



Jacqueline A. Kalley. *Apartheid in South African Libraries: The Transvaal Experience.* Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2000. xvi + 237 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-3605-1.



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Libraries and their history represent an important part of the intellectual and political life in South Africa and were nodes in the control and production of knowledge in the apartheid era. This is the terrain of Kalley's book, a version of her doctoral thesis at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. As Reuben Musiker notes in his foreword, long before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission undertook its interrogation of apartheid calumny, Kalley had begun to document the experiences of African librarians and libraries in the second half of the twentieth century. She offers a detailed political economy of public, provincial and community libraries in the Transvaal as case-studies of librarianship in the country as a whole. The narrative focuses on apartheid ideology, legislation and policy in the making of libraries. She reads apartheid as the extension of segregation in line with recent historiography, but goes back to the colonial roots of library development in South Africa.

The first chapter deals with different phases in the creation of libraries. Kalley enumerates discernible enduring characteristics. She begins with 1761 to 1873, a time when the Lovedale Missionary Institute pioneered information services for Africans, followed by an examination of the period, 1874 to 1927, when the institutional growth of white libraries was significant. Then she considers the developments between 1928 and 1937, when

the Carnegie Commission played an important role in the provision of information. Finally in this chapter, she turns to the modern period, 1938 to 1990, during which time the involvement of provincial authorities in library expansion became the overriding feature. This periodisation informs Kalley's later analysis which represents the background to her articulation of libraries and social change in South Africa.

Chapter 2 is extremely detailed in its description of how public libraries emerged in South Africa, but more particularly in the Transvaal, and it looks at developments among whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans from the 1920s. Kalley examines the substantial role of the Johannesburg Public Library in challenging the racial divide in most libraries, tracing this back to as early as 1905. The South African Library Association also promoted a more equitable library service for Africans and recommended more open access to libraries with reference facilities as well as a better supply of study material for black students. Like most recommendations of this era, however, apartheid officials acceded only where finances permitted and developments were very uneven. Tables of statistics for each province from the 1950s to 1980s offer a comparison of relative black and white membership of libraries and their holdings.

The third chapter compares and evaluates resources

and services in Transvaal libraries, concentrating mainly on collection-development policy and the various attempts “to bring all libraries to the same standard ...[which] represents a fundamental shift in emphasis” (p.77). Kalley argues that library discourse changed from one about cultural enrichment and leisure for mainly white users to another, centred on literacy and a culture of learning for mainly black users, through the acquisition of relevant materials designed to promote improved educational standards and knowledge. A statistical review at the end of the chapter provides an inventory of Transvaal library services from 1952 to 1992.

Chapter 4 concentrates on empirical research based on a questionnaire sent to all independent libraries and a selection of one hundred other libraries, serving both blacks and whites. The results were disappointing and one is left with the impression that findings are likely to be misleading since they are based on only twelve responses. More disquieting is that only three of the eighteen black libraries responded. Kalley’s comparison of six black libraries with six white libraries is interesting, if problematic. For example, she compares Boipatong with Vanderbijlpark, Katlehong with Alberton, Mhluzi with Middelburg, Mamelodi with Verwoerdburg (now Centurion), etc. The comparison looks at how the different municipalities funded these libraries. The results are, however, predictable: black libraries were hopelessly underfunded and catered for school children only. They were also adversely affected by the political violence of the 1980s. Vosloorus, near Boksburg, was, however, different. It became a community library in 1985 and introduced literacy classes and skills training to the unemployed.

This leads on to a short chapter on community libraries in the Transvaal as a whole. Not surprisingly, township and rural library services were neglected, but some became the focus of an enterprise to empower local people, for example, the YMCA Library in Orlando which was run as a co-operative venture with a local drama group. Books were donated by various international agencies, especially the United States Information Service which had its own mission to promote American policy in South Africa. Fulbright scholars and other American visitors were encouraged to address the Soweto community from the Ipelegeng Community Centre Library. Other community libraries concentrated on informal adult education and teacher development. The Urban Foundation was active in providing resources at the Funda Centre in Diepkloof where the library became the integrating element in educational activities. Chapter

6 offers a case study of librarianship in Alexandra Township. After a brief history of the township, Kalley focuses on the states of emergency and the impact of “people’s power” on the governance of Alexandra. She explains how civic administration collapsed because of feuds between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party in the early 1990s. Trying to insert libraries into this background is difficult. She relies heavily on the evidence of three students at the University of the Witwatersrand who confirmed that students living in Alexandra Township knew nothing of public libraries before they reached high school. The Alexandra Public Library was established in 1981, but had only a very general book stock. It became affiliated with the Transvaal Provincial Library Service in 1988. Kalley also surveys the Department of Education and Training libraries cursorily before discussing the innovative and progressive contribution of the Read, Educate and Develop Educational Trust (READ) libraries which aimed at primary school education, mainly through the provision of learning materials for township pupils. She emphasises the effects of these libraries on language education and the upgrading of teaching. The latter part of this empirical study traces the progress and development of a community library in Alexandra Township between 1991 and 1994 under the auspices of Project Acorn.

The last chapter attempts to bring the thesis up to date, especially in respect of libraries for mainly African communities. It therefore looks at the Zaaiman Report and its reformist impulses. Kalley also investigates the role of the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS). The National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information Report of the Department of National Education in 1988 also receives some attention because of its startling verdict that library and information services were not essential to educational provision. Other critical initiatives in the maelstrom of late apartheid politics in the 1990s are catalogued, ending with an assessment of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Report based on the findings of a visit to South Africa in 1993 which dealt mainly with the social context of library delivery. The vicissitudes of recent library organisational politics in competing professional associations, such as SAILIS, the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) and the Library and Information Workers Organisation (LIWO), bring the analysis to its conclusion.

As this summary of its contents indicates, Kalley’s book provides a compendious reference work of the development of libraries in South Africa in the twentieth

century. It therefore represents an important source for understanding the institutional aspects of information dissemination during the apartheid era. Since so few monographs on the history of South African librarianship are ever published, Kalley's work is likely to become a standard text. It suffers the usual defects of a doctoral thesis that has been turned into a book, especially its sometimes tedious description and methodological genuflections. Kalley also tends to lose chronological coherence in various places which is confusing for readers unfamiliar with time and place in South African social history. The research for the book is rather dated, having been completed some years ago. Moreover, it simply

ploughs the deep ideological furrows of apartheid intellectual politics which sometimes leads to unsophisticated judgements based purely on liberal sentiment or conventional interpretations. The title of the book is misleading because it promises a history of South African libraries, or at least those in the former Transvaal, but delivers only an analysis of some public and community libraries in the region. These quibbles notwithstanding, Kalley's book will find its way onto reading lists in library schools, if they can afford the prohibitive cost, and historians will consult it in search of data on the control of knowledge through information provision in South Africa.

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