Supporting Societies' Needs: a Model Framework

for Developing Library Policy

Case study - Namibia in a Knowledge Based Economy: a renewed policy towards Vision 2030

Preface

The attached case study has been included as part of a six-month research project leading to the development of a framework for library policy for which the following key activities were included:

- desk research leading to preparation of a background paper on the history and current best practice in preparation of library policy[1];

- development of case studies to illustrate forward-thinking/innovative national or sub sector library policy[2];

- development of a draft library policy framework;

- facilitation of consultative meetings and workshops to discuss and finalize documents;

- publication of a model framework for library policy[3].

The Namibia case study was first published as the Executive Summary to the final MDR/NIDA Consultancy Report ***Supporting peoples' needs: a renewed library and information policy framework for Vision 2030,*** 2011

---

[1] NIDA *Supporting societies' needs: developing a model framework for library policy: Part 1: Background* , 10pp, 2011

[2] NIDA *Case Studies of best practice in library policy: Colombia, Finland, Namibia, New Zealand,* 2011

[3] NIDA *Model Framework for Library Policy,* 2011

Supporting peoples' needs in Namibia's Knowledge Based Economy: a renewed library and information policy framework for Vision 2030

1. The need for a renewal of policy in the library and information sector

This document represents a necessary renewal of the previous policy framework for Libraries and Allied Information Agencies, *Information for Self-Reliance and Development*, which was published in 1997. During the ensuing years, far-reaching changes have taken place in the national and global environment affecting the provision of library and information services, not least the emergence and widespread adoption of the results of the Internet revolution, which have changed the context in which such services are designed and delivered forever. Nevertheless, fundamental developmental principles for libraries and information services represented in that document remain as relevant today as they were at that time: Access; Equity; Quality; and Democracy. The document is applicable to services run by the government and those operated independently of government.

National objectives and the role of libraries and information services

In recent years Namibia has produced a new strategy for national development, *Vision 2030,* reflected in both its national development programme (NDP3) and in the ETSIP programme for the education sector, the strategic objectives of which are: equity, quality, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, economic growth and a pro-poor approach.

In all, prominence is given to the development of a Knowledge-based economy and society, arising from an effective education and training system, 'value-added services' and innovation. This strategy calls for Namibia to improve the quality of life of Namibians to the level of developed countries by the year 2030. These strategic initiatives provide, both explicitly and implicitly, exciting opportunities for library and information services to contribute to the achievement of Namibia's national goals in the specific context of a Knowledge-based economy.

Vision 2030 promotes an environment where good governance and democracy prevails. Regional integration and decentralisation are key to these goals. Effective provision of information and learning for all is, more than ever, at the very heart of Namibia's continued development. However, the fulfilment of these opportunities also requires a willingness and capacity within the LIS sector to adapt some of its traditional policies and priorities in the light of changing circumstances in order to address the challenges to be met, some of which are quite severe.

Major objectives of a national strategy for Namibia's libraries

By 2030, it is likely that the great majority of content will be created, stored, preserved, managed, accessed and consumed digitally. Many more people will have access to digital content through their own, personal ICT devices. The pervasive availability of abundant bandwidth at affordable cost, e.g., through the advent in Namibia of undersea cable technology, will remove most connectivity problems for everyday purposes.

The competences and training of staff involved with 'intermediary' institutions such as libraries will need to develop to reflect these changes and to include skills in areas such as content creation, data curation, interoperability, online user assistance and interaction and information and media literacy. Policies should also seek to empower users to take advantage of these broad trends and to develop independence in knowledge acquisition behaviours. Considerable care will however be needed in the 20-year transition period until 2030 to manage these 'hybrid' services as they develop, in a way that ensures continuous inclusion of people who may be disadvantaged with respect to the 'digital divide'.

Namibia currently has a network of library and information centres, and these have been expanded to provide better coverage of previously disadvantaged regions. The network consists of national, special/scientific, academic, school and community libraries, and includes the National Archives.

Strategic consideration of the role of libraries in the future of Namibia is chiefly manifest within the education sector and through the ETSIP programme. Key areas of education development in which library and information services are identified as having a vital role include General Education, Early Childhood Development, Tertiary Education, Vocational Training and, perhaps above all, Adult and Lifelong Learning.

It is however also important to take into consideration the potential of libraries of all kinds to play a critical enabling role in support of national priorities as expressed in Vision 2030 and interpreted in NDP 3 that fall outside the education sector but for which the whole of the information sector should play a significant role including: a knowledge-based economy and technology-driven nation; a competitive economy; productive and utilization of natural resources and environmental sustainability; use of up-to-date knowledge for technological and scientific development); equality and social welfare; and quality of life.

An Information Gap exists between rural and urban areas of Namibia. Among the reasons for this are multiple combinations of poverty, uneven infrastructure and lack of access to facilities such as libraries, physical isolation in the light of the country's very widely distributed population, low rates of the various 'literacies' (information, digital, media etc) that are necessary to consume and interpret information resources, and a lack of material written in the multiple indigenous languages used by communities across the country.

Among the major objectives of a national strategy for libraries, the following are areas where an important contribution may be foreseen: strengthening the policy and legal framework for knowledge and lifelong learning; improving the quality and effectiveness of knowledge management systems; improving and strengthening equitable access to information and learning resources to ensure economic and social empowerment for communities and individuals; establishing public ICT access through the nationwide library network; improving access to and usage of both national and globally-sourced information, through digital libraries and knowledge management systems; supporting resource-based education; supporting open and distance study opportunities; facilitating information and media and ICT literacies; promoting e-governance; and democratising the availability of knowledge by pursuing the implementation of internationally recognised standards for open access to scientific information and open government data.

2. Key strategic elements

Co-ordination, leadership and marketing the sector: the *Namibian Library and Information Council (NLIC)* will continue to advise the Minister of Education, who is in turn responsible for oversight of the work of the Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS). A clear articulation of the relationship between and respective responsibilities of NLIC and NLAS and professional bodies such as the Namibian Information Workers Association (NIWA) will be established.

Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS) will continue to act as a focal point for the development of library and information services in Namibia by providing leadership and up to date expert guidance, research and support to library and information services of all kinds. The potential benefits of decentralisation and local 'ownership' in terms of ensuring quality and relevance of services are widely acknowledged. Every effort will be made by NLAS to ensure their achievement, for example by advising on budgetary provision and by providing necessary guidance support for the selection, procurement and processing of library and information resources, the deployment of technologies and the development of human capacity. To ensure success, NLAS will focus on core activities critical to developing, promoting and supporting an overall strategy for libraries and information and, in the general context of decentralisation, will devolve some elements of its current implementation work to people working in the field.

Legislation: the *Namibia Library and Information Services Act* enacted in 2000, established the framework under which libraries in Namibia operate today. The provisions of this will be reviewed during 2011, after one decade of its existence, taking into account relevant legislation in neighbouring fields such as copyright and research policy. Among the important issues to be reviewed are: the current provisions for Legal Deposit and their implementation, including their extension to electronic and non-book publications; Open Access/Open Data (government and scientific); the constitution of the Namibian Library and Archives Service in the context of the role of decentralised government and independent institutions; and the possible need to establish a legal obligation upon local and regional authorities to provide a community library service, together with financial support mechanisms to enable this.

Human resources: meeting the *needs of users* is the paramount goal of library and information services of all kinds and the reason for their existence. This will require enhanced endeavours by all library and information services in Namibia to discover what those needs – both recognised and latent – actually are and to understand them in the context of the significantly different cultural, economic and social characteristics of the regions of Namibia. An accurate understanding of user needs (together with those of non-users in the target population) is an essential prerequisite for the design and delivery of library and information services to provide value for money. Effort is also needed, during the design and implementation stages in evaluating objectively over time whether the needs of the population have been met and what impact has been made on the lives of users.

Libraries continue to play a significant role in the area of literacy support by providing reading material of interest to users at various stages of literacy in print, electronic and multimedia formats. During the last decade or so, patterns of public knowledge acquisition have broadened to the point where digital literacy has become an important component skill for learning more widely and a vital prerequisite for the broader attainment of information literacy. Libraries around the world have built success increasingly by providing access, training and support for the use of information in digital form, increasingly available in huge quantities via the Internet.

Libraries and Information services can be expected to contribute to improvements in educational performance including higher completion and lower drop-out rates as a result of the access they provide to modern communication methods together with guidance and up-to-date study materials, supported by skilled human resources.

Important categories of users to which improved information provision will be targeted include: *Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)*, which will be a key economic driver, for example, in service sectors such as tourism in pursuit of Vision 2030 and to achieve growth in employment and which currently experience acute difficulty in accessing necessary information about finance, regulation, support and market opportunities; *decision-makers* in government and economic activity, who need improved and timely (on-demand) access to information resources in electronic format; *students* of all ages using Open and Distance Learning modalities; *researchers, scientists* and others working in key areas of innovation; *rural and urban poor and disadvantaged* communities and social groups.

Human resources: sufficient qualified human capacity is central to the achievement of all policies for the Library and Information sector, as it is with other sectors. An adequate supply of skilled people, good education and training, job responsibility, satisfaction and motivation, remuneration, employment conditions and career advancement opportunities are all vital and interrelated aspects. Since independence, Namibia has suffered from problems in several of these areas, and this is constraining critically the contribution that library and information services can make to a knowledge-based economy. Relatively little progress has been made in this respect since the 1997 Policy document, and in some ways the position has deteriorated.

In several library and information sectors, numbers and deployment of both professional and other staff are often inadequate to deliver existing services, especially taking into account the need to cover for sickness and other absences. These conditions make innovation and the development of new services in response to user needs very difficult. Early attention will be applied to three key service areas where more appropriate staff structure and job specifications for LIS activity are needed: Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS); Regional library services; Ministerial libraries.

Both pre-service education and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of in-service staff remain vital and complementary necessities for an effective workforce and job satisfaction. Whilst the University of Namibia still trains librarians and records managers and thereby provides a flow of 'intake' for the sector, not all of those who graduate from such courses are seen as suitable for employment.

A substantial investment in local, regional and international training for Namibians in the libraries, archives and information fields, including scholarships for those studying at higher levels, is an important requirement. The LIS curriculum and courses of study provided by UNAM will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that they are aligned with Namibia's needs, taking into close account the views of employers across the broad library and information sector and the need for continuing professional education to address, for example, developments in applications of ICT to the LIS sector, skills in scientific documentation etc. At the same time, NLAS, working with UNAM, will provide stronger coordination of in-service training provision among all providers from public, private and non-governmental sectors and will encourage increased diversity of training provision.

Difficulties of recruitment to and retention of staff in LIS posts, other than those in the autonomous tertiary education institutions, are evident in high levels of turnover and numbers of vacant posts. Grading equivalences – and consequently levels of pay – have been inappropriately established right across the spectrum from Head of Service to Library Assistant and are self-evidently insufficient to prevent staff from taking jobs outside the sector as soon as an opportunity presents itself. Career structures and consequently advancement for those working in the sector are constrained by the low ceiling for professional grades. Commitments will be sought from government that sufficient remuneration and incentives are offered to qualified personnel to ensure that they are retained in key posts and do not find that they need to leave the field, once they have been trained.

Job designations for posts that fall under NLAS responsibility will be reviewed regularly with a view to linking their grading more appropriately to jobs in other sectors and thereby improving remuneration prospects. Budgetary provision at national and regional levels will be sought to enable this. A more differentiated and specialised career structure will be established to support improved promotion prospects and to enable job mobility by ensuring that staff who have acquired appropriate training can be identified for each post.

A limited number of people are currently willing to take up jobs outside Windhoek. Some flexibility may be needed to ensure that motivated and able people are available to fill library posts in the regions where it proves difficult to identify LIS qualified personnel. Such an approach, while not ideal, is preferable to leaving posts vacant for long periods of time.

The Namibian Information Workers Association (NIWA) strives to improve the terms and conditions of service and the training and employment opportunities of all who work in the library and information sector. NIWA will be further recognised and utilised as a channel to improve two-way communication between NLIC, NLAS and the library profession, e.g., by establishing more formalised liaison mechanisms and developing an agenda for consultation in areas such as curriculum review, pay and conditions.

Information resources for library and information services: libraries, including those covering rural areas, working in partnership with the responsible government departments and agencies will play a central role in disseminating knowledge needed by individuals and communities. Key subject areas of information needed for social and economic development include that for: community development including day-to-day 'survival' information; agricultural and rural development; SME development; education and literacy for all levels of the education system; tourism development; health; the environment; technology; and legal and government information.

The information that people need and libraries could provide is available in an increasingly wide array of formats. Image and sound-based resources, for example, may in many cases prove more useful than text-based resources.

A strategy of collaboration: on the one hand between NLAS and relevant line ministries or other information producers for the effective 'packaging' of content; and on the other hand regional community libraries for its delivery, will be implemented to ensure a consistently updated supply of information in appropriate forms (including oral form where appropriate) to people who need it. Libraries and information centres run by NGOs and the private sector also play an important role in addressing the information needs of poorer people in rural communities

The Government of Namibia, working where appropriate with international partners, will undertake adequate planning and funding to provide the resources that libraries need to provide services appropriate to a knowledge economy, including: an increased supply of new books, multimedia and information materials in all languages used by Namibians, (including up-to-date scientific and technical information and government publications and data concerning Namibia) in order to make access easily available countrywide.

Donations of books, resources and equipment have in the past played an important role in building up libraries, including those in schools. Although most such donations are well-intentioned, the quality and relevance of resources received by this means are inevitably mixed. This can lead to a waste of storage space and of staff and user time and effort in Namibia. NLAS will establish and promote among libraries of all kinds policies which emphasise the development of productive relationships with only well-founded and painstaking providers of high quality resources which are relevant to established user needs and will support intended recipient organisations in gratefully declining and/or disposing of such donations where these criteria are not met.

Namibian content: the position in terms of content production in national languages is very fragmented. There is insufficient Namibian language content available to match national policy goals and, in some languages, a shortage of readily identifiable authors and creators. Materials currently available in Namibian languages for purchase in the market do not reflect the needs of all age groups.

Work will be undertaken to develop an implementable national policy on content creation by reviving and updating previously extant cross-sectoral fora to form a Content Development Council, involving publishers and digitisation agencies such as NLN and NAN to develop a plan of action, consider means of attracting funding and put proposals to government. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) on content created by Namibian people, especially in the digital environment, will be addressed. The establishment of a national policy on Digitisation and a consequent Action Plan will be one of the outcomes of this work.

Increased efforts will be made to capture indigenous knowledge, culture and history, recognising that much of this is now available only in oral form, at local level and in Namibian languages. The contribution of User Generated Content in digital format by members of the community will play an important role in recording the culture and history of Namibia. Utilisation of popular devices such as cellphones can play a useful role in this. A policy and action plan designed to stimulate the supply and re-use of this type of content, protected by appropriate copyright provision, will be developed. The development of web-based content management and a range of portal-style discovery channels will be pursued actively as part of this plan.

Funding: libraries in Namibia are, in most cases, inadequately funded to provide the services that their user communities need. The 1997 policy document drew attention to the unworkability of incremental funding based on expenditure in previous years and to the desirability of basing budgets on agreed planning assumptions for service delivery. This remains the case.

A recent economic analysis of the Library and Information Service Sector recommended a minimum annual increase of N$ 22.8 million by Government on the library services supported by NLAS. Although substantial in terms of existing library funding, this amount would require the transfer of an extremely small amount within the education budget to libraries. Actual expenditure on libraries currently accounts for about 0.75% of the Ministry of Education's budget (a proportion that has also been falling). Budget execution (the actual expenditure of available funds) will be improved as one important contribution to the effective use of available funds.

Responsibility for deciding and executing budgets is likely to shift somewhat over the forthcoming years to regional and institutional levels. It will be important that decisions on budget allocations to libraries, which are sometimes made in competition with local services or priorities of other kinds, are based on well-researched information regarding the costs of delivering service models of different kinds, supported by suitable 'funding formulae' designed to achieve equity of provision over time in all regions and localities of Namibia. It is likely that financial provision for library and information services in the regions will mainly be achieved by convincing those able to make funding decisions at regional level of the value of these services. The provision of suitable evidence, guidance and advocacy in this area will be a major priority for NLAS and NLIC as will the monitoring of outcomes.

ICT: the opportunities now available to improve the delivery of information services through effective deployment of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are enormous and critical to success. Namibia lags well behind in the implementation of good practice in this area. Significant and rapid progress is required in order to create the conditions in which the goals of Vision 2030 for a Knowledge Based Economy become feasible and the 'digital divide' and inequalities in access to ICTs and information can be redressed.

Successful approaches to distance learning and the provision of information for development now require access to the Internet and appropriate digital content resources. This in itself indicates a strong case for an effective and well-resourced library and information network structure, involving expansion of ICT access points available to the people of Namibia. A number of important national ICT initiatives, with relevance and potential for libraries, are at various stages of implementation, under the aegis of different government departments. Every effort will be made to leverage these resources and to optimise the contribution of libraries through the implementation of such initiatives. The roll out of Internet connectivity to all libraries is underway. The resolution of most serious technical 'teething troubles', including the replacement of dial-up in rural areas, will be pursued by all stakeholders in the period to 2015.

A new strategy on ICT deployment in the library and information sector will be developed and implemented by NLIC and NLAS respectively and will cover the following issues, among others: stimulating and facilitating the creation of websites, digital libraries, repositories and portals to improve access to scientific and other content resources held by distributed content holders nationally and internationally; increasing availability of facilities for producing digital content and for digitising analogue content throughout Namibia; expanding affordable and fast internet connectivity infrastructure to all libraries accompanied by appropriate ICT equipment and communications tools to enable access to content and distance learning; and utilising popular social networking tools for the communication of knowledge.

3 . Policies for individual library and information sectors

The ability of the *National Library of Namibia* **(NLN)** to provide the services that are standard requirements of national libraries around the world has been depleted in recent years by human capacity factors. A vision-driven recovery plan will be created, designed to enable Namibia's national library to carry out its rightful role in providing dynamic leadership for the library and information sector and to contribute to the goals of Vision 2030, not least in the utilisation of ICT and digital resources. This will require a significant increase in resources and the effective tackling of human capacity issues.

NLN will support other libraries in Namibia in so far as its resources allow and will cooperate with other libraries and the National Archives in order to minimise overlap and duplication of work and collections and to play an appropriate part in new initiatives, e.g., in the area of digitisation and national portal development.

The *National Archives of Namibia* (NAN) is the country's major repository of expertise in digitization. However, NAN is suffering from similar challenges in regard to professional human capacity as those that affect the library and information sector in general. Substantial investment in Namibia's archives and, in particular, in digitisation and digital preservation activities ('digital curation') will be sought in order to utilise their enormous underlying potential in a Knowledge-Based Economy. NAN, in addition to its more traditional and statutory roles will participate strongly, in cooperation with other agencies, in the development of a national plan for digitisation, including the creation of a national digital library – 'Namibiana' – designed to meet the needs of learners, researchers and industry (e.g., tourism) in the digital economy.

Specialised and research libraries. The results of much research in and about Namibia are often little known and therefore under-utilised. The need for improved access is rapidly becoming visible in the need for specialised, up to date information on a daily basis by those involved, for example in: planning and implementing government projects, national development across all sectors; and research and development. The network of specialised and research libraries managed both by government Ministries and by non-governmental bodies has a vital role in to play in enabling Vision 2030 by strengthening its work in the collection, management and provision of access to both knowledge and data created through research about Namibia; and global information relevant to Namibians, increasingly available in electronic formats.

Increased synergies will be sought by creating a national scientific information network in key areas of the economy, technical advancement and social and cultural development. This network will provide an active planning forum to address key practical issues such as the establishment of resource sharing initiatives including joint cataloguing/metadata creation, information databases and repositories and the development of portal-style access initiatives, complementing work underway in the research information environment.

Ministerial and other specialised libraries and information services, such as the Library of Parliament and those of non-governmental institutions will: wherever possible, make their information resources and data available for use by researchers, students, professionals, the business community and the general public to support national development and cooperate with other libraries, e.g., regional community libraries, in packaging and distributing key information of use to the public.

Responsibility and budget for the staffing of Ministry libraries (as well as for operational costs, as at present) will be transferred back in an orderly manner to the parent institution concerned in order to enable the recruitment of appropriately qualified, graded and remunerated information specialists, including library managers, who are able to 'hold their own' within the organisation's structures.

Community libraries have the potential to serve a wide variety of the information and learning needs of people living and working across the whole of Namibia and to contribute strongly to their economic empowerment. However, the future of community libraries in a decentralised country depends on their development as a more comprehensive local institution designed to meet a full range of relevant local community needs for information, education, inspiration and communication.

Access to computers, for example, for word processing and Internet access, is one of the main attractions of public libraries around the world today. Despite current programmes of provision, the computers in Namibian libraries (where there are any at all) tend to be quite old and often out of service.

The need for adequate and comfortable study space – and resources such as textbooks – for young people, is also a major driver of the use of community libraries outside school hours. Given the domestic conditions under which many students struggle to study, these needs remain an important factor in library provision and point strongly to a need to extend opening hours in order to maximise access. Despite progress since 1997, there remains a need for a better and more equitable coverage of Community Library 'service points'. Many growth centres (villages, settlements, even towns), especially in the previously disadvantaged regions, do not have libraries. Optimal coverage of the population in terms of access to knowledge is the key goal.

Continued progress will therefore be sought towards the establishment of community libraries as: a combined access point to learning resources at all levels of education and for open and distance learning students of all kinds; a conduit for information generated by government departments, NGOs and elsewhere, functioning as a service point to expand access to materials normally only available in Windhoek; a place where well-qualified and skilled staff provide guidance and support on information retrieval, study methods, information for everyday life , opportunity resources and ICT use; an attractive destination for children and families; and a provider of 'outreach' services to the whole community.

This approach involves an expansion of the role of the main community library of each region to become the regional hub of a network of all the library and information services in the region concerned, including its multi-purpose Community Library services. The initial model for this will be the three "Regional Study and Resource Centres" (RSRCs) funded under the national Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) programme.

The importance of local 'ownership' makes effective decentralisation potentially the single most critical longer term ingredient in the future success of Namibian community libraries. Responsibility for both the operational costs and staffing of community libraries will become a regional responsibility in line with national decentralisation policy. Partnership with related initiatives such as those in adult education will be a necessary feature of this approach.

A stronger basis for resolving cost and human resource capacity challenges of access to learning and information will be sought by encouraging coordination of national funding resources to establish a more complete and complementary network of access points, including community library hubs in each region and involving outreach or support facilities provided by bodies such as NAMCOL, NIED, the Polytechnic of Namibia, UNAM, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies and NIPAM.

School libraries/media centres, BIS and resources for teachers. Exposure to a good school library/media centre provides young people with information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. Using a school library helps deliver resource-based learning and can lead to improved educational performance, equipping students with lifelong learning skills and tools to develop the imagination and helping them to develop the habits of critical thinking and to become effective users of information throughout their lives.

Substantial improvements in the current situation are needed to make this possible in Namibia. Progress towards the goals set out in the 1997 Policy Framework has been slow. According to the NLAS Baseline Study conducted in 2007/8, most schools do not have functional library facilities. At regional level, provision is seldom made for BIS or school library Advisory Teachers, leading to a situation of neglect and prioritisation of other, promotional subjects. Current staffing norms and the overloading of teachers with examination subjects contribute to a situation whereby the school libraries and the contribution they could make to the ETSIP policy of resource-based learning are frequently overlooked. Funds for books and resources are grossly inadequate: it is estimated that current annual provision of central funds by NLAS pays for approximately five books per school per year.

An effective school library reflects the needs of its population and is fully integrated into the school's educational programme. The design of the school library facility plays a major role in how well the programme services the school. The school library should create a welcoming atmosphere together with a desire for learners and staff to spend time within it. There should be enough space for individual activities, small groups, large groups, story times, and computer use.

A pragmatic approach to improving the current situation will be followed, taking into account local feasibility criteria. It remains an important goal that every school have access to appropriate curriculum-related information media and facilities, whether within the school itself or shared with other schools or the community, e.g. through community libraries, and that every school library be staffed by a qualified teacher librarian. A focus will therefore be placed upon developing the pre- and in-service teacher training curricula in order to enable a teacher-librarian in each school to manage school media resources as a means of supporting the whole curriculum and to ensure that an adequate supply of teachers is available to deliver BIS as a non-promotional subject.

Higher education libraries. Namibia currently has two major academic libraries, within UNAM and the Polytechnic of Namibia, respectively. They are autonomous institutions funded mainly by government. Their libraries are run along well-established lines for a modern academic library, mainly to support the information and learning resource needs of students and teaching staff.

The student population has increased significantly since the millennium. Combined with a continuing 'open door' policy, this requires investment in library spaces, facilities and information resources needed to enable learning, study and research. A large percentage of the student and user population comes from disadvantaged backgrounds and lacks basic orientation in the library and information seeking skills needed to study effectively at higher education level. National efforts to improve education performance at school level will take some time to impact on this situation.   A level of a funding will therefore be sought from institutional authorities which takes into account changes in the number of students and other users served and in access to the type of services and resources they need, to be calculated as a percentage of total institutional budget that is reflected by good practice in the region and globally.

UNAM and the Polytechnic libraries are currently the main licence holders for international electronic resources in Namibia and can in future be expected to play a leading role in the establishment of national consortium-purchasing arrangements, benefiting and improving the resources available to students, researchers, teachers and professionals throughout the country.