

Africana Ephemeral Collections in the Library of Congress

by

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Acknowledgment

Special thanks to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies and the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of London for inviting me to participate in this important and timely workshop: 'Political ephemera in the Commonwealth and Latin America'. I see an important opportunity here to foster more substantial contacts and co-operation with colleagues in Europe and Africa to address major issues relating to the systematic collecting and preserving Africana political ephemera or 'grey literature'.

[Powerpoint Presentation Figures -- continuing loop of selected examples of the diverse range of political ephemera represented in the Library of Congress Africana Ephemera Collections]

The Africana Collections of the Library of Congress

The Library of Congress has a long-standing role in acquiring and providing access to materials from and about the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Since the acquisition of Thomas Jefferson's personal library in 1815, which included significant publications on the culture and history of the African continent, the Library's rich and extensive holdings of Africana (material issued in or relating to Africa) have become the most prominent in the world.

For Africa south of the Sahara, the focal point of reference services and bibliographic activities in the Library of Congress is the African Section, one of three units of the African and Middle Eastern Division. Established in 1960, the history and holdings of the Library's Africana

collections mirror the growth of American diplomatic involvement, academic interest, and public attention on the African political and economic affairs from the late-19th century to today.

The multi-faceted responsibilities of the African Section include the provision of professional reference services to meet the needs of members of the US Congress and other government agencies, the business community, the scholarly community and the general public, collection development and acquisition activities, liaisons with various governmental, academic and professional associations in the United States and abroad, and the promotion of publications, educational, scholarly, and cultural programs.

The African Section has long been recognized by librarians and scholars for its bibliographic program covering general and topical guides focusing on a specific subject or country to bibliographies of official publications of African governments. In recent years, the Section's bibliographic works have been expanded to include bibliographic services in electronic formats. Recent compilations include *Africana Collections*, an illustrated guide to the Africana Collections at the Library of Congress, the *Africa Business Guide*, an extensive annotated guide to selected business and economic internet information resources on Africa; and, one of its most ambitious works, *Portals to the World*, selected, annotated links to web sites providing information and resources on Africa and other areas of the world (available at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed>).

The Library's collections of Africana are integrated by subject into the Library's general book and periodicals holdings. Impressive works of Africana research materials can also be found in the special format collections of the Library's Geography and Map Division; the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded

Sound Division; the Music Division; the Prints and Photographs Divisions; and the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. Legal materials are in the custody of the Law Library's African and Middle Eastern Division

Collection Scope

Both for historical and contemporary research studies, the Library's collections of materials concerning the 52 countries of sub-Saharan Africa are exceptionally rich. Guided by the Library's Collection Policy Statements (CPS), selection and acquisitions efforts cover virtually every major field of study in the humanities, arts, and social sciences (excluding technical agriculture and clinical medicine). The main strengths of the Africana collections are in the fields of history, vernacular languages, literature, politics, government, and economics.

Language coverage includes more than 300 African vernacular languages.

Formats collected include manuscripts, maps, microforms, monographs, newspapers, periodicals, and government publications. Films, video and sound recordings, prints and photographs, CD-ROMs and other electronic tools are also acquired.

Profile of the Africana Ephemera Collection

The systematic collection of Africana ephemera in the Library of Congress dates back to the late-1960s. In LC library jargon, ephemera are defined as non-commercial, non-book publications; including, but not limited to, brochures, pamphlets, leaflets, broadsides, policy papers, research reports, conference proceedings, newsletters, and non-print material with pictorial content and graphic design (such as photographs, badges, stickers, posters, etc.). Fugitive or "grey literature" is the term frequently applied to many of the types of information materials included under the category of ephemera. Encompassing varying non-traditional political and social views, such materials are typically published outside of official or normal

commercial book-selling channels, and are generally difficult to trace and obtain. Another feature of ephemera materials is that they lack proper bibliographic identification, – author(s), year, ISBN, etc., which makes cataloguing these documents problematic. Yet another difficulty is finding indexing terms or subjects headings to describe the content of these documents.

The Library has amassed an extensive repository of well over 35,000 individual items of an ephemeral nature that reflect post-independence era social, cultural and political developments and events in the African countries. Known as ‘The African Section Pamphlet Collection’ – this rare and important collection has gained reputation as a vital resource of ‘unique and primary materials’ that is of particular interest to the US Congress, agencies of the federal government, and academic and research communities from around the world. Its significance rests in its capacity to provide unique testimony of the evolution of economic and political developments and trends in the African nation-states that frequently are under-represented in mainstream book format. Moreover, the materials reveal not only a wealth of knowledge on past and current Africa, but looks at the dynamics of the post-colonial African world by African themselves.

Sources of Acquisition for Africana Ephemera

It is important to note that the lack of a well-defined distribution infrastructure for African ephemera has required the Library to adopt a ‘proactive’ strategy for the acquisition of ephemera materials published in Africa. Increasing by an estimated 500 pieces annually, the Library’s Africana ephemera holdings are acquired through a wide variety of channels. Examples include exchange, gift, and purchase from LCs Nairobi field office, issuing agencies, blanket order dealers, and a network of in-country bibliographic representatives. Additional materials are frequently acquired through acquisition travels and on-the-spot contacts made by Library staff members with Africa-related groups and organizations. Through these methods, the Library has

developed over the years an exceptionally strong collection of ephemera publications from sub-Saharan Africa.

Categories of Africana Ephemera and Collection Strengths

Generally speaking the Library's Africana ephemera collection is one of the most comprehensive of its kind. Concentrating primarily on national politics in the post-independence era in continental Africa to the present, its holdings are produced by a wide range of political groups and advocacy organizations (including human rights groups, labor groups, women's groups, religious groups, youth groups, environmental groups, and educational and cultural groups). The collection also includes extensive ephemeral publications from government, international, and civil society organizations.

Prominent throughout the African Section Pamphlet Collection are extensive holdings of political ephemera, notably opposition group and political party pamphlets and propaganda leaflets, trade union literature, liberation movement documentation, speeches, press statements, official government policy documents and statements, reports and newsletters produced by non-governmental and international organizations, conference papers, reports from major research institutes, as well as campaign and election memorabilia.

Equally valuable in the Collection is the wealth of materials on contemporary political action groups and the socioeconomic activities of new national and international civil society and non-governmental organizations. This diverse body of materials conceptualizes human rights issues, democracy and governance processes, and numerous other development-related themes.

While most of the material in the collection is primarily in Western languages, here too, significant works in African vernacular languages are included.

Of special note in the collections are significant items documenting and conveying much on the evolution of 20th century political change in the African nations. There is a substantial amount of materials that throw light on the impact of Cold War era on the political development of the African countries; relations between the African states with the Soviet Union, China, and Western nations; the adoption of Socialist and Marxist-style ideologies; African nationalism and the pan-African politics of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the creation of one-party states, military coup d'etats; popular movements inside the African countries such as the trade unions and African churches and political parties; the intensification of ethnic tensions, conflict, and devastating civil wars; the emergence of multi-party democratic political systems; and the general processes of African nation-building and social transformations.

Also represented are strong holdings of writings and speeches by eminent West African political leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau) Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Leopold Senghor (Senegal), Sekou Toure (Guinea), Steve Biko (South Africa) as well as other prominent and contemporary names on the African political scene.

A second area of note are the extensive holdings of ephemera documenting the era of liberation movements or armed struggle in the Portuguese-ruled colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, and of the white, minority-ruled regimes in the Southern Africa regions of Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa.

In addition, the collection also holds substantial materials on the international anti-apartheid political struggle and divestment movements, including campaign activities against nuclear and military collaboration, loans to South Africa, and oil sanctions. Ephemera from the historic 1994 first multiracial democratic elections held in South Africa, including a rich collection of ANC

and other political party ephemera. Sample voting ballots, political stickers, campaign buttons, T-shirts, automobile bumpers tickers and other artifacts are there also.

Pamphlet publications from the main political parties of the African countries is also well represented in the collection. Items from West Africa include materials from the Convention People's Party (Ghana), the National Convention Party (The Gambia), the University Party of Nigeria (Nigeria), and the Socialist Party (Senegal). A rich collection of pamphlets, news clippings, unpublished papers and reports on Nigeria and the Biafra War (1966-1968) is also included. Holdings from the East African states include political organization publications as varied as the Democratic Party and the National Resistance Movement (Uganda), the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Tanzania), and the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Kenya. There are also pamphlet publications from the main political parties of Southern Africa. This includes publications issued by "white" parties such as the Rhodesia Front (FT) in the pre-and immediate post UDI or Unilateral Declaration of Independence period in Southern Rhodesia as well as materials from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), and its rival, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Pamphlet publications from additional Southern African political parties and associated organizations represented in the collection include those of the white minority National Party (NP) of South Africa, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African Communist Party, the Inkatha Freedom Party, and others.

The African Section Pamphlet Collection is complemented by a special collection of more than 800 posters issued by government and international agencies, and by political opposition groups and social, religious, education and cultural organizations. The posters provide a unique resource on various socioeconomic and political topics. Imagery includes election campaigns, revolutionary and socialist propaganda reflecting political events in countries such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, Namibia, Angola, and South Africa, solidarity movement campaigns supporting liberation struggles in southern Africa, and posters showing heroic role models, freedom fighters, and women in the liberation struggles. Another theme represented is that of posters focusing on African economic development and social issues such as education, AIDS, women's rights, children, agriculture, and environment and natural resource management.

In addition, the Collection includes a representative sampling of Nigerian Onitsha market literature which is particularly valuable for the study of African literature, and 'representative' holdings of selected periodicals and newsletters which were published in Africa, but are no longer issued.

Organization

For ease of access, the African Section Pamphlet Collection is arranged by geographic area (country or region) and then by subject, within eight broad thematic subject categories:

- ! General
- ! Economics
- ! Humanities
- ! Politics and Government
- ! Social Sciences
- ! Speeches
- ! Bibliographies
- ! Reprints

The collection is cataloged very briefly at the country and subject level. For example, Nigeria–Politics and Government. Individual items in the collection are not cataloged. Bibliographic records are accessible via the Library’s online catalog system (<http://www.loc.gov>). To increase and broaden ‘accessibility’ and to meet the preservation needs of the Library’s ephemera holdings, steps to digitize parts or all of the collection are now under discussion. The problem of copyright restrictions, however, remains a major challenge yet to be resolved.

Current collection development priorities of the Library are focused on acquiring the growing body of ephemeral materials being issued by African emigre advocacy groups and professional organizations worldwide. Priority and planning efforts are also being given to strategies for the systematic identification, management, and preservation of “born digital” or electronic ephemera, particularly the web-based materials produced by political groups and national and international non-governmental organizations.

Today, the Library's Africana ephemera collection is becoming an increasingly valuable and indispensable source of documentation for researching post-independence political history in the African states and a great variety of political developments. The rich and diverse holdings of ephemera provide a vivid example of the importance of safeguarding the documentation of the present that is often neglected, in as comprehensive a manner as possible, so that scholars of the future will be able to interpret the past political heritage of the African nations.

In concluding, I would like to say that the African Section of the Library of Congress welcomes the opportunity for potential collaborative ties with European-based and African librarian colleagues not only to increase awareness of the unique documentary heritage to be found in ephemera materials', but also to facilitate collection development, preservation, sharing, and effective access to our rich and varying repositories of Africa-related ephemera holdings.

Thank you.

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