

**SPEECH BY MUTARE POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIAN, PRETTY
CHIBANGWA**

**AT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH CELEBRATION
AT MANZVIRE PRIMARY SCHOOL ON 07 NOVEMBER 2025.**

SALUTATIONS

Director of ceremonies, ***Deputy Headmaster Kondo Primary, Ms M Runesu***

Local Community Leadership.....

Provincial Education Directorate
Mr...Gabaza.....

Director National Library and Documentation Services, Mr Masimba Muziringa
in
absentia.....
.....

Chipinge District Schools Inspector, Mr Chinyau, here represented by the Circuit
Schools Inspector Mr Masona.....

District Schools Inspectors here
present.....

The Headmaster Manzvire Primary School, Mr
Hove.....

Zimbabwe Library Association, Chairperson for Manicaland Branch, and also
Africa University Librarian, Dr Rosemary Maturure in
absentia.....

Higher Life Foundation
 Representatives.....

Schools Inspectors here
 present.....

Headmasters from various
 Schools.....

Teacher Librarians, Librarians and learners here
 present.....

Ladies and
 Gentlemen.....

APO, All protocol
 observed.....

1. Introduction

A very good Morning and a warm welcome to you all to the celebration of the International School Library Month in Manicaland Province. The first celebration was done in 2018 at Chancellor Primary School. During the previous celebrations, we promised each other that it was not the end. We thank you all for being consistent towards the development of school libraries to enhance learning and reading culture from an early stage. They say “catch them young”.

It is a great honour and privilege for me, as the Librarian of Mutare Polytechnic, to join you in celebrating International School Library Month (ISLM) 2025. October mark a special period in the global educational calendar — a time when Education policy makers, librarians, teachers, and learners come together to celebrate the transformative power of school libraries in shaping knowledge, creativity, and imagination. Ladies and gentlemen as we celebrate once again, the international school library month running under the theme “**Beyond the**

Bookshelf: AI, Libraries, and the Future of Stories” we also need to continuously consider how best we can make Manicaland Province the champion and pacesetter for the development of school libraries.

Most of you would agree with me that throughout primary or secondary education one would have never come across a library or even visit a community library, this alone contributed to the death of reading culture, hence we are gathered here as various stakeholders to revamp our school libraries and awaken the reading culture in our children.

As Mutare Polytechnic in collaboration with various partners we thrive to see all schools in Manicaland Province, and beyond have modern functional libraries for the betterment of our children and society. Children in Primary and Secondary, end up in higher and tertiary institutions, where libraries are strongly supported, and learners are encouraged to be independent, to read, research, and develop new knowledge that influence policy and have impact in society. The challenge we normally face is that majority of these students, when they enrol for higher and tertiary education, they would have their first encounter with the library for the first time. It becomes very difficult to change them at this stage, they heavily depends on lecturers notes and recently AI as well. In their assignments, they score very high marks, due to overreliance and unethical use of AI, when it comes to examinations and real life challenges in industry they fail. This gathering is to create awareness to school authorities, on the importance of functional school libraries and encourage learners to make reading a habit, this is a lifelong skill.

As we celebrate ISLM 2025, we must embrace the evolving role of libraries in this digital age. The theme “**Beyond the Bookshelf**” calls upon us to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) and technology are shaping the way stories are created, shared, and experienced.

AI can now help us write, summarize, translate, and even recommend books. But technology alone cannot replace the human imagination. It is through libraries that we learn to balance knowledge and ethics — to use AI responsibly and creatively. Let us therefore integrate technology into our libraries not as a replacement for reading, but as a companion that enhances learning and discovery.

2. The Importance of a Functional School Library

One Scholar, ladies and gentlemen noted that a well-equipped library is the foundation of modern educational structure and that education deprived of library services is like a body without soul, a vehicle without an engine and a structure that is merely a collection of bricks without cement.

Reading, ladies and gentlemen, and our dear learners, is not just an academic skill — it is a life skill. When you read:

- You **improve your writing skills** by learning how sentences, ideas, and stories are structured.
- You **expand your vocabulary**, which helps you speak and write with confidence.
- You **improve focus and concentration**, because reading trains your mind to pay attention and think deeply.
- You **develop communication skills**, because reading exposes you to different ways of expressing ideas.
- You **learn to think creatively and critically**, finding new solutions to challenges.
- You **build memory and comprehension**, strengthening your brain through mental exercise.

- And perhaps most importantly, reading **helps you make positive life choices** — it keeps your mind busy, informed, and inspired, steering you away from drug and substance abuse.

A reading culture is therefore a powerful tool in building disciplined, informed, and responsible citizens.

3. Impact of Mutare Polytechnic Community Engagement programs

Mutare Polytechnic have assisted some schools here present to receive books from Book Aid International, assisted some schools to re-establish their library, and automated one school in Mutasa District, using Koha integrated management system. The school has a traceable record of all library inventory, who has what at any given time. It takes a second to borrow or return a library book.

However in some situations the challenge we face after setting or re-establish the library, or assist the school to receive books from Book Aid International, our efforts are usually hampered, because there is no Librarian in the school structure.

Therefore we recommend the following:

1. May the last Friday of October every year, be set aside on Manicaland Province Schools Calendar for celebrating the International School Library Month. We also need to introduce reading and writing competitions during this Annual gathering. We need to collect these stories and help our learners to publish their work, and have our Manicaland stories, heritage based, not to always rely on foreign content. From this gathering we kindly request the name of the district and school, where we will hold the 2026 International School Library Month Celebration.
2. Collectively, we need to make efforts to establish functional school libraries. Mutare Polytechnic will fully support you. I have spoken to one lecturer at a polytechnic that trains librarians, if they could support our

community engagement efforts by sending students on attachment to Manicaland Province schools, where these students could even set up functional libraries and support learners to develop reading skills from a tender age. He agreed positively, however he suggested that the school should cater for the welfare of students, in terms of accommodation, meals, and a little allowance, to cater for their personal needs. We will also engage other training institutions for this positive cause, if you are agreeable to this.

3. We also propose that it must be a requirement, as in higher and tertiary education, that each school must have a functional library and trained librarian.
4. DSIs-Whenever you hold meetings, continue to encourage headmasters to set up functional School Libraries.
5. Headmasters and teachers: on the timetable, ensure there is a reading hour and continue to encourage your learners to visit and use the library.
6. Learners: make reading your daily habit — even 20 minutes a day can change your life.
7. To our partners: let us continue collaborating to ensure every school in Manicaland Province has a functional library — both physical and digital.
8. To the parents and community: a school library is not just for children; it is a community asset. Support it, use it, and protect it.

Mutare Polytechnic and partners will continue to engage you. When you need guidance on setting a functional school library, we are there for you. We will also collect data on the impact of our community engagement programs. If we are granted permission to collect data, we will need to know how many schools have functional libraries, and those that need our support.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us celebrate our libraries not only as buildings with shelves, but as living spaces of innovation, creativity, and connection. Let us go beyond the bookshelf — exploring the future of stories with curiosity, courage, and compassion.

Mutare Polytechnic acknowledges the support rendered during all preparations until today by the Provincial Education Directorate, the Director National Library and Documentation Services, Chipinge District Schools Inspector, the Headmaster, Manzvire Primary School, Mr Hove, and your dedicated team, Higher Life Foundation, the ZIMLA and everyone here present, we sincerely say

Thank you, tinobonga yaamho