

## **Library, documentation and information**

### **Strategic objectives**

With respect to the Library, Documentation and Information services, the ASC formulates as its primary strategic objective to collect and make available knowledge and information about Africa for scientific research and higher education, through the provision of a high-quality library and documentation centre.

LDI functions as an autonomous library. Its interuniversity character is important for realising ASC's secondary objectives. Through its services, it reaches and supports the international community of Africanists, in particular academics affiliated to African research institutes. The library also provides information services to the general public and fulfils the role of a public library with the aim to promote a better understanding of African societies within the Netherlands.

The LDI department has become a successful and indispensable pillar of the ASC. Its success lies in the valuable collection of books and periodicals built over the years, and the invaluable expertise of its staff in selecting and acquiring materials from Africa, building a user-friendly thesaurus for African Studies, indexing and abstracting core international journals and less well-known journals published in Africa. The international evaluation committee of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences rated the performance of ASC's LDI department as "excellent".

In its report, the evaluation committee made recommendations for future directions. The committee advised the library to subscribe to e-journals and to make e-journals accessible online. It recommended an investigation of possibilities to cross-reference its resources with those of related-libraries, also in the AEGIS context. It suggested that links between LDI and research could be strengthened, for example through cross-linking the web dossiers. The committee underscored the urgent need to address the shrinking archiving and shelving space and to take measures to preserve parts of the collection, most urgently the video collection. Moreover, it noted the library could improve the promotion of some of its products, in particular the web dossiers and that it should regularly evaluate the "user satisfaction" of its services among its different user groups.

The following strategic objectives of the LDI department are based on the recommendations made by the external evaluation committee, complemented with the conclusions of the department's self-evaluation report and feed-back received from ASC staff and management.

The primary forum of the LDI services is the academic community at large. ASC researchers only constitute a minor part of this user group, researchers from outside the institute (including in Africa), are a larger number but both are by far outnumbered by university students, which form the single largest part of users from the academic community. This picture resembles the situation at most academic libraries.

With the rapid development of ICT facilities, the LDI department is able to extend the reach of its collection to remote users and serve its target groups better. Eventually, the global academic community will become the LDI department's user group and global resource sharing will become essential.

Therefore, the LDI department must extend its paper-based collection with a substantial digital collection, which will have to be remote accessible. It is a necessity mainly because students (as the major user group) are keen users of digital resources and they increasingly use digital learning environments and the internet as their preferred source of information to support learning.

The development of a digital collection will create a whole new set of requirements in library automation and systems integration. The challenge in the coming years will be to accommodate continuous development and innovation while ensuring a coherent and efficient overall automated library environment. It will lead the LDI department to re-assess its library automation policy and strategy, securing the benefits of present collaborative library services and to explore new opportunities and strategic partnerships for collaborative library automation.

Even if the library chooses to follow an active digital collection development policy, this will not diminish the future need for shelving space. The hybrid library, with paper-based and digital collections, will not disappear in the coming decades. Therefore the library will need to cater to both types of materials.

The growing need for shelving space also raises the need for a more explicit policy concerning the library's preservation function and in relation to that, the development of a preservation strategy. The ASC library has always followed an implicit preservation policy, keeping all items in its collection and taking over collection items from other libraries and from individuals. This policy is now acknowledged and accepted. The library will continue to accept interesting gifts, primarily from other libraries and researchers in African Studies including their personal archives, with valuable primary materials collected in Africa.

Both cross-referencing the ASC library resources with those of related libraries and strengthening the links between LDI and research, for example through cross-linking the web dossiers, are elements that stimulate the LDI to contribute to building overarching knowledge structures, the general aspects of which will be dealt with in the next chapter. Cross-referencing with other library collections and bridging the scattered Africa resources into virtual collections are interesting opportunities, which the LDI will pursue, at the national, European and African levels.

Finally, at present no systematic information is available concerning the user satisfaction of the broader public. More generally, little or no use data from specific library products are collected and user satisfaction of specific target groups has not been surveyed in a systematic way. Assessments will be elaborated which will contribute to the effectiveness of the library.

The strategic objectives are turned into the following tactical objectives.

### **Tactical objectives**

1. LDI's paper-based collection will be extended with a substantial digital collection. LDI will start to address the collection gap that is arising with the growth of electronic publishing and dissemination in African Studies and increasing availability of materials about and from Africa in digital form only. Additions to the audio-visual collection are increasingly born-digital productions as well, and need to be included in the digital collection management process.
2. The ASC library should not only take up the challenge to offer access to a wealth of online resources but also to provide it with the quality assurance that users expect from the library. This is particularly important to the major user group, the students, who are occasionally overwhelmed by the sheer volume of material retrieved without an idea of the quality of what they find. Availability of the digital collection is another aspect of quality assurance that needs to be addressed, as many publisher sites on the Internet disappear and discontinue their services, leaving dead links behind. The library will investigate best ways to ensure availability now and in the future.
3. The possibilities for distributed collection development and management in the digital environment offer interesting perspectives for collaborative collection building with partner institutions. At the same time, scattered collections can be brought together in virtual collections bridging distant physical locations. Consortium building for licensing agreements with content providers and shared management of e-journals are other interesting areas for collaboration. The library will explore opportunities for collaboration in these areas, which are also connected to the next objective.
4. With respect to library automation and systems integration, the ASC library recently transferred the hosting of its library automation system to OCLC-PICA in order to maintain its autonomous status and interuniversity character. In the coming years it will need to re-assess its library automation solution, in view of integrating the management of electronic resources and sharing data with partners. In addition, a storage and access system will need to be put in place for the digital collection, and a user-friendly search and browse system for improved retrieval of full-text articles. Eventually this should result in an automation strategy for e-resources, enabling LDI to take a leading-edge position in the field of African Studies.
5. Within four years, new shelving space has to be found to accommodate for the growth of the paper-based collections. The solution should provide enough storage space for the coming twenty years. In addition, measures should be taken to provide for adequate storage and conservation of the audio-visual materials on tape, the archival materials and the older book materials. Talks with the university Leiden expertisecentrum Vastgoed (housing facilities) and the Faculty of Social Sciences have been initiated to this effect.

6. The library will continue to accept interesting gifts, primarily from other libraries and researchers in African Studies including their personal archives, with valuable primary materials collected in Africa. The preservation function of the library should be elaborated and formalized. Cross-referencing guides to materials that are not included in the library's collection but held elsewhere in the Netherlands will be devised jointly with Africa-related libraries, archives and museums.
7. Together with the preservation function, a conservation strategy for the different types of materials included in the collection, needs to be developed. Cooperation with initiatives such as CAMP (Cooperative Africana Microform Project) will be investigated.
8. LDI's user support has not developed beyond the one-on-one advice at the information desk to help locate and use information resources. However, there is an increasing demand, also from the ASC researchers, for literature listings and training in demystifying databases and in becoming more web-wise. Moreover, the ASC has successfully coordinated the establishment of a new Research Masters African Studies programme, in which ASC researchers will contribute and the LDI department will actively be involved. In view of these developments, the library will extend its user support services and seek to meet the different needs of its user groups.
9. The success and impact of the library services and products will be assessed with the aim to improve the effectiveness of the library. The assessments will involve the main target groups of the library.

### **Operational goals**

1. In the planning period, new acquisitions for the paper-based collection will be maintained at current levels but the digital collection will be increased substantially. This concerns primarily e-journals but also other types of digital information, such as scientific publications stored in digital repositories, grey literature published on websites and audio-visuals on CD and DVD.
2. Extension of current subscriptions to electronic versions of journals should not lead to a disproportional increase of the subscriptions budget. The existing budget for the audio-visual collection should cater for digital productions, as they become available on the market. Special effort will be put into selecting digital content from Africa and valuable, freely available resources on the Internet, contributing to the further development of a niche collection in African Studies. It is anticipated therefore, that these additions will not require a substantially higher acquisition budget, but that the library staff responsible for collection development will need to reserve more time for selecting electronic resources. In addition, the ASC research staff will be encouraged to actively contribute to the selection of online resources relevant to their research area.

3. Workflows, procedures, technical routines and guidelines have to be developed with respect to the management and accessibility of the digital resources. Levels of selection, cataloguing, indexing and abstracting have to be redefined for the digital collection, in view of technical capabilities to process higher volumes of digital information automatically. The aim is to achieve near-fully-automated workflows for processing the digital collections. This will be realised in close cooperation with the ICT staff (see below). Guidelines need to set user expectation levels, to ensure levels of service (availability and accessibility) and to provide quality grading of sources (in terms of trustworthiness). The library will need to engage in agreement talks with publishers and information providers and take proper measures to secure access to digital materials.
4. The library will design its requirements model for automated electronic resources management, digital archiving, access systems and integrated searching in the library collections. It will do this with the support of the ICT staff within the ASC. Experimental environments and test-beds will be built to get hands-on experience and to feed into the design. The library will adapt its automated system to fit its needs and will explore possibilities and strategic partnerships for collaborative library automation.
5. The thesaurus for African Studies, a descriptor-system consisting of nearly 9 000 words, which the LDI department has built over the past 5 years, will be implemented in the library system and all the titles in the catalogue will be indexed with descriptors from the thesaurus. In an additional effort to cover the whole collection, materials currently not included in the online catalogue, will be added to the catalogue during the coming years. The materials concerned are mostly government reports, gifts to the library and videos.
6. Extension of the shelving space within four years might include a complete move of the library to another location, but may also imply a partial move of part of the collection. In that case, a differentiation in the collection is necessary. To date, the library has maintained open shelves stacks. The ASC recognizes the benefits of browsing and will ensure enough space for the circulating monographs on the open shelves, but the benefits of closed stacks and climate control for conservation will also be investigated. Criteria for relocating parts of the collection to remote storage and closed stacks need to be defined. Extra budget for relocating (parts of) the collection needs to be reserved.
7. Policy concerning LDI's 'preservation function' needs to be elaborated in close consultation with the library community in the Netherlands and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It concerns the preservation of the ever-growing collection, but also donations to the library from colleague libraries which have been closed down or which carry out a deselection program to ensure the currency and usefulness of their collection. In past years, donations have increased in volume. By

its nature, the stream of donations is difficult to control and leads to backlogs. Additional structural funds need to be secured for LDI's preservation function.

8. In recent years, the library also received personal archives of retired or deceased Dutch scholars and journalists, who have collected valuable primary research materials on Africa. An archiving policy therefore needs to be developed in conjunction with the preservation policy. Again, this will be done in close consultation with related institutions in the Netherlands which also fulfil an archival role concerning Africa-related materials, such as the National Archive, het Zeeuws Archief, NiZA, de Sociëteit voor Afrikaanse Missiën, etc. In this framework, the LDI will investigate possibilities to set-up an online collaborative guide for Africa collections in the Netherlands.
9. To support LDI's preservation and archival functions, conservation methods and techniques need to be developed for the different types of materials held in the library collection. The library's storage space for older and lesser used paper-based materials needs to meet preservation requirements. For other types of materials, such as the audio-visual collection and the digital collection, procedures for monitoring the physical health of the carriers and for migrating content to newer carriers should be implemented. The conservation costs should be budgeted and allocated to LDI's preservation function.
10. LDI will seek to support research projects of the ASC and its strategic partners, by providing services such as literature overviews, document delivery and contributions to bibliographies. A representative of the LDI staff will participate in ASC Theme group meetings to stay up-to-date with developments in the ASC research areas and to stimulate improved interactions between LDI and ASC research.
11. LDI will develop training modules on web information seeking and database use for ASC research staff and African Studies Research Masters students.
12. LDI will carry out annual assessments of the use of its products and services, based on usage statistics. In addition, it will carry out user satisfaction surveys amongst its main target groups: researchers and students.