



The Role of the Library in Actualising United Nation Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa

Olawumi O. Sadare ,¹ Kapil Moothi¹  & Michael O. Daramola² 

¹University of Johannesburg

²University of Pretoria

Abstract

This chapter critically reflects on the potential roles of South African libraries in facilitating the actualisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). The implemented UN 2030 Agenda is all-encompassing, facilitating financial, environmental, and communal growth. The attainment of these SDGs will be via an inclusive agenda, leaving no-one behind. Libraries are major institutions that could assist universities to achieve the SDGs by playing a critical role in research and education. The society that is privileged to have unlimited, but controlled access to information will do well in eliminating inequity, in developing sustainable strategies for food security, in adopting quality inclusive education, and in supporting public health. In addition, the society will place more value on research and innovations. To achieve the purpose of this study, a critical review of literature was conducted. Therefore, this chapter highlights some expectations of librarians during this era of knowledge economy. It also highlights possible challenges that libraries could be facing in meeting such expectations due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this chapter emphasises the significance of the government's partnerships and national support to realise the inclusion of access to information, and individual access to information and communication technology in the UN 2030 Agenda. Additionally, suggestions on how the government can support libraries in meeting its expectations towards attaining the SDGs, are recommended. Conclusively, effective partnerships have become a crucial part of library management in the attainment of the SDGs.

Keywords: Challenges; library; Sustainable Development Goals; access to information; Covid-19 pandemic



Introduction

In 2015, the entire globe embraced a set of goals to put an end to poverty, to safeguard the earth, and to ensure prosperity. 17 goals that could stimulate sustainable development were put forward and approved. Each goal has a target of achievement over 15 years (Bárcena, Cimoli, García-Buchaca, Yáñez, & Pérez 2018:5). The commitment of the private sectors, the government, civil society, and individuals is required to ensure the attainment of these adopted goals. For the development of any nation, there is a need for the provision of appropriate, rationalised, and sufficient information on education, food, health, security, gender equality, democracy, etc. Therefore, libraries can make provision for such access to information that would facilitate a productive living of people. Nevertheless, it is essential for people to be experienced at recognising, attaining, consolidating, offering for use, and openly preserving materials regardless of the form in which it is packaged so that it is accessible when needed (Ukubeyinje & Ejitagh 2019:270).

There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that target the eradication of poverty and food shortage and make provision for good health, gender inequality, decent jobs, good education, economic development, and partnerships amid global communities. These SDGs are illustrated in Figure 1. The world's severest challenges are responded to by these goals. The purpose of the SDGs is to advance people's lives by expanding their choices, free will, and self-esteem (Mojapelo 2018:1). The SDGs of the United Nations (UN) identify the interdependence between development, poverty elimination, and sustainable growth so that realising one of them can be anticipated to contribute to accomplishing others. For instance, the eradication of poverty would definitely assist in dealing with wellbeing and education challenges. Likewise, attaining the health and education goals would also play a vital role in combatting poverty.



Figure 1: The 17 SDGs (Porfiris, 2020).

A concerted effort is required from the government and other role players in order to achieve the SDGs. This is to ascertain that the goals are attained through coordinated, focussed, and sustained approaches.

The library is a key agent of transformation, capable of promoting development and social transformation through the provision of valuable library and information services such as the provision of easy access to information, the preservation of information sources, storage facilitation and information retrieval, as well as literacy advocacy. The library services could enhance the actualisation of the SDGs. Against this background, the purpose of this chapter is to facilitate a discourse around the roles of libraries in facilitating the actualisation of the SDGs by supporting the universities and the government initiatives tailored at achieving the SDGs. This chapter therefore critically outlines and redirects its readers on the potential role of libraries in supporting the SDGs, and invigorate the expectations of librarians during this period of knowledge acquisition. It is anticipated that librarians would make public access to information easier, preserve information sources, facilitate storage, and retrieve information, as well as advocate literacy. It also highlights challenges which libraries could be facing in meeting such expectations as a result of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, while possible solutions are proffered.

This chapter also redirects the major importance of government's partnerships and national support to realise the inclusion of access to information, public access to information and communication technology (ICT) and the cultural heritage in the UN 2030 Agenda. Lastly, future viewpoints on how governments can provide support to libraries in attaining the 17 SDGs are suggested. As such, the SDGs can be used by university libraries as a benchmarking tool/mechanism as well as challenging established flexible objectives associated with the UN 2030 Agenda.

South Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable development is the growth that meets the desire of the current generations without conceding the capability of upcoming generations to meet their own needs (Sustainable Development Commission 2011). Sustainable development that is applicable and fitting to the South African framework will involve communal and accelerated advancement. It will also involve directed interventions and public deployment to eliminate scarcity, and ascertain the sustainable utilisation of our natural resources and ecosystem facilities.

In South Africa, sustainable development concepts have been incorporated into the law. The National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998 defines sustainable development as the incorporation of social, economic, and environmental factors into the planning, implementation,

and decision-making for current and upcoming generations (National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998:7). Hence, the primitive perception of sustainable development is dependent on two major points, namely fairness within generations and between generations, and upholding the integrity of natural, financial, and human capital to ensure that economic and social growth are resolved with the environmental safety (UNDP 2003). Figure 2 illustrates a systematic approach to sustainability based on the fact that the ecosystem, socio-political system, and the economic system are entrenched within each other, and then united through the governance system that embraces all the other systems together within a valid monitoring framework.

Sustainability is explained by the compatible combination of these systems over a period of time. It also implies ensuring that these systems remain mutually compatible, as the key development challenges are accomplished through particular actions and interventions to eliminate lack and severe disparities (DEA 2014:73). This is better than the widely used image of the three isolated intersecting circles which describe sustainable development as restricted to a crumbly space where all three circles meet (DEA 2014:73).

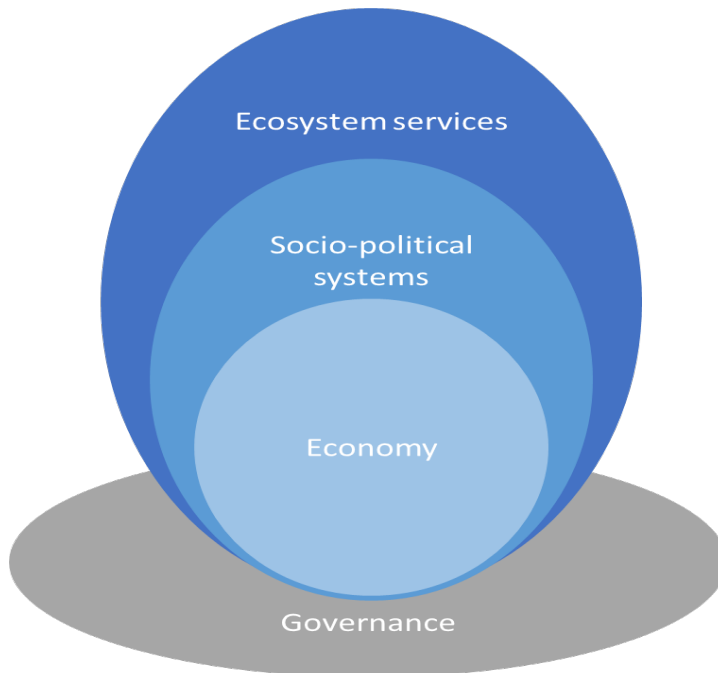


Figure 2: System economic, socio-political and ecosystem approaches to sustainability (personal archive; adapted and modified from DEA 2014:73).

The realisation of the process of a national framework for sustainable development is highly dependent on the stakeholders' involvement. The review process has been complicated and monotonous, like the policy that it appraises (DEA 2014:191). Involvement is ensued via a variety of approaches, such as interviews, well-thought-out multistakeholder workshops, publicity campaigns, facilitated focus groups, professional research-based ideas, written submissions, and academic panel reviews (DEA 2014:191). Feedbacks are received from government organisations, industry, workforce, research societies, professional bodies, and the public, desiring to contribute to development. Figure 3 illustrates the methodology involved in generating a national framework for sustainable development.

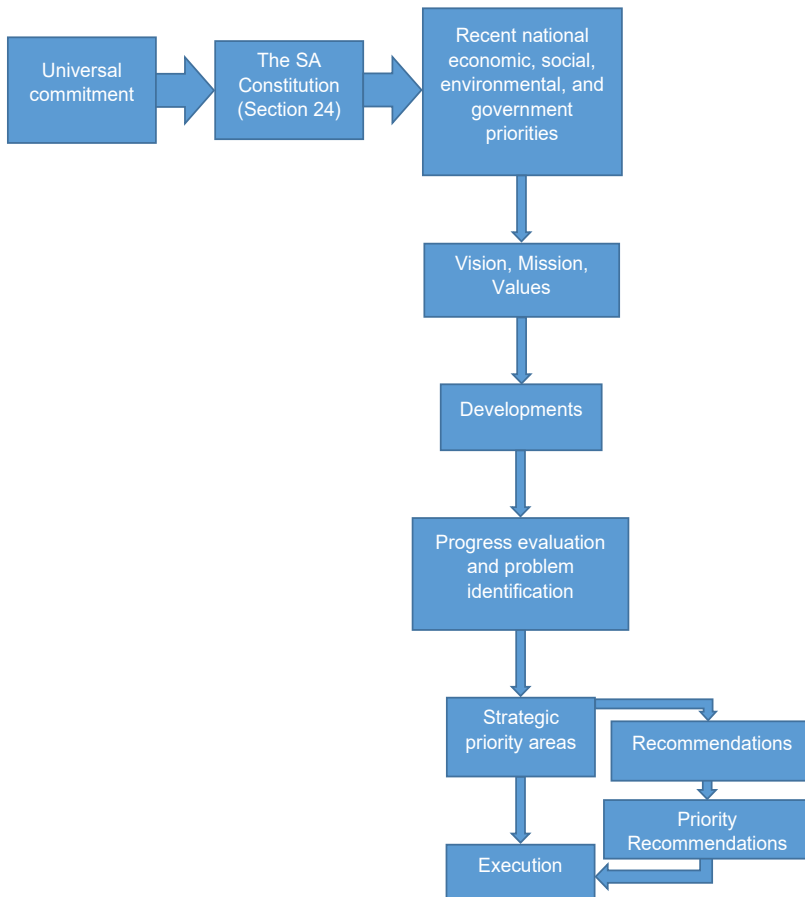


Figure 3: Flow diagram of methodology for developing a national framework for sustainable development (personal archive; adapted and modified from DEA 2014:31).

Libraries in South Africa and Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals Through Campaigns

South African libraries are involved in the development of South African communities through its programmes. It is partly responsible for promoting growth in numerous areas by offering services and significant information in support of the SDGs. The goals, targets within these goals, and the role played by the libraries in each one of them are discussed in the following subsections.

Poverty Alleviation (Goal 1)

According to Fengu (2017), South Africa had a dual education system and labour market during apartheid, as a result of the educational system. Currently, the bilateral educational system still confines social flexibility and perpetuates labour market inequality as well as the 'cycle of desperation.' Dornan and Regan (2012:1) assert that inequality causes the transmission of poverty from one generation to another: 'It is so unfortunate that the poverty of a mother can negatively affect the bright future of her children' (Mojapelo 2018:11). Prevalent poverty is one of the major challenges facing South Africa, which is worsened by high levels of unemployment and illiteracy, as well as a lack of education. In the first quarter of 2021, the official unemployment rate was 32.6%. In the last five years, there has been no significant development to better it – to the contrary, the rate has worsened (Stats SA 2021:1).

The Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 has also contributed to the high rate of unemployment in South Africa. Therefore, in order to assist the government in eradicating the plague of poverty, young entrepreneurs are encouraged by the South African libraries to create their own businesses to become employers of labour instead of employees of labour (Maepa & Marumo 2016:4). The use of the public library system, free internet, e-mail facilities, and library spaces can immensely help the potential entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. Many young entrepreneurs use library facilities to run their businesses, and communicate with customers by e-mail. In addition, government tenders are checked, orders are processed, and customers' enquiries are responded to, using internet facilities in the libraries. If not for the assistance rendered by the libraries, many of the new businesses run by young entrepreneurs would not have survived, due to the high cost of renting offices and internet usage in the proper business sector. Attainment of the SDGs in Africa is being monitored by the Africa Progress Panel, and this panel is optimistic that Africa can completely eradicate poverty and embark upon a life-changing human development route. However, African leaders need to bring the underprivileged and the most relegated sections of society from the periphery to the centre of policy design (Mbaku 2020).

Ensure Healthy Living and Promote Wellbeing for Everybody (Goal 3)

The South African libraries assist helpless women to access information on health-care, pregnancy, and childbirth, and to teach women to know how to take care of their new-born and older children, along with the general health carelines (Maepa & Marumo 2016:5). This promotes the rapid reduction of child mortality and improves the healthcare of the mothers and their children via health information delivery. This makes the library a platform that can facilitate women empowerment to acquire the best training and education.

Ensure Inclusive and Unbiased Education and Support Lifelong Learning Opportunities (Goal 4)

The government of South Africa understands the significance of education as a way out of poverty and illiteracy. This imperative is included in the South African National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP places more emphasis on the advancement of education, training, and innovation as major national priorities (Radebe 2015). One of the major areas in which South African libraries play an active role is in the provision of educational support. Study materials are provided to high school learners and university students. At any given time, learners, students, and researchers utilise a library's study and research spaces in pursuit of their educational activities. Furthermore, besides providing study material and reading spaces, South African libraries offer free internet access to scores of students (Radebe 2015).

By 2030, target 4.4 is anticipated to significantly increase the number of youths and adults who have applicable skills like technical and vocational skills for entrepreneurship, employment, and decent jobs (Bradley 2015:5). To improve the sustainability and prospects of the success of youths, South African libraries have agreements with different youth organisations and financially support their activities. For instance, the National Library of South Africa supported the Agape Youth Movement in publishing their book via a publishing grant. The youth formation is also given access to the library's facilities whenever an event is hosted without paying for it (Radebe 2015). In addition, internship placement opportunities are given to Library and Information Studies final year students to integrate whatever they have learnt in the university environment into a real-life practice and obtain skills that improve their chances of being employed after completing their studies. This is a working relationship that the National Library of South Africa has with school libraries and shows the part that the library plays in making sure that the country has a team of experienced library and information service personnel (Maepa & Marumo 2016:6).

Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls by 2030 (Goal 5)

The South African libraries are familiar with gender inequality that has created obstacles for women and girls in South Africa. It is obvious that the full potential of women is yet to be recognised because stereotypes, discrimination, and partiality are still prevailing. Women who give order and assertiveness in their leadership style, have the tendency of being disliked by their subordinates, and their ability to wield influence is mostly undermined. There is also the risk of not getting a job or being promoted when a woman is too direct (Maepa & Marumo 2016:7). Women find it difficult to connect and work in partnership with their communities, due to the external cultural, social, economic, and political barriers that continue to make it hard for many of them to attain their full potential. Women and girls must be given equal opportunities with men and boys in terms of quality education, economic resources, political involvement, employment, leadership, and managerial posts at all levels. Only through this can human dignity and sustainable development be attained. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls should be completely eliminated, if South African libraries can successfully reach out to those centres that are meant for ill-treated women and children through the engagement of men and boys. In this way, the film, *No Strings Attached* will contribute significantly to gender equality, and the gender landscape in South Africa will transform significantly if this goal can be attained (UN Women 2019). The UN anticipates having violence, discrimination, and all harmful practices against women and young girls – for example, imposed marriages and female genital mutilations – eliminated by 2030 (UNICEF 2021).

An initiative was introduced in 2003 by one of South Africa's cell phone companies in which National Library South Africa participated. This initiative is an annual 'take a girl-child to work' programme and it is aimed at providing young girls with real-life platforms to develop their thinking capacity and ambitions about their responsibility in society. It also enables them to reflect on which careers they would want to pursue after completing their high school programme. This publicity to the world of work gives prospect to the girls to be opened to the world of work and to make up-to-date career choices later on in their lives. The facts that there are still more men than women in the most high-status positions in society is still a serious concern to be pondered upon.

Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8)

The SDGs are aimed at encouraging sustainable economic development by attaining higher levels of efficiency via scientific innovation. Therefore, encouraging strategies that support entrepreneurship and the creation of jobs are key to this, being effective actions to get rid of poverty and unemployment. The aim is to realise decent work and creative employment for all women and men. By the way, through the network of public libraries that is supported,

provision of working space for new small businesses that do not have enough money to rent office space in a typical rental company is also made available (Maepa & Marumo 2016:5). Entrepreneurs can also take advantage of the free internet and e-mail facilities provided by the South African public libraries to service their customers. In addition, the libraries are in the process of supporting the creativity and innovation of young people by setting up an innovative/maker-space to be used by them. This will allow experimentation with technology with a view of commercialising their innovation and ideas. Through this, the generation of revenue through start-up companies would be made possible through the creation of innovative ideas.

Strengthen Efforts to Protect and Safe-Guard the World's Cultural Heritage (Goal 11.4)

Beyond protecting the South African cultural heritage, the library is also responsible for Africa's cultural heritage protection and preservation. A lot is expected from South Africa as a member of the African Union (AU). One of the significant contributions of South African libraries on the African continent was its involvement in the restoration of manuscripts in Timbuktu (Mali) (Maepa & Marumo 2016:8). This is due to the specialised skill that libraries have in the management, preservation, and renewal of materials. The project was birthed through the mutual agreement entered into by both the South African and Malian governments. The Malian counterparts were trained how to preserve and restore rare collections by the library staff who travelled to Mali. In terms of the role played in English-speaking African countries, libraries are expected to offer leadership in staff trainings at libraries, museums, and other institutions in the preservation of materials. Furthermore, National Library South Africa, in collaboration with the office of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions in Africa and the Mount Kenya University presented a two-day preservation and conservation workshop for participants from Anglophone countries, in February 2015. This inventiveness forms part of the roles that libraries play to support English-speaking African countries, according to South Africa's responsibility in the AU and SADC (Southern African Development Community) (Maepa & Marumo 2016:8).

Peace and Justice: Ensure Public Access to Information and Protect Fundamental Rights (Goal 16.10)

The South African libraries are responding to goal 16.10 by offering public access to information through a dedicated public engagement programme. The purpose of this programme is to promote information access, as well as government-related information in the broader sense (NLSA 2015:26). The government of South Africa has embarked on a drive to roll out e-government initiatives so as to ensure easy access and interaction between public and

government departments. Therefore, citizens are being encouraged by the government to utilise technology to access its services because it is quicker, more convenient, and easier. Additionally, application forms can be downloaded by citizens for jobs, unemployment benefits, identification documents, and housing services, among others (NLSA 2015:26; Maepa & Marumo 2016:8).

Major Importance of the Government's Partnerships and National Support to Realise the SDGs

Most government workers and librarians believe that public libraries have a part to play in advancing lives in areas such as democracy, education, health, communication, economic development, e-government and social inclusion, and citizen empowerment. Conversely, public libraries do not have all the skills or financial resources required to provide effective public development services. Hence, more libraries are entering into partnerships with other organisations. A study conducted on Lithuanian's library directors revealed that the directors noticed about 58% cuts in their general budgets, in 2010. Therefore, a considerable number of public library directors entered into partnerships with government institutions between 2010 (80%) and 2011 (89%), and with business entities – 42% in 2010 and 63% in 2011 (Verikiene, Jonikova, & Kiskyte 2011; Fairbairn 2012). The major importance of governments' partnerships and national support to realise the inclusion of access to information, and individual access to ICT in the UN 2030 Agenda are highlighted in the subsequent subsections.

Access to Information

As information is a human right, hence, the rightful access to the correct and important information at the right time is the right of all people, regardless of their race, gender, social status, belief, or socio-economic backgrounds (South African Bill of Rights 2011:13; Salman, Mugwisi, & Mostert 2017:36).

Up-to-date decisions can be made by people to improve their lives when they have free access to information. A group of people having timely access to important information, is better off to eliminate poverty and inequity, to advance agriculture, offer quality education, and support people's wellbeing, culture, research, and innovation. SDGs are achieved through the contribution of libraries and access to information by

- supporting universal literacy, including digital, media, and information literacy and skills, with the help of committed staff;
- bridging the gaps to accessing information and assisting the government, business, and the public to realise that local information requires more attention than what is given;

- providing a network of delivery sites for government programmes and services;
- developing a digital inclusion via access to ICT;
- being committed to the serving of the research and academic community; and
- protecting and offering access to the world's culture and heritage.

Libraries, by offering access to information and expertise, are able to assist in providing opportunities for people to advance their own lives and support informed decision-making by governments, communities, and others to offer services and support that eradicate poverty and enhance people's prosperity far and wide. Figure 4 depicts the route through which information is disseminated by a library.

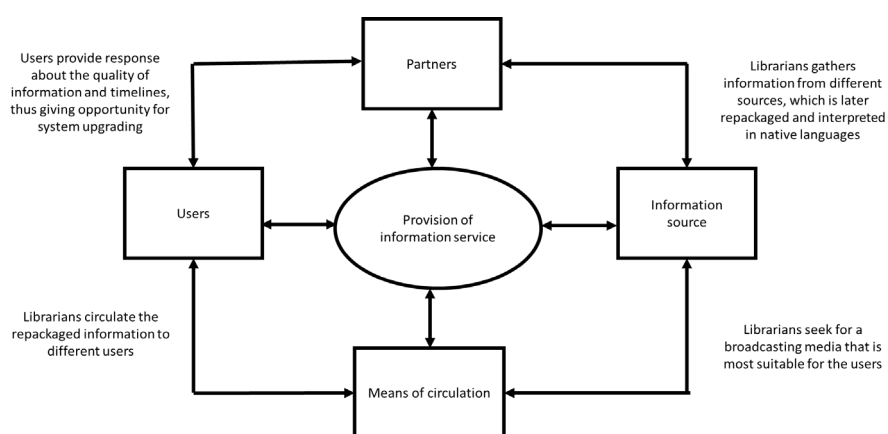


Figure 4: Chart illustrating the role of libraries in attaining SDGs (personal archive; adapted and modified from Bradley 2016:120).

Information Communication Technology

Libraries provide an essential means of reaching the next generation by supporting digital inclusion through access to ICT, with dedicated staff to help people to develop new digital skills (SDGs Partnership Platform 2021). Worldwide, 320,000 public libraries and more than a million parliamentary, national, university, science and research institutions, schools, and special libraries ensure that information and the skills to use it are available to everyone, therefore creating critical institutions for everybody in the digital age. Libraries provide the ICT infrastructure, help people to develop the capacity to effectively use information, and preserve information to ensure an ongoing access for future generations. Libraries provide an established, trusted network of local institutions that effectively reach new and marginalised

populations. Access to information is a cross-cutting issue that supports all of the SDGs (SDGs Partnership Platform 2021). Library services contribute to improved outcomes across the SDGs by advancing a digital inclusion through access to ICT, with dedicated staff to help people to develop new digital skills. Many countries have designated libraries as UN depositories, making it an important venue for information about the UN and the SDGs. Through a diverse range of programmes and services, tailored towards the needs of their communities, libraries are already supporting progress toward the SDGs, through the assistance of the government by

- increasing revenue for small-scale food producers (SDG 2);
- encouraging lasting learning opportunities (SDG 4) through the introduction of quality education and access to ICT, while developing the computer skills of library users and empowering users to be prosperous in business and employment are some of the efforts being put into supporting government objectives under its National Vision 2016;
- empowering women and young girls (SDG 5) through the provision of ICT training, particularly intended for female farmers, making sure that these women can access weather predictions, prices of crops, and assist to set-up online markets in their native languages; and
- confirming creative employment and decent work (SDG 8). This could be achieved through the support of public library computers to employment-related activities, giving room for numerous unemployed youths to apply for jobs.

Challenges Facing Libraries in the Attainment of the SDGs during the Unprecedented Covid-19 Pandemic

Covid-19 has hampered the economy, health, education, and living standards of millions of South Africans. It has also undoubtedly revealed the long-known insufficiencies and constraints in the present copyright law that adversely hinder access to information, sharing of knowledge, and the delivery of important teaching and research materials (Nicholson 2020). Strict lockdown conditions in South Africa were announced on 27 March 2020. On Covid-19 level 5 lockdown, many libraries and archives, educational institutions, as well as industries and museums were closed down on very short notice. Hardcopy study material, multimedia, and other works in libraries and related collections were totally inaccessible. Educational institutions at primary, secondary, and tertiary level were left with no other choice than to go online in order to provide teaching and material for courses. As a result, educators and librarians were directed to offer courses and other study materials through e-learning platforms, to bring about unanticipated overheads on training, technology and equipment, software, data, and other associated requirements, along

with unexpected copyright fees (Tomczyk, Potyrała, Włoch, Wnek-Gozdek, & Demeshkant 2020:10222).

The digital environment is not addressed by the existing copyright law, creating various obstacles and difficulties for educators and librarians who are putting efforts into providing study materials in very challenging situations (Nicholson 2020). Inadequate limitations and exceptions to restraining licenses, specifically e-books related, put limitations on what can and cannot be used, shared, converted, or uploaded to e-learning platforms (Nicholson 2020).

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, libraries are working with associates worldwide to make sure that research and education continue in spite of disruptions. Also, to ensure that, while the crisis continues, the scientific and health sectors have access to the broadest range of important resources and information to support their work. The pandemic has forced libraries to restructure their operations in order to continue services for faculty and students who are now working and studying remotely – from their homes (Medawar & Tabet 2021:179). The shift to virtual learning presents specific challenges to institutions in the transition economy and developing countries where electronic information for libraries is in place. For instance, many university libraries lack an adequate ICT infrastructure or the financial capabilities to put remote access systems in place so as to ensure faculty and students to have access to subscribed e-resources from home.

To mitigate these hurdles, libraries have been active on a number of fronts, so that teaching, learning, and research can continue online, while universities are closed. The International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) statement also calls for publishers and content providers to temporarily lift paywalls on subscribed content or to develop alternative approaches for off-campus verification (EIFL 2020). Possible solutions to the challenges facing libraries in the attainment of the SDGs are provided in the subsequent subsection.

Other recurrent challenges facing libraries in the attainment of SDGs are, *inter alia* poor funding of libraries, inadequate library infrastructure, inadequate skilled manpower, poor networking among libraries, and poor policy by parent institutions, etc. (Shonhe 2019:7).

Possible Solutions to Address the Challenges that Libraries and Higher Education Institutions Face during Covid-19 Lockdowns

Under this section, the range of approaches that could be in the best mutual interest of libraries and the providers of information services are suggested. The ICOLC considers the current crisis of such significance that we cannot simply assume that libraries and publishers share a common perspective about

the magnitude of the crisis and the best approaches to cope with it (ICOLC 2020). The publishers are requested to immediately consider the following:

- Eliminating and waiving all simultaneous user limits to an institution's licensed digital content during this period when universities are going all online in order to allow research, discovery, and learning to proceed.
- Lifting current contractual interlibrary loan (ILL) restrictions or photocopying limits provisionally, so that libraries may help the students to complete their courses.
- Permitting the maximum range of copyright limitations, exceptions, and reasonable uses, even if contractually restricted, to allow institutions to continue their vital teaching missions, as campuses transition to an online remote format.
- Enable flexible renewal periods and extended due dates for payments, as the future impacts on health or business operations consortium staff who facilitate the renewal.
- Delay or abate any planned price increase until the interruption and disruption that the communities, public health systems, and stock markets are experiencing, globally calm down.
- Initiate strategies to provisionally lift paywalls or develop alternative approaches of validation to enable access to subscribed content, if traditional campus authentication mechanisms (VPNs, proxy servers) are overloaded under the increased traffic.
- Lift campus-only restrictions, so there can be a continuation of teaching activities online and remotely, regardless of university closures.

It is in the best interest of both publishers and consortia to seek creative solutions that allow critical access to publisher content for the research and public health communities. It is therefore believed that these recommendations would proffer a solid foundation for the information community, including the publishers of scholarly information, to go forward together in these difficult times (ICOLC 2020).

Suggestions on how Government Can Support Libraries in Facilitating an Actualisation of the 17 SDGs

The government of South Africa needs to improve its implementation process and prioritise assisting its libraries in the implementation of the UN SDGs. The SDGs must also be adapted and localised for local context. National governments will highlight or deemphasise several goals depending on the local situation, and will form and set local targets. For the effective measurement of progress towards national priorities, national and localised indicators need to be created. In this manner, it will be very easy to monitor the progress, which is accountable, and the government's priorities. Furthermore, the countries

will require the support of, *inter alia* the United Nations Development Groups and United Nations Development Programmes, in order to normalise the UN 2030 agenda at the local level and for priority areas to be targeted within the agenda (IFLA 2017:6).

Government expenditure and programme priorities will be designed by the NDPs. These plans can include a single national development plan with broadband, digital inclusion, and social development plans, among others. It also includes access to information and library support, quality education, poverty eradication, economic development, agriculture, wellbeing, public access to ICT, and general service delivery, culture, and all other SDGs (Dada 2016; IFLA 2014). Access to information is a cross-cutting issue that supports all areas of growth – it is more than a missed opportunity. Governments may disregard the provision of public access, information, and skills to the libraries, and fund other organisations, if access to information and libraries are not incorporated into the NDPs (Dada 2016). Libraries will be in the best position to partner with the government and others to implement national strategies and programmes that will benefit library users, by demonstrating the impact that the libraries make on the attainment of SDGs.

Lastly, South African libraries are required to develop new programmes that will purposely care for some of the SDGs that are not included in the current programme offered (Maepa & Marumo 2016:9). This will enhance the role of the libraries and make it an even more competent strategic partner in the attainment of SDGs and strategically align it to the necessities of South Africa's NDP. The libraries can only support the resourcefulness of both the government and the private sector through the delivery of information to improve the activities that the bodies carry out, as most areas covered by SDGs do not directly fall within the library domain and the South African libraries. For example, the libraries can provide information resources to researchers working in the area of energy conservation, climate change, and other professional fields acknowledged within the SDGs (Maepa & Marumo 2016:9).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the strategic role of libraries in the actualisation of SDGs in South Africa as promoted by the government in its 2030 NDP. This places South Africa in a developmental path and assists government to navigate through the web of hurdles that it is currently facing. The challenges of the development are undeniably enormous, but attainable. A concerted effort is required from all state entities, the private sector, higher education institutions, and non-governmental organisations that function in different spaces. Therefore, it is imperative to sway the South African libraries' programmes and activities to ensure that it meaningfully contributes to the execution of the

SDGs and the strategic imperatives defined in the NDP. It was recently argued by the Africa Progress Panel which monitors the accomplishment of SDGs in Africa, that 'the attainment of SDGs is dependent on the success achieved in Africa' (United Nation Department of Public Information 2015:3). This is basically because the agenda for the accomplishment of all the SDGs indicate 2030 as the due date on the continent of Africa (Africa Progress Panel Report 2015:34). It is hoped that African countries will be likewise committed and put in concerted effort, resources, and energy towards achieving the set targets for 2030.

Lastly, there is much to be learned about what motivates effective partnerships, such as partnership structures, mutual planning, communication, connection building, handling expectations, decision-making, contracting, and costing. Partnership management is becoming a progressively crucial part of library management, as the number and variety of public library partnerships change. The SDGs can therefore be used by university libraries as a measuring tool/instrument, as well as a challenge to establish flexible objectives associated with the UN 2030 Agenda.

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Dr Olawumi O. Sadare is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Johannesburg.

Prof Kapil Moothi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering Technology at the University of Johannesburg.

Prof Michael O. Daramola is a Full Professor and Head of Department of Chemical Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology at the University of Pretoria.

