BOOK REVIEW 1

USER INFORMATION LITERACY: CASE STUDIES FROM UNIVERSITY LIBRARY PROGRMMES IN THE SCANUL-ECS REGION

By E. Kiondo and J. Msuya (Editors). OXFORD:
INASP, 2005, 252p. (ISBN: 1-902928-27-X)

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According to the Foreword to this book, "one aim of this volume of case studies is to describe in what ways and to what extent university libraries in the SCANUL-ECS Region of Africa are embracing Information Literacy (IL) as a part of their core activities. An additional aim is to provide a way forward both for individual libraries, which can learn from the experiences of others, and for SCANUL-ECS, by allowing it to identify any challenges best met by collective action".

That is exactly what the book has achieved. It provides an analysis of the Information Literacy Programmes in Botswana; Kenya; Lesotho; Namibia; South Africa; Tanzania; Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of the countries provided more than one case study while others provide only one. For example, while there are four case studies from South Africa, there are only two from Zimbabwe, and just one each from Botswana and Namibia. But this is understandable, considering the variations in the number of universities in the SCANUL-ECS Region.

Each study covers the development of user education; IL strategies; programme content; who does the teaching; how the programme has been evaluated; the challenges faced; and plans for the future. There is no doubt that this work has been done by seasoned librarians who know a lot about the individual libraries. Chapter one, which presents a general overview of information literacy in the Region is equally interesting.

The editors of the book have done a very good job trying to coordinate publications from a number of countries in the Region. This can be frustrating.

The book also comes with the typical hallmark features of INASP publications – beautiful cover, good format and excellent editing. However, going through the chapters, I was a bit disappointed that none of them had references at the end of the chapter. Instead, all the references are placed at the end of the whole work. While it is true that this work represents a state-of-the-art report, it is also clear that each writer would have made a reference to some other work. The reader must know this for information-seeking purposes.

While I recommend this book to all Library School students and professional librarians in Africa, I shall go further to recommend that these case studies are replicated in the SCAULWA Region. It would be very interesting to make a comparative study of the two regions.