

Renaissance of libraries and archives in Rwanda

Musa Wakhungu Olaka

Librarian for African, Global & International Studies,
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, United States.

musaolaka@ku.edu



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Abstract:

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda marked the turning point in the growth and development of libraries and archives in Rwanda. New academic institutions were established and each of the institutions established a library. However, the first truly public library was opened in April 2012. Due to shortage of qualified librarians, a library and Information Science program was established in 2001 to train the much needed human resources despite having insurmountable challenges. Despite experiencing exponential growth of archival collections and libraries in Rwanda after the genocide, the impact of the genocide continues to be felt in the libraries. Many libraries and archival collections were destroyed during the genocide and the destruction was especially pronounced in archival collections in government departments because there had been a systematic effort to try and hide evidence of the existence of systematic atrocities that had been committed by successive regimes that had been in power. The purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed analysis of the library and archives landscape in Rwanda before and after the genocide and the challenges that archivists and librarians face in trying to meet their users' needs.

Keywords: Libraries Rwanda, Rwanda genocide, Libraries History Rwanda, Public libraries Rwanda, Archives Rwanda

Introduction

The 1994 Rwandan genocide marked the beginning of the renewal of libraries and archives in Rwanda. This genocide was a tragedy of enormous proportions and claimed about one million lives and left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans internally displaced or refugees in neighboring countries. Property worth millions of dollars was also destroyed. Libraries and

archives were also not spared. However, despite all these tribulations and challenges, Rwanda was able to slowly and steadily rise from the ashes after the genocide and has registered an exponential growth of libraries and revamping of archives (Olaka, 2009).

Brief history leading to the 1994 Genocide

(a) Colonial Era

During the colonial period, Belgian colonial rulers in Rwanda mainly appointed Tutsis as chiefs to help rule over the masses because they believed Tutsis were more intelligent and superior than the Hutus or Twa. Unfortunately, these chiefs presided over a system that oppressed the masses who were mainly Hutu and who comprised about 85% of the Rwandan population. This policy of racial superiority had been adopted by the Belgian government as a result of pseudo-scientific anthropometric studies that were common in the 1930s and 1940s. These studies sought to understand human intelligence of different races by classifying people based on the anatomy of their body parts including the size of the head and nose (Heirnaux, 1954). It is this policy of favoritism that later bred hatred between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Unfortunately, there was little effort to develop libraries during this period.

(b) Education policy

Before independence in 1962 there were few schools and Belgian colonialists used formal education to favor Tutsis who ended up holding most jobs in the colonial government and did not go down well with Hutu masses. Two camps in the Catholic Church emerged. There were priests who supported a system where Tutsis were given preferential treatment in admission to schools while another group advocated for the masses/ common people to go to school (Carney, 2011).

In 1972, some Hutu priests started questioning why Tutsi were overrepresented in most parts of government including in priesthood. They called for representation in all aspects of government to be based on proportionality of ethnic groups in the population. At this time, Tutsis continued being used as scapegoats for anything bedeviling the country. Between 1972 and 1973 the government of President Kayibanda started implementing a policy of ethnic proportionality and it made many Tutsi students to be kicked out of school to give way to Hutu students. The same situation also happened to government employees.

On 20th-23rd December 1985, the 5th national congress of the ruling political party *Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et Développement* (M.R.N.D.) passed a resolution to correct past inequalities at all levels of the education system including higher education (Republique Rwandaise Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1986). This decision was not new. After taking power, President Habyarimana addressed the nation on 1st August of 1973 and reiterated that the ethnic quota system that had been put in place during President Kayibanda's time was to continue being practiced (Mugesera, 2014). This meant that school admission and government jobs were to be distributed as follows: 85% to Hutus, 14% to Tutsis and 1% to the Twa. What really mattered was ethnicity, and then regionalism. Merit was given little attention. The M.R.N.D's resolution entrenched institutional discrimination against Tutsis when it came to access to education. During President Kayibanda's reign, Tutsis were the main target. However, during President Habyarimana's regime, Tutsis continued being targets for discrimination and so were Hutus who were not from Northern Rwanda.

Table 1: Number of students admitted in 1st year at *Université National du Rwanda*, and at *L'Institut Pédagogique National*

Ethnicity	YEAR																							TOTAL
	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1997	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	
Hutu	16	17	4	1	25	80	86	136	149	173	172	209	185	214	178	243	218	232	328	430	383	415	354	4248
Tutsi	10	12	19	6	24	24	40	49	50	8	8	18	10	16	21	35	42	27	53	49	29	61	55	666
Twa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
Not Declared	23	25	38	75	74	58	10	99	61	62	73	69	69	....	....	2	....	1	5	....	....	....	....	744

Source: (*Republique Rwandaise Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1986*) pg 19.

Université National du Rwanda was established in 1963 while *l'Institut National Pédagogique* was created 3 years later in 1966, both being public institutions. Between 1963 and 1985, 75% of students admitted in first year in the two institutions were Hutu, 12% Tutsi and 0.07% Twa. Table 1 shows admission of Tutsis drastically dropped between 1972 and 1973 and can be attributed to massacre of Tutsis around that time. Many Tutsi students may also not have declared their ethnicity for fear of persecution.

Rwanda's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research had projected that between 1988 and 2003, the total number of students who would have studied at *Université National du Rwanda* would be as follows: 89.8% Hutu, 9.8% Tutsi and 0.4% Twa (*Republique Rwandaise Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1988*). This was after taking into consideration ethnic, regional and gender distribution. Unfortunately majority of those admitted into higher education ended up graduating with a 2 year associate degree and not the 4 year bachelor's degree.

Tutsi parents and especially those in Kigali came together and started establishing private community schools their children could attend without subject to the quota system. However, these parents did not want to annoy M.R.N.D and their argument was that they were establishing community schools to enhance development and bring education to the masses. Most of these schools had the name *Association des Parents pour la Développement* (APADE) (Rugengande, 2008). A few of these private schools became very well established and even had small school libraries.

Under these oppressive conditions, libraries could not grow fast. The climate of suspicion, discrimination, persecution, killing and destruction of people and property went on unabated for long and were catalysts that played a role in suppression of effective and efficient libraries in Rwanda because jobs were not given on merit but on patronage and regionalism.

Due to insufficient places and higher education programs in Rwanda. The government in conjunction with other governments issued scholarships to Rwandan students to study abroad. 833 Rwandans received government scholarships to study abroad between 1979 and 1986. Only a couple went to study librarianship as there was not library science training in Rwanda. By then the government paid more attention to train doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers. Out of the 10 prefectures, 20% of these students were from Gisenyi which was President Habyarimana's home prefecture while 16.6% were from Ruhengeri (Republique Rwandaise Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1988).

Educating Librarians and archivists

By 1994, Rwanda only had 42 people who had formal education in Library Science and most of them had an equivalent of 2 years of undergraduate study/ Diploma/Associate degree (Olaka, 2008b). Before the Genocide, training of librarians was done abroad. Rwandans had to go to Senegal, Canada or Russia. Majority of the people working in libraries only had a high school certificate and those who had library Science education had a two year associate degree in library science that they had studied at *Ecole de Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes* (EBAD) at Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal. Despite being a popular place for librarians to go and study Library science, only 31 Rwandans had graduated from that program by 2007 (Olaka, 2008b). From 2009, *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* provided some scholarships for 7 Rwandan students to study for a Bachelor's degree and 2 for Master's degree. Most of the librarians in Rwanda who were holders of a Bachelor's degree in library science had studied in Russia courtesy of the cultural scholarships that Russia offered to Rwandans to go study in Russia.

From 2010 a handful of students were awarded scholarships to study library Science online at EBAD while National University of Rwanda sent some of its employees to study for a bachelors and master's degree in Information Science at Moi University in Kenya.

Libraries in Rwanda had very few qualified librarians and that is why most grew at a very slow pace and took long to incorporate new innovations and developments in the provision of information resources and services. Unfortunately, many people who worked in libraries were killed during the genocide, some fled into exile, a few were arrested and jailed for participating in the genocide while and some took up other jobs after the genocide (Olaka, 2008b).

The first ever formal program to train librarians in Rwanda was established in 2001. This was a two year diploma/Associate degree program. Lecturers teaching in this program were librarians who worked in libraries during the day and taught library science classes in the evening. Teaching these classes was a challenge because the country had put in place a bilingual policy. This meant that students could be taught in either English or French. At the time, it could not have been efficient nor feasible to have two different streams, one stream of students being taught solely in French and the other in English because there was lack of

sufficient qualified lecturers to teach the classes. To help the students learn, lecture notes were translated. If the lecturer taught in French, then the lecture notes for that particular class would be translated into English and vice versa. All examination and continuous assessment tests were in English and French and the student chose the language they were most proficient in was the one they would use in their response. By 2009 at least 160 students had graduated from this program (Olaka, 2008b). Graduates from this program have been able to help lift the image of libraries and archives in Rwanda, grown library collections and even opened libraries that had been closed. Some of the libraries that these students either established, established or revived, include: The library and archives of *Office National de la Population* (ONAPO), *Commission Nationale Rwandaise pour l'Unesco* (CNRU), among others.

Staffing libraries and archives

Since inception of libraries in Rwanda, they have tended to be plagued by insufficient qualified staff. By December 1976, the Université National du Rwanda had the most well established library in Rwanda and 2 librarians had a Master's degree in Library Science or a bachelor's degree. Only two had *baccalauréat*/associate degree (2years of undergraduate education) in library science while 29 employees had not studied beyond high school (Bouso, 1980). By 1983, another top institution of higher learning only had 4 people working in the library and none had any training whatsoever in library science (Ngayabateranya, 1983). By 1983, National University of Rwanda had a main library and several branch libraries with a total of 40 staff members of which only 3 had at least a bachelor's degree, 7% has a two year diploma/Associate degree, 55% only had secondary education, while 30% had primary or no education at all (Ngayabateranya, 1983). By 1983, there were close to 54 libraries in Rwanda and were staffed with 108 people, with close to one third of them working at libraries at Université National du Rwanda (Rözsa, 1983). By 1994, staffing in libraries had not changed much as most libraries continued to be staffed with people who had no education or training in Library science. This is one of the reasons why growth of libraries continued to lag behind.

Space

Before 1994, most libraries had constrained space to house their collections apart from the library at *Université National du Rwanda* that has relatively large library. By 1983, *L'Institut Pédagogique National* (I.P.N) which was later transformed to *Université National du Rwanda* – Ruhengeri campus only has seating space for 35 library users (Ngayabateranya, 1983). Even after the genocide most institutions did not have a purpose built library and space was still constrained. By 2004, Kigali Institute of Education, Kigali Health Institute among a host of other libraries had libraries with seating capacity of less than 50 people. It is only after 2004 that management of most institutions actively started to expand library space to cater for the ever growing collection and user population.

Financial support and book donations

Due to limited information resources, book donation were at an all-time high after the genocide. Most of the newly established libraries received book donations from both French and English speaking nations. Organizations such as Book Aid international started sending books to Rwanda in 2003 and so were organizations such as Books for Africa. These

donations went a great deal to help expand libraries and meet information needs of the ever expanding population of students seeking higher education.

After the genocide, many institutions and at times individual countries provided funds to support libraries of the newly established institutions of higher education such as Kigali Institute of Education, Kigali Institute of Science and Technology, ISAE, Kigali Health Institute among others. Some of the funds came from UNDP, SIDA, and Africa Development Bank. These funds were mainly used in buying of books because there was a great shortage of books especially English language books which had been in short supply yet the education system was structured in a way that it was bilingual (Olaka, 2008a).

Unfortunately, by 2005, government funding to public institutions started dwindling and the money that trickled to libraries was greatly reduced. In public academic institutions, enrolment had grown exponentially and so was diversity of courses being offered. Institutions such as Kigali Institute of Education decided to channel to the library all the amount of money that students paid to register at the university. This amount was to be used to purchase information resources because libraries had to purchase materials in both English and French because of the bilingualism policy at the time. Private university libraries at the times had far much less budgets than public university libraries because building classroom and paying lecturers was what they considered to be more pressing and had to take precedence over any other issue.

Legal Framework for Libraries and Archives

There had never been a legal framework to help govern the growth of libraries and enhance quality record keeping in public institutions. In 2014, Law N° 12/2014 of 09/05/2014 was passed to establish Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority (RALSA) as a government agency. This agency merged Rwanda's National Library, the newly established first ever truly public library in Rwanda, and the National Archives. Its mission is to implement government policy related to archives and libraries in Rwanda; play an advisory role on the best way to manage archival materials in Rwanda; and to acquire, process, manage and play the role of disseminating public and private archives and records in the country. It is also the work of this new institution to develop standards for libraries in Rwanda (Republic of Rwanda, 2014). This framework is viewed as the panacea for the growth of libraries and archives in Rwanda although it is too early to assess its success.

Public libraries and politics

The first truly public library started being built in 2001 with the help of Rotary club Virunga of Kigali and donations from well-wishers. Due to lack of sufficient funds, the building stalled for a long time but was eventually completed and was officially opened on 16th April 2012 (Mugisha). To date, this is the most modern and advanced library in Rwanda.

Previously the library at *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais* played the role of a public library although it is a property of the French embassy in Kigali, Rwanda. This embassy was established in 1963 while *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais* was constructed in the 1970's. Later, the embassy opened 3 small libraries in Ruhengeri, Butare and Gisenyi in 1980's although they never operated for long after being handed to the Rwandan government in 1989 (Olaka, 2009). During the genocide, the library at *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais* was closed and opened in July 1995 (Derrien, 1995, October).

Politics and need for building ultra-modern story buildings in Rwanda contributed to the demise of one of the oldest and most well established libraries in Rwanda located at the *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco- Rwandais*. Since the 1994 genocide, there has been bad blood between government of Rwanda and the French government with Rwanda accusing France of being an accomplice to the genocide. Diplomatic relations between the two countries finally broke down when a French judge indicted President Kagame and other senior members of RPF whom the judge accused of having shot down the plane carrying President Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Ntaryamira of Burundi thus sparking the 1994 genocide (Bruguiere, 2006). On 26th November 2006, the Rwandan government gave the French government a 72 hour ultimatum to close all institutions Rwanda that were affiliated to the French government. This included the French embassy and by extension *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais* which housed one of the most heavily used, well stocked and well managed libraries in Rwanda. Although diplomatic relations were reestablished in 2009 and the French embassy started operating, the library was never reopened.

In 2010, Rwanda government requested the French embassy to build a multi-story building where *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais* stood because it was a prime location in Kigali's central Business district. A 12-floor architectural building design was submitted by the embassy and approved by Kigali City. Later, the embassy wanted to change the building design and did not go well with the Rwanda government (Asiimwe, 2010). Negotiations failed and on 17th June 2014, the Rwanda government took back the land and demolished all the buildings that formed *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco Rwandais*. This demolition brought to an end one of the most impactful libraries in Rwanda. Unfortunately, book from that library were removed and placed outside where many got destroyed after being rained on while others were taken away by whoever wanted. Close to half the collection got salvaged and was donated to different libraries including the newly established Rwanda Public library/(Rwanda Library Services) that received majority of the salvaged books. These books form the French corner at the Rwanda Library Services and are managed by two librarians with one being a volunteer.

Growth of Academic Libraries

Public higher education in Rwanda is a recent phenomenon. *Université National du Rwanda* came into existence in early 1960's when it was established through the assistance of the Canadian government, and the Canadian Dominican order of the Catholic church (Baziramwabo, 2013). However, the first batch of students were enrolment in November 1963 and all the teaching faculty then were Catholic priests including the first rector, Georges Henri Lévesque (Baziramwabo, 2013). It was only much later in 1966 when *Institut Pédagogique National* (I.P.N.) was established as the second public institution of higher learning and its mission was the of training of teachers (Republique Rwandaise Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1986). Private church-based institutions of higher learning had been established during the Belgian rule and include Grand Séminaire de Nyakibanda which had been in existence since 1936 although its mission was only to train upcoming Catholic priests. There was also a school that trained a few military officers.

At inception of *Université National du Rwanda*, there were no Rwandan faculty members because very few Rwandans had ever received university education. The few educated Rwandans at the time were priests who had been given the opportunity by the Catholic Church to go study theology in Belgium. The challenge with most academic institutions before 1994 was that they expanded at an extremely slow pace. Most of the highly qualified staff were foreigners and Rwanda tended to rely on them so much at the expense of developing more highly qualified local human resource to teach at university level. That is why none of the universities in Rwanda established a Masters or PhD degree program. It only happened after 1994.

The 1994 genocide not only led to destruction of property it greatly reduced the number of qualified people who were working in libraries. *Université National du Rwanda* had the most number of people working in its libraries. 10 of them were massacred, 3 were imprisoned for participating in the genocide and a handful fled into exile (Olaka, 2009). After the genocide, there were a handful who never went to work in the library. Instead, they sought other better paying jobs.

Because most of highly educated people had been targets during the genocide, many were killed and others fled into exile. That left the country with a dire need for highly qualified human resource. To fill this gap, the Rwandan government opened many new institutions of higher learning from 1998 include: KIE, KIST, ISAE, and KHI among others. New private universities such as ULK and INILAK were created. The need for libraries and information resources became evident and each of these institutions developed a library and acquired information resources to support curricula being taught.

Children's Libraries

After the 1994 genocide, *Centre d'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais* opened a small room adjacent to the main library as a children's library. The room was furnished with appropriate information resources and furniture. Unfortunately this library never opened after the French embassy and its affiliated units were forced to close in 2006.

Caisse Sociale (Social Security Fund) used to have a social hall complex in Kacyiru neighborhood of Kigali. After the 1994 genocide, it funded salaries of a couple of people to establish a children's library in one of the rooms at the social hall complex that was converted into a children's library. However, the library operated for a brief period because *Caisse Sociale* could no longer support staff salaries for running that children's library. Running a children's library was outside the scope of *Caisse Sociale's* mandate. The library was closed in 2002 and the person who used to run the library got a job as a French lecturer in one of the universities. The small book collection was distributed to nearby primary schools.

Currently, a functional children's library was established at the Rwanda Library Services which opened its doors in 2012. It happens to be the only children's library in the country.

Special libraries and Archives before 1994

Since inception of most special libraries in Rwanda, they have been plagued with lack of sufficient qualified human resources to effectively and efficiently organize and manage the libraries. *L'Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique* (I.N.R.S) was established in 1950,

while *L'Institut des Sciences Agronomique du Rwanda* (I.S.A.R) was established 12 years later. Despite their libraries having rare and unique collections, they have a perennial lack of sufficient qualified librarians to organize, run and effectively and efficiently develop these libraries (Ngayabateranya, 1983). I.N.R.S library housed a large collection of rare and unique recordings of oral histories about Rwanda while I.S.A.R deals with agriculture and animal husbandry.

By 1983, some government departments had established small libraries and had archival sections. They included: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et Recherche Scientifique (MINESUPRES); Ministère des Travaux Publics (MINITRAP; Présidence (PRESIREP); Ministère du Planification (MINIPLAN among others. Unfortunately most of these small departmental libraries tended to be staffed by people who had to training in Library or archival studies. Majority learnt on the job training (Rözsa, 1983). These libraries did not also grow as fast party due to space constraints. After the genocide, some of the libraries never opened because there were no people to run the libraries such as the Bibliothèque de la Commission Nationale Rwandaise pour l'Unesco (CNRU). Other institutions ceased operation such as Institut Africain et Mauricien de Statistiques et d'Economie Appliquée Bibliothèque (IAMSEA) that had a library whose part of the collection was also looted.

Archival collections in Rwanda were neglected both before and immediately after the genocide. The National Archives had for a long time been housed at Amahoro Stadium and due to limited funding, it could not effectively play its role. A few archives of a few government departments were revamped by graduates of the library and Information Science program established in Rwanda in 2001. Almost all archives that got reorganized happen to be in institutions in Kigali. Things are likely to change for the better with the passing of the law establishing Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority.

Conclusion

Genocide in Rwanda has played a significant role in developing of libraries and archives. There is yet so much work to be done because the few qualified librarians have been steadily seeking better paying jobs than library jobs while others leave the country to seek better living conditions outside Rwanda. Funding has continued to dwindle due to the many competing interests and most librarians are aggressively seeking for information resources to grow their collections. Despite most libraries in academic institutions expanding library space, it is still insufficient.

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