

Manual for village librarians

Sumbrungu and Sherigu libraries, Upper East region, Ghana
Friends of African Village Libraries – www.favl.org
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A word on this manual

This manual explains many aspects of the functioning of libraries supported by FAVL. Some of the material in this manual has been adapted, sometimes with modifications, sometimes without, from the UNESCO publication Libraries for all! by Laura Wendell. The manual is a 'living document': librarians, library supporters and FAVL staff give life to this document, by suggesting modifications from time to time. Please read it carefully, make notes on the margins, and send FAVL your suggestions, or modify yourself if you have an electronic version (available on the FAVL website www.favl.org). The manual will not be applicable to all libraries, and local management should feel free to modify as needed.

When modifying, it is good practice to note here in this section what important modifications have been made, by whom, and when.

- This version: Michael Kevane, May 30, 2007

Philosophy of FAVL

What is our philosophy?

- Durable and equitable social development is enhanced by giving children, students and adults in rural areas the chance to read and learn through books in libraries
- Libraries are sustainable over the long term when local communities are involved in oversight and local staff assures constant supervision and good performance of library services
- Public libraries should be open to all, regardless of ability to pay, age, gender, ethnicity or religion.
- Community libraries in rural Africa should charge modest amounts, however, for subscribers who want to borrow books to read at home
- Early reading is very important for very children, and programs should encourage parents to begin reading to their children at an early age

What are our objectives?

- Help finance the refurbishment and maintenance of buildings that are offered by the village community to serve as libraries
- Ensure a good collection of books in the library, particularly novels by African authors, school books, world literature, and reference books
- Ensure the training of librarians and payment of an appropriate salary

Who are our partners?

- The village communities that offer buildings to serve as a library and help manage the libraries
- Local and international non-profit associations, and government entities that promote reading
- Donors who are individuals and organizations who want to promote a reading society

What do we want to demonstrate?

- Village communities can effectively manage small local libraries at low cost
- Readers will frequent village libraries in large numbers
- Access to village libraries has positive impact on schooling

Library management committee

The library management committee is one of the most important aspects of the library, acting as a kind of advisory council and final decision-maker for the library and the librarian. In many villages in rural Africa, there is no official government entity that represents the collective will of the villagers. Chiefs occupy a sometimes informal intermediate positions between a district-level administration and the village. The village community may have no representative body that collectively owns village land or buildings. The library management committee is then a temporary fiduciary body that acts on behalf of the village community. The community is the ultimate owner of the library.

The librarian and regional coordinator are paid, but the local management committee is usually composed of influential community members who come together several times a year to oversee the functioning of the library. The status and roles of the management committee will vary from village to village. Often these committees quickly lapse once the library is up and running. There are no more important decisions to be taken and the librarian has proved capable of handling the day to day affairs.

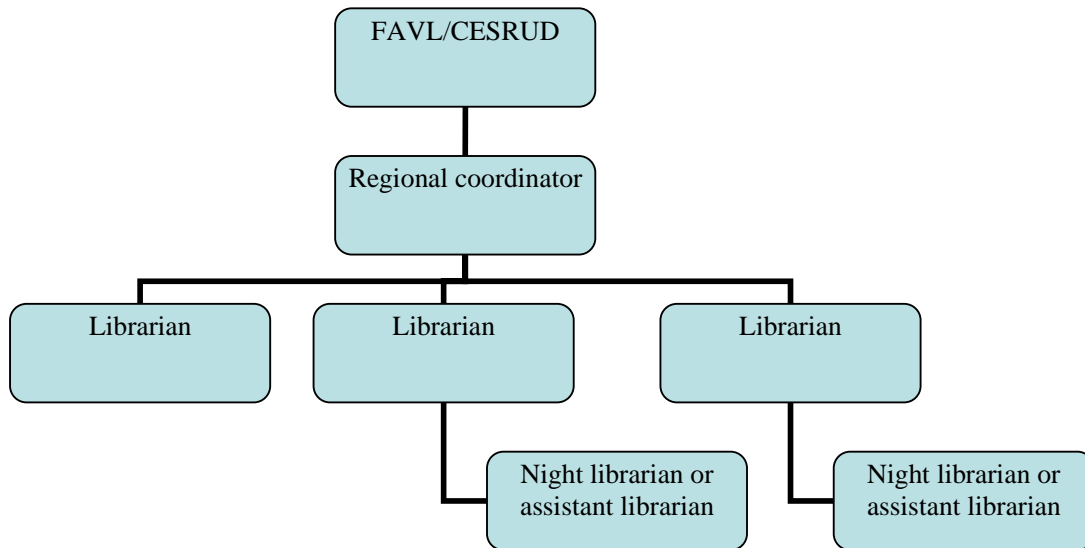
Nevertheless, for long term sustainability of the library as an institution responding to community needs, the library committee is very important, and active steps should be taken to keep it relevant and functioning.

Periodically, fundamental institutional questions about the library may arise. Who owns the library? What if someone claims the building and land belong to him? What if the librarian, as a member of the community, commits some serious violation of local norms? What if the library becomes a source of political or factional conflict, as parties struggle over control of the community institution? The library committee is there to resolve these fundamental questions. Ultimately, it is the decision-maker over the library, even as the regional coordinator and FAVL/CESRUD are supporters, financers, and technical advisors for the library. The library management committee may, however, sign partnership conventions with local government entities and cede various aspects of control over the library to the local government.

Conventions and partnerships with local government entities

The regional coordinator, librarian, and library committee will review proposals for partnerships with local government entities. The library committee ultimately approves these partnerships. For example, the local government may decide to take over payment of the salary of the librarian. Local government may donate a building for the library. The local committee may decide that the local government can officially run the library, rather than a committee.

Structure and organizational chart of FAVL/CESRUD and supported libraries



Role of the librarian

The librarian is the key person in the daily life of the library. He or she assumes a variety of tasks, and has a lot of responsibilities. Listed here are just some of those responsibilities, which vary because every library and library public is different. Assistant librarians have the same responsibilities as librarians, except typically they are not responsible for handling the finances of the library.

1. Daily responsibilities of librarians
 - a. Welcome, orient and inform the public that comes to visit the library
 - b. Handle the operations of loaning books and documents for home use
 - c. Explain and enforce respect for the regulations of the library (hours of operation, behavior in the library, handling of books, sanctions for infractions)
 - d. Ensure the cleanliness of the library (dust, insects)
 - e. Open and close the library according to the hours of operation
 - f. Complete the daily registers of library attendance and book borrowing
 - g. Reshelf books during the opening hours and at closing time
 - h. Take necessary measures to retrieve late, damaged, lost or stolen books
 - i. Manage with care the petty cash funds of the library and any larger purchases made on behalf of the library
 - j. Fill out the library account book upon completion of any financial transaction
2. Weekly and monthly responsibilities
 - a. Organize sessions of storytelling and reading storybooks, for children
 - b. Write a monthly report detailing library activities, totaling library statistics and accounts and sending them via the regional coordinator to the United States FAVL headquarters and to CESRUD. The librarian must finish soon after the end of each month the monthly report, and deliver this to the regional coordinator. The report should include mention of all interesting activities in the library (example, visit by classroom from the school, visit by mayor or chief executive, large donation of books), the statistics on library usage, and a copy of the account book. Any problems that the librarian is confronting should be included in the report, which constitutes then a written record of the actions taken by the librarian to notify the regional coordinator and resolve the

- problem. The ideal report would include anecdotes about library usage (example, a student studied every night for 30 days and passed her exams!).
- c. Attend monthly meetings of local librarians
3. Quarterly or semi-annual responsibilities
 - a. Organize and report of meeting of the local library committee.
 - b. Perform and report on an inventory of books and materials in the library.
 4. Recurrent responsibilities
 - a. Take measures to ensure continuous « auto-formation » about libraries and reading, by reading library manuals, taking part in training courses, visiting other libraries, etc.
 - b. Participate actively in workshops and trainings organized by the regional coordinator
 - c. Prepare and communicate to the regional coordinator lists of books needed in the library, especially those requested by library patrons
 - d. Take measures to restore or replace damaged books, notify the coordinator when books are removed from shelves because they are too damaged
 - e. Organize activities in the library
 - f. Promote libraries and a reading culture in the village community, by visiting schools and community gatherings
 - g. Notify the coordinator of any problems in the library immediately
 - h. Ensure that the library has an adequate supply of work materials such as notebooks, forms for registering library subscribers, subscription cards, book cards, etc.
 - i. Post and ensure adequate signs (interior and exterior) for the library, including roadside and building signs
 - j. Organize from time to time community volunteer work days to clean the library and maintain the library area
 - k. Propose changes to and maintain a current copy of the library regulations; make sure library management community knows regulations; notify library patrons of changes to regulations
 - l. Submit to the regional coordinator a budget for library activities, from time to time
 - m. Maintain an archive of library records, including correspondence, gifts and donations, visits, etc.
 - n. Make efforts for the library to become a local documentation center for government, by establishing a collection of local government documents (budgets, agendas of meetings)
 - o. Find and establish contacts with local organizations that can partner with the library (e.g. local radio, local NGOs, international NGOs working in education in the area)
 - p. Conserver les archives des libraries.
 - q. Solicit books donations from donor agencies
 - r. Facilitate the participation in library management of local government structures, so that they become stakeholders in the community library

Terms of employment

Annual holiday for librarian: The library should close once a year to permit a holiday for the librarian. Leading up to the closure, the librarian should post signs announcing the closure, and may suspend book-borrowing privileges.

Per diems and reimbursement of expenses associated with travel for workshops and trainings: The librarians should not be expected to work all the time for free; he or she has perhaps a family that depends on them. But periodically, a librarian is called upon to participate in a training or workshop, or to meet and escort a visitor, or to supervise a volunteer who is working

in the library. These activities take time away from the normal opening hours of the library, and should be compensated for. The regional coordinator and FAVL/CESRUD will determine a reasonable per diem for the librarians.

Absences: The librarian in case of sickness or emergency should notify the regional coordinator. Advance notification is required for other cases. Unjustified absences, if repeated, will result in a warning letter, and eventually loss of position.

Evaluation of librarian: The regional coordinator is responsible for evaluating the performance of librarians. He or she will elaborate a methodology for performing the evaluation, and submit a written evaluation to the library management committee, FAVL/CESRUD, and of course to the librarian.

Code of conduct and ethics of librarians

The librarian must:

- Welcome and be at the disposal of new library users, and assist all library users with courtesy
- Respect the hours of operation of the library, opening on time and closing at the closing time
- Come to library work in clean clothing and be presentable in appearance, setting an example of seriousness of reading and the library generally
- Not drink alcohol, smoke, or eat food on the library premises, except for neat snack food or sandwiches while working, or during official library functions (receptions, celebrations)
- Not spend excessive time on personal phone calls or conversations during library opening hours; should avoid personal conversations generally, instead read quietly and assist library patrons when not working
- Not use the library as a meeting place for friends or companions
- In case of suspicion of theft from the library, the librarian should approach the suspect in a courteous manner, suggesting that the book may have been taken from the library by mistake and requesting that it be returned. If the suspect is defensive or refuses to cooperate, the librarian should apologize, and continue to closely supervise the person. In case of a second suspicion, the library committee and regional coordinator should be informed and appropriate action taken (prevention from entering the library building, etc.)
- Be prepared to act courteously in case of quarrel or fight in the library, requesting the quarrelers to leave the library, and being prepared to call local authorities if the librarian is not respected
- Immediately report to regional coordinator, CESRUD, or FAVL, as appropriate, in case of suspicion of misuse of funds, or embezzlement of funds, or poor management of library funds. The librarian who suspects a superior of misuse of funds should inform an appropriate authority of his or her suspicions (CESRUD and/or FAVL).

Role of the regional coordinator

- Work regularly as librarian in one or more of the libraries, in order to keep in touch with the librarians and library patrons
- Regularly visit the libraries in the area, with both planned and surprise visits
- Measure the state of the library and performance of librarian using the Library Indicators 5x5 worksheet (see annex)

- Conduct regular inventories of the books and materials in the libraries, working with the librarians
- Help the librarians to carry out story hours in the libraries
- Help the librarians in filling out in a regular fashion their notebooks and account books
- Prepare every three months a short (one or two pages) library newsletter with information about library activities, that can be distributed to library patrons and library partners in the region
- Manage a small workshop where books can be recovered and repaired by rebinding and covering
- Substitute for librarians when they are ill and cannot attend to their regular duties
- Transmit information from FAVL and CESRUD to the librarians.
- Ensure the payment of salaries for the librarians
- Promote libraries and a reading culture through community meetings and other publicity events
- Serve as liaison agent between FAVL and CESRUD and local communities and government entities and NGOs
- Inspect and supervise the accounts and expenditures of libraries
- Manage the establishment of new libraries in the region
- Organize and chair monthly meetings of librarians
- Send monthly reports and the monthly library reports to FAVL and CESRUD
- Authorize absences by librarians.
- Issue letters of warning in case of poor performance by a librarian
- Recommend to CESRUD, FAVL and local library committee termination of contracts in case of repeated poor performance

Regulations of the library

The regional coordinator, librarian, and library committee will review a draft library regulation, suggest modifications, and together approve a final regulation by consensus. The regulation should not differ in overall substance from those of other public, community libraries. The principle of the library being open to all must be respected in the regulations.

The register and note books of the library

Every library must have a set of register books that must be kept in good order by the librarian. These should be regularly inspected by the regional coordinator.

- Accession list: A register of every book in the library. Each book should have a unique number. As books are received by the library, they may be entered in the accession book and assigned a number, to be written on the inside front cover. A column for notes will indicate if a book is lost, stolen, or damaged beyond repair.
- Account book: The library must have a petty cash account book, where all receipts and expenditures are recorded, along with the balance of the petty cash. The librarian is responsible for handling the petty cash.
- Books checked out (circulation notebook): The librarian should note the number of books checked out for home use every day, for the monthly statistics
- Visitor log book: The librarian should note every time a person comes to use the library (do not count the same person coming in and out as multiple visits). This gives CESRUD and FAVL an idea of library usage.

- Official visit, donations, and comments book, This notebook should record any visits by officials or other personalities, donations received, comments recorded by visitors, and other library events (meetings held in the library)
- Log book of librarian daily attendance: The librarian should record time opening the library, time of closing, and explanation for late arrival or early closure or absence from library service.
- Discharge book : Every object (set of books, chair, desk, etc.) that enters or leaves the library should be noted in the discharge book, with the person receiving the materials (in case the library is releasing it) signing and so acknowledging receipt
- Sanctions, late fees, lost books, damaged materials: This notebook keeps track of these unfortunate events for summary in monthly and annual reports
- Subscription notebook: New subscribers to the library (who want to take books home) fill out personal information and are given a subscriber number.

Forms and documents essential to library functions

The librarian is responsible for ensuring the availability of a set of documents for library functions, including the following.

To distribute to new readers

- Guide to new reader: A one page document very simple language that explains how the library works and summarizes the regulations and organization of the library, as well as subscribers rights and responsibilities.
- A short comic book that explains the library.
- A subscriber card that records the period of subscription, reminds the subscriber of important rules, and gives the library opening hours.

To post in the library

- Library regulations.
- Opening hours.
- Invitation to write comments in the visitor book.
- Notes to post on the door of the library (example: “The library is closed due to sickness of librarian” “The library is closed for annual holiday”)
- Promotion of new or interesting books selected by the librarian.

To distribute to visitors

- Annual report of libraries in the region.
- Brochure of FAVL/CESRUD.
- Comic book explaining library functioning.

Forms

- Notification of late book and possible sanctions.

Bookkeeping

The librarian and the library committee must work together to safeguard the money allocated to the library and keep clear records of how it is used. The librarian has a responsibility to the community and the donors to use their contributions wisely and they will want to know how they were spent. Once the librarian has decided where to store the library's funds (in a locked

strong box), the librarian will need to set up a system for keeping track of the funds. Keeping good records will allow the librarian to report to the community, see if the librarian is within budget, plan a budget for next year, show donors how their money was spent, know what equipment or furniture the library owns, and know at all times how much money the library has. The easiest way to keep track of these funds is to record all of the library's deposits and purchases by date. After each entry, record the total amount left in the account. This is called a balance sheet. Here is an example of all the income and expenses for a small library for the month of January:

Figure: Sample balance sheet

Date	Description	Expense	Income	Balance
1 Jan. 1999	Benefit party (this money was used to open the account)		200.00	200.00
10 Jan. 1999	Books from the Book Corner	98.50		101.50
12 Jan. 1999	Tape, pens, stamp pad from Ahmed's shop	15.00		86.50
13 Jan 1999	Donation from the literacy club		20.00	106.50
17 Jan 1999	Candles and Kerosene	3.00		103.50
20 Jan 1999	Desk and four chairs from Mr. Finch, the carpenter.	70.00		36.50
25 Jan 1999	Dictionary from the Book Corner	20.00		16.50
27 Jan 1999	Sale of donated corn		65.00	81.50

In addition to keeping a balance sheet, the librarian should also save the receipts for all the purchases made. You can use the receipts to verify how the money was spent and correct any errors made when entering the numbers in the balance sheet. If necessary, the library committee can always check a receipt by talking to the person who issued it. Most shops will automatically provide a printed receipt. If they do not, be sure to ask for one. Within your community, people may not be used to giving receipts. In that case, a simple hand-made receipt is fine.

Archives of the library

The library should have a set of archives that are well-organized and kept in folders in a safe place. The different folders comprising the archive should include:

- *Correspondence* : Copies of all correspondence
- *Receipts* : Copies of all receipts for expenses

Encouraging the community to use the library

Library users who are confident and satisfied will keep returning to the library. You can help people to get comfortable using the library and develop new skills by pointing out the shelf list, showing them where books are located, helping them to find the right reading level and answering their questions. You may often need to be patient and creative when trying to help someone find what they need. Some people may feel shy or embarrassed about asking questions and need encouragement. Others may ask general questions even when they want to know something very specific. You can help people to clarify what they want to know by taking the time to ask them questions like those in the following sample dialogue:

Sample dialogue:

User: Do you have any books about farming?
Librarian: Yes, we have many. Are you interested in a particular kind of farming?
User: I am interested in maize.
Librarian: You would like to read about growing maize?
User: Well, I really want to know how to keep insects away.
Librarian: You want to keep insects off the maize in your field?
User: No, I want to stop them from eating it as its drying.
Librarian: OK I think you need a book about grain storage.
User: Yes, that is what I want.

The librarian in this example helped the user to express what he really wanted to know by asking questions. Instead of wasting a lot of time looking through all the books about farming, the librarian helped the user to narrow his search to books about grain storage. Helping people to be specific about the information they need will make them more successful and satisfied library users.

Users will also feel more comfortable if the library is bright, cheerful and welcoming. To make the library more attractive, try decorating the walls with posters, artwork and/or colorful displays. Make sure that the shelf labels and signs are neat and easy to read. Post the library's hours by the entrance and hang a sign on the door with a greeting such as "Please Come In" when the library is open. Always keep the library tidy and clean. Instead of silence, try asking people to talk in a quiet voice that does not disturb other users. Encourage people to obey the library's rules by using friendly reminders such as "using bookmarks makes books last longer" instead of negative statements such as "do not bend pages." Some libraries write friendly reminders on paper bookmarks that they hand out to users. This is a nice way to get people to read and obey the rules.

In addition to being helpful and friendly, you can also encourage people to visit and use the library by featuring information on topics of special interest to the community. You can identify these topics by keeping a list of frequently requested information, by following current events, by encouraging people to make suggestions and/or by attending meetings of different community groups. Select a few key issues to focus on and use some or all of the techniques listed below to make information on these topic more accessible to library users. You should also include local community information, as this is certain to be of interest.

Preserving oral knowledge – local history, folklore and culture is of special interest to the community. One way the library can help to preserve local traditions and customs is by recording interviews with people who have particular skills or special knowledge about the community. When appropriate, you can also record stories and legends, festivals, music, ceremonies, dances and other important cultural events. These recordings could even be made into radio shows to give them a wider audience. Be sure to discuss which things should be recorded with the community and write the date, place, speaker, topic, event or other explanation on each recording.

Works by local authors – as with oral knowledge, writings by local authors may contain a lot of very valuable information of special interest to the community. These works can be professionally published or simply typed or hand-written. The authors can be by writers, poets, students, artists or other community members. Special care should be taken to preserve manuscripts that are irreplaceable. Some libraries collect all works by local authors (in this case "local" usually means the village, town or city where the library is located). Others are more selective.

Repackaging or creating materials – there are many ways that you can summarize or simplify information to make it more accessible to library users. You can create posters, fact sheets, diagrams or bulleted lists to emphasize important facts, such as how to fight infant death from dehydration. You can also translate materials into local languages. This is particularly important in rural areas where people may only be literate in the local language and publications

in these languages are scarce. You can create simple "how to" pamphlets on topics like fixing a bicycle tyre or registering to vote. You could also transcribe materials recorded on cassette tapes or write notes about local music recordings. There are endless possibilities!

News – people can gather at the library to listen to the news on the radio, read and discuss the newspaper, hear the latest news from the local taxi driver or merchant, and/or share news of their own. You can make it easier for people to follow the news on a particular topic (e.g. the World Cup playoffs) by creating a vertical file or display board (see below).

Vertical file – you can collect materials such as pamphlets, brochures, newspaper clippings, magazine articles and information sheets on special topics of interest and store them in a vertical file or in subject boxes. Using a vertical file makes it easy for library users to check for new information on special topics.

Display area – as mentioned under **News**, you can use a display board to inform people about events in the community, such as marriages, births, deaths, exam results and/or sports scores. You can also use it to display artwork, poems, stories, photos, suggestions, thank you notes for library volunteers, local handicrafts and other information. The United Nations distributes information you can use to make displays about International Women's Day, World Health Day and their other special days. You can make a simple display board by attaching flour or grain sacks to the wall and pinning things to the cloth. Put a shelf near the display board for books and materials.

Community or library newsletter – If you have the funds, producing a community newsletter with poems, drawings, puzzles and stories, as well as news, is a great way to encourage people to read, write and come to the library. You can also create a library newsletter that reports on programmes, events, displays, contests and other activities going on at the library. Either kind of newsletter can contain articles by local authors or information about topics of interest to the community.

Discussion groups – you can hold lecture/discussions with local experts or general discussions on topics of interest.

Radio/TV broadcast schedule – you can create a schedule of educational radio and television broadcasts. If you have a radio or TV at the library, you can invite users to enjoy the programmes there and hold a discussion afterwards.

Resource list – keep a list of the services and information resources available in your community

Job information – put job postings from the newspapers into a file or post them on the display board. Request brochures and catalogues from training programmes, schools and universities in your country. Also collect materials about distance learning (courses taken electronically or by mail).

Browser box – sometimes people come into the library just because they are curious or want something interesting to read. They may have no particular subject or type of book in mind. These users may feel overwhelmed by the prospect of browsing the shelves or looking through the shelf list. To help them find a book they will enjoy, you can create a "browser box." This is simply a wooden or cardboard box with one or more sections where you can put a selection of popular fiction, beginning readers, children's books, information books or other materials for people to browse. You can change the books every few weeks to keep the selection interesting.

You can also encourage people to use the library by having events, services and programmes. These may be ongoing or one-time-only activities. Most of the suggestions below cost little or no money, but may take quite a bit of time (some could even be used to raise funds – see above). Try to get volunteers to help you. For example, an older person may enjoy reading to children once a week or teacher may be willing to help students start a book club. Do not feel that you should limit yourself to the possibilities listed below. They are merely a starting point to help you form ideas.

"Friends of the library" club – you could start a club for people who are interested in volunteering at the library, working on the newsletter, helping with fundraising or other projects. The club could be made up of students and/or adults. A friends of the library club is different from a library committee in that club members meet to plan events and activities, not to make decisions about managing the library. Members can work on a single project or volunteer regularly. You can organize an annual party to thank the friends of the library and honor people who have helped throughout the year.

Anniversary ceremony – Having a celebration when the library celebrates its anniversary sends out the message that everyone is welcome. It is also a good opportunity to educate the community about how the library works.

Suggestion box – Keep a box or notebook for suggestions in a prominent place and encourage people to use it. This can provide you with new ideas while demonstrating to library users that their opinions are important.

Essay/illustration contests – students who are not accustomed to reading and writing for pleasure may need a little coaxing before choosing to spend their free time at the library. Giving out prizes for the best essay, illustration or book report is a great way to motivate them. You can choose the book/topic or leave it up to them. Be sure to have different levels so that students from the lower grades don't have to compete with more advanced students. If appropriate, give out prizes.

Other awards – you can give out awards for reading the most books, learning the most new words, writing the best report or for helping the librarian.

Story hours – reading a story out loud to a group of youngsters or adults can be a wonderful experience. With a little practice, you will find yourself putting more and more life into the characters. You can also ask other community members to take turns reading out loud or telling stories they know by heart. Try having a regular time and day for story reading – everyone enjoys a good story.

Performances – you can have plays, puppet shows (puppets can be made from paper bags, cloth, socks, paper attached to rods, dolls and many other materials), poetry readings, skits, dances, music or other performances at the library.

Games – you can keep board games, cards, traditional games and other types of games at the library. You can also hold "quiz shows" where teams compete against each other by answering questions on different topics. You can help students and community members learn to use the library by having a "quiz show" with library questions such as "where is a book's title page?" or "which title comes first in the shelf list - *More Cars* or *Better Fish*?"

Literacy classes – the library can be a great place to hold literacy classes for adults who may not feel comfortable going to the school. Classes will bring new readers to the library where they can develop their skills.

School assignments – teachers should take advantage of the resources in the library by giving their classes research assignments or suggesting readings that complement school topics.

Book clubs – reading can be even more rewarding when you have a chance to discuss what you read with others. Organize a book club so that readers can share their reactions to books.

Library partnerships – also called twinning, connect your library with a library in another country. This can provide great opportunities for cultural exchange. Displaying drawings, letters, art and other materials from your partner is a great way to get people to come to the library.

None of these activities, however, will do much to build community support for the library if people do not know about them. You will need to publicize the activities as widely as possible for them to be effective. You can do this by word of mouth, calling a meeting, sending notices or fliers to community groups and schools, putting up posters, asking the local radio station to make announcements, sending a brochure or press release to a local newspaper, publishing a

library newsletter, sending notices to library users (expensive) and/or by other means available in your community. Be sure to include the date, time and location of the activities in all publicity. You may also wish to charge a fee for attending some of the more popular activities. If so, be sure to tell people in advance. Keeping the community informed about the library's activities is one of the most important ways to bring in new users and keep up the enthusiasm of regular users.

Circulation of books for reading at home

If the library committee has decided to let readers borrow books from the library, you will need to have a system for keeping track of who has the books and when they are due back. As with cataloguing, there are many different systems for keeping track of borrowed books. Some are more complicated and expensive than others. Two simple methods are presented below. Keeping the system simple will make it easy to use and increase the chance that people will follow the rules.

Before you begin lending out books, you need to register your borrowers. This means writing down information about how to contact them in case they forget to return a book. If your library charges borrowers a yearly fee, registering them can help you keep track of who has paid. For each borrower, record the following information: name, address or neighbourhood (or any other information you could use to send them a message), and the date they paid their borrower's fee (if applicable). For children, also include their age, parents' names and school.

For each book, make a "borrowing" card. Write the unique number of the book in the upper left corner. Below that, write the title and author name. Make columns below the title for the name of the borrower, the date borrowed, and the due date.

Glue a card pocket onto the inside of the back cover of each book. You can purchase these pockets from a library supply store (ask local libraries that use such a system where they get theirs) or make your own from stiff paper and glue or by cutting letter-sized envelopes in half. Glue a slip of paper onto the last page of the book opposite the card pocket. Write "Due Date" at the top of the slip. Place the book card inside the book pocket. The book is now ready to be borrowed.

To check a book out, remove the borrowing card from the card pocket and write the borrower's name and the due date on the card. File the cards in a box by the due date using pieces of stiff paper to make sections for the dates. Also write or stamp the due date on the slip of paper you attached to the last page of the book so that the borrower will know when to return it. When a borrower returns a book, retrieve the borrowing card from the file and cross off the borrower's name. Then replace the card in the card pocket and return the book to the shelf. This card system makes it very easy to check books out and see which books are overdue.

Although card systems make it faster to check books out, circulation notebooks have certain advantages that may make them worth the effort. A circulation notebook provides a record of all the books borrowed from the library. You can use this important information when evaluating the library and weeding the collection. It shows how many books are borrowed from the library each month and which books are checked out the most often. Circulation notebooks can also make it easy to keep track of the fines people owe.

Inventory

At least twice a year, you should take an inventory, which means checking to see if any of the materials listed on the accession register are missing from the library. You will need another person to help you. Close the library for a day and put all the books in order on the shelves. Use

the prepared “number list.” Start at one end of the library, on the furthest shelf at the top. One person goes through each book and calls out the number. The other person uses the “number list” to cross off the numbers as they are called. Slowly work your way through the library. (You can calculate about how long it will take by multiplying the total number of books times the average time it takes for each book- if there are 2000 books and each book takes 5 seconds, then it will take about one minute for 12 books, or 720 books in an hour, or about three hours to finish the library. Of course, you and your partner want to take frequent breaks as it is very tedious work, but it must be done correctly and exactly to be worthwhile!) When you have finished, go through the box of cards for books checked out and overdue books, and cross off those numbers. Finally, you are left with almost all of the number list crossed out. Go through the list and find the numbers that are not crossed out. These are the books that are missing. Go through the accession register to see the titles. Perhaps there is already a note indicating that they are missing. Make a list of all the books that have gone missing in the six month period. Usually this should be less than five books. If it is more, you have a serious problem. Give a copy of the list to the library committee and post a copy in the library. Over time, some books may be returned. You could even offer a small reward for their return.

If there are many items missing, you may need to improve security at the library and/or start an inquiry to discover what happened to the books. Now it is your turn to be detective. Looking at the titles of the books missing, are there any patterns? Are they all reference books (someone is stealing the expensive dictionaries?). Are they all African novels (an avid reader is forgetting to return novels or accidentally taking them?) Are the books about Chemistry (probably a senior secondary school student is taking them?). Are they children’s books (Not too worrisome as children are always accidentally taking books, and these are the easiest to replace.)

Strategies for recovering late books

Unfortunately, there is no way to completely prevent book theft. Most libraries should expect to lose some books over the years and include the cost of replacing them in the budget. The surest way to prevent theft is also the most drastic – keep all the books under lock and key and only let users read them under supervision in the library. Since storing books in locked cabinets and only allowing the librarian to retrieve them is neither practical nor desirable for many libraries, try using some of the methods below to limit theft:

Community education – educate people about the value of the books for the community. Explain how removing books from the library hurts everyone and ask people to be on the look out for missing books. In particular, you might ask parents and teachers to set a good example and encourage responsible book use by members of their families. You should also make sure that merchants know what the library stamp looks like and where library books are stamped. Ask them not to re-sell any library books without checking first with the library.

Label the books – people are less likely to try to sell books that have the library’s name stamped or written on them. Be sure to stamp them in more than one place using ink that will not rub off. One good place to stamp them is along the edge where the pages come together because it is hard to remove marks from this area.

Keep accurate records – people are less likely to steal if they think they will be caught. You can find out which books are missing by doing regular inventories. You can identify borrowers who do not return books by keeping a circulation notebook.

Put wire mesh on all the windows – this works better than bars because people cannot pass the books through it.

Have only one door – it is easier for the librarian to keep an eye on people if they must enter and exit through the same door.

Check bags – ask people to leave their bags with the librarian while using the library.

Be selective – only lend books to people from the community. Visitors from other places may take the books home with them and not bring them back.

Use magazine folders – magazines and newspapers are small and easy to remove from the library. You can make it harder for people to take them by putting the current issues inside a large folder made of stiff paper or cardboard and passing a tiny lock through a hole punched in the folder and magazine or newspaper. You can reuse the folders and locks for new issues as they come in. Back issues are less likely to be stolen.

Involve the public – write a list of missing books and ask the public to help you find them. Someone may know who has them.

Name names – you can ask religious or community leaders to read the names of people who have not returned books during public gatherings. While this is quite a drastic step, several librarians in Africa attest that it is effective.

Withhold diplomas or school certificates – school libraries should consider withholding the diplomas, certificates, and exam results etc. of students who have not returned books at the end of the school year. Issue their diplomas when the librarian certifies that the students have returned or paid for the books.

Keep valuable books in the library – don't let anyone borrow a book you cannot afford to replace.

Librarians will occasionally have to pursue library users who borrow books and then do not return them. What are some good strategies for getting these overdue books back to the library?

First, some steps to take to prevent overdue books:

- At the time of subscription, make sure you record detailed information about the person and their contact information, especially if you do not personally know the person. If the person is a stranger, ask to see an identity card. Consider having the library committee change the regulations to permit book borrowing only by residents of the community, and not by strangers.
- For subscribers from neighboring villages, perhaps have a requirement that they be recommended by a community member
- Establish ties with local authorities (chiefs, priests, school teachers) so they can help to pursue overdue books

If prevention has failed and a book is overdue and very late, what to do:

- Visit the residence of the subscriber to request the book; family members may not be aware that a child has borrowed a book and may help to recover it
- Visit friends and neighbors of the borrower to ask their help in convincing the borrower to return the book
- If the borrower is a student, see his or her teacher and school director
- Send a formal notice that the book is overdue
- Suspend the borrower's library privileges; post a list of names of borrowers suspended in a prominent public place in the library (shame!)

Weeding

Weeding a library serves much the same purpose as weeding a garden. Removing worn or damaged books makes room for new materials. It improves the appearance of the library and encourages people to take good care of the books. The yearly inventory gives you the chance to see if each book is in good condition. If not, you should set it aside to mend or permanently remove it from the library.

Some books may be in perfect condition, but are really not appropriate for the library. Their contents may be old and outdated – perhaps even dangerous. They may be the wrong reading level for your library users or written in a language they do not speak. Community members may not be interested in certain books because they contain information that is unrelated to their

culture, customs or situation (for example, a book about famous American baseball players would not be very relevant in northern Ghana).

It is sometimes difficult to convince members of the library committee that weeding is necessary. To avoid criticism, you should try to gain their support before removing any books. Remind the committee which subjects are most important to the community. Books on other topics may be taking up space that could be used for more useful materials. The circulation notebook is a record of which books have been borrowed from the library. You can use it to find out how many people have read a particular book. If no one has borrowed a book for a long time, it may mean that people are not interested in it. There may be other reasons, however, why people do not borrow a useful book. Showing that an outdated or inappropriate book is not being used supports removing it, but do not remove a book simply because it has not been borrowed without first trying to find out why (e.g. it may have been shelved wrong or the title may be confusing).

It may make committee members feel better about removing books from the library if you can find another use for them. You could try to sell unwanted books to raise money for new materials (do not sell donated books if this is against the donor organisation's regulations). Merchants may be willing to purchase old books to wrap merchandise. Giving away back issues of magazines may encourage people not to take current issues. If there is a problem with the reading level, language or subject of the books, you could try to find another library that can use them. For example, a rural library might give a book on urban planning to a city library. You should never sell or give away books that contain outdated or false information. These books should only be used for scrap paper or fuel. If the committee absolutely opposes removing books from the library, try to get permission to at least take some books off the shelves.

It is very important to have a policy about how long to keep newspapers and magazines. In general, a small community library should not keep too many months of back issues of newspapers. Very quickly there will be too little shelf space, and piles of newspapers all over the place are very unsightly. Old newspapers (one month old, perhaps) can be sold, given to library users, or disposed of in a different manner.

Likewise, the cartons that donated or purchased books arrive in are sometimes useful, but there is nothing more unsightly than a big pile of used cartons, somewhat torn, in a corner of the library. If there is not immediate foreseeable use for the cartons, given them to library patrons or sell them to merchants or traders for recycling.

Taking care of books

Paper and books are very fragile. They can be damaged by sun, moisture, dust, dryness, and many insects find them delicious. The moment you put the books on the shelf, you expose them to potential harm. Here are some things that damage books and some steps you can take to fight them:

Moisture – is a disaster for any library. It dissolves paper and glue and encourages the growth of mould. The best way to fight the damp is to make sure that the roof and walls of the library are water-tight and that there is good ventilation. Using shelves with open backs promotes the flow of air. Leave enough space between the shelves and between shelves and the wall to allow air to circulate.

Direct sunlight – makes paper brittle and yellow. Use curtains, blinds or shutters to shield books from direct sun.

Dirt – one way to protect books from dirt and damage is to cover them. You can use old paper, plastic bags, special plastic covering available at bookshops or other materials to cover the

books. The method shown below works well with old newspapers. If you cover the books with paper, remember to put a spine label on the cover as well as the book. You should also write the author and title on the front and spine of the new cover.

Insects – love to eat paper and glue. Regularly removing the books from the shelves and dusting them with a soft dry cloth (never use water) will help dislodge any insects that have crawled between the pages. If your shelves have legs, you can put them in cans filled with water and a thin layer of oil, soap, or kerosene. You can also fill the cans with a solution made by soaking neem tree leaves in warm water overnight (replace this solution weekly). Be sure to move the shelves out from the wall or the insects will climb up that way instead. Never spray chemical insecticide directly on the books because it can damage the paper and may be unsafe for readers to handle. Talk to your local agriculture extension agent about safe plants, herbs and natural compounds you can use to repel insects. If the shelves don't have legs, consider putting them on bricks or blocks of wood treated as described above.

People – also damage books. It is important to educate library users (especially children) to care for the books they borrow or use in the library. They should always handle them gently with clean hands. They should never spill food or wax on them or tear or fold the pages. They should use a bookmark to keep their place instead of laying the book down with the pages open (this can crack the spine). They should never shut thick objects, such as pens, between the pages. The librarian should post the rules for handling the books, and any fines for damaging them, on a large colourful sign in the library (see *Community Involvement* above).

Of course, it is inevitable that some books will be damaged by normal use. You therefore need to have supplies on hand for book repair such as tape, glue, twine, rubber erasers, paper and cardboard. If a page is torn, apply transparent tape to both sides of the page so that the ends overlap and stick to each other. Then trim off the excess. Erase pencil marks by stroking gently in one direction with a soft eraser. Never wet or wash the books. You can reinforce the spines of books with heavy cloth tape or with cloth and glue. To make paperbacks last longer, glue cardboard to the insides of the covers. Choose cardboard that is strong, but not too thick. Then reinforce the spine with tape so that the covers do not rip off.

Here is a method you can use to re-cover a book that is falling apart. First remove the old covers and spine. Then carefully stitch together the pages making sure that they are all there and in the right order. At the same time, stitch a piece of cloth in place over the spine. You may need to use a pin to punch holes in the pages a few at a time before threading the cord through the holes. Use very strong thread or light twine to securely bind the pages together. Then glue the new covers, or the old ones, onto the cloth and cover the spine, stitches and left edges of the covers with heavy tape or another strip of cloth. If the inside margin of the paper (the white space where the stitches go) is not wide enough, you will not be able to read some of the words once the pages are stitched together, so make sure you have enough room, at least 3cm, before you begin. Make your stitches about 1cm from the left edge of the paper so that the pages don't rip out easily. Since this method is very time consuming, use it only when the damaged book is valuable or hard to replace. Otherwise, discard the damaged book and replace it with a new one.

Volunteers in the library

Occasionally the library will host a volunteer from the United States, Europe, or elsewhere. The librarian is encouraged to give every opportunity to the volunteer to do useful work in the library, so that he or she will have contributed in a substantial way to the development and sustainability of the library. The librarian should, at the end of the stay of the volunteer, write a short report on the volunteer's activities. The volunteer, in turn, should be encouraged to also write a short report. A meeting with the regional coordinator or a FAVL or CESRUD representative might be the ideal time to share reflections on the time spent together.

What kinds of activities are appropriate for a volunteer?

- Overhaul of the accession register and inventory: From time to time the accession register will become out of date and include many damaged or lost titles, and books weeded out of the library, and the register will need to be updated, with new books replacing the old numbers (record should be kept of the old books whose numbers are replaced). This is a good job for a volunteer, especially one who has computer skills and might have the time to enter or update the accession list into Excel.
- Improve or develop a system for classifying books: many small community libraries use a ‘color code’ systems to classify books, putting pre-printed colored stickers or labels on the spine of the book to enable the librarian to quickly sort and reshelv books. For example, African novels might have a green sticker on the spine of the book. Alternatively, the volunteer might develop a modified Dewey Decimal system if the library stock exceeds 2,000 books, and includes a large section of miscellaneous fiction and non-fiction titles.
- Reading programs. One of the hardest things in a village setting is organizing and sustaining a regular reading program, where children or adults meet regularly to read together or discuss a book they have read. A reading circle, for example, would be appropriate for young readers. A ‘Read to your little sister’ program might be appropriate for teenagers with younger sisters or brothers. A “Grandparents read books too” program might encourage the elderly to come to the library, demonstrating the value they place on reading, and enabling them to enjoy picture books and story books if they are not literate.
- Locating book donations in large towns: Many large towns have sizable expatriate communities who often have lots of books and are willing to donate them to libraries. Peace Corps volunteers also frequently can mobilize resources for books. The volunteer can, on behalf of the library, approach these donors and arrange for book donations (and thank you letters)
- Promoting the library in schools: Most schoolteachers are very happy to have a volunteer come to the classroom and bring an interesting storybook to read in class or during recess. The volunteer should prepare a handout and photocopy many copies to hand out to the students.
- Improving the system for book circulation: No system is perfect, and many volunteers have experience with libraries in developed countries. Short of developing a computer system, which would be too much technology, the volunteer might think of ways to improve the circulation system and record-keeping. The improvements should be thoroughly discussed and potential problems anticipated before implementation, though. Experimenting with a crazy idea may lead to a big waste of time and inconvenience everyone.
- Decorating the library: The volunteer often has a good eye for aesthetics, that comes from years of visiting museums and public spaces in places where art is abundant. He or she may be able to explore the marketplace for African art and paintings and drawings, and organize an exhibit for the library. The volunteer might be encouraged to raise the money for this exhibition; a typical traditional work of art can cost from \$20-\$30 dollars (with some art, such as baskets, being far less expensive), so a budget of \$200-\$300 would be sufficient. Educational posters are often available from the NGOs that are active in the area, especially United Nations organizations.

Documents annexed to this manual

Documents FAVL

- Model library regulation
- Model partnership agreement
- Model monthly report
- Indicators 5x5

Documents non-FAVL

- Libraries for all! by Laura Wendell
- Library guide Osu Children’s Library Fund