

AFRICAN STUDIES AND RESEARCH

BBC AFRICAN SERVICE AND SOMALI SECTION.

The British Broadcasting Corporation African Service and Somali Section are attempting to raise funds for the cataloguing of their tape archives. Mick Delap, the Assistant Head of the African Service, writes that the English archives contain taped interviews with African leaders from the early 1960s right up to the present day. There is also a wealth of despatches from the field, eyewitness reports, and stand-back comment from contemporary experts. In all there is a total of some six hundred or so hours of material, which includes rare recordings, and many more of great historical significance. A start has been made in upgrading a rudimentary card catalogue to a comprehensive computer catalogue. However, funds have run out and are no longer available from the BBC for this sort of operation. In return for help with funding, the possibility exists of providing interested individuals and organizations with copies of the tapes.

Of the Somali Section, Florence Akst, the Programme Organiser, says that it has been broadcasting for more than thirty years. As the Somali language was without written form until 1972, what survives on tape of their earliest output is of very special value. Somalia may be one of the least developed countries but it has a rich culture, especially in oral poetry. Politics and poetry, religion and history, have been captured on tape in a collection that is rare and often unique. Their problem is the same as that of the African Section; lack of funds for cataloguing the tape archive. In return for help with funding they are prepared to give information about the collection and access to the tapes.

For further information contact Mick Delap or Florence Akst at the BBC World Service, Bush House, PO Box 76, Strand, London WC2B 4PH.

OBITUARY

While writing the review of David Gamble's *The Gambia* for this issue of AR & D, I was saddened to learn of the death of the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Clio Press World Bibliographical Series, Robert Collison. My personal memories of him go back to 1940, when he taught me cataloguing. After the war I went to the Royal Empire Society (now Royal Commonwealth Society) Library, and for ten years he was a neighbour as Reference Librarian of the City of Westminster. In 1962, while Librarian of the B.B.C., he was a member of the original SCOLMA Committee, and in his typically quiet way offered to compile a Directory, which has not only been the first of four editions, but a pattern followed by several other guides to subject libraries. His almost self-deprecatory manner gave little clue to his energy and ability as Librarian and writer, but his friendliness and humour made him a most congenial colleague. His death, so

soon after that of another valued member of the original SCOLMA Committee, Geoffrey Woledge, is a reminder of our debt to those who founded our organisation so well.

Donald Simpson.

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher MERRETT. Deputy University Librarian, University of Natal, P.O. Box 375, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa 3200.

J.M. KARUGILA. National Archives of Tanzania, P.O. Box 2006, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.