



**WELCOMING REMARKS**

**BY**

**DR. TJAMA TJIVIKUA**

***RECTOR: POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA***

**AT THE**

**HANDING OVER CEREMONY OF A CHEQUE TO *THE VALUE OF N\$100 000 FOR THE  
ENHANCEMENT OF THE POLYTECHNIC LIBRARY'S PERIODICAL SECTION BY OLD MUTUAL  
NAMIBIA (OMN)***

**WEDNESDAY, 21 APRIL 2010**

**09h00**

**POLYTECHNIC (Senate Chamber)**

Director of Ceremonies and *Chief Librarian*, Ms. Judy Grobler

Mr. Sakaria Nghikembua, *CEO: Operations, Old Mutual and your colleagues*,

The Polytechnic Community

Distinguished invited Guests

Members of the Media

In 2008, we requested Old Mutual to provide support for the development of our Library. Later that same year we signed an agreement where Old Mutual pledged N\$300 000 over a three-year period to the Polytechnic in respect of the periodical section. Today, we are here witnessing the third handing-over in the amount of N\$ 100 000.

Mr. Nghikembua, having fermented these invaluable ties between the Polytechnic and Old Mutual, you are almost one of us.

The cooperation between Old Mutual and higher education in Namibia started more than twenty years ago with the support for the old library. This cooperation has been rekindled by the generous donation from Old Mutual. We at the Polytechnic place a high premium on this partnership and wholeheartedly thank Old Mutual for the deep understanding of the needs of our people.

When we inaugurated the library in 2005, we had very limited resources – moving from the very small library that could only accommodate a small number of visitors and resources, to the state-of-the-art library we have today. In March 2009, for example, the library had more than 11 500 visitors, which was more than double the 4 000 users, the library hosted in 2008.

The first two years of Old Mutual's sponsorship developed the Library's new **Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)**. The OPAC is a vital part of the Library Management System and contributes towards the positive image of the Polytechnic. The **Polytechnic Library's OPAC**, called **PolyCat** , is accessible through the Internet for its users to see what information resources are available in the library . It has been developed during the past two years not only to provide an attractive and user-friendly search page, but also allow users to:

- i) Have online access to their library profile/account;
- ii) View what items they have on loan;
- iii) View their circulation history;
- iv) View their previous searches;
- v) View what debts they owe;
- vi) Renew their loan items online;
- vii) Reserve library items for themselves;
- viii) Create an interest profile for themselves, which will alert them as soon as an item on their topic of interest arrives on the library shelves; and
- ix) To suggest items (books, journals, etc.) to be acquired for the library collection.

Part of this development is the adding-on of a Z39.50 protocol to the Catalogue Subsystem, which will enable cataloguers to download bibliographic records from other libraries and thereby cutting cataloguing time considerably. This development is still in the testing phase.

This last installment N\$100 000 of the Old Mutual donation will be used for the purchase of additional online journals. I sincerely believe that although this is the last installment for the three-year project, this is by no means the end of the co-operation between our two institutions and we look forward to **other forms of partnerships** between the Polytechnic and Old Mutual Namibia.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not sure whether the value of a library in this information age is fully understood and appreciated in our society. The dominant factor in the development of libraries is the ongoing move towards digital distribution of information through the global network infrastructure. This implies a shift from the traditional role of libraries as a '**clearing house**' and **service center** for printed publications, towards a role as **a supplier of networked services for digital information resources**.

Within the information chain, libraries perform an *intermediary* function between **publishers** (and other information producers) and **end-users**. This function is performed in two distinct ways:

- i) For information producers, the library acts as a *clearing house*. This means that producers do not need to offer their products to individual users, with all administrative problems and costs involved. This is especially important in the area of journals, where the library takes out a relatively expensive institutional subscription from which materials are further distributed to end-users.
- ii) For the end-user, the library is an efficient instrument to make available a limited set of relevant publications out of the entire volume of publications available in the market place. The library acts as a selective filter and quality instrument, making available to the user only those publications which are relevant and of sufficient quality. In other words, there is no need for individual users to keep themselves informed about the information market and to acquire materials individually from publishers and other producers.

One of the key components of the **knowledge mediation function** of the library is the (set of) **resource discovery mechanism(s)**, i.e. mechanisms that allow the user to identify existing

information resources based on an expression of their **information needs** (query). A further component is **a mechanism to locate the source of information resources** and to deliver them to the end-user. User support is also required in order to allow the user to make the best use of the knowledge mediation services offered by the library. Under this model, there is theoretically no need for the library to store information resources. The library could be entirely **'virtual'**, mediating between the knowledge requirements of (internal or external) users and information resources available in the outside world, e.g. on the **global networks**.

In the final analysis, this networked information infrastructure is a **vast collection of available knowledge resources** to which any user can have immediate and complete access. What users actually need, however, is a mechanism which can **relate their specific knowledge needs to distinct resources**. This is precisely the area where the **added value of libraries** for users can be found.

A library, to modify the famous metaphor of the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, should be the delivery room for the birth of ideas - a place where history comes to life. At the end of the day, intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access of all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored.

As Charles Langbridge Morgan once said, *"....a book is the only place in which you can examine a fragile thought without breaking it, or explore an explosive idea without fear it will go off in your face....one of the few heavens remaining where a man's mind can get both provocation and privacy."*

Therefore, we express our profound gratitude to Old Mutual Namibia for their deep understanding and generosity. Together we shall build Namibia to become a knowledge economy.

I thank you.