African Libraries Rising?
Leadership and Innovation for Development

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS
1. Overview

Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honoured to address this gathering today at the 3rd African Library Summit and the 1st AfLIA Conference here in my home country of Ghana.

I must say I found the theme of the conference intriguing and uplifting: African Libraries rising – Leadership and Innovation for Development! When I received the invitation from the AfLIA Executive Director, Dr Helena Asamoah-Hassan to give this address I thought how on earth can I do justice to this topic. The rising of libraries itself is a handful and on top of that tackle leadership and innovation for development? Wow! Big homework for me!

However, when I thought through the theme I began to reflect a lot on library development in Africa, and began to see the big opportunities as well. For a start, moving from the information age to the Knowledge Society has made information and knowledge valuable commodities. It has also made knowledge institutions valuable too and libraries are your archetypal knowledge institution. However, it is the advent of the knowledge economy that is propelling library services into new realms. They are also becoming hubs for innovation mainly due to technological innovations. This is because the knowledge economy is underpinned by 4 key factors: 1) that success depends on what you know more than what you own; 2) that value of goods is based on knowledge not material; 3) and there’s a focus on creating and using knowledge, and 4) organisations must adapt or become irrelevant. Librarians as knowledge brokers also must navigate and manage knowledge markets.

So while African libraries are having a rebirth with new levels of advocacy and outreach we need to interrogate their role as knowledge institutions within the context of knowledge societies and knowledge economies. We know for a fact that despite the optimism and enthusiasm our libraries face major constraints in realising their full potential. The challenges include lack of access to technology, skills gap, limited infrastructure and many more issues. However, perhaps the one challenge that crowns it all is that of investments in libraries. Whilst the librarians from richer countries have found ways to deal with such challenges, investments in African libraries remain a huge and daunting challenge. I choose the word investments deliberately because it is not just about funding for projects, but investments in library development, investments in people and in the activities. Without investments how do you rise and how do you innovate?

In this presentation, I use examples from more advanced countries and I make no apologies for that. I believe a world class library does exist in Africa (the Library of Alexandria established in 283 BC) and we are capable of establishing many more. I then give glimpses of innovative leadership and the impact of that, and provide characteristics of an Innovative African Library with some suggestions on the way forward.
2. African Libraries Rising?

Public, Academic and research libraries are available in most countries on the continent offering the traditional service of lending of books and offering a good environment for studying. Yet, it is safe to say that most of them rose from the colonial ashes and inherited from colonial administrations. For instance, the Act that established the Ghana (or Gold Coast Library Services Board was passed in 1949 and became operational in 1950 and became a model for much of the other British colonies. So in effect the Library system was at the time was created with no African input. These libraries represented the knowledge, information and literature of colonial countries and pretty much promoted their publishing companies – MacMillan and Heinemann comes to mind (economic interest) whilst advancing their cultural influence. We read their books and imbibed their values and way of life whilst and yet they archived our knowledge! To quote Leonardo da Vinci: “All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions”.

We became familiar with William Shakespeare, Jane Austen George Elliot, Charles Dickens – people who had been dead for over 500 years, reading their books which were easily available in our African libraries and are still available in many public libraries across this the continent before we read any African writer. Would I be able to find Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart (PPT1)? Or Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s Grain of Wheat? Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe): Nervous Conditions; Mariama Ba’s So Long a Letter? And Nawal El Saadawi Memoirs from a Women’s Prison from any library in Africa? Most of these publications were published abroad so their availability in Africa is a challenge. Yet, I find that our own African classics, history and key information are easily available in libraries in Europe or America than in Africa. Let me give you a few examples:

- There are archival material that shows the Arabic literary tradition of West Africa, which are held by North-West University in the US.
- The British Library’s Ethiopic (Ge'ez) holdings comprise an important collection of about 800 manuscripts dating from 1400 to 2000 AD, and some early printed books.
- The Library’s holdings of books particularly strong in Swahili, Afrikaans, Hausa, Igbo, Somali, Sotho, Xhosa, Yoruba and Zulu.
- Yale University has collections on all of sub-Saharan Africa, which constitutes one of the three largest collections in North America
- Yale’s collections on southern Africa may be unrivaled worldwide.

According to Yale University, their “African Collection is particularly mentioned for the great strength of its holdings of African indigenous languages, which are written in various scripts and represent an impressive portion of languages from the world’s most linguistically diverse continent”.
The British Library also prides itself as having “a rich resource for the study of Africa”. Which library on this continent is equipped to match Yale or the British Library? In this scenario I see a problem here. Why are libraries not mastering their own knowledge?

In actual fact, Africa’s culture, heritage & intellectual property belong to many libraries outside of the continent. The British Library digitized a series of 20th century recordings from Uganda and put them online. It then appeared that the recordings were of Ugandan royal court music – which had disappeared. The British Library gave copies to Makerere University and musicians in that country are now trying to play this unique music once again. So Africa’s knowledge resides elsewhere and given back to us! It’s just like someone giving us back our coffee, tea, cocoa, yams because we could not generate the seedlings and preserves the seeds.

How can this be reversed? Well for a start, we need to begin digitizing our own records. The digitization efforts has been slow with exception of a few countries on this continent. Digitization by itself will enable so much innovation. Today, everyone including librarians wants access to information online, however, there are some thorny issues of intellectual property – rights in in-copyright materials. We need to begin to deal with such issues as IP. A library card today gives more than just access to books and periodicals, because it provides access to the world from home or while on the road or in the office. It also enables the true visionaries of information and knowledge organization and dissemination, namely librarians to become more valuable than ever before.

While many of the duties and responsibilities of librarians have changed over the years, it is still true that they hold the keys to the best and most relevant information available on the planet.

Therefore if libraries are to make an impact on Africa’s development then they will have to undergo what I refer to as the 3 Rs: Re-profiling, Repositioning and Restructuring to meet the needs of their constituents. Re-profiling speaks to a new set of skills that is required; Repositioning is about innovative services, and Restructuring is about re-organising the business of libraries.

This is because technological innovations have altered and continue to alter how knowledge is generated, managed and stored. Libraries as knowledge institutions or hubs have become the gateway to society. Today the products and services that African libraries need to provide are not books alone. Knowledge is on the Internet and even books have succumb to that fact. Knowledge needs to be packaged in different ways and forms by libraries and even marketed differently.

Libraries’ predominantly assist in supporting the education sector, today we have unprecedented challenges the world over and not just in Africa. There is “an education, learning and skills crisis with 60 million primary school-age
children and 71 million adolescents do not attend school”, according to the report of the High-Level Panel (HLP) of Eminent Persons constituted by the UN Secretary-General on the Post 2015 Development Agenda. The report also claims that “among the world’s 650 million children of primary school age, 130 million are not learning the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and a recent study of 28 countries found that more than one out of every three students (23 million primary school children) could not read or do basic maths after multiple years of schooling”.

Specifically in Africa, UNESCO statistics in 2013 showed that 29.8 million children living in sub-Saharan Africa were out of school in 2011. This is half of the total amount – 57 million – of worldwide children who were out of school in 2011.

These statistics speak directly to librarians as well as educationalists. The services of libraries in addressing the challenge of access to education will keep libraries in business for a long time. The digital era means you can innovate in enabling access to knowledge. In re-profiling, repositioning and restructuring, these are some of the factors that should be considered. Entering into alliances with national education services is an imperative. As we all know “library is the delivery room for the birth of ideas, a place where history comes to life”, to quote American author Norman Cousins.

3. Case Studies: Leadership/Innovation

We know that in Africa assessing and communicating value continue to be challenging for all library leaders and decision makers. Traditional input and output performance measures no longer provide sufficient understanding, if they ever did, of how to determine and communicate the value of our libraries to the funding stakeholders in our communities, campuses, corporations, and governments.

African libraries need leadership at various levels and management teams to transform and sustain that transformation for innovation. There are many examples from around the world of how libraries have been transformed through leadership.

Take for example Anthony Marx president and CEO of The New York Public Library. Since 2011 he has worked to expand the Library's essential role as a provider of free educational opportunities for all New Yorkers, focusing on increasing services to students, researchers, and scholars; improving educational programming in NYPL's 87 neighbourhood branches; partnering with the city's Department of Education to increase public school access to critical learning materials; and expanding public access to e-books and other digital resources. He also has an impressive team that lead on various parts of his transformation agenda:

• Chief Library Officer charged with accelerating the Library’s digital initiatives and further strengthening both the research and circulating divisions of the Library.

• Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary who serves as chief legal officer and is responsible for guiding NYPL's legal strategy to enable the Library to achieve its mission.

• Chief Operating Officer, responsible for the Library’s expense and capital budgets, its $1 billion endowment, and all construction projects across the system’s three boroughs as well as oversight over the institution's operational departments, including Finance and Investment, Human Resources, Capital Planning and Construction, Facilities Operations, BookOps and Government Relations.

• Chief External Relations Officer to oversee the Development, Communications and Marketing, and Public Programs groups.

• Vice President for Development to oversee the Library's private fundraising efforts in the areas of Foundations, Corporations, Special Events, Planned Giving, Membership and Individual Giving.

• Vice President for Government and Community Affairs to act as the Library's liaison with elected officials and their staffs at the Federal, State, and City levels. Responsibilities of this portfolio include planning, developing, and implementing strategies for sustaining and increasing government support of the Library and its programs.

• Vice President of Public Service, overseeing the activities and services offered at all of the system's 88 neighborhood branches.

• Vice President for Finance and Strategy to oversees strategic planning, budgeting, and controller functions.

• Vice President of Human Resources at The New York Public Library to support the strategic direction of the institution and its mission for the future.

• Director responsible for collection development, preservation, reference services, fellowship programs, and exhibitions at four world-renowned research libraries.

• Vice President of Communications & Marketing to lead a department that is responsible for informing and educating the public about the Library’s programs, services, plans, and initiatives.

As a result of the kind of leadership put in place at the NYPL, innovative services follow.

The NYPL Labs is an innovation in its own right. It is an interdisciplinary team working to reformat and reposition the Library’s knowledge for the Internet age. Labs combines core digital library operations (digitization, metadata, permissions/reproductions, etc.) with a publicly engaged tech, design, and outreach team focused on enabling new uses of collections and data,
collaborating with users on the creation of digital resources, and applying new technologies to library problem-solving. (PPT2 &3)

There is a fully-fledged eNYPL complete with articles and databases, digital collections, online exhibitions, manuscripts and archives, photos online catalogue, and constantly working on various digital projects. For example with the help of the NYPL labs, the Library is transcribing well-known menus to build a powerful database for culinary and historical research with the help of tens of thousands of online volunteers. Another project publishes 52 works by 19th century African America women writers providing people with access to their writings and thoughts.

The NYPL has also been innovative in partnerships too. For instance, their corporate partners represents a wide range of business interests such as publishing, law, financial services, insurance, advertising, public relations, consumer products, entertainment, pharmaceuticals, high technology, and others. To qualify for Corporate Partners membership, these companies make an annual gift of $1,000 or more to support the Library's vital work. Their gifts have been essential in raising funds to help the Library to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our communities.

Equally inspiring is the latest British Library report, entitled Living Knowledge, which considers what it means to be a national library in a digital age and what the British Library’s role is as one of the UK’s great public assets.“ Living Knowledge sets out the British Library’s vision for its future development as it looks ahead to 2023, the year of its fiftieth anniversary as the national library of the UK. It explains how the Library delivers public value – “in custodianship, research, business, culture, learning and international partnership – and fulfils its mission to make our intellectual heritage accessible to everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment.” The British Library has expanded its client base and they “help businesses to innovate and grow, inspire young people and learners of all ages, whilst working with partners around the world to advance knowledge and mutual understanding”. They measure and generate statistics on their impact:

- In the last three years their reach to school students has grown by 70% to 32,826 for onsite visits and doubled to 3 million for online visits
- Since its creation in 2006 their Business & IP Centre has helped to create an average of 550 businesses and 1,200 jobs per year for the London economy

There is no doubt that Librarians are competent in performing their traditional roles but there is clear evidence in Africa that they also have limitations in the technology related services. As a result we have low skill base on technology services and next to nothing facilities. This requires a new breed of library staff and not just leaders to create and maintain innovative services that would meet the needs of local communities. It is also important for libraries to create and demonstrate their value to the community if they are able to innovate.
I am proud that from Africa we have examples like the National Library of South Africa (PPT4), which has put in place a strong management team. The Library prides itself as a custodian and provider of the nation's key knowledge resources. The National Library's collections contain a wealth of information, and include rare manuscripts, books published in South Africa, periodicals, government publications, official foreign publications, maps, technical reports, Africana and newspapers. Many of these are available on CD or microfilm, in digital format or accessible online. The Library through their Centre for the Book has a unique project which is to reprint books regarded as literary classics in the 9 South African indigenous languages. Members of the public, academics, authors and librarians were invited to nominate books that they consider classics in their respective Indigenous Languages. A panel of literary and publishing experts finalised the list. Just like the British Library and the NYPL the South Africa National Library does exhibitions – an innovative feature of modern libraries.

African libraries online presence has increased several folds with interesting web presence for the likes of the Kenya National Library Service, Mauritius National Library, with some Facebook presences for national libraries. PPT5. Such examples show how African libraries are beginning to innovate but we need to accelerate our efforts.

4. Libraries as innovative agents

Even without the right doses of innovation, libraries are synonymous with support to education and the development process. There is a demonstrative example of a young Malawian boy who borrowed a book on windmills from his local library and as a result learnt how to build an energy-producing turbine for his village and went to study in an Ivy League university in the US.

To be innovative, add value, and produce impact, one must understand the context for the user and also the institutional mission of the provider. Only then can one be strategic.

As starting point, libraries as innovating centres are expected to be entrepreneurial, dynamic and creative and proactively seeking information and feedback from its clients in order to deliver innovative products that improve the lives of the clients. Therefore, must have:

- Well established links with other knowledge generation centres
- A clear delivery mechanism to reach its clientele
- A clear development or business strategy
- A broad funding base
- A strong, competent and independent management team.

Building on the above, certain aspects must be carefully considered:
i. Leadership

Its start with leadership and with the right leadership, innovation needs to permeate the entire library service, which includes: major flagship library projects, wholesale moves from hard copy to digital information or from general services to personalised services.

ii. Developing Innovate Services

There also has to be innovation in some parts of the service such as incremental adaptation across the service, for instance promoting services through media and information literacy classes. Reading books in digital formats is growing, and with it a different kind of publishing industry is developing in more developed countries. Libraries wanting to innovate in Africa should respond to this trend especially documenting our own publications by our local authors, where many of these books are out of print.

iii. Pioneering Role

Some of you here today may say, that is easier said than done but if you want to become innovative you will have to play pioneering roles in the changing technology and publishing landscape and introduce e-book lending for instance.

iv. Custodians of Culture

Libraries the world over are seen as gateways to knowledge and cultures playing a salient role in society. Now more than ever, the resources and services of libraries creates greater opportunities for learning, support literacy and education and help share new ideas and perspectives to a creative and innovative society. At the same time, they also become the knowledge custodians of society keeping authentic records of knowledge creation and accumulated by past generations. Yet, due to resource constraints, these roles are not as visible in Africa as they should be. The first step for an Innovative African Library is to assume that role with gusto! This is because in a world without libraries it becomes difficult to advance research and knowledge and preserve our common heritage.

5. Definition: Innovative African Library

Africa libraries need to adopt distinctive local definitions of purpose – such as focusing on being the guardians of community stories and history and above all offering new services, even to new communities. Libraries need to engage with their communities at a more tangible level beyond providing just information. For instance, they can facilitate community interaction with service providers of health, agriculture, civic education, education, culture and entrepreneurship.

i. Innovation in the professional role

This would be re-examining the core skills required of library staff and including library leaders. Instead of teaching the traditional principles of managing a collection and making it accessible, library education must now explore and encourage innovation in public library processes in Africa.
Librarians must see themselves as Knowledge Managers & Information Managers. Andrew Carnegie once wrote (and most managers agreed with this statement): “The only irreplaceable capital an organization possesses is the knowledge and ability of its people. The productivity of that capital depends on how effectively people share their experience with those that can use it.”

ii. Embrace Technology

The African Library must embrace technology wholeheartedly just so that they serve the communities they represent properly. Libraries are now hubs of technology with over 85 percent offering wireless internet services, and many offering state-of-the-art computers for use in the developed world. Despite the challenges in Internet access African libraries can still make a difference if they work with technologists (IT, software developers etc). IT personnel are now part of the library workforce. They can be used effectively in the introduction of applications to suit the needs of users, especially mobile apps that allow patrons to access library services – here Africa has an advantage. Through technology there can be innovation in library systems – single catalogues over very large areas (regional and national) using cloud data and software, and having a good website!

iii. New Concept of African Libraries

Applying the concept of library in new, relevant ways – for instance library ‘outposts’ in public spaces, eg in transport hubs, airports, market places and shopping centres.

iv. Innovative Partnerships

Form innovative partnerships – with publishers, and other businesses. A relationship with the business world is important, and so is the natural partner of libraries, schools. In addition, due to challenges in technological skills partnerships can be formed with Internet Service Providers and software developers to customise libraries services to suit the different communities you serve. Rural Africa has internet challenges but the use of radio and mobile can be innovative in providing services, whilst online services can be provided to urban dwellers. A partnership with the Government is important, as e-government services increase libraries should work to become outposts for government online services. This kind of collaboration is certain to produce new services, products for libraries as well as create new employment opportunities.

v. Local Knowledge

Use the knowledge base of the communities you represent. Our traditional and local knowledge is not well documented nor properly codified. This lends itself to the Innovative African Library – where our knowledge through our libraries can become ours!
vi. Serve the local Business Community

The availability of vast new online business information resources through public libraries is a vital resource for new entrepreneurs. Whether providing information on regulations associated with incorporating a new business, assisting with business plan development and registration, or helping small businesses access critical information on finance and product databases, local libraries are now providing more business resource information than ever before. In larger communities, with multiple small business support agencies, public libraries are identifying and filling gaps in the formal and informal support networks and are offering specialized services to specific populations or sectors. In smaller communities, libraries are a principal source of information to area micro-, small, and mid-sized businesses. While major corporations will frequently have ready access to information from online sources, small business operators are learning to turn to the library. The potential for libraries to strengthen economic growth and resilience in the micro- and small business sectors is significant. Just as new research shows that students who do not have access to online research cannot compete with students who do, small businesses that do not have the ability to adapt and reposition their businesses with current and detailed online information are at a serious disadvantage in the competitive, global new economy.

viii. Skills Upgrade for Teachers & Librarians

Smart Teachers, Smart Librarians – the upgraded skills of teachers and librarians can unleash tremendous innovation that addresses our African needs. Librarians are natural content creators for e-resources and we need to enable them to step up to the plate. With such upgrades they can add value to learning, knowledge and libraries through new technologies.

What an Innovative African Library looks like is already here with us. Inspired by A US based sustainable architect, entrepreneur and educator currently based Washington, D.C., is looking to build libraries in here in Africa, where only 13 percent of people have an Internet connection. His four-year-old startup, Librii, a name that comes from the root word for book in romance languages, plans to open its first site in Accra later this year. Each Librii will consist of an anchor building that acts as a physical study space and houses collections, an e-hub made from a modified shipping container that contains high-speed computers along with other digital tools and an agora that serves as a public plaza equipped with WiFi. Read more: [http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/building-libraries-along-fiber-optic-lines-in-sub-saharan-africa-180954192/#qDek06Mz37EWHjTW.99](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/building-libraries-along-fiber-optic-lines-in-sub-saharan-africa-180954192/#qDek06Mz37EWHjTW.99)

Librii is a network of physical libraries along the expanding fiber-optic network in the developing world. It is founded on the principle that if you put excellent educational resources into the hands of industrious and ambitious individuals, they can transform their lives and their communities. It is designed to work very much like the Internet. Unlike the historic library, where individuals go to absorb knowledge in a contemplative environment, Librii is a place you go not only to learn but also to create. They intend to use money from philanthropy to
build the library, but activate a series of revenue streams within the library to pay the operating costs. Librii functions as a last-mile service provider linking local users with the Internet, and therefore many cloud-based companies. We believe most of our revenue will come from relationships with web companies, including many advertisers, trying to enter and expand in emerging markets. At the same time, we will also institute a freemium model for users, allowing them affordable access to various Librii offerings at tiered price points. Read more: http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/building-libraries-along-fiber-optic-lines-in-sub-saharan-africa-180954192/#qDek06Mz37EWHjTW.99 (PPT6)

The Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) includes fifteen Knowledge Centers throughout Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The Knowledge Centers, also called Maarifa Centers, help people with day-to-day problems like increasing crop yields, dealing with pests, and accessing health information. It's simple, really -- you get a building (sometimes a shipping container), stock it with books, computers, and an internet connection, and then staff it. The rest is community empowerment. Such centres can also play a role of employment centres in collaboration with government agencies.

Another example of an African-inspired innovation library is Street Library Ghana (SLG) (PPT7) is a volunteer-driven, social enterprise based in Ghana, which aims to promote better life opportunities for children and youth in vulnerable communities by addressing literacy and education issues. SLG offers a cost effective, less intimidating, and welcoming library concept in rural communities to reach vulnerable and underserved children to provide them with access to quality literature. Modes of operation are by mobile van, book kiosk, book chest for community and schools and digital access. The street library model also involves deployment of trained staff or local/international volunteers to actively engage children in activities such as mentorship and leadership training, reading and educational exercises. SLG. SLG is now launching a mobile digital library with the telco TIGO – first of its kind in Ghana for digital inclusion for children in rural areas of the country.

6. Way Forward

In conclusion I would like to offer 7 points that can be considered by AfLIA during this Summit to support the innovative African Library as well as support the continued rise of libraries in Africa.

Investing in Future Leaders

We need new curriculum in library studies, which for instance embraces innovation in libraries as a taught course. We also need leadership courses for African librarians that can enable the transformative and innovative agenda we so badly need.

A good example is the the Centre for African Library Leadership (CALL) established in the Merensky Library of the University of Pretoria, with a grant of $1m awarded to the University of Pretoria Library Services (UPLS) by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) in 2008. The primary and distinct
goal of the CALL is to develop leadership qualities in current and future library managers in the academic, public/community, and national library sectors in South Africa, including South African Carnegie model libraries. Let us try and replicate such initiatives across Africa.

We also need to look at having an exclusive AfLIA African Library Leaders Summit as part of the overall Africa Library Summit. The Leaders’ Summit could be an interactive, intimate experience for senior managers and leaders to discuss new options, including the use of outcome measures with colleagues and industry experts. Sessions would expose leaders to some exciting new projects to develop outcome measures that matter to decision makers. The overall objective would be to explore a number of models and tools and share current research and practices of different libraries and communities.

I also urge AfLIA to introduce African Leadership fellowship programmes focused on innovation. Such fellowships would also promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future. In addition, it would build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues.

**Link schools and public libraries**

Given the challenges of investments in African libraries, some innovative thinking needs to take place in their survival and sustainability. For instance, national libraries need to enter into a pact with national educational services and link schools with national/public libraries. Rural libraries are indispensable in this regard especially working with schools in rural areas to support the delivery of education, especially where text books are scarce. Furthermore, national libraries can also link up with specialist libraries such as medical school libraries or Law Libraries for greater reach.

**Promote libraries through radio**

African libraries can work with radio stations to produce programmes that promote the use of libraries, get feedback from citizens and help create awareness of what they can offer the communities they serve. This is especially important in rural areas where rural libraries can go into partnership with radio stations, community stations to provide content and programmes. Whilst national and academic libraries can consider digitization, rural libraries can also consider providing cassette books where books are read and taped for local communities and schools. Apart from using radio to create awareness on key issues facing the communities,

**Gamification & Libraries**

Turning reading and library use into a ‘game’. Exploiting game dynamics is still a developing area of library services – points- or sticker-based reward schemes are only one aspect of a much wider concept. For instance, the Lemontree game at Huddersfield university library is based on a social media model to encourage library use, as well as online interaction between students.
and staff. Students link their library card to Lemontree to become players and their library activity – for example returning books, or logging in to an e-resource – is then automatically logged and earns Lemontree points. The Lemontree website shows players their progress towards rewards and incentives, and includes a departmental leader board. The site also links into social media such as Facebook and allows users to interact, for example through recommending material to each other. Lemontree has been developed as part of the university’s IT and library service, and is currently being trialled and evaluated.

**Partnerships with Information/Knowledge/Telecentres in Rural Areas of Africa**

With information centres spreading throughout Africa and local community radio stations libraries need to enhance their partnerships with rural constituents. It is important for larger libraries to support telecentres and rural libraries to expand their reach and enhance rural dwellers access to knowledge through a series of collaborator innovative activities.

**Foster National & International Partnerships**

For instance, do our rural libraries carry the Kindle e-reader from online company Amazon that is helping address the chronic shortage of textbooks in Ghana. The Kindle provides children access to 140 titles, including textbooks. The Kindles have been distributed to this school as part of the iRead 2 programme of Worldreader, a charity organisation that is trying to eradicate illiteracy by delivering the largest culturally relevant library to people. There are similar Worldreader initiatives throughout Africa. Are libraries part of these initiatives?

**Introduce rankings for African Libraries**

Finally we must introduce metrics and measurements to the growth or non-growth of our libraries. By developing some straightforward indicators, AfLIA can introduce rankings for African libraries in terms of their transformation capabilities and progress, examine their resource diversification trends and the kinds of services they provide to their constituencies, including their ability to innovate. Collection of library statistics in Africa is at best inconsistent. There is no standard on the type of library statistics to be collected, no shared position on how data must be collected, analyzed, presented and applied. Furthermore, there is a wide gap in the type and frequency of statistics between technologically advanced libraries and those less fortunate, as well as no national or regional African databases of comparative library statistics available. We need to change this and improve on how we measure the progress on libraries. This will go a long way in raising standards in this sector.

In my view if these ideas are explored, we would not only rise but soar!

I thank you for your kind attention and delighted once again to be here!

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2 Go to [www.worldreader.org](http://www.worldreader.org)