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Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys

As part of the *National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH)* Bridging Cultures initiative, NEH and the American Library Association are collaborating on two Muslim Journeys programs: the Bookshelf and *Let's Talk About It (LTAI)*. The initiative "engages the power of the humanities to promote understanding of and mutual respect for people with diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives within the United States and abroad."

The *Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys* grants to 125 libraries and state humanities councils combine a curated collection of books and films and a proven reading and discussion model. Both are designed to be replicated informally by any library with the aid of the excellent NEH/ALA websites and extensive resource lists. The carefully curated Muslim Journeys bookshelf collection could serve as an acquisition guide and the websites and Conversation Toolkit could guide informal discussions in any library.

Let's Talk About It, a reading and discussion program model, was launched by the American Library Association in 1982. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities supported the original development, design and production of *Let's Talk About It* themes. Over the years the *Let's Talk About It* [themes](#) have covered broad, important, universal issues: death and dying, family and friendship, cultural myths, forgiveness, and the literature and religions of many Americans.

The LTAI program model involves a book group reading a common series of books selected by nationally known scholars and discussing them in the context of a larger, overarching theme. Downloadable resources for each theme include annotated reading lists, theme-related scholarly essays, supplementary texts with brief summaries and a "How To" discussion programming guide.

In January 2013, NEH and ALA awarded the [Muslim Journeys Bookshelf](#) collection to 953 library and state humanities council grant applicants. The collection consists of [twenty-five books and three documentary films](#); a series of [seven short videos](#) exploring the arts of Muslim societies, and access to the resources of [Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#) curated to present the American public with new and diverse perspectives on the people, places, histories, beliefs, practices, and cultures of Muslims in the United States and around the world. Recipients of the Bookshelf collection were invited to apply for the *Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys* award. In May 2013, NEH and ALA selected [125 libraries and humanities councils](#) to participate in the project; IPFW Helmke Library was one of the successful applicants for the LTAI award.

Each participating site is focusing on one of five [Muslim Journeys themes](#), hosting a five-part, scholar-led reading and discussion series exploring the theme and related books.

Although reading groups and adult programming services are associated more closely with public libraries, we applied for the LTAI grant because the mission, values and vision of the university emphasize a respect for diversity, responsible citizenship, civility, and open communication

Let's Talk About It (continued from page 1)

among all groups as well as a partnership with the community to enhance social, economic, cultural, civic, and intellectual life in the region.

In addition, the Fort Wayne community, like many areas in the US, has experienced an expanding cultural and religious diversity through immigration and work- or education-related relocations. The combination of meeting the University mission, the availability of several expert scholars in the Religious Studies and other campus departments, and the diversifying community encouraged us to apply for the grant.

To meet the requirements of the Bookshelf and the LTAI awards, we have embarked on a series of three free film screenings with expert speakers and audience discussion as well as the five book group meetings for the *American Stories* theme.

The series is scheduled through spring 2014. To date, we have completed one book group and one film screening at the Allen County Public Library (our community partner). Events have been well-attended and response has been positive from the attendees. The “expert speakers” drawn from the faculty and from the local Muslim community have been engaging and informative.

The challenges have been the usual press of planning, publicity, and hosting duties such as reminders, recruitment, book distribution, etc. Unlike Adult Services in a public library, most academic libraries do not usually recruit readers or even community audiences for programming. I was able to tap into several well-established networks on campus for reader recruitment and publicity for the project, e.g. a group of active, adult learners in our Division of Continuing Studies, community members who attend a myriad of arts, theatre and music events at the University, a social group of faculty women and others. The Allen County Public Library, our community partner, is also advertising events through their active channels of adult public programming.

It has been a gratifying experience on many levels—the partnering within the community, calling on the diverse expertise of faculty at IPFW, the community response to this timely topic and the support and resources available from the national NEH/ALA partnership.

The *Let's Talk About It* [themes and resources](#) are valuable for discussions and collection development in libraries of all types.

Susan Anderson is the Head of Public Services at the Walter E. Helmke Library, Indiana University/Purdue University-Fort Wayne (IPFW).



Subject Guides for East Asian Studies

Library subject guides are not new to librarians, and probably every subject librarian or reference librarian has created or used subject guides to assist users to retrieve information needed. Researching in foreign language materials can be challenging for researchers and students due to the lack of awareness about the available resources and language proficiency. Thus subject guides for area studies become essential gateways to research for many users. In June 2013 we analyzed 137 guides of North American libraries regarding the field of East Asian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Studies. Five interesting findings are illustrated below. It is hoped that these findings will shed some light on the design of area studies subject guides and revision of current guides.

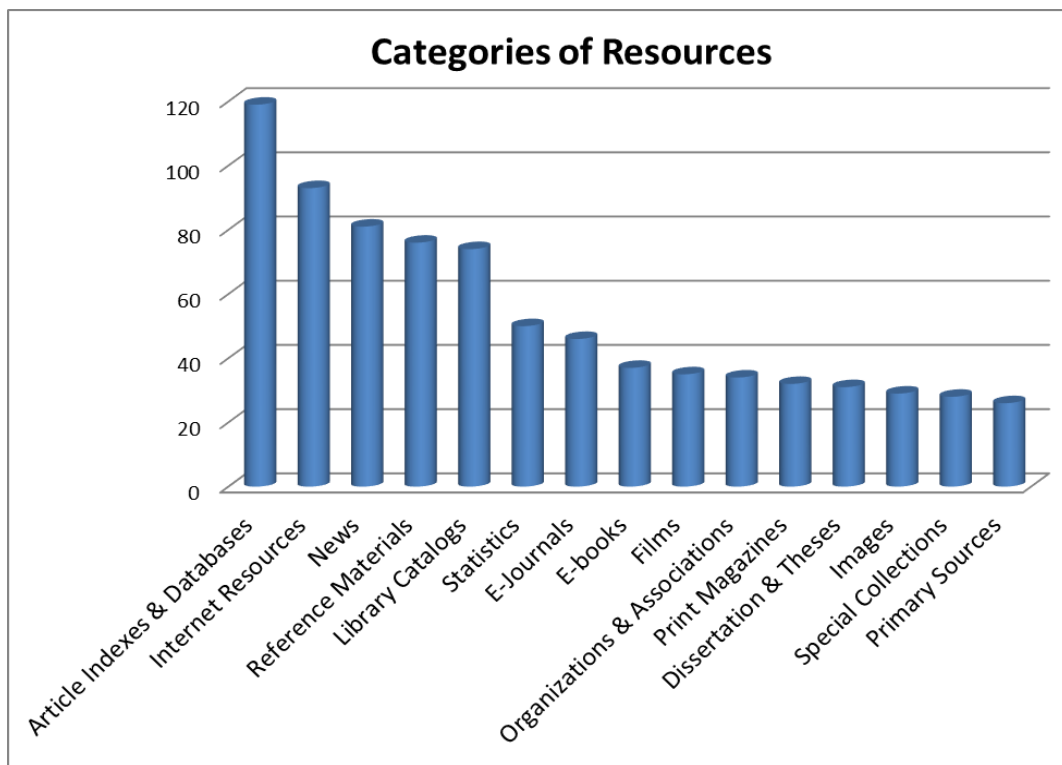
Xi Chen is the Librarian for East Asian and Web Development at the Oberlin College.

Yao Chen is Librarian for East Asian, Linguistics, and ESL at the University of Minnesota

Platform: More than half of the guides we visited were hosted by LibGuides, a commercial subject guide software developed by Springshare. Less than one third of the guides were created by various types of Content Management System (CMS). Only a small number of guides were found to be HTML coded. Most East Asian libraries/collections employed the same platform to host guides for East Asian Studies and for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (CJK) Studies. However, we found quite a few cases of inconsistency in choosing platforms for guides of East Asian Studies and CJK Studies within a single institution. For example, the East Asian Studies guide used the platform adopted library wide, but CJK guides were hosted on a different platform. In other cases, even within CJK guides created by one library, different platforms were utilized.

List of Categories: After examining the categories of resources that appeared in the 137 guides, 26 terms were selected to represent the vast majority of categories adopted by these guides. Among the 26 categories, we identified the top 15 most frequently used ones,

Figure 1



which are listed in descending order as shown in Figure 1. These categories are article indexes and databases, Internet Resources, news, reference materials, library catalogs, statistics, e-journals, e-books, films, organizations & associations, print magazines, dissertations & theses, images, special collections and primary sources. A major phenomenon that we found was the lack of controlled vocabulary to categorize resources. In some cases, the same term was used by different librarians to indicate different type of resources, and different librarians adopted different terms to refer to the same type of resources. The type of inconsistency may lead to confusion for users. For example, should e-journal belong to database or be a separate category? Another example was some libraries used both Internet resources and Websites to label free online resources.

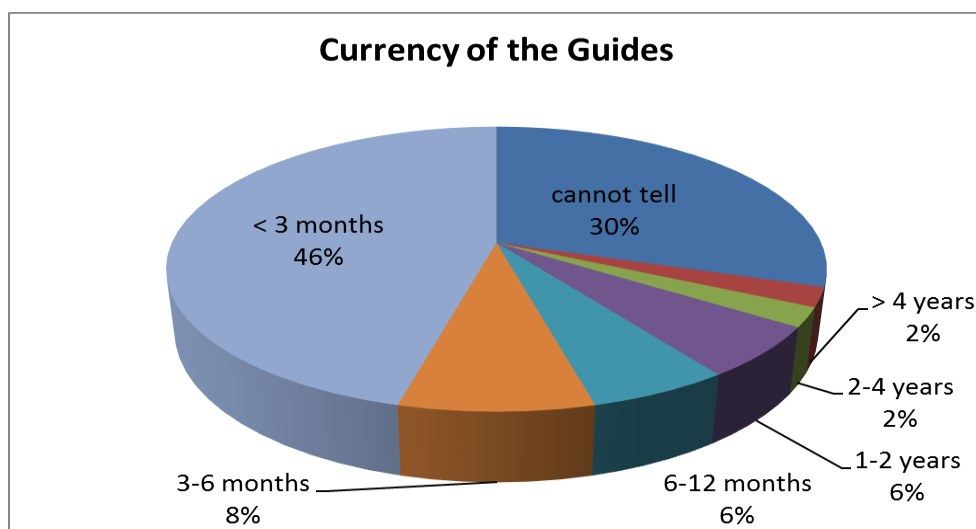
Web 2.0 Features: A significant number of libraries adopted at least one type of web2.0 feature. Social bookmarking appeared to be the most commonly used function. The second most frequently seen application was RSS feeds. The other web2.0 features that were listed in the order of popularity are: comment/feedback, Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Most of the web 2.0 features were present on the homepage of the subject guides; however, some were buried in sub-pages, which made them difficult for users to find.

Clarity of Ownership of Online Resources: We observed that many guides included both subscribed and freely available resources. We considered the following options were clear about the ownership of online resources: Guides that used the terms “owned” or “free” resources, guides that used special icons (e.g. a lock icon) and language (e.g. restricted to a certain university), or guides listed owned and free resources separately. It appears that over half of the guides observed did not clearly distinguish between owned and free online resources, only 2/5 of the guides had clear distinction between owned and free resources.

Last Updated Time: A cut-off date in June 2013 was used as the benchmark to determine the freshness of the guides. We found 41 out of 137 (30%) guides did not have “last updated time”. Sixty three (46%) guides were updated within the recent three months. Eleven (8%) guides were updated within the recent three to six months, eight (6%) between six and twelve months, eight (6%) between one and two years ago. Three (2%) were edited between two and four years ago, and three (2%) were updated more than four years ago.

In addition to the five findings listed above, we also analyzed six other elements of the guides, which included entry point, title of the guide, librarian’s contact information, instructional video, embedded instant messaging and resource annotation, for a more comprehensive examination of the guides. Detailed findings can be found in the full report to be published on the February 2014 issue of *Journal of East Asian Libraries*. While the report opens up the discussion on how we could enhance the guides and make them more user-friendly, it would be equally important to hear about the perspectives of guide creators and end users. We will survey librarians and users in the next stage to gather more data in order to have a holistic understanding of the guides, and thus provide suggestions for future improvements.

Figure 2



International Conference Report: African Library Summit 2013

The African Library Summit 2013 was hosted by the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, South Africa July 2nd -5th. The theme was "African Librarianship - The Horizon and Beyond." The aim was "to create an opportunity for established leaders to engage on significant issues in support of quality library and information services and librarianship on the African continent." Seasoned library leaders convened to establish a framework for continued library development in Africa. Sponsors were UNISA, IFLA and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Approximately 250 delegates from thirty three countries including several African countries and the United States assembled at the Senate Hall at the UNISA campus.

The sub-themes were leadership, innovation, cooperation and the way forward. Some of the significant areas identified and discussed under leadership were global leadership; developing multicultural leaders; African leadership systems; and African diaspora LIS leadership. Significant issues discussed under innovation, included sustainable innovation and change; innovation in the knowledge society within the African context; innovation spaces. Areas of cooperation identified and discussed were preservation and access to cultural heritage; library associations especially in Lusophone and Francophone Africa; education and training of professionals; and public and community information professionals. Each of these areas was introduced by several panelists at the morning and afternoon sessions. At the end of each panel delegates split into smaller groups to drill down and discuss key issues raised by the panelists. Each drill down session had a facilitator and notes from each group were submitted to conference organizers.

Araba Dawson-Andoh is the Africana Librarian at the Ohio University Libraries.

Esmeralda Kale is the Bibliographer of Africana at Northwestern University Library.



Above (L to R): Esmeralda Kale, John Tsebe, and Araba Dawson-Andoh

International Conference Report (continued from page 5)

Presentation highlights include; Dr. Andrew Kaniki, Executive for Knowledge Fields Development at the National Research Foundation, South Africa and John Tsebe, National Librarian and CEO: National Library in South Africa who discussed qualities of a leader. Dr. Chris Coward co-founder, Principal Research Scientist, and Director of the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School gave a very interesting presentation on innovation spaces and the way the youth is collaborating and using information in new spaces. Kay Raseroka reminded us of the need to collaborate with teachers in elementary schools in order to start educating our users at an early age. Dr Victoria Okojie, Chair of IFLA Africa Section and Dr. Rosemary Shafack discussed capacity building of IFLA's leaders in Africa. In a presentation titled "African Librarianship: The horizon and beyond" Prof. Archie Dick, Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria, provided an overview of African Library summit 2011, the African Public Library Summit 2012 and the 2013 summit highlighting expectations and successes.



Summit closing highlights include the launch of new LIS platforms in Africa: African Library and Information Association (AFLIA); Public Information Association; and Forum of National Libraries of Africa.

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catch up with old and new friends and view poster presentations. The evening events included cocktails, a gala and buffet dinner enabled delegates to listen to vendors, speakers and performers and sample South African cuisine. Special mentoring sessions were held during lunch for the 50 emerging leaders of African librarianship present at the conference, it was truly inspiring to see them. The summit organizers led by Dr. Buhle Mambo-Thata, Executive Director, UNISA Library and her dynamic team did an excellent job in engaging us on the issues of African librarianship in the twenty first century.

Summit closing highlights include the launch of new LIS platforms in Africa: African Library and Information Association (AFLIA); Public Information Association; and Forum of National Libraries of Africa.

Key actionable outcomes of the summit are:

- Revival of regional library associations in Africa with clear strategic plans, recognition of professionals and non-professional in the field who are making a difference.
- Strengthen library associations and LIS education in Lusophone and Francophone African countries. Provide a mechanism for development and evaluation.
- Collaboration between stakeholders (LIS educators, school librarians, academic librarians, etc.) in order to provide an environment that fosters innovation through workshops, training, etc.
- Establish a code of ethics, provide mentorship, identify emerging leaders, work on succession plans and serve communities.
- Emphasize education and collaborate to lobby political leaders to strengthen school libraries, identify vulnerable learners eg. Girls and children with special needs.

The overall summit experience was very positive. In addition to the informative presentations, there were several opportunities for participants to network. Lunch served in the exhibit halls provided delegates with opportunities to speak to vendors

“Singing the Songs of Continuation:” Libraries Worldwide Join Forces to Restore Zambia’s Literary Heritage

The Lubuto Library Project (www.Lubuto.org) is an international development organization whose mission is to provide an open system of accessible services to vulnerable African children and youth through Lubuto Libraries. These libraries enable them to develop the knowledge and skills to connect with their culture, community and the world at large and realize their right to a quality education and to reach their full potential.

While Lubuto’s libraries are open to all, we focus on the most disadvantaged children and teens. We endeavor to empower them to create positive change in their own lives. At the same time, we promote a new paradigm for library services and community libraries serving young people in Africa.

Our approach fundamentally values local tradition, respecting the priorities of government, local communities and cultures and the individuals we are serving. We strive to identify and meet the true needs of children, youth and communities. We also recognize the essential role of excellent literature in the life and imagination of all children and strive to make it available through our libraries and our work in society.

Lubuto creates public libraries that particularly address societal isolation of children and youth, starting in Zambia. We have learned from Zambia’s leaders the urgent need to preserve the country’s cultures, languages and traditions while also exposing the country’s children and teens to rich collections of excellent literature that is universal in nature. Thus we build library facilities that preserve cultural heritage through traditional design adapted to welcoming and comfortable spaces. We offer popular programs in drama, art, and mentoring, also based on Zambian traditions, which reinforce Zambian identity, culture and values, and develop children’s imaginations and creativity.

Connecting children with balanced book collections comprised of literature from around the globe can open doors to new worlds. At the same time, however, it is essential to value and preserve local oral traditions through storytelling and to extend storytelling to the streets, to those who would not imagine coming to a library. We do this in partnership with the Zambia Library Service and are working to create a broader understanding among our professional colleagues of the qualities of beautifully written and illustrated literature for young people. Lubuto thus was instrumental in establishing the Zambian Board on Books for Young People as a national chapter of IBBY. Other initiatives to this end have included sponsorship of a “Writing for Children” workshop and bookmaking workshops. We are also planning a workshop on picture book illustration and a “Lubuto Storytime” video program.

Children and teens are also motivated and helped by technology, and we advocate for free Internet access in all public libraries in Africa – which would dramatically improve the perception, use and public support of libraries on the continent. But there is also the need for local technological innovations to solve problems specific to the region and country. Thus, recognizing the need for means to facilitate children learning to read in their mother tongues, Lubuto worked with Zambian teachers and teens to create 700 computer-based lessons to teach children to read in seven major Zambian languages. This teaching tool, called *LubutoLiteracy*, shows the crucial role that libraries play as “technology incubators” and demonstrates the multiple benefits of engaging youth directly in technological innovation that benefit their society. *LubutoLiteracy* has shown that technology is more effective when linked to and reinforced by a full range of resources and opportunities for direct interaction – particularly in the open and welcoming setting of a public library.

*Jane Kinney Meyers is
President of the
Lubuto Library Project.*

Zambia's Literary Heritage (continued from page 7)

Beyond those 700 Lubuto Literacy reading lessons, the libraries stock every relevant Zambian-language title for children that we can obtain, which are mostly early readers in the country's Primary Reading Program. But that's not enough literature to fill a whole childhood, and we found another important contribution was needed that could be addressed uniquely by library professionals.

Literature for children and youth is currently scarce in Zambian languages, but that wasn't always the case. There used to be a large body of literature for young people in many Zambian languages that we have been told by experts is of very high quality. It was once available in hundreds of community libraries throughout Zambia. This literature preserved languages and reinforced cultural identity and thus was seen by leaders of the independence movement in the early 1960's as a threat to uniting a newly-independent Zambian nation. To play down ethnic differences and create "One Zambia, One Nation" when the country achieved its independence in 1964, the first president Kenneth Kaunda ordered the community libraries to be closed. Books reflecting Zambia's cultures and languages were destroyed – many, apparently, burned - or dispersed.

However, Kaunda's vice president, Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe, one of the great leaders of independence movements across Africa, cared deeply about African cultural identities that had been suppressed in many ways by the experience of colonial rule. Kapwepwe passionately articulated the importance of Zambia's oral literary heritage to the citizens of the new nation, urging storytellers to "sing the songs of continuation and never to stop" in a foreword to a collection of traditional tales published five years after Zambia achieved independence.

Simon Kapwepwe had a falling out with President Kenneth Kaunda and was pushed out of the vice presidency in 1970. After forming a rival political party he was imprisoned by the Kaunda administration under harsh circumstances that eventually took a toll on his health and he died in 1980 at age 58.

In recent years, Kapwepwe's daughter, Mulenga, uncovered this history of an extensive body of Zambian language literature for young people that no longer exists in the country. Mulenga Kapwepwe is an anthropologist by training who works tirelessly to document and preserve Zambia's heritage. She writes plays that capture the way people understood the world before colonialism and even authored an award-winning epic history of the Bemba people in operatic form (*Chiti mu Luba*, 1999). Mulenga was the founding Advisory Board member of the Lubuto Library Project and gave the organization its name "lubuto" (which, in the Bemba language, means "enlightenment, knowledge, light").

Mulenga Kapwepwe searched for the lost literature everywhere she could, finding no trace of it even in the country's National Archives. But as anathema to her as its destruction was, she explains it as the political expediency at the time, a fact she understood clearly growing up in such a politically-charged home, but also a home that she described as being full of books. In fact, Zambia has had a history of peaceful relations among its various ethnic groups that is likely attributable in part to the suppression of ethnic identity in those early days. However, now that Zambia is a stable and unified nation, Ms. Kapwepwe is determined to recapture the lost literature.

One needs only to mention such a quest to librarians to set the wheels in motion. We at Lubuto immediately began to search for the books in places we knew may have acquired them when they were published. We first found 35 books, uncataloged, in the Library of Congress's Africa and Middle East Reading Room's pamphlet files. Lubuto volunteers who were employees of the Library scanned the books during their lunch hours, and graduate student volunteers at the University of Maryland created the www.LubutoCollections.org website to serve as a digital repository.

Lubuto's staff and volunteers continue to work to identify and digitize these books in cooperation with libraries, archives and individuals in Zambia, the U.S. and elsewhere. A visit to the Boston University Mugar Library's African Studies collection in January – on a tip in the form of a bibliography from its former director James Armstrong - yielded dozens more. We are grateful for the warm welcome from the library's head, Beth Restricks, and its staff, and their willingness to scan the titles to add to the collection. Many expressed enthusiasm to be able to help restore Zambia's literary heritage that the library had preserved for so many years. We have also made an initial inquiry with the Mel-

ville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University on their Zambian language holdings that we expect will yield more of this “lost” literature.

For now, the books are in PDF format on the Lubuto Collections website, but many of the files are prohibitively large to access by people with limited bandwidth in Zambia. We plan to convert the PDFs to other, more accessible formats on the website, but there remains the barrier of widespread lack of internet connectivity. While we work with our colleagues toward removing those barriers, we downloaded the PDFs onto an iPad, a presentation close to holding the actual original books that has generated great enthusiasm for the project in Zambia.

At a meeting in Lusaka in November 2012 one individual told us of his late grandfather’s extensive collection of these books that had years ago been largely destroyed by a fire in their home. He said he believed his grandmother still had some of them and he said he would ask his Granny about them. From this was born a plan for a campaign called “Ask your Granny!” We hope this idea will allow this technology-based program to promote in-person, cross-generational communication about literature, culture and traditions.

A partnership with the Zambia National Archives has also grown from this effort, and the Archives have taken responsibility for obtaining copyright clearance for the books in the collection. It is hoped that these books will inspire radio programs, plays, adaptation to picture books and other derivative works by contemporary writers and illustrators. Additionally, we have learned of an effort to revive the Zambia Educational Publishing House, the original publisher of many of the materials, which may allow the books to be reprinted on paper and help the publisher get re-established.

Finally, we have seen that preserving this body of literature for young people, to be carried forward in partnership with the Zambia Library Service, has strengthened the image of libraries in Zambia. Libraries there have not offered valuable collections or services in recent decades and thus have not been appreciated or widely used. But now they are seen as connecting a new generation with lost literature. So deeply rooted in Zambian society is this appreciation that the paramount chief of the Bemba-speaking Lunda and Luba people of northern Zambia’s Luapula Province, the Mwata Kazembe, has firmly requested a Lubuto Library to serve his people in Luapula, and the province’s Minister has indicated an intention to pledge constituency funding to support it.

The very same First Republican President Kenneth Kaunda who was behind the loss of the books that at one time were considered such a political threat nearly 50 years ago is still active in Zambia and aware that we are working to bring them back. He has presided at the opening of each Lubuto Library and, on a tour of the contents of our library collections he commented that “we’re still holding on to humanity here.” He, Mulenga Kapwepwe and other past and current leaders now come together in support of Lubuto libraries serving children and teens, preserving cultural identity and diversity for future generations of Zambians.

Member News:

Raymond Pun recently accepted the reference and research services librarian position in New York University in Shanghai, China - their newest global portal campus opening in the fall. After seven years working in the New York Public Library: Stephen A. Schwarzman Building in various roles as a library assistant and librarian, he is ready for this new challenge and opportunity. He can be reached at raypun101@gmail.com. Expect a blog site documenting his life abroad soon!

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