

Donkeys and camels deliver remote-area library services

Ingenuous librarians in Zimbabwe and Kenya are delivering library services in remote areas by donkey and camel, according to recent IFLA reports.

The four donkey-drawn carts give remote communities in the Nkayi district, north-western Zimbabwe, access not only to printed material but to electronic communication: radio, telephone, fax, e-mail and the internet.

Each cart is provided with a solar unit installed on its roof, charging electrical batteries. Audio-visual apparatus, electronic data equipment, distilled water for batteries, books, music discs, records and video cassettes are all carried in the cart.

The units can also be fitted with an aerial or a satellite dish.

Nkayi district communities initiated the donkey drawn mobile library service and were directly involved in the project design, planning, implementation and evaluation. Eighty-six percent of the population in this area can read, a literacy level partially attributed to the donkey cart mobile libraries. The carts offer the participating 'static' libraries the opportunity to give library and information services to remote groups in areas often inaccessible to motorised traffic.

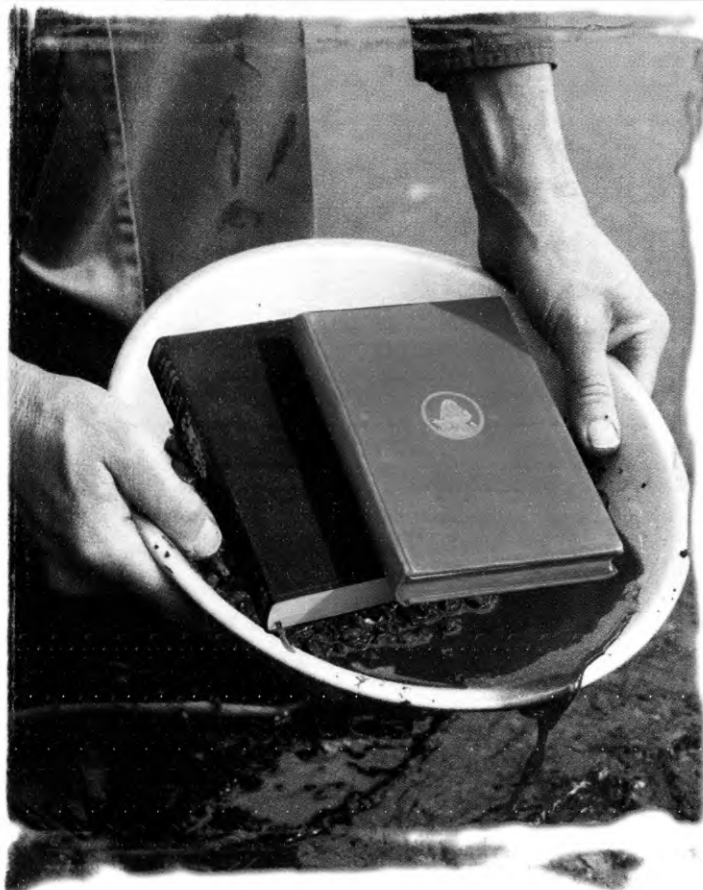
The Kenya National Library Service operates a mobile camel library service in the north eastern province, an area with a scattered population and poor roads. Six camels deliver library resources across an area of 126 000 square miles, containing 1 000 000 people, operating from the main library in Garissa.

The literacy level in this area is fifteen per cent, against the national Kenyan figure of sixty-nine per cent. Target groups for the camel library service include pastoralists, schools, adult literacy programs and refugee camps.

Both of these programs require international assistance to continue and to expand.

IFLA's Mobile Libraries Round Table commissioned the assessment of both services, so that guidelines and standards can be developed for similar projects in other areas based on the experience of the donkey and camel mobile libraries in Zimbabwe and Kenya.

The IFLA reports, by Thelma H Tate, are available from Karin Passchier, IFLA Headquarters, PO Box 95312, 2509 CH The Hague, Netherlands. They cost 10 euro each. More information is available by e-mailing IFLA-L@infoserv.inist.fr. ■



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