

AFRICA INSIDE

Policy plan 2022-2026

Library African Studies Centre, Leiden University 2022-2026

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Executive summary

The identity of the Library of the African Studies Centre at Leiden University will gradually shift over the next five years (2022-2026) to a library more in keeping with its special Africa character, with a focus on special collections. In other words, there will be more focus on primary sources, books produced in Africa and difficult-to-obtain materials. Much attention will be paid to maximising awareness of these sources among various user groups, both locally and (inter)nationally. Finally, the library sees itself as an active partner in making freely accessible sources more widely available, including outside research and education.

For the next five years, the library of the African Studies Centre of Leiden University will pursue the following objectives:

1. A distinctive collection
 - * Provenance: by 2026, 75% of new books for the library will come from Africa (incl. via targeted acquisition trips)
 - * Subject matter: more primary material
 - * Languages: abandon current limited language profile
2. Attractive presentation of the collection
 - * Part of the collection in changing presentations
 - * Thematic and country presentations, linked to digital presentation (website/webdossiers)
 - * Give specific attention to films, newspapers and archives
3. Sharing information and appealing to specific user groups
 - * Enhanced role of the library in education
 - * Other targeted presentations, linked to a digital component
 - * Other platforms, e.g. general media and via Wikipedia
4. Expanding open access
 - * Working with researchers, a targeted approach to new publications
 - * Expand Open Access (African repositories, European and African researchers e.g. via Wikidata, targeted actions)

1. Introduction

Background

A number of developments and events have redirected the course and policies of the ASCL Library and added new urgency to existing reflections in this area:

- 1) The continuing **cooperation between the library of Leiden University (UBL) and the ASCL**, as initiated by the ASCL's transition from a separate Foundation to an Interfaculty Institute of Leiden University on 1 January 2016. The Executive Board (CvB) would like the library to integrate more with the UBL.¹ The proposed relocation of the ASCL to the Humanities Campus is currently scheduled for 2023 and provides the opportunity to rethink the current **collection and service provision policy**, while respecting the library's desired independent position. The move is also expected to ensure better interaction within the ASCL itself.
- 2) The **COVID pandemic** has had a major impact on information provision: books could no longer be shipped or delivered from Africa, paper newspapers were no longer printed (as in Rwanda); in many cases, existing processes of digital access were strengthened and expanded; customers were dependent on locally available material.
- 3) Finally, the increasing **digitalisation and retrievability of sources** strengthened library users' sense that there is enough information available, even without the traditional role of the library. The flip side of this development is an increasing demand for material that is very difficult to obtain. The ASCL library could expand its role as important European player in this regard.

This *policy plan* thus forms the basis for a new Collection Policy for the Library of the African Studies Centre, to be published in 2022.²

¹ In the text of its 2021 decision, the UL Executive Board specifically mentions safeguarding responsibilities for the ASCL Library, including the formulation of a collection profile, agreements on the handling of collection budgets, and defining of associated tasks.

² See Appendix 1 for an Overview of the number of books per theme in the ASCL Library, and Appendix 2 for an Overview of the top 20 publications from African countries in the libraries of Leiden University.

Internal reflection

In light of these and other developments in recent years, ASCL staff have been considering the future role of the library in various ways and formations. For example:

- Through the collective reading and summarising (by information specialists) of *The Library in the life of the user. Engaging with people where they live and learn* door Lynn Silipigni Connaway;
- By organising a two-day workshop *Redesigning the ASCL library* led by the former head Elli de Rijk in 2018;
- Following this workshop, a **Redesigning the ASC library working group** was established. It was launched in April 2019 with the task of “turning the input of all colleagues in the process so far into a document with practical recommendations for the future of the ASCL Library.” A number of aspects of the future library were discussed in 8 sessions;
- In **January 2020**, the working group discussed an article by Gerard van de Bruinhorst: *Telling” [OUR] ‘own’ {Sto riES}!!!: Collecting, connecting, enriching and disseminating Africa’s stories: Initiating a vision for the ASCL Library until 2030.*

Objectives

The identity of the Library of the African Studies Centre at Leiden University will gradually shift over the next five years (2022-2026) to a library more in keeping with its special Africa character, with a focus on special collections. In other words, there will be more focus on primary sources, books produced in Africa and difficult-to-obtain materials. Much attention will be paid to maximising awareness of these sources among various user groups, both locally and (inter)nationally. Finally, the library sees itself as an active partner in making freely accessible sources more widely available, including outside research and education.

In summary, the ASCL aims to:

1. A distinctive collection with more material produced in Africa and more difficult-to-obtain material;
2. Improved, attractive, and regularly changing presentation of both the physical and digital collection;
3. Diverse ways of sharing information and connecting with users;
4. Open Access (incl. with Africa repositories, Dutch researchers and Wikidata).

2. ASCL Library: mission and target groups

The ASCL's mission statement has long read:

“The African Studies Centre Leiden is a knowledge institute that conducts research into and offers education on Africa, and aims to promote a better understanding of historical, current and future developments in Africa.”

The ASCL's main goals are:

1. To promote and conduct academic research on Africa;
2. To be a national centre in the field of African Studies and contribute to teaching in these studies;
3. To promote knowledge and understanding of African societies to the wider public.

The library mission is to facilitate the achieving of the above three goals. In the past 75 years, the ASCL Library has focused on collecting material on Africa, with a particular focus on material produced in Africa, and making these documents retrievable and accessible.

In the past, the library's **target groups** were very diverse. The primary group closest to academic research included:

- Academics (affiliated to ASCL and UL, other academics in NL and internationally)
- PhD students (affiliated to ASCL and UL, YoungLeidenASA, other universities)
- Students (Master and Research Master African Studies, Bachelor African Languages and Cultures (ATC), LDE minor African Dynamics, LDE minor Frugal Innovations, Leiden University, other universities and HBO)
- ASCL visiting staff
- LeidenASA researchers

The library also targeted a secondary group of:

- Africa professionals (NGOs, etc.)
- Africa community members
- NVAS members
- Journalists, radio and TV contributors
- Diplomats and (policy) officials

- Fellow Africa institutions in the Netherlands, Europe and the rest of the world
- Libraries in NL, Europe, beyond Europe
- Cultural and social institutions (e.g. Filmfestival Leiden, theatre makers)
- Secondary school pupils
- General public in the Netherlands
- Global audience

In practice, physical visitors were mainly students (70%), most of whom studied at Leiden University. At the same time, there was also use at other locations and online. This broad composition of target groups makes formulating specific policies rather difficult. In the future, the library wants to focus mainly on people seeking in-depth knowledge about Africa, and should, in particular, go further and deeper than knowledge about Africa that can easily be found elsewhere in the Netherlands. This choice also directly affects what the library collects.

3. Current situation in key figures: How does the ASCL Library currently contribute to achieving the ASCL mission?

Usage figures and visitor numbers

Comparing visitor numbers and usage figures is like comparing apples and pears. What exactly do you present, and how reliable are figures like downloads of publications, for example, even with robots filtered out? Choices are also reflected in the presentation of figures. Yet, it is important to show those digital uses, because the library plays a role in providing online publications in various ways. Furthermore, figures are useful, for example, to see trends. The general thinking is that the numbers of physical visitors and loans are declining. Yet, over a ten-year period (and ever further back) that thinking does not appear to hold true for the ASCL Library. (In the overview below, 2019 has been chosen instead of 2020 due to the exceptional Corona circumstances in 2020). Online use of the library has increased significantly overall, as e.g. journals are mainly offered digitally and many more online offerings have been provided. An analysis of loaned materials was made a few years ago, which showed, among other things, the diversity of the provenance and type of publications.

A few examples:	2010	2019
Number of visitors to the ASCL Library	3,847	3,323
Number of loans	5,337	5,782
New books	2,861	4,180
Number of downloads of ASCL publications	58,353	312,707

Other key figures

- Number of FTEs: ca. 8.5 FTE, including approx. 3.5 library staff (front desk, book ordering, cataloguing), ca. 4 information specialists and 1 FTE as head of the library and vice-director of the ASCL (costs 2020 EUR 636k);
- Acquisition budget books, (e-)journals, databases, films: EUR 100k, expenditure p.a. EUR 80k;
- Library space rental (incl. energy and services): ca. EUR 100k.

Nature of the current ASCL collection.

The ASCL collection contains about 100,000 books and articles, mainly in French and English, in the fields of the humanities, social sciences, literature and law.

Based on a citation analysis (in 2016) involving a statistically significant sample taken from over 4,000 references in English- and French-language monographs and articles, the following can be concluded:

- Together with the UBL, ASCL provides access to 74% of the literature referenced in academic publications in the ASCL collection;
- Of the remaining references, 10% is available in the Netherlands (and can therefore be requested via ILL; the rest is unavailable in the Netherlands).

Furthermore, the following stands out:

- There is an overlap of 55% between the historical ASCL/UBL collection and material in other Dutch libraries;
- Although this was not included as part of the research question, it seems that African publications show a significantly more diverse use of sources;
- The sample was limited to published references. The results for the total spectrum of sources actually used will be a lot worse: so-called “grey” (irregular) material in the field of African Studies is hard to obtain in the Netherlands.

In his essay *Can't buy us love* (2014), librarian Rick Anderson argues that in US academic libraries, most of the budget and time is currently spent on materials that users can obtain relatively easily. These include materials that can easily be obtained through other libraries, via online bookstores or second-hand providers, or via direct contact with the author, which is facilitated by a variety of (academic) websites.

Anderson advocates for shifting, at least in part, the emphasis in collection building and accessibility from commonly available materials to documents that are rarer: harder to find and harder to obtain (<https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.24613>).

A – further – shift in this direction is also important for the ASCL Library. For example, hard copy journals from (smaller) African universities by no means always find their way to libraries or to internet channels that would make them easily retrievable and widely available. The same is true for publications from publishing houses in Africa and for in-house publications. It certainly also applies to materials in African languages.

The strategic change of focus will eventually also change staffing levels. This can be achieved with slight shifts within current personnel levels. In the change of focus, the priority will not be on achieving higher lending figures or more visitors, but on focusing on specific parts of the collection. This could include a focus on certain themes (decolonisation, education), countries or special archives or African languages. The ASCL research programme plays an important role in

this regard. There is also a clear opportunity for cooperation here with the University Library, which, after all, has a large historical collection in the field of African languages that also deserves constant attention and additions.

4. Objective: in five years ...

1. The ASCL Library has a distinctive collection

Digital developments have greatly increased access to the offerings of major Western journal providers and to publications from established Western publishers compared to two decades ago. In the coming years, the ASCL Library will therefore shift its efforts further towards acquiring and unlocking more difficult-to-obtain and globally inaccessible and hard-to-find³ material from and about Africa. This does not mean that the historically grown task of offering what Anderson calls ‘commodity items’ (Rick Anderson, *Can't buy us love*) will be abandoned altogether, but it does mean that there will be a shift in investment of time and budget towards documents that are less well known in the Netherlands and Europe. By focusing the library's expertise on material that is still (partially) invisible to users, and by permanently preserving a representative selection of material from Africa, the library can make a special contribution to the ASCL's objectives. As a result, the collection will gradually become more diverse in terms of provenance, subject, type of material and language.

Provenance

Currently, about 50% of new book purchases come from Africa. To do justice to increased information production in Africa and to provide more access to harder-to-find material, the goal is to increase that percentage to 75% by 2026.

Subjects and material types

The ASCL Library makes a special effort to make available material produced in Africa that would otherwise be difficult to access or inaccessible. This includes **academic output**, such as academic articles, but also, for example, documents from governments and NGOs, and all kinds of (other) types of so-called “grey” literature. Journals play an important role, of course, and the ASCL Library has a key collection of these. The library also collects African-produced non-fiction, such as textbooks, self-help guides, books about local culture and history and works related to marriage and parenting. African-produced fiction, such as novels and stories, is also an emphatic part of the collection.

³ The ASCL thus takes Rick Anderson's comment to heart: “...As we begin to move in this direction, it is imperative that we avoid confusing uniqueness with value” (*Can't buy us love*, p. 7)

The ASCL joins existing (European) collections wherever possible and actively cooperates to supplement such collections and make them available to Leiden and Dutch researchers.

Increasingly, the ASCL Library focuses on opening up **primary material**. Primary sources, or ‘first-hand sources’, are typically well suited as objects of scholarly research. These can include materials, whether formally published or not, from government agencies and from local organisations and movements, but also, for example, journalistic, opinion and propagandistic work. The current collections of literature/fiction, films and brochures will be developed further.

The library also houses some archives of researchers or individuals who played a special role in Africa. Currently, much work is already being done by PhD’ candidates and students who are able to unlock such sources during temporary contracts or internships. This development will continue within the existing library budget.

No preference is expressed for digital or print media, but, first and foremost, sustainable availability, the most open access possible and then ease of use are central.

Languages

Currently, the printed collection is 65% English-language, 25% French-language and 3.5% Dutch-language. This is followed by smaller percentages of German, Portuguese, Afrikaans and Italian. In some African countries, the lion’s share of book production is (still) in the languages of the former colonisers; in other countries, however, production in African languages has increased sharply. For a somewhat representative picture of what is published in a country, it is necessary that work in African languages is also collated.^{4 5} The ASCL Library believes it is important to facilitate not only African authors who write in a Western language, but also precisely those who write in a (major or minor) African language. The language discussions in African countries show how this field is in flux, and any collection policy must reflect this.⁶ (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o wrote about this as early as 1986 in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*.) This shift will happen with policy and the first few years will be about pilots and inventorising. ASCL Library staff and UBL colleagues already have particular expertise with respect to African languages. Focusing on collection

⁴ During the acquisition trip to Botswana in 2018, roughly 10% of the material acquired was in Kalanga and Setswana, the rest was in English.

⁵ In Somaliland (2019, the breakdown was 17% Arabic, 10% English and 73% Somali. In Rwanda (2021) our (selective) procurement in Kinyarwanda alone was more than 60%. Limitation to Western languages produces a substantial bias here.

⁶ See e.g. Rwanda, which, changed its curriculum from French to English in 2008; see also Oumaima Abalhaj, “Studenten Marokko willen Engels” NRC, 4 October 2021, p. 7.

development and making materials in African languages retrievable, such as locally produced literacy and educational materials, (folk) stories and works on local history, is therefore an obvious choice. The continuing cooperation between the UBL and ASCL will make it possible to develop a mature collection in this area, too, and ASCL staff will take the lead in this. In the new accommodation on the WSD site, the immediate proximity of the African Studies course will encourage intensive cooperation.

Actions for a more diverse Leiden Africa collection

(The actions listed here are expressly meant to be examples and not an exhaustive list. Several other actions are being considered by library staff.)

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Parties involved
Provenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 country acquisition trips per year - Review approval plan book supplier Hogarth - New collectionplan 		Visit 3 (e.g. neighbouring) countries p.a for acquisition trips (ca. 300-800 books per country).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection builders ASCL Lib. • African Studies course • Diaspora communities? • TB/Acq ASCL Lib. • ASCL researchers
	65% African material	70% African material	75% African material	
Material types	New workflow archives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Webdossier 'african textbooks' - Work visit GEI 	Full inventory of non-book material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening up existing archives in more detail - Create a conservation plan 	-

			- Building archival skills among staff	
Languages	Pilots for e.g. languages with a Leiden education connection, e.g. Swahili and Hausa			Subject group Afr. Languages/ CV ASCL Lib.

2. ASCL's Library presents its digital and physical collections attractively in more frequently changing exhibitions

In 2023, the ASCL will move to its new premises on the Witte Singel. There, too, a significant part of the ASCL Library's collection will be kept in open-access bookcases ("open stack"), although the percentage in storage will be considerably larger than now. At the same time, more attention will be paid to changing presentations that highlight lesser-known parts of the collection in an attractive way. The library will thus become less a warehouse of information and more a challenging sample of information about and especially from Africa. The presentation could include a map of Africa on the floor, with book cases varying in height with material about, but especially *from* the more than 50 African countries. Currently, about 30% of the collection is in a closed warehouse. That will possibly exceed 50%, based on a careful consideration of use. (While recent books are heavily used, older works remain in high demand.) The new space should also have an inviting character and provide a pleasant working environment. Interesting but unknown material can get the attention it deserves through better presentation. At the same time, the rest of the material should always be available within a few hours. More attention will also be paid to the presentation of the digital collection. Alert services have a special role in this regard, which can help to increase the retrievability of information.

Sub-collections that already run well of their own accord and attract attention (such as film and literature), are used strategically to highlight material that is more difficult to 'sell' (read: "grey" publications, newspapers, archives). Attractive presentations are also possible for archives, by following up on current issues together with, for instance, the website and social media, or by "putting issues on the agenda" (e.g. political developments in Africa, corruption, etc.). These actions are not dependent on the new accommodation and are already being implemented, such as making

Rwandan newspapers available following a recent acquisition trip and the use of the Hofstra, Bryceson en Verstraelen archives in presentations to students.

Consideration could also be given to visualising data from the catalogue and combining it with e.g. Wikidata, as is already done successfully via Library Weekly.

The film and literature sub-collections are expected to remain in open-access bookcases.

Collection presentation actions

(The actions listed here are expressly meant as examples and not as an exhaustive list. Several other actions are being considered by library staff.)

Short-term (2022-relocation)	Mid-term (relocation-2025)	Long-term (in new accommodation) 2025-26	Parties involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating space in PdIC for 3 years - Changing collections pilots - Country stacks pilots by relocation committee - Trial of QR codes to other material - Students create their own ASCL sources exhibition. - Display at front desk with relevant material (e.g. African newspaper from 100 years ago?) 	Preparation for relocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise hardware (fichereader, beamer, film room - Interior must facilitate maximum interaction with (special) collections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Front desk - Interior architects

3. The ASCL Library uses other ways of sharing information, targeting specific user groups

Retrievability (general)

Offering documents produced in Africa, and making them retrievable and accessible has always been a core task of the ASCL Library (“information and documentation centre”). The use of other resources has changed the implementation of this in recent years. In addition to locating and acquiring difficult-to-obtain materials (in printed and electronic form), the ASCL Library has invested heavily in making them **retrievable** online. This is necessary because the metadata of these documents (title, author(s), keywords, abstracts) often do not or rarely end up in globally accessible databases – so that the documents are not only not consultable, but their existence is not even suspected. This sometimes concerns documents that exist only in printed form, but also digital documents that are concealed on the internet and rarely appear via search engines.

The ASCL Library ensures the global electronic retrievability of documents that otherwise risk staying under the radar. The library does this by including titles and authors in the library catalogue, tagging them with specialised keywords from the ASCL thesaurus, developed by the ASCL Library – a keyword tool specialised on African Studies and constantly updated. In addition, by strategically adding free text content information, maximum retrievability of unknown African documents is being worked on.

Furthermore, it is also important to keep raising awareness of the documents *outside* the catalogue through, for example, the frequently accessed webdossiers and presentations in the library (such as in November 2021 with The Climate Poets and Antjie Krog).

Sharing information (specific)

Among other things, the ASCL Library provides customised thematic alerts, lists of acquisitions, overviews of newly published scholarly articles, current webdossiers, exhibitions, highlights of specific documents and linking via Wikidata, in order to draw attention to the special collection in a variety of ways. The more diverse the collection becomes, the more proactive the library will be in this regard. After all, some of the material has less informative titles for a non-expert. If content metadata is missing, those publications become unretrievable in general searches. To this end, we have several activities in mind to make the library offer clearer. In terms of the collection, we as a library will engage more and proactively with our primary target group (researchers and students) both in education and beyond. But pop-up exhibitions for temporary audiences, such as visitors to a seminar, can also bring this unfamiliar material to a targeted audience. Contact with African diaspora communities in the Netherlands could also be an entry point.

Because the academic library word is constantly changing, a lot of research has been done on user groups and their needs. Here, age is often a more important factor than education or profession. It

would therefore be preferable over the next five years to develop three specific virtual user profiles for whom the ASCL Library will offer products.

Providing education in Leiden and beyond

A crucial role is played by the connection with **education**. In line with the current research agenda, as formulated in *Strident Africa: Societal and Environmental Change in the Context of 50 Centuries of History: Research programme African Studies Centre Leiden 2019-2024*, there are close teaching and research partnerships between the library and other segments. Library staff participate in Collective Research Groups and, since 2018, three library staff members have a BTQ (Basic Teaching Qualification). In this way, the Leiden BA, MA, Minors, Research Master and PhDs are reached with specific, tailored lectures on search skills, on publishing and publications, and on the collection. These options will be additionally brought to the attention of the courses. This enhanced role in education can best build on the expertise of the library staff, on the one hand, and the versatility and topicality of the ASCL collection, on the other hand. This offer is also open to programmes from other universities and colleges.

User actions and information sharing

(The actions listed here are expressly meant to be examples and not an exhaustive list. Several other actions are being considered by the library staff.)

Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Parties involved
	ASCL has 3 virtual user profiles in clear view and is developing products for them	ASCL has a BA and MA course: <i>Using African sources</i>	documentation

4. The ASCL Library provides as much open access as possible to Africa-related material

By linking data and by making sources public, Leiden researcher and students as well as others (far beyond Leiden) benefit. With the knowledge available about copyright, about (open access) journals in the field (broader than just *ranking*) and of the digital possibilities, the library can play an important role in this regard. Already at an early stage, the ASCL Library is playing a role: in research

applications, in the processing of data and the use of data analysis software, in helping to reflect on the choice of the type of data used, and the platforms on which they are published.

The importance of open access to information is widely endorsed within the ASCL. Yet, even in-house publications by ASCL staff are sometimes behind paywalls. Putting into practice what we preach requires a cultural shift. The past (isolated) months have highlighted the importance of open access – which anyone who has ever worked in Africa can attest to. As ASCL, it is therefore important to keep an Africa perspective in mind and to ensure good collaboration with African institutions. It is important to make African repositories accessible for ASCL services such as Connecting-Africa, preferably in collaboration with fellow librarians in Europe (e.g. Frankfurt). This will involve staff efforts from within the library. Initiatives such as the List of Free Online Periodicals and more **Wikidata records** of articles about Africa,⁷ which will also allow better exposure of research from and about Africa, also deserve stronger support. The ASCL’s metadata must be better linked to external data, and be as open as possible. By including part of the metadata from the catalogue in Wikidata, as is the case e.g. with the Somali collection, the ASCL Library can provide linked, open and enriched collection data and share it more easily with others. An additional benefit is that inclusion in Wikidata makes free functionality available, such as data visualisation. This enhances the visibility and usability of the collection.

The library is committed to ensuring that publications by ASCL staff that may be made open access are actually put online (and digitalised if necessary). Another possibility is to set up our own Wikibase to provide linked and open metadata ourselves.

Open access actions

(The actions listed here are expressly meant as examples and not as an exhaustive list. Several other actions are being considered by library staff.)

Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term
-Make dozens more ASCL staff publications Open Access. (This is possible	- Guiding researchers/ research applications on copyright/open access issues	- Obvious point of contact from research application to publication. Open

⁷ See e.g. the “bubble chart of places of publication of Somali publications”: <https://w.wiki/3Lbs> or the “timeline of Somali publications with ASCL call number: <https://w.wiki/4Q6G>

under the Taverne rule in copyright law.) -Wider use of Wikidata	- Identification of key publications about Africa that are not yet Open Access (and taking action)	access will be the norm
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5. Financial and other implications

General

The way of working as outlined in this policy document is labour-intensive, small-scale and high-quality. This also means an adjustment of tasks for library staff in some cases, which is possible within the current workforce. New positions will require careful consideration of the right match of tasks and competences. In any case, specialised title writers, book orderers with Africa experience and front desk staff with in-depth knowledge of the collection and catalogue will continue to be necessary for the ASCL Library.

More diverse collection

- A more unique and possibly more fragile collection poses additional questions for conservation and lending policy.
- Targeted choices in acquisition will have consequences for lending figures.
- Part of the acquisition budget should be earmarked for describing and opening up archival material. This means that the extra financial scope agreed in the previous external evaluation (increase of the acquisition budget from EUR 80k to EUR 100k) will probably be used in a different way. This could include additional staffing for the archives in the ASCL collection. (14 archives, 9 of which are currently described, see <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/archives>)

Presentation

- An attractive presentation takes more space, which incurs (partly hidden) costs.
- Work for front desk staff increases (compiling presentations and administratively, with processing books in and out).

Other ways of sharing information

- Presenting *library weeklies*, webdossiers etc. regularly leads to responses from students and researchers, and from society. Even critical reactions to these expressions should be viewed positively. Analysis of website usage figures shows that these sections of the website are among the most visited webpages of the ASCL.

Open access

Targeted action on open access is labour-intensive. The costs of this lie mainly in the deploying of staff. This includes actively approaching researchers and publishers to make the most important and most cited publications available in open access. In addition, budget is needed for digitalisation.

6. SWOT

Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Collection

S: The ASCL collection continues to develop towards a true 'Special collection'. Materials that are difficult to obtain elsewhere (in NL, in Europe, in the world), are available in the ASCL Library.

S: The library's ambition is to be at the forefront of Western 'decolonised' collections: materials from Africa increasingly spearhead the collection.

S: Addition of keywords and content ensures retrievability of materials that currently do not appear via Google.

W: Lending may decline as the library focuses more heavily on more unknown and non-Western material.

W: Library processes are labour-intensive.

O: Further coordination and cooperation with UBL and with specialist libraries in Europe about who collects and offers what.

O: Migration of Africans to NL/Europe: larger potential audience for the collection.

O: Less Western travel (e.g. for climate reasons): presence of ephemeral material becomes more important.

T: A collection that looks 'strange' to non-African interested parties because of the relatively high proportion of hard copy materials produced in Africa.

T: The library is vulnerable with a management that strongly aims for quantity rather than quality, and focuses on short-term instead of long-term.

T: Increasing populism in society: pressure on funding for this type of collection.

Presentation of the collection

S: Stimulating research environment for students, academics and other visitors.

S: Unknown parts of the collection become more visible.

S: 'Look and feel' of material produced in Africa gets attention.

W: Because the library opts for open stack and partial presentations of the collection, and not primarily for study areas for students of any discipline, the library does not contribute significantly to student workplaces.

W: Book launches and other African-related events find an attractive setting in the library (e.g. poetry evening with, among others, Antjie Krog).

T: Additional staffing required.

Outreach

S: Because of the enhanced role in education, students make wider use, especially of more unfamiliar collections items.

S: The entire library staff, especially also the front desk, has specialist knowledge of the collection, allowing customers to be well-assisted.

S: Knowledge and experience of digital retrievability and cross-referencing of collections – incl. via the ASCL thesaurus in Wikidata and Connecting-Africa.

W: More staff time spent on education is necessarily at the expense of other tasks.

O: Being a more active player in public debate.

T: Getting bogged down in sensitive discussions.

Open Access:

S: Increasing accessibility of materials, especially also for users in Africa.

O: Knowledge return

T: Increasing digital access makes it harder to interest younger generations in hard copy output. This is still important for an Africa special collection: a significant part of the (primary) material is not digital.

T: The perception that what is free has no value.

Appendix 1. Overview of the number of books by theme in the ASCL Library

Number of monographs by theme (2010)

1. Political conditions & developments	ca. 17,000
2. Society, culture and social issues	ca. 16,000
3. Arts, audio-visual collections and literature (ca. 11,000 of which are primary)	ca. 15,000
4. Economy & development	ca. 15,000
5. History	ca. 10,000
6. Law & constitutions	ca. 6,700
7. Religion, philosophy and worldview	ca. 5,000
8. Education	ca. 4,000

Appendix 2. Overview of top 20 publications from African countries in Leiden University libraries (status December 2021)

Egypt	19414
South Africa	16432
Morocco	7185
Nigeria	6608
Kenya	5805
Zimbabwe	3411
Senegal	2909
Tanzania	2769
Ghana	2611
Cameroon	2354
Uganda	2013
Ethiopia	1775
Tunisia	1673
Algeria	1435
Zambia	1222
Ivory Coast	1137
Burkina Faso	1091
Namibia	1047
DR Congo	808