildren in the study. At the two schools the children were asked to volunteer by their teacher. I had no direct control over the selection process, but on the other hand, the schools did not have time to prepare students in advance.

The questionnaire is designed to answer three types of questions habitual, practical as well as attitude questions. The habitual questions concern their use of the library and literature. The
practical questions are about access and time for literature (oral and written). The attitude questions are more about what they think about other people and what they do. My assumption is that it will tell us a lot about the attitudes. However some attitude questions are about how they would prefer their literature habits to be. The three types of questions are intermixed in order not to be too obvious. The last three questions about libraries are mostly to show how people actually use them and to give suggestions to how this situation can improve. The questions are open to give the respondents a chance to more freely express what they expect and want in terms of service at the library\(^5\).

Moreover, I planned on having a more qualitative interview with the library staff to get their point of view, as well as the goals and statistics about the library. If possible I wanted to conduct it as a group interview. If there is a discussion there will hopefully be less arranged and politically correct answers. Here the out-come was that I had full access to all of the library statistics and the staff, but I did not arrange a group interview because I felt that my Swahili was inadequate for handling a discussion, since most of the staff was not fluent enough in English. However, I tried to have informal talks with as many of them as possible during the 16 days I spent at the library and I had many opportunities to observe them in their work.

2.2 Literature search methods

When it comes to searching literature about Africa in Sweden it is important to know which libraries and collections that might contain something of interest. I have conducted some of my searches at Nordic African Institute (NAI) in Uppsala and at Sida’s\(^6\) information center in Stockholm. Both these catalogues are, to the best of my knowledge, only searchable at the physical libraries. Some of the books at NAI are in the Uppsala University Library catalogue, but far from all. I have not used very sophisticated long search strings because there is not more written on this subject than can be sorted through manually. Mostly, I have used the terms *Africa, reading, library* (in different forms), *Tanzania, Swahili, literature, literacy* and *culture*. I also browsed the shelves when I visited the different libraries. There is not exactly a plethora of literature on the subject and much of what I found was outdated. Moreover, I have used Artikelsök\(^7\) and after finding an article that I thought was relevant I used the catalogue sign for that article to find more (e.g. Ab-p). At both NAI and Sida I have used the possibility to search on all the Minor Field Study studies conducted in both this geographical as well as academic area. The total amount of Minor Field Studies in Tanzania were 64, five of them were remotely interesting for my work. I have naturally done some searches in Libris, Borås University College Library, Stockholm University Library and Uppsala University Library (DISA). DISA is also the catalogue for Dag Hammarskjöld’s library in Uppsala., which is another library that has a great deal of literature on the Third World. Last but not least, I have used many references in the literature I have found.

2.2.1 Chosen literature

I have not chosen authors and writers with regard to their origin, but solely by what they have written about. Some of them are African, such as Adolphe O. Amadi and K. J. Mchombu. Most of them are from the West, and have lived and worked in different parts of Africa, e.g. Per Wästberg and Marie-Hélène Dufil. It has been my aim to find writers who have something interesting to say and who seem to have their heart in Africa. There is predominance of European writers, but I have tried to avoid those with a too Euro-centric perspective. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate more African works with relevance to my study.

\(^5\) cf. Appendix 1
\(^6\) Sweden’s foreign aid agency
\(^7\) Sweden’s Article Search
Why have I chosen certain texts? There are four categories of literature: Case studies, African literature, the Tanzanian background and some analytic texts. Below are some examples. The author has made all translations of titles and quotations:

First there are articles describing situations in Africa similar to that of Tanzania and describing what the main problem areas are. Here my aim has been to find articles and books that describe situations that are commonplace in Africa and in Tanzania. Examples of titles are Where Books are Luxury Items and Homework is done Under the Streetlights (Dufil, 1985), A Long Standing Swedish Library Project for Building Libraries in Botswana (Hornwall, 1984), Between Violence & Language Reform: Libraries in Namibia (Markusson & Bystöm, 1993), It is not Enough to Know the Letters (Nordstrand, 1990), In Zimbabwe There are Hardly any Books to Buy (Petri, 1989).

Second comes literature about African literature and what its distinguishing features are. African literature has some very distinguishing traits and it is important to understand this in order to understand the library needs in Africa. Examples of titles are African Literature - Young and Contemporary (Wästberg, 1984), Literature and Liberation - a Reader Survey in Kenya (Björkman, 1988), Literature in Southern Africa (Litteratur i Södra Afrika, 1996).

Thirdly, there are some examples from Tanzania and descriptions of the situation historically. Here are both examples of projects in Africa and descriptions by the Tanzania Library Service (TLS) as well as Tanzania’s history. Examples of titles are: Initiating Information Services in a Developing Country - a Case From Tanzania and Some Generalizations (Hjerppe, 1981), Tanzania - an Example (Hogling, 1987), Libraries- Vital Factors in Development TLSB Silver Jubilee (Kaungamno & Ilomo, 1989), Language in Tanzania (Language in Tanzania, 1980), Mwalimu - The Influence of Nyerere (Legum & Mnari, 1995), A History of East Africa (Odhiambo et al, 1977).

Lastly, there are some more analytic texts on the underlying problems in Africa as a whole, including some very critical texts on how colonialism and Euro-centrism has had negative effect on the library service in Africa. Examples of titles are Maslow and Library Needs: Notes From the Margin on a “Progressive” Report on Libraries in South Africa (Lor, 1993), Libraries in Afria: Away From the Western Model (Wetmark, 1992), Information Needs and Seeking Patterns for Rural People’s Development in Africa (Mchombu, 1993), Illiteracy, Literacy and Libraries in Two African Countries (Sandgren, 1992), The Quiet Struggle - Libraries and Information for the People of Africa (Sturges and Neill, 1998).

2.2.2 When in doubt…

All sources seem to have their own library statistics, different from the ones I found in Arusha. I have decided to rely on the library’s own statistics and consider them as closest to the truth since they are closest to the source (with one exception; the size of the population of Arusha). However, as comparison I also include some other numbers. I would like to ask the reader not to see these figures as absolutes but rather as guidelines.

One of the problems that I have encountered is that different sources sometimes give very different information, mostly because statistics are estimations and not absolutes, due to the fact, that statistics are usually difficult to collect. Often times, I have assumed that the truth lies somewhere in between. E.g. I have several differing statements on how many Regional Libraries there are in Tanzania. However, it might not be crucial to this study whether Tanzania has nine (Saur) or almost 20 (The National Library of Tanzania) functioning regional libraries. I believe that the National Library’s is closer to the truth, but I feel it is important to show that there are differing opinions.
More important is the size of the population in Arusha. The library statistics say 166,402 inhabitants (since 1994) and Hodd gives the number 350,000 (Hodd, 1997). I assume that Hodd is closest to the truth, however, the library’s number is interesting considering that it is what they use for planning and running the library.

Who can you trust? At the Regional Library in Arusha they have very carefully collected different statistics which have been very useful to me in my work. It is very hard to know under what circumstances these statistics were kept. During my observations at the library I was able to study i.e. how visitor statistics were recorded. As far as I can see those figures are accurate, but that does not tell us if they have always been recorded accurately. There is also a slight problem of counting errors. The newly registered are added on to the total number of members and I have tried to correct and control the counting errors I have found, but in some cases it has not been possible for me to check the actual numbers. As for the recordings concerning the stock I think the numbers are sometimes arbitrary. With regard to my observations it is my belief that Arusha Regional Library’s own statistics are as reliable as statistics ever can be, with the exception of the stock. I made my own rough calculation of the stock, which I present in the chapter on Arusha Regional Library along with the librarian’s estimation.

One other problem is that it is harder to read the social signals in a foreign culture. There might be times when I, unknowingly, misinterpret or misunderstand people. When I feel unsure I will try to make the reader aware of my hesitance and uncertainty.

2.3 Word explanations

- **Mother tongue** can be an indigenous language, but most importantly the first language to be learned. Among the most common indigenous languages in the Northern Tanzanian region are Kipare, Kichaga and Maasai. Swahili is usually mother tongue along the coast and on the islands.
- Terms often used by authors for convenience in generalizations are African culture and tradition, they usually denote common traits found in most of the sub-Saharan African countries.8
- **Literature** is used to mean both oral and written fictional stories in the context of the study, but not in the context of the literature survey chapter.
- **Leisure reading** is reading for pleasure, relaxation, enjoyment and recreational purposes.
- **Donors** are countries or international organizations that give foreign aid to the Third World.
- **Maasai, Pare and Chaga** are common tribes in the area. Pare and Chaga come from the slopes of Kilimanjaro. Maasai are a nomad people living both in Kenya and Tanzania. The prefix Ki- denotes their language, e.g. Kisweden means the Swedish language.
- **Children** are everyone under the age of 18, at times I distinguish between primary school children and secondary school children.

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8 In fact, there does not exist an homogenous African culture nor a Swahili one, more than there can be said to exist one European culture.
3 Background

3.1 Literature survey

In the following section I will try to review some of what has been written about Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa and its literary history as well as library history. It will also contain articles on library projects and literature as well as texts on the current situation. Several (almost all) books and articles discuss one common problem - the lack of books. Also, illiteracy seems to be a recurring theme, along with Euro-centric supply of material.

Many people cringe when they hear words like African culture or African tradition. Naturally there does not exist a homogenous African culture more than there exists a homogenous Asian or European culture. There is an immense number of cultures in Africa. However, for practical reasons the terms African culture and tradition will be used at times. There are some traits shared by the different countries in Africa. I would like to ask the reader to accept some of these generalizations while keeping in mind that there are always exceptions and variations. Some of the selected texts have no direct connection to Tanzania nor to the Tanzanian library system, yet they describe situations and problems that are similar or almost identical to those in Tanzania.

3.1.1 Obstacles to reading

For many Africans there are practical obstacles to overcome when reading is concerned. One is the lack of tradition, as well as lack of opportunity to read. In Lena Maria Nordstrand’s article It is not Enough to Know the Letters, she writes that many African students can not complete their studies due to a lack of experience to read books. They know all of the letters but they have never read an entire book and so they have trouble reading the required literature for their classes (Nordstrand, 1990, p 78-79).

Other practical issues are poverty and a lack of electricity, as well as, not having enough space nor possibility to be alone. In the article Where Books are Luxury Items and Homework is done Under the Streetlights Marie-Hélène Dufil writes about how the traditional society in Benin is evolving. This puts new and different pressures on the young people. The urbanization speeds up the process of dissolving the big families and replaces it with nuclear families. The oral traditions are also in recession. Books are luxury items, inaccessible or impossible to decipher for most children and youths in Benin. Most books are printed in France, because Benin does not have its own publishing company. Libraries are few and almost only contain adult literature in French, a European literature that is not culturally adapted to the Benin culture. For most Benin families buying books is inconceivable. It is much too expensive. But these practical problems are not the only obstacles for reading. The language is naturally a problem. Reading is seen as a utilitarian activity rather than a recreational one. Reading is not promoted in the home. It is difficult for the children to find space and time for their reading. Children do not have a room of their own and the homes are filled with noise and activity. Many houses do not have electricity and therefore it is not possible to read and do homework after dark. Another obstacle is that reading is done individually going against the African group mentality. It is however a question of time and slow development if reading is going to increase and also a matter of encouragement and insight from parents, educators and authorities (Dufil, p 114-116).

The necessity of libraries in Africa becomes very apparent when you realize how hard it is to find and buy books. There are many countries in Africa that hardly has any book production at all. Eva
Petri writes about the development in Zimbabwe. The reasons for the low production numbers are, among others: lack of paper and other printing materials. The only way to increase the library collection is to buy from abroad, but to do that you need foreign currency, something that is often lacking in Third World countries (Petri, 1989, p 51-53).

3.1.2 Needs

Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was a theory developed in the late 1960's. The theory explained that that human needs were hierarchical in nature. The needs are:

1. Physiological: hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc.
2. Safety/security: out of danger
3. Belonging and Love: affiliate with others, be accepted
4. Esteem: to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition.
5. Cognitive: to know, to understand, and explore
6. Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty
7. Self-actualization: to find self-fulfillment and realize one's potential
8. Transcendence: to help others find self-fulfillment and realize their potential.

(Huitt, W.G. 1998)

Leisure reading can satisfy the sixth and seventh levels of Maslow’s model of human needs; esthetic needs and need for self-fulfillment rather than the cognitive needs. In an article called Maslow and Library Needs Peter Lor warns against using Maslow’s model too simplistically, and against thinking that you completely need to satisfy all of the needs on the first levels before it is possible to satisfy the esthetic needs, i.e. need for self-fulfillment and the cognitive needs. A person’s needs are not limited to a certain level until his/her needs are satisfied. If used too simplistically Maslow’s model would confine people to certain levels of society and would promote library apartheid of sorts (Lor, 1993, p 6-11).

K.J. Mchombu, in Information Needs and Seeking Patterns for Rural People’s Development in Africa, makes an assessment of the information needs in rural communities in Tanzania based on what people perceive to be the most important factors in rural development. Libraries and information were not on the top ten list, although literacy education came in as number six. However, when asked about factors that prevent development, “lack of knowledge” was a common reply (Mchombu, 1993, p 63-64). In his book, Mchombu tries to trace people’s problem solving processes. Here the responses rank from family members to traditional medicine men, but there is no mention of written material or libraries (ibid. p 68). Moreover, when asked of places/occasions where information is exchanged, the answers were (in order): church/mosque, public meetings, market place, village school, bus stand, clinic/health center, at the shops, local beer drinking place, friend’s place, communal water point, radio, or no response (ibid. p 70)

In Mchombu’s study of two villages and their information seeking patterns, there is also an attempt to establish the need and use of literacy skills. A majority of the population in these villages responded that they never exchanged letters or filled out official forms. Most children were used to helping their parents with reading/writing their letters. The study also tried to find out something about reading habits. 40 % in one village could not mention one single newspaper. In the other village the literacy rate was higher and only 18% did not know the name of one paper. They were also asked if they owned any type of publication and most respondents said that they had none. The table below shows, in percentage numbers, how many households reported to have publications in their homes.
Table 1. Not original table, recalculations based on Mchombu’s work made by author. The average in this table includes both villages in the investigation.

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<thead>
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<th>no (average)</th>
<th>yes (average)</th>
<th>no responses (average)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

The most common type of reading material was: the Bible/hymn books, newspapers, non-fiction, Koran, novels (5-7%), pictures, and adult literacy books (0-2%), i.e. mainly religious material, newspapers, and non-fiction (ibid. p 72-75).

### 3.1.3 Library use

Due to the many obstacles in doing homework at home libraries are often used as an extension to the school and the library’s most important function is that of a study hall. Bo Markussen and Lars Byström describe a library in Namibia “In the reference room black youths sit at tables sunk in their study literature. We do not buy fiction, nobody here has the time or interest to devote themselves to it, says librarian Jennifer Jones.” (Markusson, Byström, 1993, p 88).

Roland Hjerpe writes in an article from 1981 about a project called TANRIS (Tanzania Research Information Service). “Libraries are a prerequisite for information services, the very basis for all other services. But libraries are not enough, they must be used.” (Hjerpe, 1981, p 122) He describes an extremely difficult situation even if all of the best intentions were there.

> Information is needed to get information … The less information there is available the harder it is to get more. How can you utilize all the information sources that are in many cases almost free of charge when you cannot even find out the name of the list of sources? (ibid.)

In an article describing a library project in northeastern Tanzania, Inger Löfberg writes that the library is losing its users due to the fact that there are too few books in Swahili. They are also often of poor quality. Lack of funds mean that many libraries in Tanzania cannot develop according to any plan. This makes it difficult to give the users enough support (Löfberg, 1987, p 385).

Lennart Wettmark describes an ideal African library fulfilling the needs in an African culture:

> An important factor in Africa is the weak position of the written word. Often times there is a rich tradition of oral literature (poetry, myths, genealogy etc.), but to develop a library based on the people, it must be in the shape of a community center with rooms for adult education, means for listening, reading aloud, Audiovisual media etc. I.e. the printed word musn’t dominate too much. (Wettmark, 1990, p 12,) 9

### 3.1.4 Foreign aid programs/projects

One of the problems that many libraries have to struggle with is that:

> Many foreign institutions send left over books to Tanzanian libraries. To send out-of-date editions with out of date information and then think that you are doing a good deed shows contempt for and ignorance of the quality of higher education in the Third

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9 translation made by the author
Gunilla Hogling writes about the medical libraries in Tanzania and describes many of the difficulties surrounding donors and foreign aid. Often the series of magazines are incomplete due to fluctuations in aid reception. Irrelevant and unnecessary titles are not uncommon due to an urge to spend the funds to ensure the donor that the money was needed.

Magdalena Sandgren has written an essay entitled *Illiteracy, Literacy and Libraries in Two African Countries*, in 1992 (Sandgren, 1992). The two countries were Zambia and Tanzania. Sandgren asks if there is any point in teaching people to read and write in times of desertification and other natural disasters in poor people’s lives and when there is not enough food (ibid. p 18). The question is of course rhetorical. Sandgren argues that literacy education is needed to accomplish global justice. She says:

> It is important that the population of the Third World also gain access to the written word, as it gives the poor countries larger opportunities to hold their own in the current situation of the World.”\(^1\)

Sandgren asks if libraries in Africa are a colonial phenomenon and answers that the libraries in Africa follow a European pattern and bases her opinion on Adolphe O. Amadi’s book *African libraries, Western Tradition and Colonial Brainwashing*. Amadi says that the establishment of libraries in Africa is a product of a colonial way of thinking. They follow a European pattern, which does not suit the African society and its traditions and needs (ibid. p 50). Sandgren feels that the African libraries need to be developed in the direction of their society. This means that the libraries should not focus solely on written material but rather a wider range of tasks. Sandgren also points out that it is important that the library is equipped with materials that are right for its target group. She agrees that many factors come into account such as; economy, publishing, the authorities, the staff, and the linguistic situation (ibid. p 51).

Sandgren states that she thinks that one of the most important objects of the library service is to uphold and keep literacy skills alive. She also thinks that it is necessary that the library take active part in spreading important information to the rural population including using other than written media (ibid. p 52).

### 3.1.5 African literature

Polly Bohary describes how the precolonial child in Tanzania through lullabies, fairytales, stories, riddles etc. received its first knowledge of society’s language, history, family relations, geography, nature, technology and much more. The oral tradition was not only a form of education but also entertainment. It was also meant to stimulate the child’s fantasy and esthetic mind. Since the beginning of colonialism the oral tradition has declined (Bohary, 1996, p 264). More women than men are illiterate in Tanzania and it is a common social attitude that women should not read. Reading is for school children and students. The literacy rate has gone down continuously since the 1980’s when the donations slowly stopped coming because the largest donors thought that the goal had been achieved, when in fact, literacy needs to be kept alive and recaptured (Norström, Ridaeus and Nilsson, 1996, p 91).

Per Wästberg has written an article on *The Literature of Africa*. He says that the most distinguishing mark is that most African literature is contemporary. There are hardly any published writers born before 1930. According to Wästberg, African literature lacks the great masterpieces in the European

\(^{10}\) translation made by the author  
\(^{11}\) translation made by the author
sense. Instead it has an educational value. Perhaps it ought to be regarded as a kind of factual fiction, trying to define Africa’s role in the world. The most common literary genres are the short story and the drama. The European novel is slowly being incorporated in the African culture. In East Africa approximately half of the published literature is in English. Few of the African countries can meet UNESCO’s standards of information and media access. Many African authors are known to a large part of the public only as voices on the radio. It is often very difficult for all to get printed for technical and economical reasons and the quality of libraries varies considerably. It is difficult to argue for culture in a poor economy, when people are starving and enemies threaten. Culture can also be dangerous and question the position of the elite. Wästberg gives an example of a Kenyan writer who was allowed to publish his works as long as he wrote in English, but when Ngugi wa Thiongó started to write in Kikuyu his book was banned. Wästberg concludes that writing in an indigenous language can be explosive (Wästberg, 1984, p 136-137).

Ingrid Björkman has written many books about women literature in East Africa, particularly Kenya. In an article, called Literature and Liberation - a Reader Survey in Kenya, she describes two female writers and the response their work received from the readers. Björkman asks how the native female literature can be helped in order to have a positive effect on women’s liberation, if in fact literature can have such a positive effect. So far there are very few established women writers in Africa. Male writers almost exclusively paint the picture of the African woman. Often these pictures are so remote from the truth that it is impossible for women to identify with them. The two most common types are the prostitute in the city and the good wife in the country. One problem is that women more often than men are illiterate and often they only know their mother tongue. For literature to be accessible to women it should not be presented in any of the European languages and in some cases it will have to be transformed into oral media (Björkman, 1988, p 37).

3.1.6 Critical voices

In this section I primarily deal with authors who have an idea of the characteristics of an African library, how it should be, as well as, what should be avoided. The main authors are Amadi, and Sturges and Neill.

Amadi writes, in African Libraries - Western Tradition and Colonial Brainwashing, about how the ethnocentric European paper culture imposes its ideal on the African society with its oral tradition. He describes the impact of colonialism and says that “Essentially, European penetration and settlement in Africa was a meeting of two cultures and of two divergent ways of seeing and behaving” (Amadi, 1981, p 3-4). He speculates that there is a global imbalance in information power “Africa is drastically deprived of the invisible but crucial power of information…” (ibid. p 44) “Librarians and other apostles of the book tend to confuse information with its medium – the library, literacy, books and other mass media of communication”(ibid. p 49) Amadi means that maybe libraries should not be judged by the amount of books on the shelves, but by the information they can supply. Amadi thinks that the true African libraries are the elders (ibid. p 140). They are the true bearers of information. He says that “we define what the library is or ought to become, rather than what the informational needs are and how they ought to be met”(ibid. p 50-51). Amadi asks, “Why should a strong oral tradition be considered problematic to librarianship”. He thinks it is because “librarianship deals with recorded thought, hence expressed thought remains central to the concern of librarians”(ibid. p 210).

Amadi also writes about differences in perception of work and leisure. He says that the African does not separate between work and leisure. He says, “Under these circumstances, reading and exposure to ‘high culture’ or ‘literate’ entertainment, with their time-conscious nature, becomes

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12 UNESCO’S standards are ten newspapers, five radios, two cinemas, and two TVs per 100 inhabitants.
chores. (…) rather than the more creative and personally fulfilling interaction with an author, implied in the reading of books” (Ibid, p106-107). Amadi concludes that there is ample evidence that oral libraries are more appropriate for Africa. (ibid. p 137). He thinks that western institutions “can constitute the skeletons upon which a true African edifice may be constructed”(ibid. p 205). ‘American’ or ‘British libraries’ in Africa have neither African clientele nor services.

The African continent has seen many struggles the last decades. First, there was the struggle for independence, then the struggle for economic emancipation and the struggle against cultural imperialism. Paul Sturges and Richard Neill write in their book *The Quiet Struggle* about the struggle for information and knowledge that is continuously ongoing on the African continent. This struggle is in part fought by library and information workers. This struggle, the authors feel, has not featured prominently in the media or in research papers that discuss Africa, until recently (Sturges and Neill, 1998, p 1-2).

Lennart Wettmark refers in his article to Sturges and Neill’s book and he writes in his article that the Anglo-Saxon public library idea has not been a success story in Africa (Wettmark, 1992, p 37-40). The basic problem is that libraries answer to the needs of the elite, if as much as that.

Furthermore, Wettmark points out that part of the problem is due to low literacy rates and a poorly developed book production. The key to understanding the African situation is to understand the strong position of the oral culture. To be illiterate is not equivalent to being ignorant.

They say that people do not perceive information to be important to the basic needs for survival (Sturges and Neill, p 50). To satisfy the needs for information among the people you need to try different methods. Perhaps the answer is not always a traditional library. It could be a theater, a radio show or other non-printed media. Sturges and Neill talk about information animators that could bridge the gap between the printed word and the oral tradition. The goal would be to increase the use of printed materials slowly in order to free the citizens of their oral ghettos.

A typical African library may have a great imbalance between a lot of adult literature and almost no literature for younger people. Also, much of the schoolwork is done as lessons learnt by heart. This does not encourage library use among young people. For the adults who have just acquired reading skills it is important to find the space and time to read. More study rooms in the libraries could help them.

Sturges and Neill suggest that Africa needs libraries that are less formal and more local. The traditional oral culture must be the foundation if you want to reach the average African. This needs to be combined with more *modern* written knowledge (Wettmark, p 40).

### 3.2 Tanzania

Tanzania is composed of two parts - Tanganyika, which is the mainland, and Zanzibar Islands. Tanzania harbors more than 120-130 tribes with diverse religions and languages.
3.2.1 History of Tanzania

It is important to keep in mind that Tanzania’s history started long before Europeans sat foot on African soil. In *A History of East Africa* the authors start by making the statement that the Rift valley that cuts through Kenya and Tanzania is the area where man originated from (Odhiambo, Ouso and Williams, 1977, p 1).

*By about 6000 BC the Stone Age inhabitants of East Africa seem to have developed a fairly settled way of life. Those living around the lakes had become fishermen, and it is possible that a form of boat was in use. Others left evidence of their activities in the form of rock paintings on the walls of caves.* (ibid. p 3)

The coastal area of East Africa has had outside contact the last 2,000 years, through its links with the Indian Ocean trading system. This has had a profound effect on the coastal people - including the influence of Islam - distinguishing them from the people in the hinterland (ibid. p 15). In 1500-1850 the Bantu groups in the northeast tended to form small, self-sufficient communities due to climate and geography. Their language, historical origin and geographical proximity were the only things common to these groups (ibid. p 65).

After centuries of trading between East African peoples and the Omani merchants on the African East Coast, the Portuguese made their entrance on the Indian Ocean. In 1497, Vasco da Gama came sailing along the East Coast on his way to India. Later Portugal became the first, but not last, colonial power in East Africa. They needed ‘service areas’ and wanted to spread Christianity along the coast on their way to India. In order to control the African East coast the Portuguese had to destroy Moslem strongholds. By pursuing a policy of divide and rule the Portuguese maintained their foothold on the coast (ibid. p 82–83). As Portugal lost its monopoly of trade to Europe from this area, Portugal’s power was undermined. However, Portugal leaving the scene did not automatically mean the return of the Omani rule, although many paid homage to the Imam of Oman along the coast and on the islands (ibid. p 86–87). Trading was the main source of income and there
were trade routes reaching from the coast and far into the hinterland. Two of the most important commodities were ivory and slaves, which were transported to the coast along trade routes. By 1839 between 40,000-45,000 slaves were sold annually at the slave market in Zanzibar. In the 1860’s this number had increased to 70,000 (ibid. p 95-96). The slave trade brought political, social and economic changes as well as human suffering.

In 1887 the Germans had established a base at Dar es Salaam. Following the partition of Africa in 1890, the establishment of colonial rule was conducted with a combination of force and persuasion. Zanzibar was declared a British protectorate with the Sultan retaining his position, but without power over external matters (ibid. p 120). In German East Africa there had been some uprisings that had been quelled, however with some difficulty (e.g. in 1905, the last and most serious revolt started, called the Maji Maji\(^{13}\) rising, although, the Germans won they were badly shaken). The Germans were inexperienced in colonial rule. Their aim was to make their colonies produce a profit (ibid. p 135). The German rule ended with the First World War when Germany had to surrender all its overseas colonies. Tanganyika became a mandate for the British Commonwealth (ibid. 142).

Today there are few remains of the German rule, however, a great amount of evidence of the British presence in Tanzania. A British form of administration was established along with an educational system, as well as infrastructure. If the German goal had been profit, the British aim was merely to make their colonies pay their way. Britain often used something called indirect rule, which basically meant governing Africans through their own traditional institutions, a system that had many flaws (ibid. 143).

Coinciding with the end of the Second World War, the real struggle for independence started. Many African soldiers had fought in Europe against oppression and dictatorship, for freedom and independence. These ideals they brought back to Africa on their return and gave fresh force to the political movements (ibid. p 163). In the following decades the African states gained their independence some by force and some peacefully. Tanganyika was the first colony to achieve self-government in East Africa. The first political party was formed and the first elections were held. In 1961, Tanganyika gained independence but remained within the Commonwealth (ibid. p 164-167).

**Facts about Tanzania**

The United Republic of Tanzania is a union of two nations - Tanganyika and Zanzibar, which were united in 1964. Formerly both were under British colonial rule and prior to that Tanganyika was governed by the Germans, and Zanzibar by the Arabs. They regained their independence in 1961, and 1963 respectively. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was the first president in Tanzania after independence, he is therefore also called the father of the state. He remained president until 1985\(^{14}\). He was educated in the U.K. as a teacher, which explains the title mwalimu, which means teacher in Swahili. In the book *Mwalimu - The Influence of Nyerere*, from 1995, there are some interesting points about the legacy from the Teacher. Green devotes his chapter to the fact that Nyerere was not all about economy, but rather his perception of development is about people. Humans were the reason as well as the means for development. Green says that Nyerere’s title is a sort of key to the understanding of him and his work.

‘Mwalimu’ is not Julius Nyerere’s and his people’s title of choice by accident. His most abiding presence and style is that of a teacher... In general this approach has served Tanzanians well, (Mwalimu - The Influence of Nyerere. 1995, p 90)

\(^{13}\) maji=water in Swahili. A prophet had said that by sprinkling special water on themselves they would gain complete protection against German bullets.

\(^{14}\) Mwalimu Julius Nyerere passed away in the fall of 1999 at the age of 77.
Many of the ex-President’s beliefs and ideas still manifest themselves in Tanzania today. Julius Nyerere is still greatly revered among large portions of the population. From my experience I do not think it is possible to overestimate his influence on Tanzania’s development, both negative and positive.

The Arusha Declaration marked the beginning of *Ujamaa*, the socialistic commitment in Tanzania, involving nationalization and five-year plans. In the first ten years of independence there were attempts to right every wrong in the education system, including: racial integration, expansion of secondary school education, and expansion of teacher training (ibid, p 49). In their chapter on *Education for Self-Reliance* Ishumi and Maliyamkono, say that:

…the rather ‘personal’ educational philosophy of a national leader became ‘public’ educational policy consistent with (and complementary to) a society aspiring to a socialist mode of existence characterised by human dignity, equality, co-operative endeavour and hard, productive work. (ibid. p 51)

Politically, Tanzania is now a multi-party state. The party in power is Chama Cha Mapinduzi 15 (CCM party). Corruption, a common problem in Africa, is a severe problem on all levels of society and there is a great deal of mistrust against government officials.

Geographically, the country covers 945,090 sq km, whereof water 59,050 sq km (Central Intelligence Agency, 1998). The land features are dominated by both highlands and plateaus. The highlands fall into three belts, the northern belt, which include Pare highlands, Mount Kilimanjaro, and Mount Meru (this is where Arusha is situated), and also the central and the southern belt. About 56% of the land is arable, but only 3% is currently in use. The climate varies from tropical in the lowlands to temperate in the highlands. The rainfall also varies from less than 500 mm to 1,250 mm in a normal year depending on the area. Rainfall comes in slightly different times of the year to different parts of the country, which can be useful during droughts 16. Demographically, Tanzania has a population of 29.5 million people with an annual growth rate of 1.6%. Life expectancy is 41.71 years with an infant mortality rate of 104.8 deaths per 1,000 births (1997 estimate). Tanzania is made up of many ethnic groups. On the mainland 95% are Bantu (more than 120 tribes) 4% other native Africans and 1% other (Asian, European, or Arab). On Zanzibar, there are Arab, native African, mixed Arab and native African (ibid.).

Tanzania’s per capita income was US$ 76, at independence, which has increased to US$ 650 (1995 estimate). The labor force by occupation is made up of agriculture 90%, industry and commerce 10%. To further describe the condition of things there are 137,000 telephones (1989 estimate), 640,000 radios (1992 estimate) and 45,000 TVs (1992 estimate). The literacy rate according to the definition for literacy: “age 15 and over can read and write Swahili, English or Arabic”, the total rate is 67.8% (male 79.4%, female 56.8%) (ibid.).

### 3.2.2 History of Swahili

Swahili is not, contrary to popular belief, a constructed language, it is an old trade language that originates from the Bantu language spoken along the coast. Due to the frequent trade with Arabs many of the words in Swahili come from Arabic (*Language in Tanzania*, 1980, p 79). Swahili has only been a written language since the beginning of the 18th century (mainly poetry in the Arabic alphabet) and since the second half of the 19th century when missionaries recorded Swahili with the Roman alphabet. Later when Kenya and Tanzania came under British rule there was a strong influence from the English language. This was mainly due to the fact that Swahili needed new

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15 Revolutionary party (Chama - party and Mapinduzi - revolution)

16 One part of the country can suffer from drought while another part might have a normal year.
words for many of the new occurrences that the Europeans and the new times brought. The greatest upswing for the Swahili language came when the government, after Tanzania gained independence, decided to make Swahili a national language along with English (Abdulaziz, 1980, p 146). This was rather unusual in Africa at the time, but probably a wise decision.

At times there are claims made that some of the African languages are poor languages. Poor, in the sense that they do not include words that correspond to words in the European languages. This is easily explained by the fact that the culture and climate differ between the two continents. Which language that is poor depends on your viewpoint.

About 90 million people on the African continent speak Swahili, which makes it the third largest language in Africa. Approximately 20% of published literature is in Swahili, which is still not very much. The printing and publishing industry is not very developed in Tanzania; thus it is difficult to be an author, at least professionally. Few books are released in Swahili for these reasons. Taking into consideration that a large portion of the population only reads and writes Swahili this causes a great problem. Most Tanzanians have a mother tongue, but they learn Swahili very early, as it is the only way to communicate with others. This is especially true for the larger towns and cities where many tribes are mixed. Still, we must remember that Swahili is only a second language for most Tanzanians. However, finding printed texts in every mother tongue is not likely so printed texts in Swahili must suffice for all those who are not fluent in English, because English is usually not taught, to any great extent, until secondary level and not very many students reach this level. In conclusion, “The attitude of the people towards Swahili is a positive one” (Abdulaziz, 1980, p 161).

3.2.3 Facts about Arusha

Arusha is the largest town in the northern region of Tanzania with a population of with somewhere between 166,402-350,000 citizens. It is situated at an altitude of 1,380 m above sea level and at the base of Mount Meru (Hodd, 1997). It is the starting point for most of the wild life safaris to the National Parks in Northwest Tanzania. Therefore one of the major income sources is tourism. In the countryside around Arusha there are many coffee, wheat, sisal and maize plantations. Arusha is also the center for many of the Maasais that pass through the area.

Arusha has also been the stage for many great political events, such as the Arusha Declaration signed in 1967 and manifested by a great monument (ibid. p 371-372). In more recent years we notice the genocide tribunal following the violations of human rights during the war in Rwanda and Burundi. Moreover, Arusha was once intended as the capital of the East African Community, a cooperation project, which failed but is now being revived again in new form by the East African states. As a legacy from the time, when Arusha played a role as the capital of the East African Community, there is a huge International Conference Center (AICC). For a long time the main purpose of the conference center has been to lease office space to safari companies, but now it is beginning to be used as it was originally intended to house the administration of East African Community. The AICC also used to include a library with conference proceedings and Tanzania’s laws amended regularly (Saur, 1998, p 665-666). Because the space was put to the UN’s disposal, this collection has now been scattered and donated to other libraries and institutions.

There are 28 primary schools in Arusha whereof three are privately run. Moreover there are ten secondary schools of which three are run by the state. There is a Moslem library named the Public Library of Arusha and quite a number of bookstores.

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17 Most indigenous languages in Tanzania are Bantu languages like Swahili, one exception among others, is the Maasai language
18 Depending on the source, the Arusha Regional library statistics say 166,402 and Hodd says 350,000.
19 cf. Map of Tanzania
20 I roughly estimate about ten bookstores.
3.2.4 Libraries in Tanzania

The Tanzania Library Service seems to follow a pattern common in Africa. Gert Hornwall gives an account of the Swedish aid program in Botswana that was initiated in 1972 (Hornwall, 1984, p 129). The priority was not on the main library but rather the aim was to build regional libraries and obtain mobile units and service centers in the remote villages. This sound almost like an identical structure compared to the situation in Tanzania. Arusha Regional Library was built at almost the same time by another Scandinavian country. Now, almost thirty years later, nothing more seems to have been accomplished. Rather, it almost seems as if things have moved backwards. Many of the mobile units and service centers are no longer operational.

Tanzania library history

Ezekiel E. Kaungamno and Charles S. Ilomo have written a book for the Tanzania Library Services’ silver jubilee called Libraries - Vital factors in Development. Kaungamno is the director of Tanzania Library Service and Ilomo is the chief librarian of Tanzania Library Service. The Tanzania Library Service is a parastatal organization under the ministry of education. The Tanzania Library Services Board provides library, documentation and information services on a national scale. Kaungamno and Ilomo states: “In Tanzania, the government has all along supported the development of libraries” (Kaungamno and Ilomo, 1989, p v-vi).

Below is a selection of some of the most significant events in the library history of Tanzania according to Kaungamno and Ilomo. In 1946, a first step was taken towards establishing libraries in Tanzania when a Municipalities Ordinance was amended that empowered councils to establish and control public libraries within the municipality. In 1951, the East African Literature Bureau started a library service in Tanganyika. After independence, the new government initiated many projects to promote education. In July 1961, the Tanganyikan government adopted the Post Independence Three Year Development Plan 1961/62 - 1963/64. This plan included the building of the National Central Library (opened in 1967). The year after came the Enactment of the Libraries Act 1962, which meant that printers were obliged to deposit one perfect copy of every printed book to the University College Dar es Salaam. The same year that the United Republic of Tanzania was formed, 1964, the Tanganyika library Service was born. (In 1970, the Regional Library in Arusha was opened.) In April of 1975, came the Enactment of the Tanzania Library Services Board Act 1975. The act repealed the 1963 Library Act and widened the board’s functions, responsibilities and powers. The world economic crisis in 1982 also affected the Tanzania Library Service, and meant a massive cancellation of periodical subscriptions, and the board was not able to import journals or books. An international conference on resource sharing was held in Tanzania in 1985. The ministry of education appointed a committee to study the proposed National Library Policy. Among other things the committee recommended the following; Tanzania Library Service should be responsible for Public Library Development and the Department of Adult Education and Tanzania Library Service should share responsibility for rural library development (ibid. p 444-449).

According to Saur’s World Guide to Libraries there are only nine regional libraries in Tanzania. Special libraries maintained by other institutions add up to seven. Moreover, there are three ecclesiastical libraries, two government libraries, seven school libraries, ten university/college libraries, one general research library and one National Library. This adds up to a grand total of 40 libraries for a population of 30 millions (ibid.). Tanzania Library Services also had about 300

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21 These numbers do not correspond to those supplied by the Tanzania Library Service or by the head librarian in Arusha.
22 Cf. The National Library in Dar es Salaam says there are 20 regional libraries.
village libraries or static library centers run by voluntary staff in 1988 (Kaungamno and Ilomo, 1989, p 174). For people living in truly remote areas there was also a postal library service provided by Tanzania Library Service. I have been unable to confirm these numbers.

The National Library of Tanzania- Maktaba Kuu ya Taifa

The National Library of Tanzania is situated at the end of Maktaba Street in Dar es Salaam, one of the main streets in the city. The National Central Library in Dar es Salaam was opened by President Nyerere in 1967. I received the following information on my visit to the National Library. The government pays the lion’s share of the administrative costs, mainly salaries. The most important donors are UNICEF, UNESCO and Book Aid International. They provide the library with printed materials, funds and technical aids. One of the UN organizations has set up a multimedia department at the library. According to the National Library there are approximately 20 regional libraries, 17 district libraries and 6 ward libraries. However, some of them are not running at the moment.

Gulbraar and Moens give a broad picture of Tanzania Library Service and describe many of the libraries, including the National Library. They say it functions as the core of the nation’s library services. The National Library also trains personnel and produces the national bibliography. The Library and Documentation Services Department consists of five divisions: Technical Services, Documentation, Readers Services, School and Children Services and the National Bibliographic Agency (Gulbraar and Moen, 1986, p 11).

The National Library shares housing with the Regional Library of Dar es Salaam. These two libraries combined have a collection of 127,300 books distributed as in the figure below:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Junior fiction</th>
<th>Adult fiction</th>
<th>Non-fiction</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regional/National</td>
<td>7964</td>
<td>15216</td>
<td>104120</td>
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The collection at the National Library consists of three main areas:
- Fiction in English, both junior and adult
- Non-fiction in English, both junior and adult
- Swahili literature, both fiction and non-fiction. The only statistics I managed to get here were the total amount of Swahili literature for the whole of the Tanzania Library Service. In July 1998 they had 35,500 titles and 112,000 volumes in Swahili.

According to Saur the National Library of Tanzania contains 116,900 volumes and 2,070 current periodicals (ibid.). Regardless of the exact number, I hesitate to compare these numbers to any country of the same size and similar population mix.

The situation at the National Library is not unlike that of the library in Arusha. The main users of the National Library are, as in Arusha, secondary school students who need a place to study and some reference literature. One of the staff said he thought people did not have enough time to be habitual leisure readers. The membership fees are also the same as in Arusha.

At the National Library they claim there is a system for inter library loans, but that it is not in use, or not used very actively. However, they do have a Book Box service to various institutions such as

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23 Maktaba means library

24 In my opinion, most likely a very overestimated number. Even a moderate rough estimate gives that if this number was correct Arusha Regional Library ought to have at least 5,000 volumes and 1,500 titles in Swahili, while in fact there are only approximately 1,200 volumes.
secondary schools, hospitals and prisons. There are about 200-300 books in these boxes and they are exchanged approximately every two months.
4 Arusha Regional Library - Maktaba ya Mkoa Arusha

Arusha Regional Library was built and financed by a Scandinavian country in 1970. According to Anja M. Rasmussen at the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs it is likely that Denmark was responsible for financing the library. However, their records only date back to 1978. (At the time of construction Arusha was a small town of about 25,000, but today it is the second largest town in Tanzania. The interest in the national parks such as the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro with their wild life and Mount Kilimanjaro are the main reasons for this expansion²⁵.) Since the construction of the library there has been very little maintenance done. The library is situated next to the river on Sokoine Road, the lower main street through Arusha. Unfortunately the street has not been maintained properly and outside the library the road is only dirt without asphalt. When it rains the road becomes a river and after it dries it spreads dust that enters into the open shutters of the library. Therefore it is very difficult to keep the library clean especially during the rainy season. On the upper floor we find the entrance desk, the librarian’s office, the adult non-fiction and fiction, as well as the study places for the secondary school students, and the reading places for other adults. On the bottom floor there is a workroom for the staff and the children’s library with both non-fiction and fiction. The furnishing is original from 1970 and many of the chairs have their upholstery sticking out. Downstairs it reeks of urine from the badly cleaned and maintained bathrooms.

The most acute needs are a larger building with more and better study places, a computer-service and new furnishing. All new acquisitions of books result in new waves of theft, therefore the willingness to spend their meager funds on books is very small. These needs do not appear to have changed in the 13 years since Gulbraar and Moen stated in their report that the most urgent needs for the library are: lack of shelves, too little space, the reference literature is out of date, and there is no stock development planning due to lack of financing (Gulbraar and Moen, 1986, p 23).

²⁵ Cf. Map of Tanzania page 13
Arusha Regional Library is one of 20 in all of Tanzania. Ten years ago the collection consisted of 30,000 volumes, 40 current periodicals, 200 government documents, 120 maps and 500 pamphlets (Kaungamno and Ilomo, 1989, p 174). The library allows inter library loans. The Regional Library in Arusha is funded in the same way as the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam, i.e. the government is responsible for paying salaries to the staff. For the building and for new acquisitions the library needs funding from foreign aid agencies or domestic organizations. The British organization called Book Aid International is one of the greatest contributors. There is a Regional Library board which is mainly responsible for fund-raising and has until now managed to raise 1.8 million Tanzanian shillings (US$ 2,570). Tanzania Library Service is required to maintain the earlier level of service and cater to the whole region, even though the financing is no longer coming from the state. The mobile libraries and static libraries that existed before are no longer functioning. The reasons are poor infrastructure and lack of funds. There are still books left at the static libraries but no one knows in what shape they are. The branch libraries in the districts will be reopened some day, according to the head librarian, Mrs. Sokko.

The Regional Library Board consists of ten members. The chairman is the mayor of the municipality and one of the other members is the director of education in Arusha. The other members are prominent people who are interested in the library. The board meets at least two times per year and their main object is to raise funds for the library. They are not involved in the running of the library. The head librarian, who is also the Tanzania Library Service representative, is responsible for all policy decisions.

4.1 The stock

Unfortunately, I have been unable to obtain the result of the stocktaking that took place during the spring 1999. The head librarian estimates that half of the books from the stock-taking in 1996 are lost or stolen, i.e. approximately 11,000 volumes. I tried to count the stock by counting the amount of volumes on ten shelves at random, calculating the average and then multiplying by the number of shelves. My estimate is that there were about 7,200 adult volumes on the open shelves. 4,700 of which were non-fiction, 4,200 in English and 500 in Swahili. 3,000 were fiction, 2,500 in English and 500 in Swahili. Moreover, there are approximately 2,600 children’s volumes of which about 200 are in Swahili. This only includes the open shelves and not the reference collection kept in the librarian’s office or books on loan. It seems that the librarian’s opinion and mine roughly are in agreement that the total number of volumes is somewhere over 10,000.

The collection is centrally classified and catalogued at the National Library in Dar es Salaam according to the Dewey system. Acquisitions rely on donations and that may cause problems. Ingrid Persson describes the stock at a library in Mozambique:

Many books are gifts. And that is a problem. Not only with reference to languages. In Mozambique, Portuguese is the official language. In addition, several African languages are spoken, and in school you learn English nowadays. (Persson, 1997, p 9).

In Tanzania the corresponding language situation is Swahili instead of Portuguese, but otherwise the situation is very similar. Persson continues with a quote from one of the library workers:

-It’s great that we have received so much, says Juvencio. But. As receivers we have little possibility to control which books we will receive. Now, we can read most of them, since we pointed out that almost no one knows French or Dutch. But in the

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26 Probably, not all 20 are in active use.
27 not including the books on loan
28 my total 10,300 volumes
books I just collected, there is nothing about our lives, nothing about our reality. They are written in another context. This is a political problem. (ibid.).

4.2 The staff

The staff consists of two librarians, one of which is head librarian and manager, five library assistants, five library attendants, one secretary/typist and two night watchmen. The total is fifteen people, with salaries paid for by the government. Their salaries range from 46,000-98,000 Tsh per month29 These are not high wages but not very low either. As far as I have been able to conclude they correspond to ordinary civil servant levels.

![Picture of the staff outside the library.](image)

The library assistants work with processing books, discarding books and managing the monthly statistics. They render services to the clients at the counter, work as reader’s advisors, deal with queries and service extensions (tutorials). They also handle black-listings of those who have not paid their fees or who have behaved in an improper manner. The assistants usually sit at the reception counter and deal with membership queries, loans and returns. Since many of the most popular books are not on the open shelves, they often have to retrieve books for clients and give them out as library loans. I have not been able to observe much reference work. As far as I have been able to observe, the desk with the sign “Reader’s advisor” is not manned very often and when it is, it is not very frequented by the clients. Most of the library assistants know some English, but will not speak in a free and easy fashion.

The library attendants are in charge of cleaning, shelving, running errands, taking care of the garden, collecting magazines and they sit at the checkpoint, where the clients are required to leave their bags. As a rule, I would say, they know very little or no English.

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29 US$ 66-140 or SEK 555-1180
Monday through Friday the staff are responsible for tutorials for the children from primary school. The subjects are English and mathematics. The tutorials usually consist of giving the children different tasks and problems, which they have to solve. Usually the teacher will write the problems on the black board and the children have to copy them into their notebooks. The blackboard is old and cracked, more gray than black and it is very hard to see what is written on it.

When the children have finished their assignments they give them to the teacher to be corrected. Sometimes they read or tell stories during the tutorial. There are not enough chairs and tables for all the children that come. A problem that will increase as the tutorials become more popular. And the trend is that more and more children are discovering the library’s tutorials.

4.3 The users

There are six types of users at the Arusha Regional Library, four of which are based on annual membership. The first three are secondary school students, primary school pupils and unemployed people or farmers and they all pay an annual membership fee of 1000 Tsh (US$ 1.40). The fourth group consists of working adults and their fee is 3000 Tsh (US$ 4.30) per year. The fifth group consists of visitors who pay to use the library for just one day and the fee is 500 Tsh (US$ 0.70). The reason for this rather large fee is to discourage less than serious users. The sixth and last type of

30 Either a librarian or a library assistant act as teacher.
users consists of the primary school pupils who come for tutorials every day. They do not need to be library members and admission is free. They are, however, still included in the library statistics as visitors to the library.

Opening hours are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Members are allowed to check out 2 books at a time for a period of two weeks. The library staff is not keen on having members who are not residents in Arusha for the fear of more books being stolen or lost.

In August 1996 the library introduced membership fees. This meant that all memberships were canceled and everyone had to reregister as a member of the library and pay their fee. In July 1996 there were a total of 5,425 visits to the library. The remaining five months of 1996 there was a total 3,752 visits. This shows that the fees introduced may not seem expensive in Swedish eyes, but in fact they caused an extremely large decline in visits. Since then there has only been one single month with more than 3,000 visits (March, 1999), but note also that the same month there were more than 600 attending the Children’s Story Hour, i.e. non-paying members.

Some of the staff, responsible for keeping records of visitors, expressed the opinion that there were equally many men and women visiting the library. The table below shows that this is not the case. Notice also that the primary school children at the Children’s Story Hour are included in half of 1997 and all of 1998 and there are more girls than boys in this group of users. This means that there is a smaller share of adult women that visit the library today. In 1996, when there were no fees but also no Children’s Story Hour the statistics still show the same percentage of women as in 1998.

The appendix shows that in 1996, the total number of visitors was 34,667, in 1997, it was 14,443 and in 1998, it was 22,092.

One conclusion that is possible to draw from this is that one of the greatest effects of introducing membership fees was that adult women stopped coming to the library while the share of adult men increased.

On Saturdays they have something that is called Children’s Story Hour: The program for this event is as follows:

- 9-10 watching children’s TV shows
- 10-11 video
- 11-12 tutorial
- 12-12.30 story/play/poems

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31 Cf. Björkman and women’s liberation
The background to the Children’s Story Hour seems to be that during 1993 it went on during six months of the year, with a total of 16 occasions. 1994 also shows activity during six months with as many as 38 occasions. During 1995 and 1996 there were no Children’s Story Hour, most likely due to a lack of funds. In July 1997, the library opened on Saturdays and the Children’s Story Hour returned on a total of 26 occasions. 1998 seems to be the year when the Children’s Story Hour was completely established. For the year 1998 the statistics show 48 occasions, which means almost every week, total attendance for this period was 1,239 children. If we look at the first three months of 1999, we are able to see that attendance already has reached 1,162. If this continues the remaining part of 1999 that would mean an attendance total of 4,648 and perhaps higher if the existing trend continues.

From the statistics it is also possible to conclude that during the period 1993 to 1999 there have been more children than adult members at the library at all times. However, when I compare the last month without fees and the last month I have statistics of, I find that in July 1996 43.2 % were adult members 56.8 % were children, whereas March 1999 shows that 19 % were adults and 81 % were children. The total amount of members in July, 1996 was 6,680 and in March, 1999 it was 2,438. The graphic figure below illustrates this difference. Naturally, it is not easy to find one factor to explain this change. But I think that it is safe to assume that the higher adult fee plays an important role.

Appendix 3 shows that in July 1996 the amount of members were 2,841 adults and 3,739 children and in March 1999 the respective amounts were 463 adults and 1,975 children.
A majority of the users of most public libraries in Africa as well as in Arusha are secondary school students. In Tanzania primary school students have to qualify through an exam to be able to continue in secondary school. Only the most talented students are allowed to continue (cf. Löfberg, 1987, p 385). In most homes it is difficult to find the time and space to do homework for these students. To them it is imperative that the library can supply study places and adequate study material.
5 Presentation of the result

The questionnaire had three parts. The first section consists of questions about reading and written literature. The second section had questions about story telling and oral literature. The last section had questions about the library in Arusha or, in some cases, the library that the respondents used. For most of the respondents, Arusha Regional Library was their nearest library. However, some respondents only used their school library, and some boarding school students answered the questions with their hometown library in mind. The two first parts of the questionnaire aim to show the habits and attitudes toward literature and the last part is intended to show the habits and attitudes connected to the library. The very last questions are meant to give a glimpse of what can be done in the future (Appendix 1).

5.1 The respondents

The total number of respondents was 57. In the survey, the average age among the men is 23.8 years old and among the women 23.6 years old. Below, the table shows the age distribution among the respondents. The average age seems very low compared to Swedish conditions, but not compared to the age distribution in Tanzania. According to the CIA World Factbook the age structure in Tanzania appear as follows: Age 0-14 - 45 %, age 15-64 - 52 %, and age 65 and over - 3 %. In this survey the age structure is: Age 0-14 - 17.5 %, age 15-64 - 80.7 %, and age 65 and over - 1.8 %.

All of the respondents spoke Swahili, except one, who only spoke English and Hindi. Three said they only spoke Swahili, seven only knew Swahili and their mother tongue. Six said they spoke Swahili and a little bit of English, eleven said they spoke both Swahili and English. 29 people said they spoke three or more languages, most of them had another indigenous language as their mother tongue such as; Kichaga, Kipare, Maasai, etc. All of these 29 knew English, varying from a couple of words and phrases up to complete fluency. Four of the 29 also knew French as a fourth language.

In the group of respondents with children ten are from one of the primary schools in Arusha and ten adolescents from a secondary level boarding school on the hillside overlooking Arusha. In order to visit the schools I had to be accompanied by one of the librarians who vouched for me to the headmasters. As stated earlier the children were asked to volunteer by their teacher and I had no direct control over the selection process, but on the other hand, the schools did not have time to prepare students in advance.

There are a few different categories of people in the adult part of the group of respondents. In the academically untrained category there were two farmers/pastoralists, four people were one type of businessmen or another, and one who was a brewery worker. There were eight women who had jobs in either beauty saloons, or worked as seamstresses, barmaids or cleaners, and one was a housewife. In general, pastoralists, farmers and businessmen are well respected and reasonably well
off economically. People who are manual laborers or in service professions are slightly less esteemed.

One category was the academic group consisting of four teachers, one engineer, one employed and one unemployed journalist. In the group of adult users there were also many students. Four of the students were at college or university level and ten were students who were eighteen and over but still in secondary school. It is my impression that most people in Tanzania covet education. It is difficult to be admitted to secondary school and even more so to university level. Therefore, students and people with academic degrees are respected, but not always economically rewarded. Professions such as teachers or journalists are not very well paid.

5.2 Literature

Literature can be both oral and written. Historically, African literature has been predominantly oral and much of the written literature has its origin in the oral tradition. In this section, the questions concern books and reading as well as oral literature. It was essential that both forms of literature would be represented. The aim here was to discover the habits among the library users and the respondents in Arusha. The result of the questionnaire was that a majority of the respondents read, enjoyed reading and felt they were encouraged to read fiction in school. However, quite a few thought they did not have enough time for reading. Almost everyone listened and enjoyed listening to stories. The same was true of telling stories. Again quite a few felt they did not have enough time for story telling. The answers on oral and written literature were very similar. The difference occurred when asked about who produces literature. More people thought that seniors were oral storytellers, but when it came to written literature it was predominantly white people and men who were thought to be responsible for the production.

5.2.1 Written

The questions here are very concrete. I asked about books, in particular fiction and not texts in general. Most people claimed that they read and that they enjoyed reading fiction. However, I think that some respondents gave me an answer that they thought would please me. I.e. they thought that reading fiction is something that you are supposed to do and, therefore, when asked they claimed that they read fiction. This is, however, not in agreement with the opinions of the professional library staff. One person told me that it is not part of the Tanzanian culture to read for leisure. In Tanzania most people are more preoccupied with surviving rather than living. Also, Marie-Hélène Dufil writes that; “Books are luxury items” and Bo Markussen and Lars Byström quote; “We do not buy fiction, nobody here has the time or interest to devote themselves to it, says librarian Jennifer Jones.”

Do you have enough time for reading? 50 % of the men, 74 % of the women and 75 % of the children said they had enough time for reading. Some of the untrained workers modified their answer with “sometimes”, “only on Sundays” and “but it is hard to find time”. Perhaps the expectations on enough time play a great part in these answers. Those who said “only on Sundays” seemed content with that and answered that they had enough time for reading. While others might consider that not to be nearly enough time. Most people, i.e. two thirds of the respondents claimed they had a sufficient amount of time for reading.

34 Cf. appendix result of the questionnaire
35 The reason for the name of this master thesis
36 Cf. Background chapter
37 Please note that the library is closed on Sundays.
Encouragement

Did/do you read fiction in school? Almost all the women and children said they read fiction in school, while one third of the men said they did not. Some of the respondents said that they did not start reading fiction in school until secondary school. It should be noted that most people in Tanzania never reach the secondary level.\(^{38}\) When speaking to the respondents I distinctly got the impression that it was very much up to the teacher if reading was encouraged or not. It did not seem as if the schools had specific reading strategies. Some teachers were simply interested and they would encourage their students to read. According to many of the respondents, students are not introduced to reading fiction until they are teenagers. This seems very late compared to Sweden. However, it is important to keep in mind that these children most likely will have had extensive contact with oral literature since they were very young.

Do you think school encourages reading? 90% of the women and the children and 78% of the men thought that school encouraged reading. One man was unsure. Many of the secondary school students had additional comments such as; “reading was optional”, “especially in secondary school”, “not enough encouragement”. One student related that he got candy for reading. One student reported that they had exams on fiction, but he thought this was a questionable method. Another student said that he felt reading was not so important in school. One said that especially English teachers encouraged reading. One adult commented that “most schools lack a sufficient amount of books to maintain the interest”.

Acquisition

During my time in Arusha I found that there were a great deal of good bookstores. Some of them religious, some targeted towards tourists and some with a broad selection of both fiction and non-fiction literature for children and adults. All of the shops have literature in both English and Swahili. If you live in Arusha the conditions for acquiring books are good, perhaps even the best in Tanzania, but books are expensive and many people are poor. Therefore there is a large market for second-hand books, especially non-fiction books.

One question was Do you buy books? Approximately 80% of the adults and all of the younger children claimed that they bought books. A much larger portion than would be expected. Although, as stated earlier, the selection of bookstores is unusually good in Arusha. This added to the fact that many of the participants in the survey were either library users or students can account for this rather high number.

5.2.2 Oral

This section gives a background to the questions about reading and it is necessary to balance the picture. 93% of the respondents listen to stories told by friends and relatives. Some of the additional comments from adults were; “I liked to listen when I was younger”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “I listen on the radio”. 89% of the respondents would tell stories to their friends and relatives. 95% wanted to listen more and 88% wanted to tell more stories. One student said he preferred “true stories”, others said: “Not much”, “I would rather discuss more” It was only children that said they wanted to listen less to stories. While both men and children wanted to tell less stories. Many of the respondents were hesitant and unsure, adding modifiers such as “maybe”, “a little” or “sometimes”.

\(^{38}\) Cf. Background chapter

\(^{39}\) I do not have an exact number, but I estimate around ten bookstores.
When asked: *Do you have enough time to listen (to stories)?* 50% of the men, 79% of the women and 80% of the children said they had enough time to listen to stories. Some of the working untrained adults said there was only time “in the evenings”, “on Sundays”, “on Saturdays”, or that “it depends”.

*Do you have enough time to tell (stories)?* 50% of the men, 79% of the women and 90% of the children replied that they had enough time to tell stories. Two comments were that “there is only enough time for children to tell stories”, and “on Sundays” One man pointed out that: “women gossip a lot”. One student mentioned that he told stories to his younger brothers.

### 5.3 Library

The result of the questionnaire was that close to 80% of the respondents visited the library, 67% of the respondents experienced some sort of difficulties in getting to the library and 85% felt they were encouraged by their school to visit the library. Half of the respondents thought that it was mostly students who used the library, but close to 90% thought that the library was for everyone. When people came to the library they usually read, wrote, studied or borrowed books. The services requested were for the children mostly tutorials, the others wanted more modern media and more types of media. There were many differing answers and suggestions to the question about the ideal library.

*Do you visit the library?* 77% of the men, 63% of the women and 95% of the children claimed that they visited the library. Three people said sometimes. Two people said they used to visit the library. One of the professional adults gave the following reason for why he stopped going: “fees, poor opening hours, only kids go there = playground, a static collection with no new books or new information”. Five of the children said they only used the school library.

The question: *Do you have any difficulties getting to the library?* resulted in some rather interesting comments. Some of the respondents considered the distance and other practical issues associated with the physical position of the library, while others thought about opening hours and the membership fees. And some said they simply did not have enough time. Most of the children saw no difficulties while almost half of the adults met with some difficulties when visiting the library. One person also expressed that there were too many children there using it as a playground. This respondent felt reluctant about coming to a “children’s house”.

*Do you think school encourages going to the library?* 86% answered that they thought that school encouraged library visits. Some of the respondents referred to their school library. They claimed that short, few (and sometimes random) opening hours discouraged them to use the school library. One of the students said “yes, school encourages visiting the library very much”, two students were very hesitant, but answered yes. One person said not until secondary school. One said that they were not encouraged to use the regional library because the school had it’s own library. One person said that most schools encourage using the public libraries, because many schools lacked school libraries. Interestingly enough, the answers from the students at the same school varied considerably.

*What kind of service/help do you want the library to offer?* I wanted to find out what people expected and wanted in terms of service at the library. The younger children wanted the library to help them expand their knowledge on certain subjects and help them to learn English, mathematics and to read, i.e. tutorials. They thought the library should answer questions and help them understand things. One older student experienced that the staff was not capable of helping him find books. Some students mentioned that the books were “ancient” and inadequate. Many said they wanted help to find books both reference literature/non-fiction and fiction. Some of the students said they wanted a good introduction and directions to the placement of books. “More information
on the latest books and computer service”. They wanted Internet, video, audiotapes, international magazines and typing services. Some students said they wanted silence. A couple of the adults wanted news about the library and information about other libraries. Some just wanted to be able to borrow books. One academically trained adult said he did not request any service from the library staff because he was able to do it himself, while others wanted a better educated staff.

**How do you want the library to be, (ideally)?** When I had to rephrase this question I also used the word “dream-library”. This question gives an opportunity to express what they would like to change about the library. From many of the respondents came interesting and well considered answers. Many mentioned more books, more kinds of books, newer books, better books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, etc. Some wanted more fiction and some more non-fiction for schoolwork and more books for secondary school education that were modern. One adult wanted simple books in order to learn English. Some students wanted computer access, telephones and photocopiers. Others talked about video and radio cassettes and watching TV or story-telling. Some of the younger children wanted English tutorials and help with their schoolwork also tutorials in more subjects than math and English. Some students wanted to be able to borrow the expensive books. One person thought they should make sure that the library would have a modern current collection to supply information and knowledge. One adult wanted information about different places. One person thought the collection was too generalized and wanted more specialized books. Only a few did not think any change was necessary.

Three adults mentioned the financial situation. One of them suggested a new type of temporary membership for maybe a week or so. Another thought there should be no membership fees. A third person did not know because he could not afford to visit the library.

Some of the suggestions went towards the physical building. They wanted a larger building in better condition or renovation of the existing building, because it looked old. They wanted the library more modernized. Others said they wanted more space, better comfort and a good atmosphere for reading, in short, a good study place with more places to sit. Somebody wanted the library to be cleaner because it “stinks”. Others suggested better and newer furniture and clean bathrooms.

A couple of students said they thought the library needed more promotion. One twelve-year-old boy wanted the children to come there more. Somebody wanted the library to encourage more than students to use the library. Variability of facilities, a large supply, more libraries. Some pointed out that there was too much noise at the library.

To sum up, a quotation from a Maasai farmer: “There is not enough at the library. It needs additions”.

**Usage**

This question is about whether they come to the library at all. Most of the respondents claimed to be library users, in most cases this may be true, but compared to the library’s own statistics there is a very small portion of Arusha’s population that actually uses the library.

**What do you do at the library?** Study and read books, both fiction and non-fiction were the most common answers, borrow books was also a fairly common reply. Some students replied that they come to: “Choose a nice book and read”, “Plan what to read”, “Completing assignments”, “Checking references and doing homework!” and “Go to tutorials. The adults said things like: “Looking for a quiet atmosphere for writing”, “Try to find books for work and information”, “Read newspapers and magazines”, “Discuss” and “Learn about the world.”
5.4 Attitudes towards literature and libraries

The questions about who produces and uses literature as well as the questions about who uses the library are meant to find prejudices. I do not use the word prejudices in a negative sense here. I rather mean the norms of society.

On the multiple choice questions the respondents were able to answer more than one alternative, and therefore the total sum sometimes exceed the number of respondents.

**Who do you think writes book?** Most people, 63 %, thought anyone could be a writer, then came white people, 21 % and men, 12 %. Very few respondents thought that seniors, women, students or Africans were writers. This answer does not correlate well with the stock at the library where most authors were white, but on the other hand it reveals the opinion that it does not necessarily have to be that way.

**Who, in your opinion, are books for?** 88 % of the respondents replied that books are for everyone, only a few said students, men, women and white people. It does not appear to be common opinion that books are for the elite or any other group of people.

**Who do you think tells stories?** 42 % answered seniors and 44 % said everyone. 16 % put students. A couple of people said men, women, Africans and one person put white people. I do not find it very surprising that a large part of the respondents see older people as story-tellers. This corresponds to what we know of African oral tradition.

**Who, do you think, goes to the library?** 51 % thought that mostly students go to the library. 40 % thought that everyone goes to the library. Five people answered men or women as primary users. A majority made a correct assumption. It is mostly students who frequent the library on a regular basis.

**Who, in your opinion, is the library for?** 89 % thought that the library is for everyone. 11 % thought the library is mainly for students and one person thought the library is mainly for men. People seem to realize and know that the library is for everyone, although they do not treat the library accordingly, but rather as an extension of the educational system.

5.5 The point of view of the Arusha Regional Library staff

The library staff is well aware that the library is in dire need of renovation and modernization. Ever since the government stopped their funding, most of the work is aimed at getting enough resources to run the library. The difficult financial situation causes a lot of stress. However, once someone expressed that the membership fees (that they were forced to introduce) have brought one good effect. Before the time of fees a lot of people used to hang around the library, using it as a meeting place with their friends. These “unserious” users have now disappeared and given room for the more serious users, in general and students in particular. There seems to be a widespread consent that the primary goal for the library is to cater to the needs of the primary and secondary school students; children who need help with their schoolwork or simply a quiet place to study. Most of the schools do not have a school library and most homes are unable to offer their young ones a quiet well-lit study room. For a country like Tanzania education is believed to be the key to development and the library staff has fully realized the importance of education. Nobody seems to be very interested in leisure reading or the fiction section. The staff’s concern lies mainly with the non-
fiction/school literature. They were also very excited about getting the computer\textsuperscript{40} and all that this new technology might bring.

They express some opinions that are contradictory both to what some of the users think and what the statistics say, i.e. the staff thinks that both genders are equally represented while the statistics proves their belief to be unfounded. Also, many of the users do not think that the library is intended only for students, however most of the staff thinks that the students are preferred users.

\textsuperscript{40}In the spring of 1999 the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam donated one computer to the Arusha Regional Library. It had not yet arrived in April 1999.
6 Discussion / Analysis of the result

In this chapter I use the questions posed in the beginning as basis for my analysis. The questions are as follows:

- What are the attitudes towards oral or written literature among the respondents in Arusha?
- What are the respondents’ literary (story-telling/reading) habits?
- What means do the Arushans have to acquire literature? What are the constraints?
- What do the library users conceive the library to be?
- How do the library users use the library?
- How would the users want to change the library?
- What kind of library service would be ideal in Arusha, as well as in Tanzania?

The oral literature is a common and an important part of the Tanzanian society. My feeling was that the respondents had very strong opinions in regard to their oral literature habits. The questions about oral literature provoked more emotion than the other questions. Written literature is less common in everyday life. The only place where I could observe reading was at the library with one exception: The girls who worked at my guesthouse and at the hairdresser read during work breaks. It seemed that the most popular reading material were little pamphlets with romantic stories told with pictures like a comic book41. This seemed peculiar when added to the fact that many people told me that people did not habitually read in such a manner in Tanzania. These pamphlets were passed around and even I was offered to read them in order to practice my Swahili. Encouragement to read written literature seemed to come rather late in life for most respondents. According to the respondents, most schools do not prioritize reading fiction as one of the more important skills. Most people seemed to agree that written literature was for everyone and that anyone could become a writer. A common opinion was that seniors usually produced oral literature, but seniors were not originators of written literature.

During the 20th century the African written literature has increased42, and some native authors of distinction have appeared. Reading has a high status because it is seen as something done by the elite. Notice how almost everyone in the survey claimed that they read fiction. I doubt that they regularly have the opportunity to read even if it was something that they prioritized. It is interesting to compare the answers regarding having enough time for written and oral literature. Most respondents said without hesitance that they had enough time for reading written literature. Yet, when asked about having enough time for oral literature, they had to stop and think, carefully. I think the question: “do you have enough time for a certain activity” demands some reflection before it is possible to answer. In my opinion the answer about having enough time to read often came too soon for this reflection to have taken place. My interpretation is that oral story telling is a tangible part of their life; recreational activities that most people have a strong opinion about.

In Arusha it is fairly easy to acquire reading material - if you have enough money. Many bookstores and several libraries make for a relatively large supply of literature. However, I am sure that it is hard for many families to afford the membership fees to the library or to afford buying literature in one of the many bookstores, even though, most people stated that they bought fiction. The respondents in Arusha seem to correspond to many other African studies concerning obstacles to reading. Marie- Hélène Dufil states that one of the obstacles are that most books are written in a European language (Dufil, 1985) and this is certainly true at the Regional Library in Arusha, where even most of the children’s books are in English and so few primary school children know any

41 cf. Starlet in Sweden
42 cf. Per Wästberg in the Background chapter
English in Tanzania. Added to the fact that books written in a completely different culture is very hard to understand for small children. Cultural adaptation being another problem that Dufil touches on in her article. The fact that the Regional Library in Arusha is used as a study hall by the secondary school students is also a confirmation of Dufil’s study concerning lack of space, light and quietness for reading in the home (ibid.). Another phenomenon described in Bo Markusson’s and Lars Byström’s article, that the library is mostly used as a study hall and very few users are interested in fiction is at least confirmed by the Library staff, who see their primary purpose as being an extension of the educational system. When I regard the change in membership profile to more students than adults, I draw the conclusion that monetary issues are an obstacle to becoming a member of the library. To some people the ideal library is a library with lower or no fees. It might be a good idea to consider temporary membership fees that last for more than one day. For some people in the survey the distance to the library was a big constraint. Even though the Arusha Regional Library is supposed to provide service to the whole region there is only one library in the town of Arusha. As for the privately run libraries they also lay within the bounds of the municipality. For all those living in the countryside surrounding Arusha it is difficult if not impossible to visit a library. For them a visit to the library cost both time and money. Time and money that they do not have or rather chose to invest in their survival. It would be desirable if the library could reopen the branch libraries in the region for those who are not able to come to the Regional Library. At the moment, I fail to see how a reopening of the extended library service points could be economically possible, unless they receive more financial aid.

The answers differ on what the users conceive the library to be. Some seem to assume that the library is intended to cater to students, while others think the library is for everyone to explore personal interests. Most respondents said that the typical user was a student. Many of the respondents acted with surprise when I wanted to talk about fiction rather than educational literature and non-fiction. Some even expressed that the students have a greater right to the library than other users. The library helps in imposing this impression by lower fees for students and children. Some of the older users do express an alternative view of the library as a place where intellectual interchange can take place; a room for discussion and personal growth.

When we consider how few members and visitors the Arusha Regional Library has in relation to the population in Arusha we can conclude that a majority of the population in Arusha do not choose to seek the information that they need at the library. This assumption corresponds to Mchumbu’s study where the library was not even mentioned as a possible place for exchanging information (Mchombu, 1993).

In relation to the low frequency in library use in Arusha we can compare the situation to the one in Inger Löfberg’s article. She says that the library is loosing it’s users due to low funds and a lack of ability to develop according to plan (Löfberg, 1987). Lack of funds is certainly an obstacle concerning the reopening of the mobile units and the static libraries in the region surrounding Arusha. Perhaps is also the low number of books in Swahili a factor that explains the low numbers of library members.

Most people seem to regard the library as part of the educational system. This can be explained by the fact that many of the respondents were students themselves. Some of the respondents expressed that tutorials were a very important part of the library’s function. This leads me to believe that, as there are very few school libraries, most people regard the Regional Library as part of the educational system. They expect the library to supply study materials, study places, a good study environment and tutorials for the younger children. Most people come to the library to read, borrow books, write or do homework.

Most respondents seemed to think that the ideal library is a library focused on helping students and encouraging education. The younger children wanted classes and individual help with homework, an opportunity to ask questions and instructions on how to use the library. This is of course very
difficult with the number of children that come to the tutorials. If the number of children increases even more there might be a problem of where to have the tutorials. Perhaps the younger children’s tutorials could be held upstairs where there is more room. Many of the respondents had interesting and suggestions showing insight about how to change the library. Some talked mainly about the stock and the service, including additional services, others talked about the building. The bathrooms on the ground floor need to be cleaned and perhaps repaired to make the ground floor more appealing and less smelly. Several of the adult users wanted a place for discussions. If e.g. the secondary school students’ study places were moved downstairs then the upper floor of the library could include almost all of the stock and during the early part of the day, before the tutorials, it would be less important to keep this part of the library quiet which could offer an opportunity to have quiet discussions and facilitate asking questions to the staff. It would also make for a quieter study environment, since the students are often bothered by the noise that naturally occurs around the entrance, especially when all the children enter for the tutorial. Also, the noise coming from the street is less noticeable on the ground floor. It is important to notice that some of the users also brought up the need to encourage more people to use the library. Their suggestions were more promotion, if the library wants a larger part of the population to make use of their services. For a large part of the population it would be good to discover or in some cases rediscover the library and its information resources. Some of the people I talked to knew close to nothing about the library and had never been there. From a humanitarian as well as an economic perspective that is disheartening. I think the library should be more inviting to the serious adult users, who now seem to think that the library mainly is intended for the students. Also, if the library could attract more adult members it would generate higher incomes

I think the ideal library in Arusha needs to cater more to illiterate people and develop the oral literature collection. Several people requested more audio-visual media such as tapes and videos. Most people have not gone to secondary school. They may not be illiterate in the strictest sense, yet they do not read fluently and with pleasure, generally, and particularly not in English43. This is a major problem as most of the stock is in English. The access to Swahili literature is very small. According to Tanzania Library Service in Dar es Salaam there ought to be at least 5,000 volumes and 1,500 titles at the Arusha Regional Library while in fact there are only approximately 1,200 volumes. This allows for two interpretations; either all the other regional libraries have an abundance of Swahili literature or the total number of volumes that is believed to exist within the Tanzania Library Service simply no longer exists. Most probably these numbers are old and the books have been lost, stolen or discarded. It is important that the library can serve everyone.

43 Cf. Background chapter.
7 Conclusions

7.1 The library

In regard to how the library in Arusha functions and what service they supply to the users, my conclusion is that there are many needs within the Tanzania Library Service in general as well as at Arusha Regional Library. I can only point towards some problem areas and the writers I have quoted mention others. It is obvious that the Tanzania Library Service has been neglected for many years both by international donors and by the domestic government. However, within the Tanzania Library Service there is much motivation and many hard-working and devoted people. It is difficult to imagine a library still running in Sweden that had close to no public funding and had had no new investments since the early seventies, a situation that is reality in Arusha. The stock is in a condition were it would have been long since discarded at a Swedish library. The furnishing is in dire need of being replaced and the building itself is too small and in bad condition. It is less than satisfactory that the library has to rely on different organizations’ ‘charity’ for restocking and that the main issue on the head librarian’s table is to raise funding for the library. This takes invaluable resources from the actual service to the users and renders the librarians almost powerless when restocking. Furthermore, it is, in my opinion, very unfortunate that the Tanzania Library Service has felt it necessary to introduce library membership fees. In a financially challenged country, like Tanzania, it is hardly ideal not to have a free library service.

7.2 The users

The situation of the users is that there is a small group of people in Arusha who are regular users of the library despite lacks in service, poor stock and membership fees. Many of them see the shortcomings and have opinions on how to improve the library. To ascertain what the library users’ needs and wants are, as well as the demands and the wants of the prospective library users I have found in my survey that the interest for fiction literature is not great, although, almost everyone claims they read it. It does not appear that the connection between the library and fiction literature is very strong as the library is rather seen as an extension of the education system. It is also understandable in the light of the actual stock. There are hardly any African authors represented and most of the literature is in English. To conclude, the most urgent needs, as far as fiction literature is concerned, in my opinion are: more books in Swahili and more books written by African writers, but also more literature on audio tapes for the inexperienced readers. Also it seems that the users request more guidance from the staff. Another issue for the library is how to cater to the adult users that appear to feel unwelcome to the library. It would be desirable to try and find room for their needs also. It is unfortunate if they feel that the library is a house for children. Last but not least, it is of course important to care for the largest group of library users, the students. The tutorials are an important service to the younger ones and the study room and the study material supplied by the library is essential for many of the older students. However, there is always room for improvement. Many of the students expressed, not surprisingly, that the books at the library were too dated or too few. A problem difficult to rectify since non-fiction literature can be very expensive and a great temptation to theft.
8 Summary

This master thesis concerns a library in East Africa and the users of the library. The aim is to describe the situation and try to assess what the users’ needs and wants are. With this essay I wanted to put the focus on something different than the situation in the Swedish library system.

The introduction consists of a short personal background and reason for this essay and a rough disposition. In the problem formulation section we find the aim and the questions that I hope to answer with this essay. Following this a chapter on the method which was used including literature search methods.

There is a whole chapter on what has been written on libraries in Africa and African literature, including Sturges and Neill’s book the Quiet Struggle. My assumption has been that some of my Swedish readers will not be very knowledgeable on the subject of Tanzanian libraries so a complete chapter is devoted to giving a broad background on Tanzania and the Tanzania Library Service, including history and a quick glance at Swahili and Arusha.

The chapter on Arusha Regional Library makes use of the statistics from the library regarding number of visits and so forth. This chapter is mainly based on the observations I made in Arusha and the material I managed to gather. In the next chapter there is a presentation of the results of the questionnaire grouped around the different areas - literature both written and oral as well as libraries and attitudes toward literature and libraries. Afterwards comes a section on the point of view of the library staff. Expressing some of their concerns, aims, and hopes at present and for the future.

In the conclusion, I bring up the fact that due to circumstances beyond the control of the Tanzania Library Service and the Arusha Regional Library there are many library service needs that go unsatisfied. The financial situation has forced Tanzania Library Service into solutions that are less than ideal. However, there are things that can be done. It is my opinion that it would serve the library well to listen to the users and take their suggestions seriously. Furthermore, I make some suggestions on how the library could improve, these suggestions are based on my observations and on the comments made by the respondents of the questionnaire.

In the appendices we find the questionnaire given to the users with a summary of the responses, also, the statistics from the library with some corrections of counting errors.
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**Web-resources**


**Unpublished sources**

Arusha, Tanzania
Arusha Regional library
The monthly statistical reports at the Arusha Regional Library dating from July 1993 to March 1999 (also available at the National Library in Dar es Salaam)

Observations in the library: March, 29-31 April, 1-3, 6-9, 19-24, 27 (total of 16 days) 1999

Oral information
Questionnaire: Children at primary and secondary school level (20), Men, including users and non-users (20), Women, including users and non-users (20)

Informal talks with the library staff and the two librarians in Arusha

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Tanzania National Library and Dar es Salaam Regional Library
Oral information from librarians and statisticians
Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Question 1. Age? 

Question 2. Sex? • F • M

Question 3. Occupation? 

Question 4. Education? 

Question 5. Language? • Swahili • English • Other

Written

Question 6. Do you read fiction? • yes • no

Question 7. Have you ever read a fiction book? • yes • no

Question 8. Would/do you like to read fiction? • yes • no

Question 9. Do you think there is enough time to read? • yes • no

Question 10. Who writes books? 
- seniors • men • women • students • Africans • Whites • Anyone

Question 11. Who are books for? 
- seniors • men • women • young people • Africans • Whites • Everyone

Oral

Question 15. Do you listen to stories? • yes • no

Question 16. Do you tell stories? • yes • no

Question 17. Who tells stories? 
- seniors • men • women • young people • Africans • Whites • Everyone

Library

Question 22. Do you go to the library? • yes • no

Question 23. Is it difficult to go to the library? • yes • no

Question 24. Who goes to the library? 
- seniors • men • women • young people • Africans • Whites • Everyone

Question 25. Does school encourage going to the library? • yes • no

Question 26. Who is the library for? 
- seniors • men • women • young people • Africans • Whites • Everyone

Thank you!
### Appendix 2 - Result of the questionnaire

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<th>women yes</th>
<th>women no</th>
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<th>children no</th>
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<td>Do you read fiction?</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>Have you ever read fiction?</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Do you have enough time for reading?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>Do you buy books?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Did you read fiction in school?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Do you think school encourages reading?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>Do you tell stories?</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>1</td>
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## Appendix 3 - Arusha Regional Library Statistics

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<td>average newly registered adults</td>
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