

TRIBUTE TO

**MR. K.E. INGRAM, O.D., M.Phil., B.A. F.L.A.**

IN APPRECIATION OF HIS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

TO THE

**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF JAMAICA**

**AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

**JANUARY 1979 – DECEMBER 1999**

*Delivered at an Appreciation Function in his honour  
at The Courtleigh, New Kingston  
11 April 2000*

**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF JAMAICA**

*Madam Chairman, Mr. K. E. Ingram and Mrs. Ingram, other guests, Members of the Board of Management and Senior Staff of the National Library of Jamaica, good evening.*

*This evening is indeed one of celebration. We have come together to express our thanks and appreciation to a member of our family, Mr. K.E. Ingram, for his outstanding contribution to the National Library of Jamaica as a member of the Board of Management from 1979 to 1999. He brought to the Board not only his professional expertise as a librarian – and he is one of the most eminent and respected figures in this field in the Caribbean - but his deep knowledge of the collection of the National Library of Jamaica as a scholar and bibliographer. His contribution to the Board was therefore unique.*

*Honoured by the Government of Jamaica with the award of Officer of the Order of Distinction and by the Institute of Jamaica with the Gold Musgrave Medal for “his distinguished eminence in the fields of librarianship and historical scholarship”, K.E. Ingram brought lustre and distinction to the Board of the National Library and for this we are truly grateful.*

*Mr Ingram's service over the past 20 years – significant as it is – is only the tip of the iceberg as far as his contributions to the National Library and to its predecessor, the West India Reference Library (WIRL) of the Institute of Jamaica are concerned. His association with the Institute goes back almost 60 years, to 1941 when as a young and eager young man - and a graduate of Jamaica College, let me add - he joined the staff of the then West India Reference Library as a Library Assistant. He then started his long association with this institution and its remarkable*



collection. He developed there his interest in West Indian bibliography, and this has become one of the great passions of his life.

He left the West India Reference Library in 1950 for greener fields at Mona and pursued a successful career at the University retiring in 1981 as University Librarian. In a sense however he never left the West India Reference Library as he continued his research into that incredible collection of Jamaican and West Indian materials assembled over the years by Frank Cundall. The descriptions of many of these items in his bibliographies and in his historical articles bear testimony to his detailed knowledge of this collection.

As a result of his association with the West India Reference Library and his interest in the collection, it is not surprising that in 1976 when the Institute of Jamaica decided to establish a Board of Management for the WJRL, he was one of the persons appointed to the Board. This Board was called an Interim Board and was intended to pave the way for the conversion of the library into a national library. He served as a member of this Board from 1976 to 1978 when the permanent board was appointed.

By this time NACOLADS - the National Council on Libraries, Archives and Documentation Services - had produced a plan for a National Information System for Jamaica. The most significant recommendation of the Plan was that a National Library should be established. As a leading member of NACOLADS, Mr. Ingram played an important role in these deliberations. So important was his role that in 1978 when NACOLADS established a small sub-committee to review the recommendations regarding the National Library in the Plan and to see how they could be implemented, he was appointed Chairman of the committee. Incidentally, the other



members of the committee were a Miss D Douglas and a Mrs S Lampart.

In January 1979 the new Board of Management of the West India Reference Library (National Library) was appointed with the indomitable Joyce Robinson as Chairman. Several members of the former interim board including Mr Ingram were appointed members. The Board's first task was to determine the manner in which the WJRL could be converted into the National Library of Jamaica, the establishment of which had been provided for in the Institute of Jamaica Act passed the previous October.

It is hardly surprising that the Board turned to Mr Ingram for his expertise. He was appointed Chairman of the Planning and Restructuring Committee to make recommendations for the administrative structure and organization of the proposed National Library as well as the duties and responsibilities of the National Librarian. This was a major responsibility as it involved restructuring the West Indian Reference Library to become the National Library. Mr. Ingram accepted this challenge and approached the work with his usual meticulousness, which is one of his well known hallmarks.

Before the first meeting of the Committee he wrote a 3 page paper entitled "Some preliminary thoughts for the consideration of the committee". Later when the Committee was asked to examine a job description for the post of National Librarian produced by Jamaica Library Association he went through it in detail before the meeting and wrote out his comments which took up 7 pages. This preparatory work greatly expedited the deliberations of the Committee, and here I can speak from first hand knowledge, as I was the secretary of the Committee. (Let me hasten to say that this

appointment had nothing to do with whatever qualities I might have had - I was just the senior of the two librarians on the staff and the Board wanted all the committees serviced by the librarians).

One of the Board's priorities was the appointment of a chief executive officer for the National Library. At that time the position was called National Librarian. The Board Chairman made no secret of the fact that as far as she was concerned there was only one obvious person in Jamaica for that post. Unfortunately that person was already employed. However in her meetings with ministers and other government officials, she used Mr. Ingram as the benchmark for the position and she urged that the post be established at a level to attract someone with his experience and qualifications.

I think I have said enough to show that Mr. Ingram played an important role in getting the National Library operational. It is impossible for me tonight to describe in detail all his other contributions to the Board over the years as they have been so numerous. Suffice to say that he was regular in his attendance at Board meetings and contributed greatly to the determination of policies to be pursued. As his advice was always practical and sound it was invariably accepted. In the absence of the Board Chairman he often chaired meetings.

He also served on several sub-committees as the Board was always seeking to streamline its operations and improve its effectiveness. Over a period of time the committees he served on included the Executive Committee, the Policy and Planning Committee and during the past five years the Collections and Management Committee.



*If I had to single out Mr. Ingram's most important and enduring contribution to the work of the National Library it would be that he kept the Board focused as to the real mission of the National Library. This was to preserve under optimum conditions the recorded heritage of Jamaica both the materials being currently collected as well as the irreplaceable collection the Library inherited from the West India Reference Library of the Institute of Jamaica. On every possible occasion he stressed this great responsibility and the necessity for the Government to provide the Library with the necessary resources to have this done.*

*He was mainly concerned with the manuscript collection and he has been through this collection in detail, listing its contents for his bibliographies. As a byproduct of his work he compiled a report on the collection which included the conditions of the items. This was discussed by the Board of Management which gave instructions that priority attention should be paid to the collection. The list he compiled of items in need of repair /conservation, called by us the "Ingram List", is being used to determine priorities for attention in our preservation and conservation programme.*

*In paying tribute to Mr Ingram tonight I would like to thank Mrs Ingram for her support over the years. She has always shown interest in the Library and has been faithful in her attendance at Library functions.*

*Mr. Ingram, we are grateful to you for your commitment to the Library's objectives and goals which you helped to frame, for your involvement in our activities and for your willingness to assist us in whatever ways you could. It is now up to us to develop a national library, which lives up to your ideals of excellence. This is a national library fully staffed and equipped with the necessary*

*resources to accomplish all its tasks. We - the members of the Board and Staff of the National Library - have to dedicate ourselves to this task if we are to ensure that your outstanding contribution has not been in vain. It will not be easy but we owe it to you and to others like you who worked hard, and often at great sacrifice, to lay the foundations for others to follow.*

*Although we have set you free from the confines of the Board room we have not released you from the hallowed walls of the National Library where we expect you to continue your exploration in the world of West Indian research and bibliography. You will always be welcome.*

John A. Across  
Director (NLS)