American Books in Africa
South of the Sahara

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Africa South of the Sahara has an area of approximately 700 million square miles and an estimated population of 170 million people. Included in this number are some 165 million Africans, 3 million Europeans and 750,000 Indians, plus a miscellaneous group with Syrians and Lebanese in the majority. It is a tremendously complex area which because of its natural resources and its strategic position seems destined to play an increasingly important role in world affairs.

Seven university colleges and six technical colleges have been established in British, French, and Belgian Africa, in Liberia and in Ethiopia since World War II. Mass education programs are being carried out in most of the British areas, in Ethiopia and Liberia. While literally hundreds of thousands are becoming literate each year, it has been estimated that 90% use their new found facility only for reading the Bible and for writing letters—primarily due to the lack of other literature adapted to their degree of literacy—either in African dialects or in simple English, simple French, Flemish, Portuguese, or Afrikaans. Universal free primary education has been established in the Gold Coast and in two of the regions in Nigeria in the last year. In the Gold Coast it is anticipated that by 1957 sufficient teachers, buildings and equipment will be available to make primary education compulsory as well as free. This is an advance which Lord Hailey, the top British African expert, estimated in 1939, on the basis of then current educational programs would take 600 years. Some 10,000 British Africans are studying in British colleges and universities and over 500 are enrolled in United States colleges and universities. All these people—the newly literate, the primary school graduates, the university and college graduates—will be demanding additional books, which are yet to be produced.

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While at present Africa South of the Sahara seems definitely aligned with the West ideologically, politically, and economically, it cannot be assumed that it will always be so. In the fields of education and publications—books, pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers—the United States can play a part in contributing to the advancement and stability of the peoples of Africa. However, no single technique can be applied for the entire area, where there coexist so many different races, religions, and cultures in different stages of political, social, and economic development.

The 165 million Africans are divided into innumerable ethnic groupings and speak over 700 dialects and languages, very few of which are written. Lingua francas have been developed in various parts of the continent—Kiswahili in East and Central Africa, Lingala and Kikongo in the western Congo, Hausa in West Africa, etc. and have at times been used as the language of instruction in the lower grades and in mass education and literacy drives. Due, however, to the lack of any extensive body of literature either in the vernaculars or in the lingua francas, the various countries have been forced to adopt a foreign language as the language of instruction in the upper levels of school and in the universities and colleges, as well as for government, professional and commercial transactions. In Portuguese Africa this cultural language is Portuguese; in the Belgian Congo and in Ruanda-Urundi it is French and Flemish; in British East, West and Central Africa it is English; in Liberia it is English; in Ethiopia, English and French, and in the Union of South Africa it is English and Afrikaans.

In computing literacy rates, it is the language of the controlling colonial power which is used for the base in colonial Africa—for example, the 98% illiteracy in Mozambique is 98% illiteracy in Portuguese. In areas where English is the prevailing foreign language literacy rates vary from less than 1% in certain rural areas to as high as 40 to 50% in the urban areas of the Gold Coast and Nigeria. With the introduction of universal free primary education in these two countries, coupled with intensive adult education drives, one finds the literacy rate rising very rapidly from year to year and the demand for reading material practically insatiable.

While less advanced in educational expansion than the Gold Coast and Nigeria, the other English-speaking countries in West Africa, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, are spending larger and larger amounts on their educational budgets and an increased demand for books is being created. British East and Central Africa have lagged behind British West Africa in the field of education, and literacy

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rates among the Africans are considerably lower. In French and Belgian and Portuguese territories, on the other hand, literacy in English is practically zero among the African population. In Belgian Africa where 50% of the children of school age are in school, literacy in French and Flemish is estimated at 40%.

Amongst the three million Europeans resident in Africa, English is the language of communication for about two-thirds of the population and is read and understood by many of the government officials, professional men, writers, and editors and many of the engineers and technical experts in the French, Portuguese and Belgian territories. For relaxation reading, however, the native European language is preferred in all non-English speaking areas, and in general English books are used only if French, Flemish, or Portuguese books are unobtainable.

The shortage of dollar credits in Africa South of the Sahara causes the various governments to impose import restrictions on book imports in order to conserve dollar reserves and earnings for more pressing needs.

With but few exceptions, tariffs do not apply to books, periodicals and printed publications going into the various African countries. These exceptions include a 12% duty in French Equatorial Africa on books "with fancy bindings," and a 10% duty on publicity materials in French West Africa.

Import licenses are required in advance of shipment for all imports in British East, Central, and West Africa, in French West and Equatorial Africa and in Portuguese East and West Africa. In all these areas foreign exchange is strictly controlled, particularly dollars. There are no import or trade restrictions applicable to books and publications in Liberia, in Ethiopia or in the Belgian Congo. In the Union of South Africa there is a restricted list; goods on it may not be imported into the Union from any country unless authorized by a special permit from the Director of Imports and Exports. Included on this list are: magazines and periodical publications of a class or kind embracing science-fiction, fantastic stories, screen, detective, sex, western, love and true or confession stories, and similar publications; publications commonly known as "comics"; publications which present the narrative mainly in pictorial form; and back numbers of all magazines and periodical publications of whatsoever nature shipped on a date more than two months from the date of issue.

In addition to the regulations cited above, there is a clause in the Customs Act of 1944 which prohibits importation of anything obscene
or indecent or on “any ground whatsoever objectionable.” If the customs official has any doubt whatsoever as to the character of a book or publication he may refer it to the Board of Censors of the Union, who may ban it. Certain issues of *Time* magazine have thus been censored in the past and complete shipments confiscated. It is reported that there has recently been appointed by the national government a committee to investigate the circulation of subversive literature in the country. Unesco’s publications on race questions were prohibited. In the Gold Coast and Nigeria, Communist literature in specific categories has been officially banned since 1954. The categories include literature of such organizations as, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Federation of Youth, and the African News Letter of the British Communist Party. A regulation of February 1955 specifically forbids the importation of subversive literature into Kenya. Uganda apparently has no specific regulation, but has consistently tried to exclude materials that were outright subversive. Tanganyika, probably largely due to its UN status, has no obvious regulations. Southern Rhodesia has had a specific legal provision against importation of subversive literature since 1950. Both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland have the authority to exclude subversive publications. In the Belgian and French areas there are no such regulations. Though no record could be found of Portuguese regulations, it can be assumed that very definite prohibitions against Communist or subversive literature do exist.

Quite generally the high price of American books when translated into foreign currencies or rates of exchange means that they are out-priced in competition with the European books. Especially is this true in the colonial areas. Likewise there are long-standing trade arrangements which have been made by European publishers reserving to themselves the rights to most American trade books in the colonial areas. This same price competition with European books, particularly British books, is met with in Ethiopia and in the Union of South Africa. This is not true in Liberia, where the chief deterrent is the lack of purchasing power on the part of the educational institutions or the average literate citizen.

The absence of any international copyright protection in most areas of Africa also militates against distribution of American books in the area.

Commercial book production facilities in Africa South of the Sahara are practically non-existent, and up-to-date statistics on what does exist are generally not available. It is fairly safe to say that outside
the Union of South Africa a commercial book publishing house of the size of a United States or European book publisher does not exist. According to Unesco's statement on Book Production for 1937-50, the Union published 1,204 titles in 1949 and 1,250 in 1950.

The major production of publications for Africans in Africa South of the Sahara has been and still is carried on mostly by missions or through official and semi-official publication bureaus. Credit should be given to individual missionaries who pioneered in getting the African vernaculars reduced to writing. In addition the work of Frank Lau-bach in simplifying teaching methods for the many dialects in Africa has advanced the cause of literacy probably more than any one single factor. Missions still carry on publishing enterprises, some small, some fairly extensive, in Belgian, French, Portuguese, and British Africa as well as in Liberia and Ethiopia.

In the Union of South Africa, in French and Belgian Africa, and in many parts of British Africa, commercial bookstores are established in most of the major cities and in some of the villages as well. The Christian Missionary Society and the Catholic Missions have been responsible for establishing many of these stores. In Liberia outside of Monrovia, and in Ethiopia outside of Addis Ababa and Asmara, there do not exist commercial channels for purchase of books.

There has been no established pattern for obtaining translation rights from the United States except in the Union of South Africa. A few European publishers, particularly the Oxford University Press and Longmans, Green, have entered into the business of producing books for Africa and have been very successful at it. However, it is recognized that in many instances official or semi-official publications bureaus are indispensable and must be subsidized in order to produce books of limited editions at a price which Africans can pay. With the rise of nationalism in the Union of South Africa, there has been a steady increase in the production locally of books in Afrikaans. It is reported that there are now about 10,000 books in this language. Up to 1937 only 3,000 books had been published in Afrikaans.

If by "public library" is meant a free library open to all and meeting the needs of the population of whatever race or culture, there are few public libraries in Africa South of the Sahara. Most libraries are still subscription libraries and in "white settler" areas there are separate libraries for Europeans and Africans. The Union of South Africa and the Gold Coast have taken the lead in establishing public libraries.

Free lending libraries were late in coming to the Union, but by 1900 there were substantial and well-run subscription libraries in most of
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the large towns and reasonably good library collections in a number of the villages, all of which received state financial support. Real library development in the Union dates from the publication of the Carnegie Corporation of New York Commission report in 1929 on the South African library situation. Grants were made for the establishment of libraries and assistance given in the establishment of the South African Library Association in 1930, and a professional journal began publication in 1933.

The first big free public library, paid for by public taxation, was established in Johannesburg in 1924. Within a year its membership had increased 400%. Today it is reported to have a collection of 491,000 volumes with a circulation of over two million, as well as a strong reference library, a number of branches, traveling libraries and numerous extension services. In 1949 the Union had 244 public libraries with holdings of 2,952,681 books, a circulation of 8,908,827, and 245,930 registered borrowers. For the rest of the area, public libraries are few and small. There are a few research libraries in the Congo and French West Africa; several in the Union of South Africa.

Since World War II university colleges have been established in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Monrovia, Liberia; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Kamapala, Uganda; Dakar, French West Africa; and in Kimuenza, the Belgian Congo. In addition a new university college has been incorporated in Salisbury, Rhodesia, to service the new Central African Federation. In the Union of South Africa there are university colleges in Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein, Praetoria, Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg, and Fort Hare.

The growth of British colonial university libraries, the greater part since World War II, represents a spectacular change in the library resources of the African colonies. It has involved heavy capital and recurrent investments, mostly from the Colonial Development and Welfare funds. All the libraries have received, in addition, numerous gifts and benefactions from governments, from foundations (such as gifts of copies of the Library of Congress catalogs from the Carnegie Corporation) from other universities, especially from the University of London, from business firms and private individuals.

By a generous grant from the Carnegie Corporation, the Inter-University Council in London was able to appoint a library adviser, to provide central services for all colonial libraries. The services are being continued by a government grant. By obtaining microfilm copies of articles and papers in various libraries it was possible to distribute copies to all the libraries. In addition to serving their basic
purpose of service to the teaching and research activities of the universities, the libraries, as the main learned libraries in their areas, are performing other services for their regions, serving as national libraries of deposit and assisting students. In addition to the university libraries, there are libraries attached to the various technical colleges and teacher training institutions established in the different territories since the war. There are central and local governmental archival libraries and government departmental libraries in the various territories.

No evidence could be found of major promotional and sales efforts of American publishers and export sales representatives or agents in the area, or of any commercial sale of translation rights.

Bibliographic information concerning American books can ordinarily be obtained at any of the USIS centers in Africa, or on special request to the consular officers in places where there is no USIS center.

In general, in colonial areas, currency restrictions, inability to read languages other than the major cultural language of the area, and a desire to have the educational and cultural patterns of the governing group dominate, all serve to limit importations from other major countries as well as from the United States.

The British Council has excellent libraries in British East, West, and Central Africa and carries on a very good cultural and informational program throughout the interior of each of the countries. A limited British Council program is carried on in the Union of South Africa as well as a limited British Information program—limited, it is said, primarily because of the anti-British attitude of many of the Afrikaans.

The Alliance francaise has small cultural libraries in the French areas and also in certain other countries including Kenya, Ethiopia, and Liberia.

Russia has an embassy, a library and information program in Ethiopia, but is rather spotty in its propaganda efforts. From time to time it brings out a fancy, well-printed and illustrated magazine of the type of Life or Fortune, but it relies generally on a small library with copies of Russian papers and a few Russian pictures of people like Pushkin (whom they try to relate to the Ethiopians). They also distribute a few motion pictures on Russia (with Amharic subtitles). Groups of young Ethiopians are gathered together for lectures and discussions. The Russian hospital would appear to be a legitimate hospital with only limited propaganda efforts. The influence of the Russians in Addis on the rest of Africa has frequently been grossly exaggerated. Importation of Russian material into the Gold Coast and
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Nigeria is for the most part forbidden, as indicated earlier, but it still continues to come into the area through merchant seamen at the various seaports such as Takoradi. There are reports that this illegal importation has been stepped up recently. The propaganda material is directed mainly to labor groups, youth groups (World Federation of Trade Unions, World Federation of Democratic Youth, etc.), and to the newly literate. The Russians have a consul general in Praetoria and a consular agent in Capetown. Their total staff is eight and no overt propaganda is carried on. The Soviet does not beam radio programs toward the Union. Communist literature in French and Belgian and to a certain extent in British Africa comes directly from the Communist Parties in the master countries.

The Indian government beams broadcasts to the Union and to British East Africa in English, Hindi, and Gujarati in the morning and afternoon on domestic and international affairs—but makes no special appeal to the Indians resident in Africa. It also carries on informational work in British West Africa through the Indian commissioner and has an informational program in British East Africa.

The Dutch government has a bi-lateral cultural relations treaty with the Union to facilitate exchange of persons. It also has a press attaché in Praetoria who issues news bulletins. They also broadcast to the Union in Afrikaans and Dutch.

The United States Information Agency Program has been one of the most effective U.S. government programs in Africa. The first Information Center in Africa South of the Sahara was established in 1947 in Monrovia, Liberia, with one American and three nationals. The Liberian government cooperated enthusiastically in the information program—gave space, lighting, and equipment and looked upon the Center as one of the country's most useful sources for information on political, economic, and educational subjects. High school and primary school teachers and pupils, university and college professors and students, government officials, journalists and businessmen used the library regularly. Closed down during the budget cut of 1953, it has been much missed in Liberia and its re-opening in fiscal 1956 will be welcomed.

Gradually other information centers were opened, in Accra, the Gold Coast, in Lagos, Nigeria, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in Nairobi, Kenya, in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, and in Dakar, French West Africa. The center in Dakar unfortunately had to be closed in 1953 but much of the collection was transferred to the consulate general where the American consul general personally supervises its operation as a small reference library. The library in Nairobi, Kenya, oper-
ates as a regional center distributing books to other libraries in the three East African territories. It has proved an effective inter-racial center, where Africans, Indians, and whites have intermingled even during the most tense Mau Mau crises. Broadcasts in Swahili have been carried on by the staff of the USIA center. The Leopoldville Center has operated regionally for the Congo, French Equatorial Africa, and Portuguese West Africa.

In fiscal 1956 the USIA will operate overseas book and library programs with ten information libraries in eight countries of Africa South of the Sahara. Book collections today total more than 25,000 volumes with yearly circulations of nearly 60,000. The libraries are used by some 200,000 persons annually. The Information Centers Service also has presented 15,000 books and pamphlets and 360 periodical subscriptions, as well as 220 expendable library sets.

As a part of the above service, USIS in Praetoria successfully supported the Transvaal non-European library service last year to the extent of 3,000 items. This service conducts programs in 45 native schools, scattered throughout the Transvaal province, as well as a mailing service into such native areas as Zululand, Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia and in Nyasaland.

Probably one of the most effective parts of this special presentation program is the special collections and subscriptions which have been presented to the university colleges of the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and British East Africa and the technical colleges of these areas as well as the libraries of other schools and colleges in Nigeria and Kenya. These centers are servicing the newly educated group who will, in the not too distant future, be controlling the governments of British West Africa, and who are insatiable in their demand for books on practically every subject.

U. S. Technical Assistance Programs in our area began during World War II in Liberia, under the Foreign Economic Administration Program and the U. S. Public Health Program, and are being continued today under the International Cooperation Administration. Present programs include extensive health, agricultural and educational projects. Cheap textual materials have been produced under ICA supervision. Within the last year limited ICA educational projects have been started in British West and East Africa.

For many decades the only private American groups to evince an interest in the educational side of African life were the missionary and church groups, both Protestant and Catholic, and they still represent one of the most active channels for distribution of
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American books and literature into the countries South of the Sahara. Pioneer work has been done in the fields of literacy and the production of literature for the newly literate. One of the most productive of these programs has been that carried on by the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa, with headquarters in London and New York City. It stimulated and guided the production by missions and some other agencies of literature in the vernacular languages as well as in English, French, and Portuguese. In addition, it itself has published a variety of master texts, textbooks, and readers on many subjects; it continues to publish or subsidize certain periodicals and studies library, press production, publication, and distribution problems of all sorts.

With the primary purpose of helping African countries build up their stock of technical and scientific books and periodicals, the United States Book Exchange shipped more than 6,000 gift books and more than 3,000 periodicals in 1954 and 1955 to the various African countries. In addition, the United States Book Exchange in 1955 has facilitated the expenditure of part of the $30,000 granted by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for books and periodicals for African college libraries.

One of the earliest American foundations to become active in British Africa, particularly in the fields of education, libraries, and book distribution, was the Carnegie Corporation of New York, whose name is appropriately inscribed on many of the library buildings there since many were started with Carnegie funds.

Since 1911 the Corporation has made grants in Africa, including both the British colonial territories and the Union of South Africa, totaling nearly 2½ million dollars, of which about half a million dollars has been expended since the second world war. These grants have been made in many fields, including library development, the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. In general, emphasis has increasingly been given to higher education, and this trend is likely to continue in the future.

Until recently a far larger proportion of the funds has been expended each year in the Union of South Africa than in the colonial territories. The post-war development of university colleges, technical colleges, and research institutes in British Colonial Africa, however, has tended to increase the Corporation's activity in these areas. In 1953, for example, a grant of $80,000 was made to the East African Institute for Social Research at Makerere College for a team study of African leadership.

In the Union of South Africa the Corporation has contributed to
library development, both university and otherwise (through buildings, equipment, books, staff, etc.), and has supported many aspects of university teaching and research. A relatively large recent grant was one of $102,000 made in 1952 to the University of Witwatersrand for support of the Bernard Price Institute of Geophysical Research. Among non-university institutions which have received support are the South African Institute of International Affairs and the South African Institute of Race Relations. Since 1928 the Corporation has maintained a program of travel grants to enable educators and administrators of South Africa and of the African colonies to visit the United States and other countries.

In addition to the approximately $2.5 million the Corporation has disbursed within the African continent itself, substantial sums have also been given to institutions in Britain whose work is concerned entirely or in part with Colonial Africa. The Institute of International Education has for three years (1953-55) carried on an exchange and assistance program for African students, largely through a grant of $151,000 from the Ford Foundation.

If this paper has shown one thing it has shown the tremendous need for books in Africa South of the Sahara, books not in thousands but in hundreds of thousands and even millions—books of every kind—books for training of craftsmen and mechanics, clerks and traders, books on teacher training, books on general education, books on economics and local government; books on food and health, on agriculture, on dress-making, on athletics, on world affairs and on local history, on arts and sciences and even purely for relaxation.

If one priority were to be established over all others it would undoubtedly be "textbooks"—textbooks on every level. There is an unlimited demand for textbooks in all of Africa today. As one travels in parts of Africa and finds schoolroom after schoolroom where there is but one textbook for 40 to 50 pupils, and that frequently locked up in the desk of the teacher, one realizes that means must be found to correct the situation. In addition to the fact that there are too few textbooks, there is the additional fact that those few that exist are not adapted to the understanding and background of the African pupils and are not written from their point of view. Textbooks in teacher-training centers will be teaching theories and practices long outmoded and disproven by more recent experience. Certain commercial firms have done excellent pioneer work in this field, as have some of the regional literature bureaus, subsidized by colonial governments in Africa—but much more needs to be done if the supply is in any way

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to catch up with the vast demand being created by the universal primary educational schemes being introduced in Africa, as well as the expanding secondary school programs and university college developments.

Governments of countries like Ethiopia and Liberia, which have been going through an over-all modernization program in their governmental and educational, in their economic and social patterns, need books and studies on public administration, on civil aviation, on port and highway development, etc. Countries like the Gold Coast and Nigeria, which are on the threshold of self-government, need books on legislative procedures, on local government, on taxation and finance, on foreign service establishments, etc.

Surveys of reading and purchasing habits among the Africans have been made and reveal patterns not too different from those that might be expected in generally under-developed areas pushing forward toward becoming modern states. A certain utilitarian interest is exhibited—particularly by the post-primary and post-secondary school boy: he wants to read something that will help him advance in his employment; he may be reading for an examination; he may want to read so that he can read and write letters.

For relaxation, post-secondary, and university and college graduates showed an interest in travel and exploration stories, in the classics (particularly in simplified or abbreviated form), stories of the history of their own people, biography, a few animal and mystery stories. Even with the "elite" reader, however, there is a general desire to improve in his profession or career and to keep abreast of developments in his field.

Another large unfilled need is literature for the newly literate in the vernacular. Some 90% are said never to be able to read anything but the Bible and letters written to them. Throughout Africa people being helped by mass education programs to emerge from illiteracy and ignorance need continued access to suitable publications and stimulation of their interest and expert reading guidance. Only very few are served by public libraries. If others are not, they will slide back into illiteracy. This is a field which the Regional Literature Bureaus have tried to meet and which the Communists have been known to exploit; e.g., a few years ago it was reported that the newly literate youth in West Africa were being supplied simple stories in the vernacular, well-illustrated and carefully prepared to indoctrinate readers. There is definite need for the production and distribution of more simple reading matter in Africa South of the Sahara.