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**REPORT OF THE EVALUATION
OF THE CENTRAL ECA DOCUMENTATION
REPOSITORY AND THE LIBRARY**

MEMORANDUM
FOR THE RECORD

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BY: [illegible]

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**REPORT OF THE EVALUATION
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AND THE LIBRARY**

I. INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of the central ECA documentation repository and the library falls in line with the general preoccupation of the Secretariat to enhance its capacity and capability to better implement the mandate of the Commission through continued review and appraisal of its activities. This exercise has therefore been undertaken by PPCO within the framework of ECA's continued self evaluation in general and follow-up on the instructions of the Executive Secretary's circular No.003/92 of 14 January 1992 on meetings and documents in particular.

A. Objective

The stated objective of the ECA library is to serve the research and information needs of the Secretariat staff and participants in ECA conferences, seminars and workshops. The library was also to serve United Nations Agencies and Diplomatic Missions in Addis Ababa, OAU Research Personnel, visiting scholars and students and other visiting people from Africa and overseas looking for information on Africa. Thus, the first objective of the evaluation was to establish the extent to which the Library has lived up to these expectations. The second objective of the evaluation was to analyse the current situation of ECA's central documentation repository and the library and to recommend measures to improve on the existing conditions.

B. Terms of Reference

Given the above mentioned objectives, the terms of reference for this evaluation were as follows:

- i. To examine the current situation in the library including the opening and closure times;
- ii. To review the quality of the library collection;
- iii. To examine the services rendered;
- iv. To examine the quality of staff working in the Library;
- v. To look into the degree of comfort for its users;
- vi. To review the usefulness of the Library in relation to: Newspapers, Periodicals, Journals, Books, UN Documents, Intergovernmental publications, Government publications and other publications; and

vii. To examine the Library's policy on borrowing, and acquisition.

C. Methodology

The method of evaluation was based, essentially, on analysis of questionnaire submitted to a group of ECA staff and from interviews with Library staff and users.

II. BACKGROUND HISTORY ON THE LIBRARY

The Library was initially conceived as a regional reference Library for information on Africa's development activities. It was originally established to serve as a social and economic Library for the continent along the lines of the United States Library of Congress. It is to be recalled that much of the academic discussion during the post independence period, particularly, on African Unity and regional integration and cooperation was, significantly and conspicuously Euro-centric. African contributions were limited, by and large, to the speeches and writings of political figures. The Euro-centricity of the literature on African integration and cooperation was a product of European intellectual thinking that the experience of post World-War-II European reconstruction and integration could be applicable to Africa. But, what has become clear is that the studies on African integration and cooperation prepared in Europe were more influenced by their own intellectual facade, rather than by intimate acquaintance with and interest of the African situation. The ECA Library was supposed to attract Africanists familiar with the African social and economic situation to play a decisive catalytic role in shaping Africa's political and economic thought, leading to a "grand-theory" of socio-economic development in the region.

Consequently, the ECA Library was established soon after the first session of the Commission. In mid-1977, the ECA Library moved to its new premises after being accommodate first at Adjuna Square, in a room at the Ministry of Defense where the Commission was temporary housed, then moved to what is now being occupied by the staff council, then to where the cartography unit is located and finally to the present new premises.

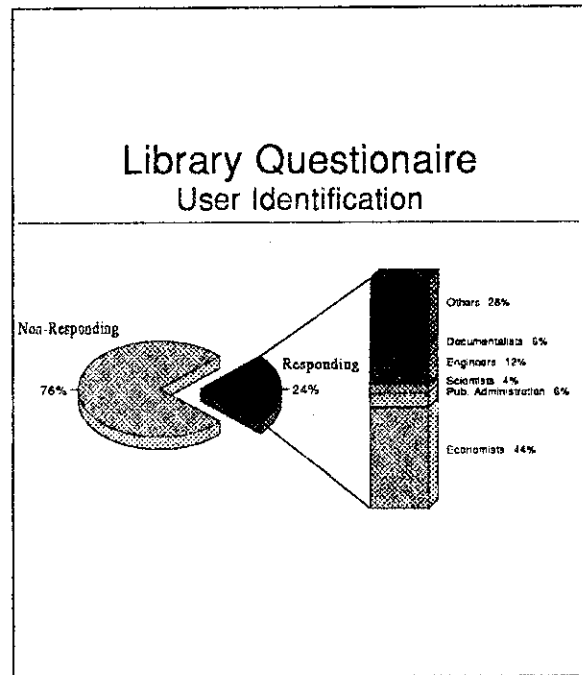
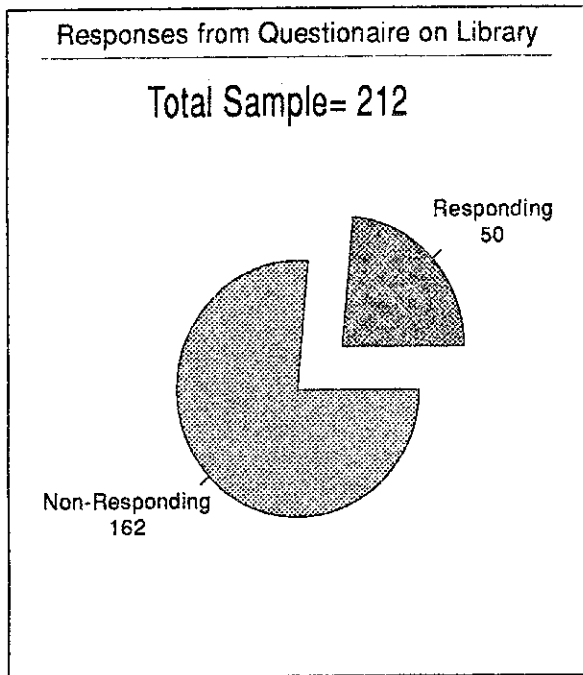
It is claimed by some officials from the Library that the Economic Commission for Africa is the only one with a separate Library premises. It is also claimed that the ECA Library has the biggest collection under one roof in the UN system outside New York, Geneva and Vienna Libraries. Furthermore, the ECA Library is said to have the most substantial single collection in Africa on the economies of the African region. It is estimated to contain over 150,00 volumes, excluding mimeographed United Nations documents. It is also claimed that the Library presently

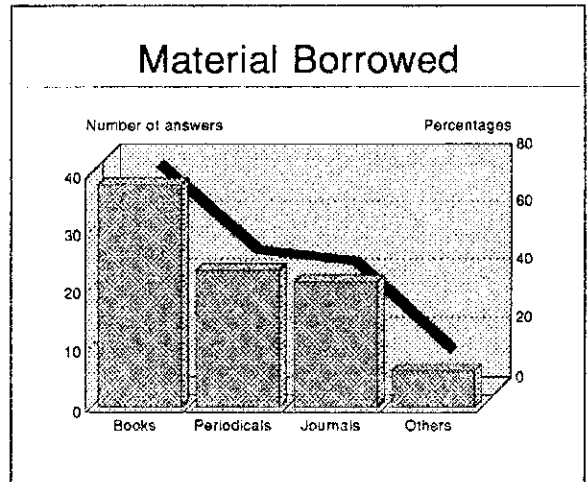
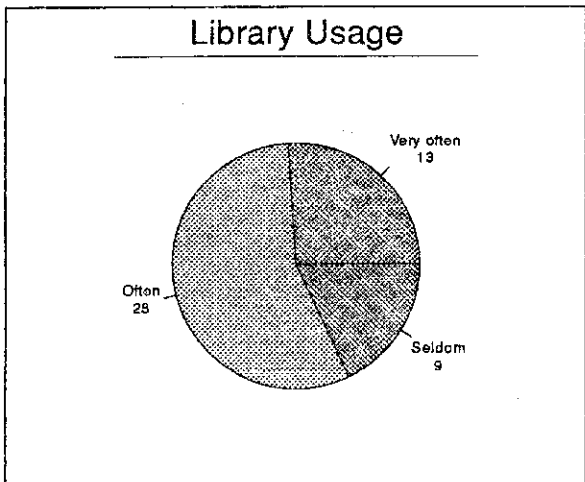
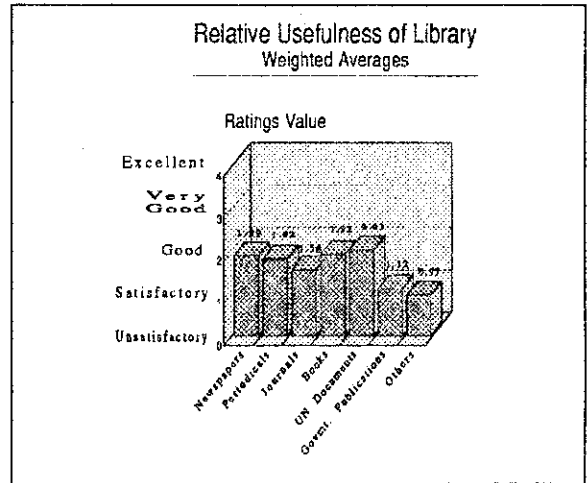
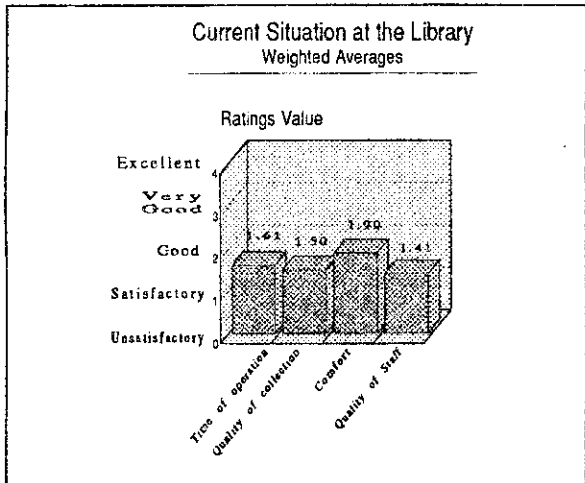
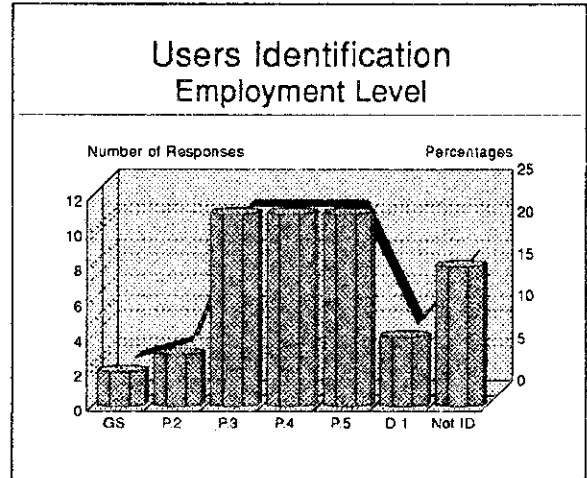
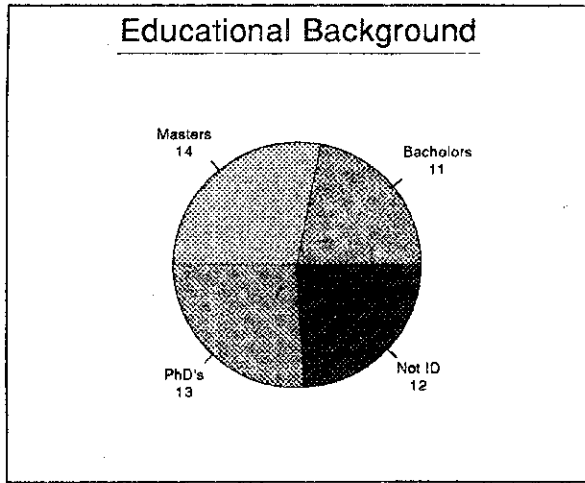
subscribes to over 500 periodicals and newspapers and receives a similar number of journals on an exchange and gratis basis. Significantly, several visits to the Library did not give the evaluator that impression.

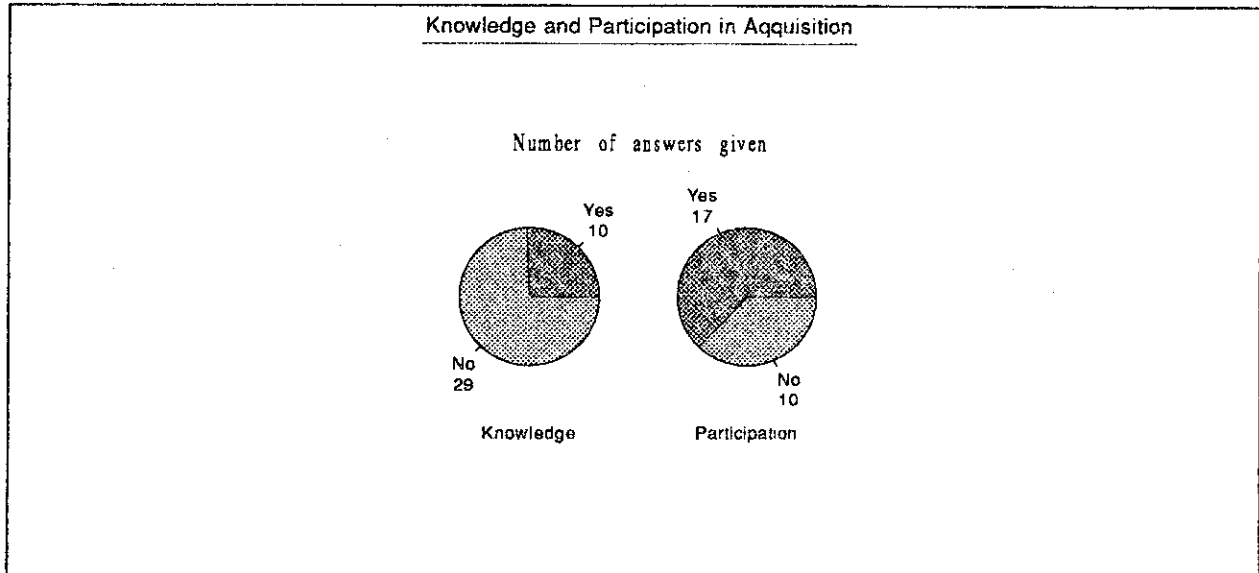
When the Library was established, the idea was to make it an African Economic Library and one of the objectives was to bring back important historical documents from the metropolitan colonial capitals taken during the pre-independence period. It was envisaged that an African person of great intellectual contribution to the understanding of the problems confronting the continent --not necessarily a Librarian-- would be the Director of the Library comparable in status to the Director of the US Library of Congress. However, these lofty ideas did not materialise due to lack of financial resources. The Library is financed from the regular budget and the resource constraints experienced by ECA have seriously affected the capacity of the Library to function as the African Economic Library originally envisaged.

III. GRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

The following is a graphic analysis of questionnaire responses from the Library survey:







IV. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that the Library survey did not attract much attention from ECA staff members. Post-survey interview indicated that of the 162 non-responding staff a majority recognized that the survey was important but argued that they were too busy to answer the questionnaire. However, the 50 who responded to the questionnaire gave a fair indication of the current situation of the Library.

A. Shortcomings

The survey revealed a number of shortcomings as perceived by the staff. These can be summarized as follows:

- Serious disadvantages to the full utilization of the Library's potential are presented by the lack of photocopy equipment, a proper microfiche system, the lack of computerization of catalogues and printer reader facilities that are not fully operational;
- It was pointed out that the Library lacks a proper binding section for periodicals;
- The manpower of the Library is considered inadequate in terms of professional training, dedication and numerical strength;
- The language variety of acquisitions is not equally distributed among English and French publications; it should be broadened and staff should be actively encouraged to participate in the process;

- It was pointed out that a large amount of publications currently stored in the basement of the library are not classified or filed and pose a substantial fire hazard;
- It is felt that the hours of operation are inadequate and should be increased; and
- The accessibility of certain collections and the general cleanliness of the Library should be substantially improved.

Some respondents made extensive and detailed comments which deserve to be more fully reproduced. For example, one respondent made extensive comments on the Classification and Cataloguing Unit (CCU). The respondent observed that the CCU is composed of three senior assistant cataloguers, three English typists and one staff dealing with production of stencils. This respondent claimed that two out of the three senior assistant cataloguers are almost always on sick leave or on consistent absenteeism from the office and the third one has recently started complaining of back pain. The respondent's observations were subsequently corroborated by senior management staff.

B. Recommendations

As a result of the above analysis the following recommendations should be given serious consideration:

- Photocopy equipment should be installed and manned by Library staff in order to serve the need of ECA's researchers; additionally, a self-serve coin-operated photocopy machine should also be installed for the use of all other visitors.
- Computerization of the Library's cataloguing system should be given priority, alternatively, a microfiche system should be installed and be made operational as soon as possible;
- The manpower requirements and professional training of Library staff should be reevaluated and the necessary corrective measures promptly implemented;
- The acquisition of new materials should be broadened with regards to language variety, staff should be encouraged to recommend new acquisitions and collect materials whenever on mission, and publications from MULPOCS should be incorporated;
- The Library should coordinate efforts to prepare lists of materials earmarked for exchange with other organizations; and
- Last but not least, it was suggested that the Library should be electronically linked with PADIS in order to provide up-to-date statistical information and retrieval capabilities on various subject areas.

C. CONCLUSION

The Library is the life-blood of the Commission, particularly, in terms of implementing the Commission's mandate in the field of research. Consequently, the ECA Library should be able to provide the necessary basis upon which the scientific and analytical rigour of the Commission should be further strengthened. The latter point is especially relevant since it is in the context of a new policy of research, intended to bring a balance between the operations and research activities of the ECA.

The Library should be able to assist ECA in the development of an intellectual focus that is likely to spur member states to action around a set of ideas and purposes. To this end, the acquisitions policy should be more oriented to those publications that will enhance the capacity and capability of ECA in its research activities. There is no doubt that improvement in the present conditions of the Library will go a long way to reinvigorate ECA's role as a Think-Tank. The so called ECA's advocacy role in development problems of the continent can only be measured in terms of the Commission's research capacity by way of articulate, analytical, scientific and rigorous outputs. This can only be possible if the Library has the means and the capability to provide the necessary material and technical inputs to ECA's staff.