



Annual Report 2024

Compiled by
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ALMEDA Annual Report, 2024

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Introduction

2024 has been ALMEDA's first full calendar year of operation. During the year, we have welcomed new colleagues to the ALMEDA team, been involved in a number of scholarly and research activities, collected metadata on thousands of literary works in multiple languages, developed a working draft of our specific knowledge ontology for African literary works, and set up our data repository. What follows is a report on our activities in 2024.

People

In addition to PI [Ashleigh Harris](#), information specialist [Ursula Oberst](#), and digital engineers, [Dann Wu](#) and [Adam Maen](#), who were all already on ALMEDA at the end of 2023, we have welcomed the following colleagues to ALMEDA this year:

- [Nicklas Hållén](#) joined the project as a case-study researcher in January
- [Oulia Makkonen](#) started as a postdoctoral fellow in April
- [Max van Loenen](#), [Malin Runefelt](#) and [Eric Sarkar](#) were student interns on the project in the spring term of 2024
- [Max van Loenen](#) joined us as a research assistant in August
- [Gijs Aangenendt](#) joined us as a data curator in August
- [Gloria Ajami Makokha](#) began her postdoctoral fellowship in August
- [Pedzisai Maedza](#) joined the project as a case-study researcher in September
- [Mumbi Macharia](#) joined us as a research assistant in October
- [Riaan Oppelt](#) joined the project as a case-study researcher in October
- [Adèle Robbe](#), [Julia Schultz](#) and [Lailan Maronsi](#) have been student interns on the project in the fall term of 2024
- [Marja Fahlander](#) joined us as the financial officer of ALMEDA in November.
- [Elliot Mason](#) joined us as a research assistant in November.

Case-studies 2024

1 – 4 October 2024: Machakos, Kenya

Nicklas Hållén

As part of his case-study on **popular and street forms in Kenya**, Nicklas Hållén visited Machakos University in October where he co-organised a PhD and MA student workshop on popular cultural production in Kenya together with Dr. Charles Kebaya. The workshops are designed to help students plan and develop a research project and then co-write an article for publication based on this work. This is the second time Nicklas has run a workshop with this group of students, who have been working in groups on six different projects which will be collected in a co-authored book that is scheduled to be published in late 2025. The book will focus on Popular Cultural Production and the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. The final workshop, focusing on the book publication, will take place in the first half of 2025.

7 – 21 September 2024: Harare, Zimbabwe

Pedzisai Maedza

Pedzisai Maedza's case-study focuses on **contemporary theatre festivals** in Harare, Zimbabwe. The festivals studied during this trip included the the Mitambo International Theatre Festival (which, due to resource issues, did not run this year), the Shoko Festival, the Oliver Mtukudzi International Festival of the Arts, amongst others. What became apparent in Pedzisai's research is the problem of sustainability for festivals in the on-going economic and regulatory difficulties in Zimbabwe: irregular and unreliable funding and demands for the pre-clearance of scripts by the censorship board creates significant programming difficulties for festival organisers. Despite these challenges the festival and theatre scene is remarkably resilient, with new venues and festivals emerging as quickly as established ones close down. This quickly changing organizational landscape presents challenges for creating metadata that maps the contemporary Zimbabwean theatre scene.

18 – 25 June 2024: Bamako, Mali

Oulia Makkonen

Oulia Makkonen's case study focuses on **audiovisual remediations of Malian Kotéba theater**. During this research trip, in addition to setting up important contacts, she conducted research in the Institut des Sciences Humaines (ISH) de Bamako; the National Library of Mali, the National Museum of Mali, and The Women's Museum: Muso Kunda. At the ISH, Oulia was provided access to ISH's library catalogues and to their archive – consisting mostly of documents and audiotapes in boxes in a room. Together with ISH's interns, Oulia retrieved significant literary materials, including letters containing collected stories by teachers and pupils in the 1960s from all around Mali. These stories are hand-written in French (translated from local languages and folklore) and were sent to the radio in Bamako. A further dataset of some issues of the Revue semestrielle Sankoré, which includes materials in Bambara and French, was created.

19 September – 2 November 2024: Uppsala, Sweden

Riaan Oppelt

Riaan Oppelt is based at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, and his case-study focuses on expressive forms in Afrikaaps. Before coming to Sweden to work more closely with the ALMEDA team, Riaan did archival research in Cape Town and Stellenbosch on early examples of Afrikaaps in the Afrikaans archive. During his time in Sweden, he focused on compiling a

dataset of Afrikaaps writers, rappers, playwrights and screenwriters. This dataset is the first part of a larger dataset on Afrikaaps creative texts, including poems, spoken word poetry, short stories, books, TikTok poems, radio and television dramas and music. Riaan is working towards a collaboration with the substantial Wikipedia archive, the Encyclopedia of South African Theatre, Film, Media and Performance, and the YouTube channel, the Stellenbosch Literary Project (SLiP).

Events, Conferences, Lectures and Seminars

15-16 February 2024: Symposium African Digital Humanities, African Stories and Agency: University of Ghana – Legon

Ashleigh Harris, Nicklas Hållén, Oulia Makkonen and Ursula Oberst

Ashleigh Harris ‘Linked Open Metadata for African Literary Heritage’

Karen Ijumba ‘Poetry Africa Digital Map: An example of how selective and curated digitisation of ephemeral material in collections can enable new pathways of knowledge production’

Ursula Oberst and Ashleigh Harris ‘Wikidata Solutions for Informal Literary Archives’
Workshop facilitators included Nicklas Hållén, Oulia Makkonen, and Karen Ijumba.



University of Ghana – Legon: Workshop with colleagues and doctoral students and Microfilm archive of Ghanaian Newspapers currently being digitized.

The ALMEDA project, with the support of Vice-Chancellor’s co-funding from Uppsala University, supported ten PhD students’ participation in this event, as well as covered the costs of four keynote speakers, including Karen Ijumba with whom we have a standing collaboration via Poetry Africa.

23 February 2024: Forum for Africa Studies, Uppsala University.

Nicklas Hållén and Ashleigh Harris

‘African Literary Metadata: What? How? Why?’

28 February 2024: Seminar for Students at Leiden University

Ursula Oberst

‘Wikidata solutions for informal literary archives.’

22 March 2024: Forms and Formations of African Literature, Uppsala University,

Oulia Makkonen, Nicklas Hållén and Ashleigh Harris

Round table discussion on ‘Interrogating prose in African Literature’

5 April 2024: Lecture to undergraduates on Knowledge Organisation in the Librarian program (Bibliotekarieprogrammet) at Södertörns högskola.

Nicklas Hållén and Ashleigh Harris

Lecture to students on ‘African Literary Metadata’

13-14 May 2024: ALMEDA Kick-off meeting

Full ALMEDA team

The kick-off meeting was an opportunity for the full ALMEDA team and some of our advisory board to meet one another other. Advisory board members who were present included:

[Langa Khumalo](#) Chair and Coordinator of the Africa Union (AU) IsiZulu Language Commission and director of the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR).

[Munyao Kilolo](#) Founder & Editor-in-Chief, *Ituika*, A literary platform devoted to African languages and Translation

[Tunde Ope-Davis](#) Professor of English, Digital Cultures and Discourse Studies at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

[Åsa Lund Moberg](#), Chief librarian, Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden.

We were also joined online by four guests with close connections to the ALMEDA project:

[Tinashe Mushakavanhu](#) (University of Oxford), [Serah Kasembeli](#) (Mzuzu University, Malawi),

[Nkululeko Jama Sibanda](#) (Rhodes University, South Africa), and [Karen Ijumba](#) (Poetry Africa and Open Restitution Africa).

14 May 2024: ALMEDA Open Seminar 1. Online.

[Tinashe Mushakavanhu](#) (Oxford University)

‘Metareading a Country’ a paper on Mushakavanhu’s experiences with the experimental archive, ReadingZimbabwe.

15–17 May 2024: SASUF Sustainability Forum. Malmö, Sweden

Ashleigh Harris, Pedzisai Maedza and Nkululeko Sibanda

Panel: ‘Endangered Cultural Archives of Southern Africa’



Copies of Zambia's Youth Magazine, 'Orbit' at the Nordic Africa Institute's Library and Pedzisai Maedza assessing the Preben Kaarsholm collection at the Centre for African Studies, Copenhagen.

24 May 2024: Kolloquium »Phänomenologie der Digital Humanities« (Sommersemester 2024), Freie Universität, Berlin

Ashleigh Harris

'Introduction to ALMEDA: African Literary Metadata'

6–8 June 2024: DFG Network Towards a History of Work in the Cultural Economy, Getting a fair share? Cultural work under intellectual property regimes. Oslo, Norway.

Ashleigh Harris

'The Appropriation of African Literary Labour from Colonial Copyright to Corporate Paywalls'.

9 July 2024: iSchool/University of Washington, Leiden

Ursula Oberst

'African Literary Metadata: what, why and how?'

15 October 2024: ALMEDA Open Seminar 2. Online.

Riaan Oppelt (Stellenbosch University)

'Afrikaaps and the Literary Archive', <https://almedaresearch.org/lecture-afrikaaps-and-the-literary-archive-riaan-oppelt/>

19–20 November 2024: Linked Open Data and Literary Studies, Freie Universität, Berlin

Ursula Oberst and Ashleigh Harris

Attended only: related to presentation by Harris 24 May.

26–27 November 2024: Workshop on West African Ephemera, Uppsala.

Full ALMEDA team with guests:

Stephanie Newell, Yale University (advisor on ALMEDA)
 Flora Losch, L'école des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales
 Michelle Kelley, Kings College London
 Jarad Zimble, Kings College London
 Asha Rogers Birmingham University
 Anna Marie Skråmestø Nesheim, University of Oslo



Outside Uppsala University's aula. From left to right: Flora Losch, Gloria Makokha, Anna Marie Skråmestø Nesheim, Stephanie Newell, Asha Rogers, Michelle Kelley, Jarad Zimble.

27 November 2024: ALMEDA Open Seminar 3. Online.

Flora Losch (EHESS – L'école des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales)

'Postcolonial Technopolitics. Radiotelevisions, Audiovisual Archives, and the Return of the Past in Africa (20th and 21st centuries).'

Collaborations

- African Digital Humanities at the University of Kansas
- Centre for the Creative Artis, University of KwaZulu Natal
- Karen Ijumba, (Poetry Africa and Open Restitution)
- SABC Radio Archives, Johannesburg
- Femrite, Uganda
- Colleen Higgs (Modjaji Books)
- LITAIID: Decolonization, Appropriation and the Materials of Literature in Africa and its Diaspora (UKRI: UK Research and Innovation), PI Jarad Zimble, Kings College, London
- Noemi Alfieri (Subdiretora para as Dinâmicas Internas dos Investigadores - Investigadora Contratada CEEC FCT)

Results: Datasets and Publications

Datasets (alphabetical by surname)

Gloria Ajami Makokha	Lailan Maronsi
Sayings, idioms and proverbs (<i>jina</i>) printed on khangas of the East Coast of Tanzania and Kenya	Kwani? Print materials
Ashleigh Harris	Adèle Robbe
Cataloguing of literary material from 'Moto Magazine', 'Drum Magazine', 'Transition Magazine', 'The Township's Wife', 'Zonk!', 'Parade Magazine', 'Hi-Note!', 'Folklore Journal', 'Staffrider', 'Cape Monthly Magazine', South African Broadcasting Company, Radio play archive Preben Kaarlsholm's collection, Centre for African Studies, Copenhagen. Onitsha Market Literature Swahili Author information Literature in the Lord Grey Collection, NLSA South Africa	Cataloguing of literary material from, 'Africultures' 2001-2013, 'Cultures Sud' 2007-2009, 'Jamana' 1984, 'La voix de l'artiste' 1988-89, 'Africultures' 2001-2013, 'Notre librairie' 2000-2002, 'Recueil des pièces de théâtre de la phase nationale' SNAC 2001-2003, 'Sankoré' periodical 1973-76 and 1978, 'Semaine nationale des arts et de la culture' Mali 2001. Unesco Patrimoine culturel Immateriel Senegal Les lauréats au Concours théâtral interafricain de 1967 à 1991
Monica Härnqvist (ASCL)	Malin Runefelt
Catalogues for 'Lawino' and 'Lolwe'.	Catalogues for 'Dhana', 'Odi', 'Okyeame', and 'Umma'. Swahili Newspaper Serialisations
Nicklas Hållén	Eric Sarkar
Catalogues for 'Jalada' and 'Ta Adesa'.	Catalogues for 'Comic Republic' and 'Something Wicked'.
Oulia Makkonen	Julia Schulz
Cataloguing for 'Sankoré', 'Jama'	Cataloguing for 'Botsotso'. South African poets' data.
Mumbi Macharia	African Studies Centre, Leiden
Contemporary Slam Poetry, Nairobi	Swahili pamphlet literatures collected by Gerard van de Bruinhorst (ASCL) and researched Annachiara Raia
Max van Loenen	
Catalogues for 'Black Orpheus', 'Busara', 'Darlite', and 'Nexus'. Swahili Newspaper Serialisations. Author data for Poetry Africa.	

Publications

Ashleigh Harris. 'The Literary Metadata of African Little and Popular Magazines', ALMEDA Pamphlet #1 January, 2024.

Ashleigh Harris. 'African Literary Metadata and Makerere University's Library' *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 55, no. 1 (Spring 2024). 1-27; forthcoming.



Zonk! Magazine collections at the National Library of South Africa, Pretoria.
Moto Newspaper and Magazine Collection at the Nordic Africa Institute Library, Uppsala.

Data Repository



ALMEDA is using a private Wikibase instance, running on Uppsala University's server, for the data repository. Instead of using Wikidata, a completely open database that can be edited by anyone, we decided to create our own wikibase instance that allows the project to maintain control over and ensure the quality of the project's data.

The Wikibase instance has been set up by digital engineers Adam Maen and Dann Wu and Dann is populating the repository with basic data (such as languages, country and city information, and other general classes). Gijs Aangenendt has been retrieving relevant items from existing Wikidata records, including author data, data about occupations, festival and awards.

We plan to start populating the database with our current datasets in January 2025. Thus far we have collected data on approximately 12 000 individual texts in a variety of languages, including Swahili, Xhosa, Ndebele, Zulu, Hausa, Luo, Bambara, Sotho, Afrikaaps, Chichewa, Portuguese, French and English.

Knowledge Graph/Ontology

A major outcome of this year's work has been the creation of a way to model information about literary works that allows for flexible and intuitive access to our data, which will operate multilingually, and which will counter some of the problems imposed on a wide range of literary data by standards that privilege the book object. We will publish this ontology in the new year after our information experts, Ursula Oberst and Dann Wu, put it through further testing.

After consultation with our advisors in February, we began work on our multilingual ontology with French, Portuguese, Swahili, Yorùbà, and Zulu. We are now planning to start opening up to a wider circle of languages.

Looking ahead

The ALMEDA repository will be ready for internal [input of collected data](#) in January 2025.

January sees the first of two [ALMEDA-related PhD courses](#), 'Distant Reading World Literatures'. The second course on 'Literary Metadata from the 19th century to the Present' will run from September to November. These courses are free, online, and open to registered PhD students from anywhere in the world.

Adam Maen and Dann Wu will begin developing [the search interface](#) for the ALMEDA repository in the Spring Term of 2025.

Planned [research trips](#) include field research for Oulia Makkonen in Ivory Coast and Paris, for Gloria Ajami Makokha in Mombasa and Mwanza, Nicklas Hållén to Nairobi and Machakos, and Erik Falk to Uganda and Ashleigh Harris to South Africa.

Conferences

Ursula Oberst and Ashleigh Harris will be attending the 6th Conference and 8th African Library Summit which will hold in Windhoek-Namibia from 19th – 23rd May, 2025.

Ashleigh Harris will be presenting at the American Comparative Literature Association which will be held virtually, May 29 - June 1, 2025.

Gloria Ajami will be presenting at the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa 15th ISOLA conference, 9-12 July 2025 at University of Abuja, Nigeria.

Team members have sent in [abstracts](#) for the following conferences:

- ECAS European Conference on African Studies, Prague, June 25-28 2025
- African Literature Association conference 2025 Conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya – June 25-28, 2025
- 7th Mashariki Literary and Cultural Studies Conference, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. August 21-23 2025
- 11th edition of the DH Benelux Conference, Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, 4-6 June 2025

In September 2025, we will welcome Erik Falk to the project: his case-study focuses on Ugandan and Botswanan Literary NGOs and Erik is behind our collaboration with Femrite, Uganda.

Finally, we have plans for many publications in the coming year, when we will be paying particular attention on co-publishing across different areas of the project as well as on increasing our ALMEDA Pamphlet output.

ALMEDA would like to take the opportunity to thank Angelica Olausson, financial officer of the Department of English, who managed ALMEDA's finances before Marja Fahlander joined us. Our thanks are also owed to Åke Eriksson, for his generous support in all administrative matters.

We would also like to thank Hibo Moulid Hassan, who worked for ALMEDA as an administrator until September 2024, when she left to focus on her legal studies degree. We wish her all the best in her future career.

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