Addressing Epistemicide through the Integration of Indigenous Knowledge: Are South African Public Libraries Ready?[1]

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Abstract

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of John Langalibalele's birth, whose philosophy for the development of sustainable livelihoods in rural communities included, among others, education and self-reliance, this paper asks: How does the Library and Information Services (LIS) profession contribute towards keeping this legacy alive? The paper is premised on the belief that rural livelihoods largely depend on the provision and use of Indigenous knowledges and resources available in communities. Therefore, one way of facilitating sustainable livelihoods in rural communities is to provide context relevant resources, including library resources. Specifically, this would involve integrating Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into Library and Information Services for rural communities. However, as a knowledge system, IK was marginalised and is on the brink of extinction. The imminent epistemicide can only further marginalize communities whose livelihoods depend on this knowledge. Libraries can contribute towards addressing this epistemicide by integrating IK into their services. The success of such an endeavour would be determined by the extent of readiness of libraries to embrace IK. Therefore, this paper explores the readiness of provincial library services whose mandate is to provide library services to all, including rural communities. In particular, the paper examines librarians' understandings and articulation of the concept of Indigenous knowledge and their readiness to integrate it into library services.

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[1] This paper is extracted from a larger study that sought to explore the integration of Indigenous knowledge into services of public libraries in South Africa.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with four purposefully selected heads of provincial library services in South Africa. The findings reveal divergent understandings which can arguably be attributed to the contextual nature of IK. Furthermore, an inclination towards viewing IK integration as beyond the purview of libraries was evident in the responses of participants. The findings further suggest that libraries serving rural communities are not ready to integrate IK, a situation that inadvertently might contribute towards its extinction and the resultant intellectual epistemicide. If Dube's dream of educated and self-reliant rural communities is to be realised, the educational resources provided (including library services) must draw on the local knowledges in which they are located. If those mandated with such resources do not understand this link, it is unlikely that the libraries they are in charge of will empower communities to be self-reliant. Further research with communities and community librarians is needed as a way of raising awareness of the plight of IK.

Keywords: Epistemicide, Indigenous knowledge, Integration, Public libraries, South Africa

Introduction

Indigenous communities[2] have always had their knowledge systems. However, due to the systemic dominance of Eurocentric knowledge, these communities and their knowledge systems have endured subjugation and marginalisation, leading to possible extinction of the latter. This is likely to contribute significantly to the disempowerment of rural communities whose livelihoods depend mostly on their knowledge systems. As John Langalibalele Dube believed, rural education and empowerment are key to self-reliance among rural people, and to sustainable livelihoods in their communities. To provide such education, access to appropriate information and knowledge that enables

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[2] *Indigenous communities* and *rural communities* are used interchangeably to denote South African communities whose languages, cultures and religious practices have been historically marginalised through repressive laws. Based on their ethnicity, these communities were restricted to specific under-developed areas within South Africa.

full participation in societal matters for all citizens (including rural communities) is critical. Public libraries, by virtue of being 'local gateways to information' (UNESCO/ IFLA 1994:2) have an important role to play in enabling access to such information and knowledge in rural communities.

This paper is premised on the belief that the provision of context relevant resources is key to ensuring access to the contextually relevant information and knowledge necessary to sustainable livelihoods in rural communities. Specifically, the provision of context relevant resources would involve integrating Indigenous knowledge into Library and Information Services (LIS) in rural communities. Based on its premise, the paper explores the readiness of public libraries (which are charged with providing access to information) to integrate Indigenous knowledge[3] (IK) as part of the empowerment of rural communities in South Africa.

The paper commences by providing the background and contextual setting, followed by the statement of the problem and research questions. A review of pertinent literature precedes the discussion of the adopted methodology. Findings and discussions are followed by reflections on the implications for IK integration. Finally, conclusions are drawn and limitations of the paper are identified with a view to making recommendations for further research.

Background and Contextual Setting

Like many other African countries, South Africa was subjected to colonialism resulting in the marginalisation of Indigenous communities and their knowledge systems. Oppressive legislation such as the *Native Land Act* of 1913 (RSA 2013), which granted the white minority ownership of 87% of the land and the remaining 13% to the Black majority,[4] and later the *Group Areas Act no.41 of 1950* (Union of South Africa 1950), which restricted movements

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[3] *Indigenous knowledge* and *Indigenous knowledge systems* (IKS) are used interchangeably to refer to the collective wisdom of communities, which has been accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation through language, practices and rituals.

[4] Racial grouping of the population consisted of Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans. Africans were referred to as Natives or Bantus. In this paper Blacks, Africans and Indigenous communities are used interchangeably to refer to this group of people.

of Indigenous communities, perpetuated their marginalisation (RSA 2013). The apartheid regime further divided the 13% portion of the land allocated to Indigenous communities according to their ethnic groups. Coloureds and Indians also lived in specifically designated areas. The racial segregation ensured that Africans, Coloureds and Indians had no access to services that were provided exclusively for the minority white population.

Among the laws that affected libraries, and by extension access to information, in pre-democratic South Africa, were the *Publications and Entertainment Act 26 of 1963* and later the *Publications Act 42 of 1974* (Culhane 1993). These Acts manifested in the paranoia of the government of the time and essentially limited access to information to only materials that were deemed 'suitable' by the apartheid government. Needless to say, Indigenous communities were the hardest hit, because not only was there a paucity of library services, but the few that were in existence were physically and epistemologically inaccessible.

A historic milestone in democratic South Africa was the establishment of new non-racial geographical demarcations, which resulted in the formation of nine provinces. Each of the nine provinces is mandated to provide library services in terms of Schedule 5 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (RSA 1996). As can be expected, the newly established provinces display stark social and economic inequalities which impact on service provision because of imbalances of the previous political dispensation. It is therefore judicious that multi-pronged approaches be instituted to address the aforementioned inequalities. A critical component of addressing the equalities is the provision of context relevant information and knowledge – a role that can be played by public libraries.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

With colonialisation and the subsequent apartheid regime in South Africa, Indigenous knowledges were marginalised and, in some cases, forbidden. As a result, IK is facing possible extinction. This imminent extinction could be detrimental to developing sustainable livelihoods and building sustainable communities as outlined by the *Libraries, Development and UN 2030 Agenda* (IFLA 2017). Public libraries can make a valuable contribution towards enabling access to and preserving IK for sustainability among Indigenous communities. However, the success of such a venture needs a paradigm shift

on the part of the Library and Information Services (LIS) sector. Such a shift needs a conducive legislative and policy environment as well as the readiness of libraries and librarians to embrace and integrate IK into their services.

While significant strides have been made to increase access to libraries (and information) in democratic South Africa (IFLA 2015), library collections do not seem to reflect much change in terms of epistemic access (Morrow 2009). In this paper, I used epistemic access to information and knowledge to denote the content, language and format in which library materials are presented in line with user profiles and needs. The importance of epistemic access is highlighted by Zhou, Landa and Tshotsho (2020), who bemoan the plight of rural students in the classroom space, arguing that 'rurality presents a contemporary marginalization under racial subjugation' (Zhou *et al.* 2020: 241). The researchers advocate translanguaging as a way of facilitating epistemic access for Indigenous language students. Translanguaging, the authors further argue, can contribute towards decolonizing the classroom and enhancing learning among those who are learning in a foreign language. To support such translanguaging, the involvement of stakeholders such as public libraries in providing relevant resources is key.

The lack of access to relevant resources (written in local Indigenous languages) in libraries in rural communities seems to give credence to the notion of information poverty in these communities, which scholars have challenged vehemently over the years (see, for example, Amadi 1981; Kotei 2003; Marcella & Chowdhury 2018; Moahi 2012; Sturges & Neill 1998; Tise & Raju 2015). Moahi (2012:550) posits that despite changes in clientele over the years, libraries continue 'doing what they have always done'. In line with their function of promoting and creating awareness about their services, librarians also need to promote and create appreciation for Indigenous knowledge that exists among local communities. Community libraries can thus play a critical role in ensuring epistemic access as part of their mandate of providing access to information to all.

Research suggests that Indigenous people often prefer and rely or oral knowledge transfer as a way of learning new information. For example, one of the earlier studies on information behaviour of rural women entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal (Jiyane & Mostert 2008), showed that they preferred word of mouth as an information transmission medium. Sources of such information could be knowledge holders in communities, usually elders. This raises the need for libraries to be cognisant of these needs and preferences and to make

efforts to capture and preserve the knowledge for dissemination to the rest of the community. Furthermore, this insight into the need for other types of information formats is an important factor in providing responsive and context relevant services. This is likely to go a long way towards improving the plight of Indigenous communities who, apart from having to contend with print media also have to deal with languages that are foreign to them. It is therefore critical that public libraries in rural settings take cognizance of all the factors that may impede their efforts to achieve their mandate of providing access to information to all.

Library collections are the backbone of services and can determine the extent of inclusivity of the services. Providing inclusive services demands that libraries are aware of the knowledge and information needs of the communities they serve and are able to transform in line with changing user needs in these contexts. Based on the identified role of public libraries[5] in developing and maintaining sustainable livelihoods in communities, this paper aims to examine their readiness to integrate IK into their services as a way of addressing epistemicide. To this end, the paper aims to interrogate understandings of the concept of IK by librarians as well as examine existing collection development policies with a view to gauge the readiness of libraries to integrate IK into their services. I address the following critical questions:

- How do librarians understand and articulate IK?
- To what extent are collection development policies aligned to the integration of IK into library services?
- What are the implications of integration on IK into public library services?

Literature Review

In this section, I commence by contextualising the concept, Indigenous knowledge. I then examine the readiness of public libraries for the integration of IK by examining the legislative and policy instruments that impact on IK. In making a case for epistemic access, I illustrate the importance of the alignment of collection development policies to the national instruments. I conclude the

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[5] *Community libraries* and *public libraries* are used synonymously to denote libraries whose mission is to cater for information needs of communities.

section by reflecting on initiatives and strides made towards integration of IK in libraries.

Indigenous Knowledge in Context

Indigenous knowledge discourse has gained momentum in recent times, with a plethora of literature from diverse fields of knowledge attesting to its value. Examples include, among others, agriculture (Chisita 2011; Lwoga, Ngulube & Stilwell 2011; Mugwisi, Ocholla & Mostert 2012; Ngulube & Lwoga 2009); education (Khupe 2017); health (Maluleka 2017; Ned 2019); sustainable development (Agrawal 2002; Donnelly-Roark 1998; IFLA 2017; Kocsiejav 2020), thus affirming the role of IK in the lives of communities.

Notwithstanding the value of IK, over the years, tensions between Indigenous knowledge and western knowledge systems have also been evident in the literature (see, for example, Agrawal 1995; Briggs 2005; Dentzau 2019; Horsthemke 2004). Scholars such as Horsthemke (2004) have shown scepticism in regarding IK as 'true' knowledge, while Briggs (2005) warned against 'romanticising' it. Using the criteria of belief, justification and truth to assess the validity of Indigenous knowledge, Horsthemke (2004:31) concludes that it is 'an incomplete, partial or, at worst, a questionable understanding or conception of knowledge'. Dentzau (2019) acknowledges both IK and western knowledge as knowledge systems. He posits that they differ in how they provide evidence therefore espouses the integration IK in order to retain the value of its wisdom.

Though tensions around IK exist, it is important not to lose sight of its documented use and value. Information providers such as libraries need to play a role towards making IK accessible to all, including rural communities. Libraries are not only storehouses of information, but can also ensure that this valuable knowledge does not become extinct. It is within this context that the readiness of libraries to integrate IK in their services needs to be gauged with a view to exploring possible interventions that can assist in alleviating the impending epistemicide of this knowledge.

Readiness for Integrating Indigenous Knowledge

Libraries operate within specific legislative and regulatory contexts. It is thus important to look at the extent to which the legislative and policy landscape is

conducive to the integration of IK. This section examines this landscape, in particular as it applies to IK.

At international level, Article 19 of the *UN Declaration on Human Rights* (United Nations 1949) declares access to information as a human right. The *UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto* (UNESCO/ IFLA 1994) echoes a similar sentiment, calling for the provision of services 'on the basis of equality of access for all'. Recognising the contribution of the public library to democracy, independent decision-making, life-long learning, and cultural development, the *Manifesto* (UNESCO/ IFLA 1994) further highlights some imperatives, which can contribute towards the achievement of the above. These include, among others, access to information for all users, the need for appropriate services, and the importance of appropriately trained librarians. Together with the *IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines* (IFLA 2010) and the *Libraries, Development and UN 2030 Agenda* (IFLA 2017), these instruments inform and guide library practice at the international level. The *Libraries, Development and UN 2030 Agenda* (IFLA 2017) posits that libraries are in a strong position to contribute towards the attainment Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because they can leverage existing resources within communities. This observation opens the door for ensuring that Indigenous communities tap into their knowledges as resources for development, a principle similar to John Dube's self-reliance. Public libraries can play an important role in facilitating access to these knowledges by working closely with communities.

Nationally, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (RSA 1996) has entrenched access to information as a basic human right. Informed by the constitution, other instruments have also taken cognisance of this entrenched right. For example, the *White Paper on Transforming the Public Service* or *Batho Pele White Paper* (DPSA 1997) is based on eight principles that are intended to guide the transformation process. At the heart of these principles is the importance of recognising that people should be the focus of service delivery. In the context of library services, this principle implies that the kind of services provided need to be informed by the clientele. Library collections are the core of library services making it critical that they should be reflective of the served clientele.

The *National Language Policy Framework* (DAC 2002) argues for the development, promotion, respect and tolerance of South Africa's linguistic diversity. The implication for libraries is to ensure that information is available

in languages of communities served. Similarly, the *Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy* (DST 2004) aimed at promoting the recognition and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge systems of various communities of South Africa was intended to be 'an enabling framework to stimulate and strengthen the contribution of Indigenous knowledge systems to social and economic development in South Africa' (DST 2004:9).

Furthermore, the *IKS Policy* explicitly acknowledges the important role that libraries can play in providing 'essential services that promote an understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems' (DST 2004:33).

In a similar vein, the *Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter* (DAC 2014) envisions a transformed library and information service which is within reach and freely accessible to all citizens. One of the challenges facing the sector, according to the Charter, is 'insufficient information resources in Indigenous languages'[6] (DAC 2009:xx). As discussed above, language is a critical vehicle to epistemic access, and therefore the paucity of Indigenous language materials impacts negatively on access to information in communities.

The few legislative frameworks and policies identified above bear witness to the conduciveness of the legislative environment to integrate IK. However, a critical challenge is the readiness of libraries to implement the prescripts of these instruments, specifically, the integration of IK to address the needs of Indigenous communities. Such readiness should manifest in collection development policies that recognise this need. It is through the provision of relevant and appropriate collections that Indigenous communities can be empowered in line with Dube's vision. Not only would collections be useful resources; they would also ensure that information is preserved for future generations and in that way contribute towards preventing epistemicide. Contextualised and relevant information is imperative if libraries are to remain true to their mandate of providing access to all citizens. Ongoing reflection on the needs of users in a changing environment as well adapting to new imperatives are essential in ensuring continued relevance of services and epistemic access to information. Such epistemic access will ensure that

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[6] *Indigenous languages* denote all South African languages that were marginalised in pre-democratic South Africa. Thus, the definition excludes English and Afrikaans because of their privileged position prior to the democratic dispensation.

communities have access to context relevant Indigenous knowledge, and that they use this to empower themselves towards realising Dube's vision for communities: self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.

Epistemic Access to Knowledge

The need to capture and preserve cultural heritage is highlighted in the literature (for example, Gosart 2021; Ngoepe 2020; Seifi & Soltanabadi 2020; Tise & Raju 2015). For example, Tise and Raju (2015) accuse African librarians of failing Africans by 'not capturing and disseminating their cultural heritage', thus rendering public libraries relics of colonialisms. This assertion seems misaligned, given that the *Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy* (DST 2004) is specific about the role of the library. Are libraries oblivious of the need to transform in line with the changed political and legislative landscape of the South Africa?

Applying the concept of preservation to the library context, Gosart (2021) alludes to Indigenous librarianship that focuses on preserving and revitalizing Indigenous library institutions and knowledge systems. Describing the concept, Gosart (2021) states that Indigenous librarianship seeks to advance the aspirations of Indigenous communities by integrating their knowledges and practices. In integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, Indigenous librarianship 'fosters procedures and norms to guide responsible and respectful care for materials with indigenous content that are preserved outside of Indigenous communities' (Gosart 2021:1).

Also addressing the preservation of cultural heritage, Ngoepe (2020) highlights the need to authenticate information, taking into account that oral histories are susceptible to challenges such as memory loss and at times the subjectivity of the narrator. The danger of distortion can have serious implications, as can be witnessed from historical colonial accounts. Libraries have the responsibility to ensure the provision of credible sources and to this end, they apply specific criteria in selecting materials. However, the criteria do not accommodate oral histories and IK. Ngoepe's (2020) recommendation for the use of archival principles to authenticate oral histories can contribute towards new and expansive selection criteria in libraries as part of transforming collections.

Libraries need to institute visible transformation measures to enhance epistemic access, lest they inadvertently perpetuate the challenged historical

misconception of 'information famine' in Africa (Alemna 1995; Sturges & Neill 1998). Challenging the narrative of information famine, commentators have argued that Africa is in fact information rich, but that the problem is the Eurocentric models on which libraries are based. Sharing a similar sentiment, Marcella and Chowdhury (2018) further posit that one of the contributors to the notion of information poverty is the exclusion of communities based on illiteracy and language, among others, thus raising the need to embrace orality in libraries while being cognisant of the role of libraries in the promotion of literacy. The impending obliteration of IK resultant from various factors including systemic marginalization calls for concerted efforts to harness this knowledge which is part of the identity and livelihood on Indigenous communities.

The following section discusses some strides and initiatives that can potentially contribute towards integrating IK.

Initiatives and Opportunities for Integration of Indigenous Knowledge

Several initiatives have been undertaken to integrate IK into library resources and services. For example, in South Africa a partnership between the eThekwini Metropolitan Library, and the local community resulted in a project where Indigenous knowledge was captured (Greyling & Zulu 2010). Youth from the community were trained to conduct interviews with Elders and other knowledge holders in communities. Through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) this information was then digitised and made available through the library portal. Notwithstanding challenges experienced during the process, Greyling and Zulu (2010) attest to the value of involving communities. As Greyling and Zulu (2010:35) put it, 'the community as a whole constitutes the natural resource that forms the basis of the model'. Thus, apart from enhancing the relevance of library resources to Indigenous communities, the project also raised a sense of awareness about the role of the library. A significant attribute of this initiative was that information was captured in isiZulu, the language of the community.

The second example involves initiatives that are intended to improve access to resources in Indigenous languages, championed by the National Library of South Africa (NLSA). For example, the Centre for the Book, an outreach project of the NLSA based on its Cape Town Campus, works with

local authors and encourages writing and publication in Indigenous languages. This ensures the availability of Indigenous language materials in communities, and goes a long way towards ensuring the sustainability of the languages, and by extension, IK.

I came across a similar example while collecting data for the study on which this paper is based. Some participants in one provincial library indicated that within their directorate, the provincial Department of Sports, Arts and Culture was supporting local authors in writing in Sesotho in an endeavour to address the paucity of Indigenous language materials in libraries. However, the participants pointed out that a major challenge for Indigenous language materials is that publishers are often reluctant to publish material with a low sales potential. This observation corroborates extant literature (for example, DAC 2009; Fredericks & Mvunelo 2002), which highlights the plight of Indigenous languages and by implication IK. However, it is encouraging to witness efforts that can contribute to making IK accessibility albeit on a small scale. The National Department of Arts and Culture can also play a role by liaising with the Department of Basic Education to ensure that Indigenous language books are made available to schools, thus creating a market for Indigenous language authors.

The third initiative is the establishment of a community library in a village in Limpopo (Mojapelo & Ngoepe 2020) where the community recognised the need for accessible information resources. Mojapelo and Ngoepe (2020) also note with concern a lack of access to information resources and its impact on socio-economic development to communities in this province. These researchers worked with three communities in Limpopo to establish the Bakgoma Community Library. Arguably, the project reflects the application of the Batho-Pele principles where intended beneficiaries are involved in all phases. This project reflects the ideal that Dube stood for – empowerment and self-reliance. A case can be made for the potential to capture IK and enhance its accessibility in projects such as this one. The researchers recommend the multi-stakeholder involvement as a suitable model for similar initiatives (Mojapelo & Ngoepe 2020). The involvement of multiple stakeholders also has the potential to contribute to context relevant information and enhanced awareness of the important role of the library as a space for self-empowerment.

Finally, storytelling, which features highly in public libraries, is an excellent avenue for IK transmission. For example, writing within the context

of Zimbabwe, Chisita (2011) notes a positive shift where some urban public libraries are integrating story telling for children. Storytelling and story reading also feature strongly in children's services in South African public libraries, although the intention is not necessarily to integrate IK. However, if told in Indigenous languages, storytelling can be an effective conduit for IK transmission. Demonstrating the critical role of language in acquisition of knowledge and values among the Basotho, for example, Seema (2012) posits that without a good understanding of language, valuable lessons taught through proverbs are rendered meaningless. Libraries need to be cognisant of the role of language in enhancing epistemic access.

Most of the initiatives mentioned in this section did not set out to integrate IK. However, two elements that could contribute towards the project are worth reiterating, namely the potential role of Indigenous languages as conduits for IK transmission, and multi-stakeholder involvement. Elsewhere, I recommend a framework for IK integration into library services, which among others, highlighted the two elements (Mhlongo 2018).

Methodology

The paper is extracted from a larger qualitative study that explored the integration of IK into services of public libraries. Using critical theory to interrogate the integration of IK as a matter of epistemic justice (Fricker 2007), the paper is located within the interpretivist paradigm. The major tenet of critical theory is the transformation of social phenomena with the ultimate aim of developing a just society. The critical researcher believes that by changing the various factors that shaped reality, reality itself can change. Thus, critical theory goes beyond seeking understanding but assumes a moral position by describing and striving for 'what could be' (Glesner 2011:9). In framing the research question, I sought to explore how the status quo of inaccessible library content for Indigenous communities can best be addressed first, to mitigate the impending epistemicide of IK, and second, to enhance efforts by libraries to provide inclusive and epistemically accessible content and services. Epistemic access to information is critical to enabling active citizenry that is involved in matters that concern it.

The population constituted of the nine provincial library services of South Africa. As already indicated, Schedule 5 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (RSA 1996) stipulates that the provision of public

libraries is a provincial competence. Unlike metropolitan libraries that operate within metropolitan areas of which they are part, services of provincial libraries extend to rural areas, rendering them suitable targets for purposes of the paper. Purposive sampling was done using two criteria, namely the predominance of an Indigenous language as well as the willingness of the potential participants. Language is a critical in epistemic access as it enables effective transmission and expression. Four out of the nine provincial libraries met the two criteria and thus participated in the study.

Data Generation and Analysis
In the first instance, data generation entailed conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with heads of provincial library services. As the research was exploratory, the identified participants were suitable to shed light on issues pertaining to IK at policy level. The understandings of IK by heads of library services would arguably influence decisions pertaining to its integration. The interviews were recorded with the permission of participants. After transcription, interviews were sent to participants in order to ensure accuracy and enhance integrity. Only one participant returned the transcription with additional historical data while the other three did not respond despite two reminders. Data were analysed thematically. For purposes of this paper, the analysis focused on the articulation and understanding of IK by participants.

The second set of data comprised the collection development policies that were requested from participating libraries. Of the four participating libraries, three provided collection development policies, which were then analysed in line with objective two of this paper. Content analysis of the policies focussed on their alignment to legislative and policy frameworks that should inform collection development.

Findings
The aim of this paper was to determine the readiness of public libraries to integrate IK into their services. The first part of this section presents responses of participants relating to the first research question, namely, understandings and articulation of IK. Second, analyses of collection development policies are presented in response to the second research question which sought to determine their alignment to selected legislative and policy frameworks.

In order to maintain anonymity of participants as per undertaking, they are referred to as Participant A, B, C and D.

The first question was:

How do librarians understand and articulate IK?

Participant A responded in these words:

> Indigenous knowledge is about local history and stories from old people. It is undocumented knowledge

Participant B alluded to a number of IK aspects that mostly related to her context and reported that the library had received a directive from the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), who is the political head of the library to:

> Go and record the stories of magosi[7] and put it in the library. Their tradition, their music, their folklores, customs … everything that defines and tells of their history - where they come from and who they are… and that history must be in libraries.

Providing further context on the pronouncement, she explained:

> Our current MEC - it goes with them coming up with a vision - but remember now we are sitting with Traditional Affairs as one of our components of the department and Traditional Affairs exists to support chiefs.

Participant C did not have much to say in terms of articulating what IK is. However, her brief response alluded to history and culture and was expressed in these words:

> Research about, you know, about things such as kingdoms and customs and traditions.

In her description, Participant D emphasised the cultural aspects whilst also alluding to the tacit nature of IK thus:

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[7] Translation: Chiefs

> To me, IK is about how people have always done things. For example, our rituals, for example how to make (*isinkwa sombila*)[8] , how we have always done certain things, not just African and others you know - Afrikaans people making biltong, like that. It's not just food. It's a lot of other cultural activities which in most cases is not recorded anywhere. So, as far as I understand, it's making that knowledge that is out there in people's heads on how they do things, which is possibly documented or undocumented.

In their responses, the participants used such concepts as culture, traditions, customs, folklore and history to articulate IK. Their understandings of IK as linked to culture could be linked to Missions 7 and 8 of the Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO/ IFLA 1994:4), which state that public libraries should strive to 'foster inter-cultural dialogue and favour cultural diversity' and 'support oral traditions', which, as librarians, they would have been acutely aware of.

Regarding its nature, participants in this study described IK as oral and undocumented and even referred to it as 'knowledge in people's heads'. Participants seemed to view orality as problematic and as less valuable than the printed word – a largely western perception. This suggests that for them, because IK is in 'peoples' heads' it is not necessary or even possible to integrate it into library services. Such characterisations could have been influenced by perceptions of what constitutes knowledge, which in the case of librarians, who by virtue of their training, subscribe to the notion of knowledge from a western perspective.

A related perspective of orality was that IK is 'knowledge of old people'. The association with old people seems to undervalue IK in terms of its contribution to everyday modern lives of communities, this, despite the plethora of documented evidence of its value. Associating IK with old people could be a result of the hegemony of western knowledge, which is regarded as more valuable than IK (Akpan 2011; Busingye & Keim 2009; Green 2007; Teffo 2013). Such a stance could potentially impede any efforts to integrate IK into library services. To address the misconception, the colonial library models that do not take into account oral African contexts need to be challenged as pointed out in the literature (Alemna 1995; Ocholla 2007: Minishi-Majanja

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[8] Translation: maize bread

2012; Sturges & Neill 1998; Tise 2010).

In their articulation of IK, the participants alluded to its contextual nature. For example, their reference to different aspects of IK confirmed its multidimensional nature, different applications and diverse understandings of IK (see also Chanza & De Wit 2013; Lindh & Haider 2010; Mearns, Du Toit & Mukuka 2006; Nakata, 2002; Ngulube & Onyancha 2011; 2017; Reynar 1999; Semali & Kincheloe 1999; Sillitoe 1998; Viergever 1999). Participants' understandings seemed to be aligned with events and processes that were taking place in their provinces. For example, references to aspects such as oral history, customs and traditions of chiefs; arts and culture; cultural activities such as the reed dance, making maize bread and others, seemed to demonstrate the link between participants' understandings and their environments. The diversity of understandings underscores the interpretive paradigm where the concept of multiple realities becomes evident. The situation calls for consultation with and involvement of communities as co-constructors of their realities. The adoption of multiple epistemologies can enhance integration of IK which requires clear articulation and focus on purpose (Bohensky & Maru 2011). The result of such an approach would be the provision of 'culturally responsive' services (Becvar & Srinivasan 2009), which by extension would be accessible and inclusive.

Interestingly, despite arguments put forward by indigenous scholars (Battiste & Henderson 2009; Chilisa 2012; Kovach 2009; Odora Hoppers 2002; Wilson 2001), none of the participants mentioned the spiritual aspects of IK. This omission could be ascribed to the fact that IK has not entered the LIS practice discourse in South Africa, and therefore is yet to be fully understood or accepted. Another presupposition was that these participants were not working directly with communities leading to possible constraints in their understanding of IK. The possibility reinforces the importance of community involvement towards attainment of holistic understanding of IK.

It was interesting that participants seemed to perceive capturing of information from Indigenous communities as the role of archives. Pervasive suggestions for me to contact archival institutions appeared to imply that librarians regard IK as knowledge that needs to be preserved for posterity rather than for everyday use as per mandate of public libraries. It is rather concerning that, despite the documented importance of IK in communities, libraries do not seem to regard integrating it into their services to be within their purview. The implication of this stance on the part of librarians was that

in terms of role identification, librarians do not seem to regard integrating IK as part of their responsibility, possibly because of it being associated with 'old people'. Such misconceptions could result in libraries inadvertently contributing towards the impending epistemicide, which would be contrary to what they represent as gateways to information and knowledge. A far-reaching question relates to the type of training received by librarians in preparing them for IK provision in libraries.

Librarians need to understand, appreciate and be at the forefront of IK integration initiatives as part of their mandate of providing access to all citizens. It is important, though, to be cognisant of the fact that participants in this study were not working with communities on a daily basis. This might explain their limited contextualised understanding of the lives of communities they are serving. The value of determining this understanding lay in the fact that it might shed light on whether they see it as a necessary aspect of public library services and therefore as worth resourcing and providing.

The second question was:

To what extent are collection development policies aligned to the integration of IK into library services?

As indicated under methodology, three of the four participating libraries provided their collection development policies. Content analysis of the policies focussed on concepts that appear in legislative and policy frameworks that inform public services, specifically, pertaining to IK. Findings are presented and again, in order to protect and maintain anonymity, the libraries are referred to as Library 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

Aspects addressed in each library are outlined.

Library 1
In terms of its scope, the collection development policy of Library 1 aims:

> To establish and maintain a relevant collection of current and retrospective materials in various formats and levels of comprehension, which would support and nourish the aesthetic, cultural, creative, and educational and leisure needs of all citizens.

Furthermore, Library 1 articulated its selection principles as:

> Addressing past imbalances; access to information in all fields of knowledge; and responsiveness to the changing needs of the community; and proving for diverse interests of the community that varies greatly in level of literacy, taste and reading ability.

In building its collections, the policy of Library 1 states:

> Preference shall be given to South African indigenous languages.

Library 2

In its introduction, Library 2 stated that the vision and mission of the department of which it was part, informed its functions and responsibilities.

> The vision of the Department was: Championing social transformation. The mission is the creation of an enabling environment for social cohesion and nation building.

Following on the vison and mission of the parent department, Library 2 articulated its vision thus:

> Library Services – 'libraries for all – towards a literate reading and informed community' – supports the Department's vision of social transformation. Through its mission, the Directorate aims to contribute to the development of people and to the enhancement of the quality of life of inhabitants of the [name of province] through the provision and promotion of library and information services which are free, equitable and readily accessible and provide in the learning, information, reading and recreational needs of the community.

The aim of Library 2 is to provide:

> Wide variety of formats which meets the needs of a diverse community for information, education, lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, intellectual stimulation and recreation.

Furthermore, Library 2 contributes to Social transformation by:

>Providing free, easy, equitable and ready access to reading and information sources;
>Meeting learning, information, cultural and recreational needs of the communities;
>Offering a lifelong education adapted to the changing world;
>Providing a high-quality library collection that supports efficient service delivery;
>Providing library material that encourages intellectual freedom among library users of all categories, i.e. students, school-going children and adults; and,
>Providing free flow as well as equal access to information in support of the needs of the community.

Regarding languages, Library 2 states that:

>Library materials in all official languages are bought. Materials in languages predominant in the province will be bought in bigger quantities. Library material in other languages is acquired according to the needs of the community.

In the case of Library 3, Consultation where '*all beneficiaries of the policy got a chance to make input*' was ongoing. Participants in the consultation process included:

>The entire component of Library Services within DACT through the relevant organs;
>Supply Chain Management, whose inputs were all factored in without amendments;
>EXCO whose recommendations were incorporated into the document.

Other stakeholders for the ongoing consultation are:

>Suppliers (Annual consultation process) and Treasury (To ensure proper registration by suppliers) and EXCO for monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of languages, the policy of Library 3 declares that:

All official languages in the province should be provided for in buying fiction – the languages are Zulu, Afrikaans, English and Sesotho.

Two libraries mentioned the *Public Finance Management Act no. 1 of 1999* (RSA 1999), while only one mentioned the *Batho Pele White Paper*. All the policies mentioned access to information, consultation, transformation and inclusive services. These concepts are in line with international and national frameworks such as the *UN Declaration on Human Rights* (UN 1949); the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (RSA 1996); the *Batho Pele White Paper* (DPSA 1997) and the *LIS Transformation Charter* (DAC 2014). Surprisingly, only one library explicitly cited frameworks such as the *Batho Pele White Paper*, *IKS Policy*, *National Language Policy Framework* and the *LIS Transformation Charter*, which arguably should feature in all public libraries. Although it can be argued that all these frameworks are subsumed in the *Constitution*, it is important to be explicit in order to ensure that all librarians that participate in collection development are properly guided.

Library policies also reflect intentions to include Indigenous language materials. For example, Library 1's collection development policy is explicit in stating that '*Preference shall be given to South African Indigenous languages'*. Similarly, the collection development policy of Library 2 stated, *'Library materials in all official languages are bought. Materials in languages predominant in the province will be bought in bigger quantities',* while Library 3 declared that '*All official languages in the province should be provided for in buying fiction*'. These statements are a further indication of the awareness for transformation as articulated in the *LIS Transformation Charter* (DAC 2014) and the *National Language Policy Framework* (DAC 2002). While the citation of these expressions in the collection development policies was encouraging, whether their presence translated into the explicit recognition of, and the integration of IK remains to be seen.

Indigenous Knowledge Integration, Empowerment and Development of Rural Communities: Discussion

This paper argues that for the integration of IK into library services and Dube's vision to be realised, it is necessary for libraries not only to tap into knowledge of Indigenous communities, but to also ensure that it is accessible and preserved for future generations. Libraries cannot continue to provide services

that solely focus on the western conception of knowledge.

As indicated in their articulation and understanding of IK, there appears to be a misalignment between librarians' articulation of IK, their (librarians) role in IK integration and the prescripts of the mentioned policies. By continuing to privilege the western conception of knowledge and disregarding orality in the context of transformation, libraries could be seen to be failing in their mission. Ironically, such a situation would be a perpetuation of the exclusion and marginalisation of Indigenous communities leading to social injustice in a legislative context that strives for inclusivity and equality.

Epistemicide is a threat to Indigenous communities. In terms of legislative and policy frameworks in the broader context, the environment is conducive to IK integration in South Africa. However, gauging from responses of participants regarding their understandings of IK, libraries are not ready. If librarians do not perceive themselves as participants in the process, then the likelihood of them initiating any integration processes are limited. This state of affairs increases the risk of epistemicide and by extension the possible negative impact on sustainability of livelihoods for Indigenous communities.

The documentation and preservation of IK is critical in mitigating its extinction. The apparent laxity of libraries to engage and take the lead in attempts to address epistemicide as part of their responsibility in promoting access to information is concerning. Also of concern is the perception that it is 'old people's' knowledge, because it undermines and undervalues epistemologies that are 'different' in a society that strives for equality and inclusivity. There is a need for a paradigm change in library and information services as a sector. Such a shift would arguably lead to embracing different epistemologies and enhance inclusivity of services.

Policies are crafted to guide practice in line with strategic objectives of an entity and are used to ensure continuity until such time that a change becomes necessary. The absence of explicitly aligned collection development policies might broaden the knowledge gap as staff leave the library. In cases where there could have been discussions on the need to integrate, even such tacit understanding would not be enough to ensure the integration of IK, especially with the knowledge gaps that arise with staff attrition. Without aligned collection development, the likelihood of the perpetuation of the marginalisation and exclusion of IK would prevail. Conversely, the presence of aligned policies would not be the end result in IK provision; however, it would create an environment where implementation would be the focus. It is

crucial that libraries implement services in line with relevant frameworks lest they be seen to be deficient in terms of carrying out their mandate.

While the analysed collection development policies mention aspects that might imply IK (for example, giving preference to Indigenous languages), it is important to explicitly align policies to national policies such as the *Indigenous Knowledge Policy* (DST 2004). Furthermore, libraries need to display awareness and perhaps widen the scope of their collections to include IK in an endeavour to enable and enhance its accessibility.

Information provision should not be regarded as the sole responsibility of librarians. As noted by Donnelly-Roark (1998), development initiatives depend on the involvement of communities. Such involvement presupposes the integration of Indigenous knowledge to which communities relate. Stakeholders such as Indigenous communities need to be involved in content creation as a way of ensuring availability and accessibility of relevant information. Knowledge holders such as Elders in communities can contribute valuable knowledge and insights thereby enhancing epistemic access and preservation of knowledge. Context specific information on events such as the reed dance would go a long way towards creating awareness about the value of libraries to cultural enrichment, learning and sustainable livelihoods. Such sustainable development and the empowerment of communities would be a positive step towards realising Dube's ideal of rural development, empowerment and self-reliance.

In line with Dube's ideal of empowerment and development of rural communities, community libraries can therefore contribute immensely to ensuring that relevant information is accessible. Such epistemic access would quell the notion of libraries as ivory towers that only serve the elite (DAC 2009). It is through epistemic access that community libraries can become spaces for communities to become empowered and self-reliant. For example, educationists have called for the integration IK into science and other curricula in primary schools (Khupe 2017). As resources for education, libraries must ensure that learners, who form the bulk of public library users (Mhlongo 2018), have access to IK so that their learning needs are adequately catered for with access to contextually relevant and accessible resources.

Conclusion

As discussed above, the year 2021 marks the 150th anniversary of John Langa-

libalele's birth, whose life's work was dedicated to the development of sustainable livelihoods in rural communities included, among others, education and self-reliance. This paper has argued that the Library and Information Services profession has a significant role to play towards ensuring the realisation of Dube's ideals and keeping his legacy alive. One strategy for achieving this involves the integration of Indigenous knowledge into Library and Information Services in rural communities. In this regard, the paper examines the extent to which public libraries are ready to integrate IK into their services. Two criteria were used to gauge their readiness, namely, librarians' understandings and articulation of IK, and secondly, the extent to which library policy frameworks provide a conducive environment for the integration of IK. The findings reveal a lack of readiness to integrate IK into library services. This suggests that IK remains marginalised and subjugated in favour of western knowledge in libraries, this despite the conducive legislative and policy environment. If Dube's ideals are to be achieved and his legacies is to be kept alive, the findings highlight the importance of education and training for information professionals, especially in terms of appreciating and valuing multiple knowledge systems and epistemologies, including IK.

It is worth noting that a limitation of this research is that participants were heads of provincial libraries who do not work directly with communities. As such, further research with community librarians and communities is needed. Such a venture would underscore the specific IK within each community and inform decisions regarding the kind of IK that can be shared, disseminated and preserved in libraries.

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