

Contributed Paper Session I-5

INFORMATION FOR AFRICA: THE ROLE OF THE VETERINARY LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, ONDERSTEPSPOORT

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ABSTRACT: The Veterinary Faculty of the University of Pretoria at Onderstepoort is widely regarded as the best veterinary educational facility in Africa and one of the best in the world. The development of the Veterinary Library is described briefly. Other veterinary libraries/information centres in South Africa and other countries in Africa are then discussed.

Various changes in the African situation - political, sociological, cultural and financial are outlined, showing their influence on the veterinarian's role in Africa, as well as their effect on the Veterinary Library of the University of Pretoria. The university of Pretoria has had to re-think its role, realising that it is part of Africa first and foremost.

With diminishing financial resources worldwide, but especially in Africa, the Veterinary Library of the University of Pretoria has a vital role in providing and sharing information resources with the rest of Africa. This will ensure its own development and potential as an information provider.

The Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria

The Veterinary Faculty of the University of Pretoria at Onderstepoort is widely regarded as the best veterinary educational facility in Africa and as one of the best in the world. Its high standard in teaching and research was first established by South Africa's most famous veterinarian, Sir Arnold Theiler in 1922, and has been maintained since then. Its veterinary degree, the BVSc, is recognised by the Royal Veterinary College. A further indication of its international status is that its graduates have always been able to compete on an equal footing with

graduates from anywhere else in the world. In 1989, for instance, Onderstepoort graduates competed for the 56 internships available at various veterinary schools in the United States — internships for which there is keen international competition. Our graduates managed to secure seven of these posts, which is more than any other school from anywhere else in the world.⁽¹⁾ The Faculty is extremely popular as a place for clinical training amongst students from European veterinary schools. The past year has also highlighted the African status of the qualification, as graduates from the Sub-Saharan veterinary schools beyond its borders applied to further their studies at this Faculty.

The change in government policy in South Africa in 1989, leading to the dismantling of apartheid, has led to the opening of formerly "white" educational facilities to all races. This has caused the University of Pretoria to rethink its role, realising that it is part of Africa first and foremost. The mission statement of the university was adapted in 1991 to include its new Africa-oriented role.

The Veterinary Library's mission reads as follows: To strive to support the mission of its parent body, the Academic Information Service of the University of Pretoria by managing and marketing its information resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. This will enable it to provide the appropriate and essential information support needed by the university in its teaching, study and research mission, as well as the university's mission to provide effective and relevant aid to the nations of Africa.

In South Africa and other Sub-Saharan countries, veterinary schools are situated in 11 states, each

having one, except Nigeria and South Africa who each have two, as follows:

ANGOLA	1
TANZANIA	1
KENYA	1
UGANDA	1
MOZAMBIQUE	1
ZAIRE	1
NIGERIA	2
ZAMBIA	1
SENEGAL	1
ZIMBABWE	1
SOUTH AFRICA	2

As far as I could ascertain, all Sub-Saharan countries have a veterinary research centre or agricultural institution or college with probably a library or information centre attached to each. This map showing developing Sub-Saharan countries lists institutions receiving free subscriptions to two leading American veterinary publications from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

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Veterinary Libraries in South Africa

The two veterinary faculties in South Africa are at the University of Pretoria, Onderstepoort, and at the Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA), on the border of Bophutatswana, the former being mainly for white students, and the latter mainly for black students. The Veterinary Research Institute at Onderstepoort, till 1991 resorting under the State's Department of Agricultural Development, and now changing to a semi-private institution, is the third veterinary facility in South Africa. Each has a library, all relying on each other in the areas of resource sharing, while the University of Pretoria's Veterinary Library undertakes CD-ROM or online searches for MEDUNSA since financial cutbacks reduced their database resources.

The oldest of the three facilities is the Veterinary Research Institute, founded by Sir Arnold Theiler in 1908. He came out to South Africa in 1891, a young Swiss veterinarian, intensely interested in the strange, unknown animal diseases of Africa. He was a tireless researcher who built a veterinary facility of world class, gaining international recognition within his own lifetime. Among the diseases for which he is most well-known are rinderpest and East Coast fever. Today, the Institute has worldwide recognition for its high quality vaccine research and vaccine production. The vaccine for equine influenza virus was recently used as far afield as Spain.

This is one of the main reasons why South African veterinary research and its benefits cannot be excluded from the rest of Africa. Diseases know no boundaries. Successful research on the specific animal diseases of Africa helps not only animal health within South Africa but beyond its borders. Providing the information is the role of the veterinary libraries in South Africa, rather than their counterparts in the USA, UK or Europe.

The Faculty of Veterinary Science of the University of Pretoria came into existence in 1921, when it was established as part of the Veterinary Research Institute, with Theiler as the first Dean. In 1930 the Faculty became part of the University of Pretoria but was staffed by part-time personnel of the Research Institute. In 1973 it separated functionally from the institute and became an integral part of the University of Pretoria. Until 1975 admission was limited to 45 students per year, but in 1976 the number was increased to 90 per year, such was the growing demand for vets. At present there are 600 students (it is a 5 1/2-year degree course), approximately 45 veterinary nursing students for the 2-year diploma course, and 85 academic staff. More than 29,000 patients are treated each year.

The growing realization that the veterinary demands of the black animal owners with their four million cattle, goats and sheep could not all be met by the annual 90 new graduates from the University of Pretoria's Veterinary Faculty led to the creation of the Veterinary Faculty at MEDUNSA in 1982. Lecturing staff from the University of Pretoria joined the new Faculty where the training of vets for mainly rural veterinary practices takes place.

The Veterinary Library, University of Pretoria

Until 1973, the Veterinary Library of this Faculty modestly occupied one room in the student hostel. It then moved to new quarters near the Faculty's sheep and pig pens, much to the envy of library colleagues at the main campus in town with their romantic notions of the delights of a farm atmosphere!

Library holdings by 1979 were 5,198 books (4,037 titles), 3,175 journal volumes (270 titles) with a staff consisting of one qualified librarian, one assistant and one messenger. Soon this new facility was too small for the growing stock and student numbers. It was a great relief when the library moved, in 1987, into the new lecture hall and administration complex, known as the "Sir Arnold Theiler Building." By then, the book stock had increased to 8,474 items (5,420 titles) and the journals to 5,499 volumes (415 titles). Now, five years later, the holdings are 10,951

books (8,035 titles) and 6,148 journal volumes (395 titles) as well as a steadily growing audio-visual collection (609 titles). Due to financial cutbacks, we will be cancelling approximately one-quarter of our journal subscriptions this year.

The cataloguing and classification of the books and audio-visual materials, as well as their ordering and the ordering and receipt of the journals, is done at the Main Library. Later this year the cataloguer will move to the Veterinary Library as part of the decentralization policy of the Academic Information Service. She will place the book and audio-visual orders as well, which we welcome as a most efficient step in helping the library to provide a better service to its users.

The library today has two full-time information specialists to deal with the information needs of 13 departments, one full-time assistant who runs the lending desk with its many and varied activities, and a part-time assistant for interlibrary loans. There are two more assistants who act as messengers, photocopiers and cleaners. A veterinary student is employed "after-hours" to enable the library's facilities to be available from 07:30 till 18:30 each day except weekends. On Saturdays, the library is open from 08:00 till 12:00, manned by staff members on a rotating basis. During the university's two main vacations (July and December), the library hours are shorter.

Technological facilities are well established in this library. Since 1982 online searching has been available, showing a rapid growth with researchers and lecturers of the Veterinary Faculty making more use of it than those from any other Faculty of the University. CAB CD-ROM was purchased at the end of 1990 and is most popular with our users. Online searches, as elsewhere in the world, have since decreased dramatically. We are looking forward to the day when CAB can supply more frequent updates on the CD. Other databases used, but on a smaller scale, are MEDLINE, AGRICOLA and BIOSIS. The diskette version of *Current Contents: Agriculture, Biological and Environmental Sciences* is also now available to our users.

Changes in the African Situation

As Pritchard remarks in his article on the veterinary profession in the 1990's and beyond, political, sociological, cultural, and financial changes are affecting veterinarians throughout the world.(2) This is particularly true of Africa. These changes are influencing the services of veterinary libraries. Political changes in South Africa have already been referred to in this paper, leading to the opening of

formerly "white" education facilities to all races. Agreements were reached this year between the African National Congress leadership and the South African Veterinary Council regarding the registration of South Africans who have qualified as vets outside the country, and who now wish to return and practice in South Africa. These persons will not be required to sit the Council's Board exam, but must attend the clinical year at the South African veterinary faculties.

Sociological changes caused by the abandonment of apartheid policies in South Africa have affected our perception of our society. A positive result of this is our attitude to providing veterinary services to the developing parts of Africa and having a role to play in ensuring a successful and healthy sociological climate. Cultural changes have also affected the veterinarian in South Africa. He realises that Africa's farming culture, herd-raising, has to be taken into account, not ignored in favour of imported western methods that work in the developed world, but not always successfully in Africa. As Yeoman points out(3) "By our success we vets . . . have caused enormous damage in Africa. We should not persist in the error of introducing western technology just because it exists."

With diminishing financial resources worldwide, but especially in Africa, veterinary librarians have to come together to plan for the future. Cutbacks in budgets for staff, books, and journals have led in South Africa to the cancellation of duplicate journal titles, the introduction of fee-based services to outside users, the need to share resources, to upgrade standards of library services and to develop marketing principles.

Despite financial cutbacks, the Veterinary Library of the University of Pretoria intends to try to keep up with technological growth, and to help other veterinary information institutions in Africa to do likewise. This does not imply the financing of the new technology in the developing nations in Africa. The literature shows a number of USA, UK, and European institutions have been providing finances for the past five years at least, but in providing instruction in their use, and sharing their experiences with new users of information technology, such as CD-ROM and fax.

With the help of technology, information specialists at the Veterinary Library are developing databases on topics of African interest where there is very little available commercially, such as a database on ostriches or on breeds of cattle peculiar to Africa. **Why the Need to Share Information in Africa?**

Agha(4) in his overview of the VIIIth IAAID (International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists) World Congress, Budapest 1990, drew attention to the growing importance of information, worldwide, but especially in the developing countries. He pointed out the "inequitable situation that exists between the developed and the developing world in the access to information. Everyone acknowledges this state of affairs but very little is being done to alleviate the situation." Other recent literature on Africa's information needs shows the necessity of meeting Africa's exclusive animal disease problems by African expertise rather than by the very different North American or European approaches.

A veterinary educator from Africa, Dr. D. N. Kisauzi (5) of Zambia contrasted the veterinary education there with that in the USA. (He was referring to the Pew Report.) "In Africa there is a much higher diversity of environments that vets have to contend with, as well as a wide variation in educational standards in different parts of the continent." Camara(6) stresses the importance of indigenous knowledge to the development process, "the development of information infrastructures adapted to local needs, . . . the use of local expertise (South-South cooperation), the use of information tools and methods adapted to a local context and the development of human resources."

Mchombu (7) in his article "Which way African librarianship?" states, "If we are to accept that the main duty of African librarianship is to satisfy the basic information needs of society in such areas as health and prevention of disease, environmental protection, farming and livestock husbandry . . . it is necessary that African countries strive to create their own knowledge and information base relevant to these requirements. "He adds," Africa can and should learn from others, but such knowledge and information acquisition should be carried out selectively and objectively."

Pritchard(2) writes about the growing importance of animals to society. In South Africa, companion animals are playing an increasingly important role in contributing towards human health and well-being. At the Faculty, the development of the new human/animal bond discipline is gaining world acclaim. The head of the relevant department (Veterinary Ethology) was invited to address the recent World Veterinary Congress on the new curriculum of this department.(8)

Livestock have always been Africa's most crucial commodity. In view of the ever-increasing population growth of the developing countries, it is even more essential today to make livestock more productive and valuable economically. To achieve this, the veterinarian in Africa plays an essential role, with the support of his library.

The African situation is a challenge not only to veterinary educators and researchers in Africa, but also to the libraries that serve them. This First International Conference of Animal Health Information Specialists is, therefore, of great significance to African veterinary librarians. Of the 15 contributed papers, three are from Sub-Saharan Africa - a much needed boost to the development of African library co-operation.

The Role of the University of Pretoria Veterinary Library in Providing Information for Africa
As Bertschinger(1) pointed out, there is a great need for vets to become involved in the development of stock farming in black rural areas. This Veterinary Faculty, together with its sister faculty, the Faculty of Agriculture and the State's Department of Agricultural Development, has started to tackle a major project to improve black stock farming methods not only within South Africa, but elsewhere in Africa as well. Locally trained vets are essential because of the conditions unique to Africa. The teaching of herd health practice at the Faculty has become an essential part of the BVSc degree.

The Department of Theriogenology at the Faculty is presently involved with developing courses in animal husbandry and herd health geared to the needs of the developing areas of Africa. In creating videos on such topics, this department further hopes to assist the developing countries' vets in a practical, Africa-oriented way.

The Faculty can make a major contribution to African veterinary education by offering continuing education courses and postgraduate training for Africa. Such courses are offered regularly by the clinical departments at the Faculty, but so far they have been geared more to meet the needs of the developed veterinary world. The facilities and resources of the library are made available to the registrants of these courses.

The library is involved with most veterinary endeavours launched by the Faculty, and sometimes other research bodies as well. It is well equipped to meet the information challenges of Africa. It has a well developed book and journal collection, the up-to-date technology necessary to locate information

on databases, either by using CD-ROM or online sources. It can make use of African-oriented centres of information at the university such as the Equine Research Centre, the Poultry Reference Laboratory, the Clinical Pathology Laboratory, the Veterinary Public Health research facility and the Mammal Research Institute, geared to Africa's needs.

The library staff's expertise based on effective training and years of appropriate experience, and the technology needed for efficient document delivery further emphasize the suitability of this library to provide veterinary information for Africa. We do lack one essential aid, if we are to optimally meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is the necessary finances to develop our infrastructure.

Challenges

The challenges facing all veterinary libraries and information centres in Africa today have been noted by various African and other librarians, educators or technology experts:

- Resource sharing: Ostwich (9), Agha (4), and Mutewera(10)
- Need for effective communication: Agha (4), Ochs(11)
- Communication achieved by appropriate technology to enable successful document delivery
 - fax: Ochs(11)
 - networking: Ochs(11), Ostwich(9), Mchombu(7), and Shaw(12)
 - satellite: Ochs(11) and Pool(13)
 - CD-ROM and other computer technology: Hartevelt(14) and Ostwich(9)
- Creating databases: Ostwich(9)
- Creating union lists: Ostwich(9), Hartevelt (14)
- Sharing relevant expertise: Mchombu(7), Camara(6)
- Undertaking cooperative information projects: Ostwic (9), Hartevelt(14)

To meet these challenges in the 21st century, information specialists in animal health in Africa need to work together. "We must create a new sense of community where people work together to accomplish things that they could not achieve alone in the information world and in particular in agricultural information to offset any global ill effects in the future, it is necessary for us to act together for mutual benefit. "Agha.(4) He also points out: "There is a strong momentum today that we must all protect our environment across the globe and the realization that what we do in one part of the world affects the other directly or indirectly, immediately or in due time."

Suggestions to Implement Structures to Meet the Challenges

- Hold a meeting of information workers in animal health in Africa to:
 1. Improve resource sharing between the Sub-Saharan countries (at present, only Namibia and Zimbabwe are using our resources and vice versa)
 2. Discuss ways to improve document delivery (delays exist at customs between South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, and fax facilities are still lacking in many developing countries)
 3. Implement the sharing of staff expertise as necessary
 4. Discuss how the information needs of post-graduate students in, for instance, Zaire, Ivory Coast, and Uganda can be best met
 5. Examine the possibility of extending the Veterinary Library's current awareness service (at present serving practising vets within SA) to vets outside its borders
 - 6a. Inform each other about their specific information projects, perhaps making the relevant bibliographies or databases accessible to each other as necessary, e.g., the Veterinary Library's own collection of information sources on specific African animals, or African animal diseases, or breeding programs as used for special projects. Examples are those related to game farming, zoos and game reserves outside South Africa's borders (the Ivory Coast and Mozambique amongst others, where veterinarians from South Africa's National Parks Board are involved and the cheetah breeding projects of other countries assisted by the Faculty's cheetah expert).
 - 6b. Examine the necessity of cooperative information projects and put into working if feasible
 7. Arrange for the exchanging of union lists, accession lists as aids in effective resource sharing
 8. Consider the implementation of networking, linking regional networks such as South Africa's UNINET to the continent's AFRIKANET (Shaw(12)); investigating the possibility of joining the satellite information system at present linking five African countries, as described by Pool(13). As Ochs(11) points out, the use of optical scanning technology is not yet feasible in developing countries with their isolated areas where networks will not be extended for many years. Here satellite transmission can be used effectively to help solve data communications problems
 9. Examine together the infrastructures needed to meet the challenges of African information provision in the 21st century

Lack of finances is the greatest problem for all information providers. Finding funding sources will be a challenge, but working together as veterinary librarians in Africa, we should have greater success than doing it alone. International bodies who are willing to fund information development in developing African countries are: (1) IAAID [Agha(4)]; (2) World Veterinary Association [the President's report (15)] to the World Congress in 1991 outlined the WVA Development Programme, meant to assist developing countries in setting up efficient veterinary services; and (3) ISD (Information Services Division of the International Development Research Centre, Canada) Ostwich(9).

If we, veterinary information specialists of Africa, strive to positively meet these challenges, we shall have gone some way in improving Agha's "inequitable situation that exists between the developed and the developing world in the access to information." (4)

In the words of our past Rector, Professor D. Joubert(16), when presenting the Sir Arnold Theiler Memorial Lecture at the Faculty last year, "With Africa in the throes of what is called its second liberation, we cannot afford not to become and stay fully involved."

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