International School Library Month (ISLM)  
October 2012

School libraries: a Key to the Past, Present and Future

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ZIMBABWE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION [ZIMLA] – Midlands Branch Activities of the ISLM 2012

16 November 2012: Commemorations from

Stanley Primary School to

Cecil John Rhodes (CJR) Primary School, Gweru

COMPILED BY: THE SECRETARY GENERAL  
ZIMLA – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC)  
Tel: 263 – 9 – 362934  
Mobile: 263 – 733 515 048  
E-mail: sg@zimla.co.zw or info@zimla.co.zw
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Zimbabwe Library Association’s National Executive Council (NEC) would like to extend appreciation to the ZimLA Midlands Branch Executive, chaired by Mr. Alphege Maisiri (Senior Assistant Librarian from Midlands State University); for organizing the belated commemorations of the International School Library Month of October, on 16th November 2012.

The Guest of Honour Mr. Michael Phiri, and all other resourceful presenters, who shared their vast knowledge and experiences, we extend our heartfelt thanks for assisting Midlands Branch.

The pledges and book donations, our sincere thanks to Longman Harare for the unwavering support. We are positive that your assistance will go a long way in the development of school libraries to become effective agents in support of learning. We appreciate the Longman’s Midlands Educational Representative based in Gweru, who facilitated the delivery of the books at the host school precisely on the morning of the events.

May we further extend our appreciation to PLD Investments, Harare for book donations. To be afforded the opportunity to personally select books in Harare was a rare privilege. We further register our heartfelt thanks to Darien Book Aid Plan who sent beautiful children’s books that were donated at the commemorations.

Appreciation goes to Cecil John Rhodes Primary School administration, with Mrs. Nyabeza as the Headmistress, for hosting the commemoration occasion on 16 November 2012.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the administrators and teachers of all the primary & high schools that participated in the activities. All institutions that allowed their Librarians to participate are highly applauded.

The presence of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) for providing escort services during the march from Stanley Primary School to CJR Primary School on 16 November 2012 was very much appreciated.

Finally, to all the pupils and students, we hope not only did they have fun, but also learnt the importance of school libraries in learning and self development.

ZimLA NEC
**PREAMBLE**

The Zimbabwe Library Association (ZimLA) takes keen interest in recognizing national and international events in line with the profession. School Libraries (and Librarianship) has been on the agenda for the ZimLA National Executive Council – ZimLA NEC, to actively participate and lobby for viable school library services.

As such, after the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) devoted the month of October to recognition of school libraries in 2008, ZimLA has adopted an annual culture of recognizing this unique month through activities by its Branches. This document spells out activities from the ZimLA Midlands Branch, hereby to share with each other their experiences and possibly create more networking and learning from one another.

Yes, we are proud of being Librarians and we do Love the L sign.

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**Secretary General**
ZimLA – National Executive Council
[sg@zimla.co.zw](mailto:sg@zimla.co.zw)
Introduction

The ZimLA Midlands Branch organized one day activities for the celebration and commemoration of the ISLM of October 2012. A special Organizing Committee had been set up by the Branch Executive, chaired by Mr. Alphege Maisiri, a Senior Assistant Librarian from Midlands State University and Branch Chairperson.

Activities revolved around the 2012 International Association of School Librarianship presidential theme: *School libraries: a Key to the Past, Present and Future*. The activities included a march from Stanley Primary School, through the city centre by the Librarians, teachers, students and pupils to the venue, Cecil John Rhodes Primary School on the 16th of November 2012.
Due to logistics and other activities, the ZimLA Midlands Branch deferred the ISLM celebrations to mid-November 2012. The Branch successfully conducted its activities. Gweru Schools, on Friday 16th of November 2012 marched through the streets of Gweru to commemorate the belated International School Library Month. The International School Library Month is an annual event celebrated worldwide to lobby the schools and other stakeholders to establish and develop their School Libraries. The Zimbabwe Library Association (ZimLA) Midlands Branch was no exception in conducting this year’s event whose theme was *School Libraries: a key to the past, present and future*.

The events started with a march/procession by both primary and secondary schools from Stanley Primary School to Cecil John Rhodes (CJR) Primary School. The march / procession was guided by the Zimbabwe Republic Police Traffic Branch, who expertly escorted the large group. Leading the procession were two High School girls from Nashville High School, clad in white t-shirts bearing the theme of the event. The Branch’s Organizing Committee thoughtfully had T-shirts branded particularly for the day’s events. The girls carried a Banner high up attracting early shoppers as they passed through the Gweru CBD.

Speaking at CJR Primary School, the venue of the celebration, the Guest of Honour Mr. Michael Phiri the Executive Chairperson of a local clothing company, MesClothing; commended the Zimbabwe Library Association and Midlands Branch in particular, for successfully organizing the event. He urged schools present to make their libraries a place for exploration and discovery, so as to nurture pupils and students to become avid readers and be future leaders. He also said that there was need to develop in children inquiry skills, that this would nurture them into self learning and encourage them to ask questions and seek help when needed. Most importantly, Mr. Phiri further said, these enquiry skills would enable pupils and students to develop a range of information handling skills, especially the ability to efficiently use the library and its catalogue, and to locate the resources they require, and finding the kind of literature and more books by an author they enjoy.

Both school children and students took to the stage to recite poems in line with this year’s ISLM theme. Some of the schools that took part were Thornhill High School, Nashville High, Lundi Park Primary, Bumburwi Primary and Mvuma Primary School. Mr. Michael Phiri later presented pupils and students with book prizes.

The Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Library Association’s Midlands Branch, Mr. Alphege Maisiri a Senior Librarian at Midlands State University, said the Midlands Branch valued School Libraries and that those were a top priority to the Branch. He said a school library was therefore a must in every school, he said schools that had libraries help build the educational foundation of the children as well as the school community as a whole.
Mr. Maisiri said the Midlands Branch would like to see the following:-

a. School library development in Midlands province
b. Setting up of an ideal School Library in every school with appropriate staffing requirements
c. Provision of reading material relevant to the school curriculum
d. The teaching of information and inquiry skills for pupils to be effective users of the library for homework and research activity
e. Establishment of computer laboratories

Next year the Midlands Branch intends to Launch the Schools Spelling Competition, where schools will compete at district level, those who excel at district will qualify to compete at provincial level where finals will decide the winners who will walk away with a box of books for their School Library.

The Midlands Branch was also working in collaboration with Zimbabwe Reads an organization that provides book donations to stimulate a reading culture. Mr. Maisiri said Midlands Branch covered all the Midlands Province and was happy to help schools and give professional advice about the procedure of starting a new library as well as, the setting up of a Library Management Committee to carry out the plans and spearhead the establishment of a School Library. Two booksellers who donated books, PLD Investments and Longman Zimbabwe were acknowledged for their kind gesture.

The Coordinator of the events Mr. Hosea Tokwe, a Librarian at Midlands State University hailed this year’s commemoration as a huge a success.

**Conclusion**

Activities were well appreciated by all stake holders, schools and students. Of paramount importance was the role of the school library in support of learning, the school curriculum and activities. Another point stressed by the Branch was the role of the school library in developing a reading culture among pupils and students, and creating an environment of user friendly libraries. It was emphasized that school librarians encourage pupils and children through reading, to develop their lifelong skills useful outside the school peripheral.

Among challenges, like in other ZimLA Branches, the Midlands Branch noted lack of trained librarians to efficiently run the school libraries; lack of adequate financial resources to equip school libraries with the latest technological gadgets and most importantly, lack of school libraries in certain schools.

We congratulate Midlands Branch for the efforts and successful commemorations of the international School Library Month.
APPENDIX I

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH: GUEST OF HONOUR’S SPEECH:
Mr. Michael Phiri, Executive Chairperson – MesClothing

The Staffing Officer for Schools, The Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Library Association – Midlands Branch, our host the Cecil John Rhodes (CJR) School Head, School Heads, Librarians, Book Publishers, ladies and gentlemen and all school children present, I feel greatly honoured to stand before you and present this speech, on this very important day to celebrate the International School Library Month in the Midlands Province.

The origins of the International School Library Month go back to 1999 when President of the International Association of School Librarianship, Blanche Wools, proclaimed 22 October as International School Library Day (ISLD). This was reaffirmed by Past President Peter Genco in 2005. Then in 2008, immediate Past President James Henri extended it to a whole month, to allow schools around the world to choose one or more days in October that would best fit their specific situations to celebrate the occasion. Here in Gweru, the Midlands Province we have chosen 16 November 2012, though belated to sensitise all stakeholders to see the importance of school libraries and advocate for their development in our Schools.

We are here today to celebrate the contribution of the School Library to our education. I would like to start my speech by saying that the School Library is the epic-centre of School life. One writer by the name Jeff Norton once wrote that School Libraries nurture future talent and economic prosperity. Pupils as they start to get in contact with books need a safe space to explore who they are, be themselves and discover that they are not alone. The true gift of school libraries is that they create a place for study, reflection and exploration. It is the one place where students who are serious about intellectual exploration reflect and can feel accepted and unashamed about wanting to excel. Or to be a bit humorous it is a place where loners and misfits can escape and bury themselves in fiction or fuel their interest with non-fiction.

However School Libraries are not a bunch of rooms filled with books, but they are places where future world changers ground themselves, recharging their intellectual curiosity and emotional fortitude. I am told that this year’s theme is “School Libraries: a key to the past, present and the future”. This theme is most befitting to make us reflect on the vital role the school library plays in our Schools. In Gweru and the Midlands Province as a whole some of our schools have no libraries, and where they are found they do not have a proper library system. Looking at the past, a School Library was there to:

1. Support the educational aims of the school.
2. To provide materials to support the curriculum.
3. To organize material, that is cataloguing and classifying.
4. To select materials and to provide aids to teaching for school staff
5. To provide instruction to teachers and pupils in the use of the school library
I would like to believe that for schools in the Midlands Province as a whole, those with libraries are fulfilling these functions so as to support the teaching, learning and research processes that go on in the school. But how about School Libraries in the present day? What role should the School Libraries play? Today we all know the challenges that have been brought about by Information Communications and Technologies (ICTs). These have affected comprehension skills in our children. In our schools, education is now more learner-centred. So there is now need to develop reader education and advocating reading so that pupils and students can be good readers, develop mastery skills, and develop a passion for reading. There is need to develop in them inquiry skills, this will nurture them into self learning and encourage them to ask questions and seek help when needed. Most importantly these enquiry skills will enable our pupils and students to develop a range of information handling skills, such as how to efficiently use the library and its catalogue; how to locate the resources they require; how to enjoy literature and how to find more books by an author they enjoy.

This is only but the beginning of a concept that is currently being introduced to all freshmen in Zimbabwe at the university level, but here we are saying “catch them young”. This means when they get up there they will be active information need identifier, effective and efficient locators, evaluators and users of information to accomplish specific tasks and participate actively in the democratic society. This is why our theme says: - “School Libraries: a key to the past, present and future”

We all know that books as physical objects matter to us. They evoke the past. It is said that the world in which we are living is changing, but are we changing with it? Some schools in Zimbabwe have already computerized their library services. Now we hear of electronic books, e-commerce and e-journals, DVDs, CDs, RSS feeds, Podcasts, Wikis, and Blogs, social networks like Facebook, Twitter among others in education. What does the future hold for school libraries? It is realistically a future where our School Libraries will be turned into Digital Libraries.

Given this technological development I would like to believe that future school libraries should provide equity and access, that is to say provide a balanced collection of books in both digital and print formats that serve the needs of the whole school community. Students and pupils will have to access both written and digital resources. In other words, I am saying children should have equal access regardless of socioeconomic status and access to information technology out of school. In our society some families might not have resources, knowledge, or capacity to promote high quality reading and learning opportunities for their children. It is the school library that will provide a facility to all in that respect.

In conclusion, let me say for the future, schools libraries must be a safe environment to explore well organized information manned by professionally qualified librarians; where our children can have fun, feel safe and enjoy literature. Students must enjoy the space because they need to be needed, and others will get that most precious opportunity to develop leadership skills as they interact with quality information. School Libraries for the future should be active learning centres that create, share, and use knowledge for learning, living, and good life. We all need School Libraries in our Schools NOW, more than ever. So what are we waiting for?

Let the International School Library Month celebrations begin.
I THANK YOU.
APPENDIX II

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH:
ZIMLA – MIDLANDS BRANCH CHAIRPERSON’S SPEECH: MR. A. MAISIRI

The Master of Ceremony, Mr. H. Tokwe, our Guest of Honour, Mr. M. Phiri, our host Cecil John Rhodes School Head Mrs. Nyabeza, Schools Heads and fellow Librarians present, all pupils and students in attendance, I am honoured to stand before you all.

The idea to celebrate the International School Library Month of October was initiated by the Zimbabwe Library Association early in 2010 at a Conference and AGM held in Masvingo in May 2010. Librarians all agreed that it was now high time we moved with times and be in line with the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) to commemorate or observe the month of October. The Midlands Branch first commemorated the International School Library Month (ISLM) on 29 October 2010, right here at CJR School. So we want as the Midlands Branch to conscientise and lobby for all schools in the Midlands Province that do not have School Libraries, to deeply think about establishing a School Library in the coming year.

The Midlands Branch of the Zimbabwe Library Association values School Libraries and we give them top priority. The heart of the school is found in the School Library, but a school without a Library is like a ship without a compass. A school library is therefore a must in every school, for schools that have libraries help build the educational foundation of children.

We are guided by the IFLA/UNESCO international standards on school library development, that espouses effective provision of reading materials to support the reading and learning process.

The Midlands Branch would like to see:-

a) School library development in Midlands province
b) Setting up of an ideal School Library in every school with appropriate staffing requirements
c) Provision of reading materials relevant to the school curriculum
d) The teaching of information and inquiry skills for pupils to be effective users of the library for homework and research activity
e) Establishment of computer laboratories

As we celebrate this event, we want to lobby for all schools to have libraries. Starting next year we will engage the Regional Education Director to seek authority to carry out a provincial survey on state of libraries in the schools of the Midlands Province.

This will enable us to;

1. Gather information on state of school libraries in the province
2. Know the number of Schools with libraries
3. Find out whether these libraries are well resourced

4. Discover whether they are professionally managed

5. Find out whether there is proper organization and handling of information to support the school curriculum.

This survey will help us as an Association to come up with ways to assist and advise schools to establish and develop their libraries. This will also assist us to approach potential partners with whom we can cooperate to get books to help schools boost their stock. As an Association we believe it is vital to bring back reading habits among pupils and students for this will develop comprehension skills; which have now been eroded by too much technology currently crowding school children’s lives. Reading Clubs, Debate Clubs, Drama and Writers Clubs should be revived to stimulate the desire to continue acquiring new knowledge in the school environment. How can we stimulate pupils and students to have the zeal and love for their School Library?

As an Association, in the coming year 2013 the Midlands Branch intends to launch the Schools Spelling Competition, where schools will compete at district level, those who excel at district level will qualify to compete at provincial level where finals will decide the winners who will walk away with a box of books for their School Library. Already we have identified a potential bookseller to provide prizes that I am not at liberty to disclose now.

I am also happy to inform you that we are in collaboration with Zimbabwe Reads, an organization that provides book donations to stimulate a reading culture. Early in March at our first ZimLA-Midlands Branch meeting, a number of schools received a parcel of books each. We are expecting more donations from the same donor by end of this month.

As ZimLA Midlands Branch we are happy to help schools and give professional advice. We are free to visit your school at your invitation, to assist with the procedure on starting a new library, the setting up of a Library Management Committee to carry out the plans to establish the Library.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to thank all organizations who answered our appeal for donations. Fellow School Librarians in the Diaspora who sent us pens, bookmarks and posters. Darien Book Aid Plan that sent us beautiful children’s books and last but not least PLD Investments based in Harare that donated excellent children’s books that constituted the bulk of book prizes that we will hand out to our participating children and students at this gathering.

I also want to register my sincere thanks to MesClothing for the décor and I say a big thank you to CJR School Head Mrs. Nyabeza for permission to use their School Hall. Thank you very much.

All the best in the celebrations.

I THANK YOU.
APPENDIX III

Pictures from the celebrations at Midlands

Two Nashville High School students, (putting on ISLM branded T-shirts) ready to lead the march / procession as they stand inside the Stanley Primary School yard.
The march /procession starting from Stanley Primary School yard by Mvuma Primary School pupils, with their lady teachers assisting to control the excited group; heading towards Cecil John Rhodes Primary School, the venue of the celebrations.
The march/procession crosses a road junction, in the foreground is the Gweru Municipal Offices.

With the assistance of the Zimbabwe Republic Police, the march went on.
Two librarians in suits, in front Mr. Hosea Tokwe, the ZimLA National Treasurer, and behind him Mr. A Maisiri from Midlands State University Library & ZimLA Midlands Branch Chairperson; enjoy the march with Lundi Park Primary School pupils on their immediate right.

Takunda School pupils (forefront) marching through the streets of Gweru, with Mr. Hosea Tokwe (in suit) enjoying the march. Behind him are students from Nashville High School participating in the fun.
“Support Our School Libraries....” The Prefects from Mvuma Primary School appear to be saying as they go through the streets of Gweru holding their message posters high up!!!

The pupils from the participating schools enjoy singing and clapping, while the ZimLA National Treasurer Mr. Tokwe not resisting the fun of it all but to join in.