


## Chapter 16

# The Role of the Rural Librarian on the Provision of Social Justice Education in South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

*The author assesses rural community libraries' cultural strategies for the provision of online services. This chapter details social justice strategies in rural library settings to reduce the inequitable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this chapter will give context to rural South Africa following apartheid legislation and connect this context to library services. Effectiveness of the social justice library strategy improved in South Africa Libraries of the former Bantustan state from the apartheid system to a democratic system in 1994. A Social Justice library strategy was developed to change the mindset of rural communities to adopt information communication technology to disseminate information. Libraries and information services are provided to communities irrespective of ethnic group, belief, or culture. Furthermore, the author will also analyze the transformation after the transition. The role played by the National Department of Arts and Culture department in the establishment of the recapitalization program as a strategy to empower rural libraries is discussed.*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Historical Development of Libraries in South Africa

The National Party came into power in 1948 and introduced the apartheid system. The apartheid policies segregated people based on culture, tradition, and values. The homelands states included Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei, Gazankulu, KwaZulu, Lebowa, KwaNdebele, KaNgwane, and QwaQwa. Rural libraries were situated in the former homeland's states. Libraries in these areas are underdeveloped because of a lack of infrastructure (Netshakhuma, 2021). The apartheid system created inequalities in

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the distribution of infrastructures, libraries, and Information communication technologies. This implied that rural communities lack access to information. Urban areas were in the position to receive resources from urban areas (Jimenez, Vannini, & Cox 2022) . This paper discussed the role of rural libraries, resources, and infrastructure, the role played by the South African national department of Arts and Culture in funding rural libraries. Rural libraries technology and librarians. State of rural communities' experience with libraries.

## **THE ROLE OF RURAL LIBRARIES**

After 1994, the National Department of Arts and Culture redesigned strategies to empower rural libraries. The recapitalization program was introduced by the South African government for rural communities to access information (Boloka & Jiyane, 2019). Rural libraries were reevaluating their role in their community, questioning whether they were providing equitable access that focuses on empowering marginalized communities. They were the centers for disseminating information and raising awareness to the public regardless of their gender, religion, and tribe (Rafi, Ahmad & Ming 2021). Rural librarians provided information to impoverished, illiterate, or marginalized communities. They embraced their role in strengthening social fabric through social justice strategies, skills development, and allocation of budgets. To engage with systemic and structural changes, librarians needed to provide training and demonstrate leadership (Vong 2022, p. 140). They embraced social justice strategies through transformation, a step toward the convergence of practice and principle. Librarians played role in disseminating quality information to communities through the adoption of digital technologies and developing a cultural strategy. This view was supported by Hong, Thong, Wong, & Tam (2002), Ahmed, Rehman, & Sheikh (2019) stated that adoption of digital technologies, library awareness, information literacy, organizational and environmental issues, sources characteristics, and demographics influence user's information-seeking behavior. These initiatives brought changes to the library industry user behavior. The adoption of a library information system was dependent on the usefulness of the information management system.

## **RURAL LIBRARIES RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

There was inequality in South Africa among the races in several areas of human endeavor- education, wealth, and resource allocation, etc. This inequality was further exhibited in the limited resources and library infrastructures between rural and urban libraries located in white, black, and colored neighborhoods. Some rural libraries lacked the resources to establish online systems that would help in the easy dissemination of information to patrons. This was shown by limited resources and library infrastructures. Some rural libraries lacked the resources to establish database systems. This lack of development of rural areas' libraries was affected by limited budgets allocated for infrastructure development Cox & Eddy (2016). Research data management leads to a re-evaluation of how libraries support a research program. A limited budget to develop a strategy in library communities to adopt an online library system is a challenge for rural community libraries.

The sustainability of online library services was dependent on the allocation of resources. A resource allocation was used to develop library databases to store and disseminate information. This statement was

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