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Celebrating libraries in 20 years of democracy: An overview of library and information services in South Africa

International Federation of
Library Associations and Institutions
2015, Vol. 41(2) 97–111
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0340035215585100
ifla.sagepub.com



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Abstract

Since the establishment of the first public library in 1818, the South African library and information services landscape has also been a reflection of the socio-political order and developments in the country. This article presents an historical perspective as well as an overview of libraries in South Africa since 1994, the context within which libraries function, library governance and legislative framework, government funding for redress, library technologies, library and information services education and the professional association. The article further highlights the importance of libraries in meeting the goals of the national development agenda towards entrenching a strong democracy and an educated and informed nation.

Keywords

Libraries, South Africa, library legislation, professional association, development partner

Introduction

1994 was a turning point for South Africa. It was the year when the shackles of apartheid were officially replaced by a democratic dispensation led by Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. As a fledgling democracy, every effort is being made to redress the inequalities perpetrated by 46 years of apartheid, an official policy of racial segregation involving political, legal, social and economic discrimination.

Post-apartheid South Africa, therefore, has the responsibility to provide free and open access to information to all its citizens to ensure that history does not repeat itself. It is also important to develop a society and individuals that are informed, able to exercise their democratic rights and play an active role in society. The Bill of Rights, enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, is upheld as a cornerstone of South African democracy. It clearly articulates the fundamental rights of South Africans, including access to information, which forms the basis of the mandate for the South African library and information services (LIS) sector.

Since 1994 great strides have been made to build new public and school libraries, merge academic libraries and upgrade historically disparate library facilities throughout the country. The burgeoning of

the LIS sector in South Africa has resulted in a wide network of libraries that currently serves 51.7 million South Africans. This network of libraries includes:

- the National Library of South Africa with campuses in Pretoria and Cape Town
- the South African Library for the Blind
- Library of Parliament
- five legal deposit libraries
- nine Research Council libraries
- 23 higher education libraries
- 1993 public libraries (1612 provincial/381 metro)
- approximately 2000 school libraries
- special libraries, which include corporate libraries, law libraries, government libraries, prison libraries, etc.
- independent and private libraries, including UNIC, Goethe Institut, US Embassy and Consulates, Room to Read, Monash University, the Brenthurst Library, etc.

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This tangible national web of libraries gives South Africans predominantly free access to information and knowledge from all types of libraries located around the country. The introduction and inclusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has further created the opportunity for a dynamic networked and connected society.

There is the growing acknowledgement and acceptance of libraries as knowledge and cultural institutions because they provide the public with spaces for information and learning and are accessible to all groups of society, regardless of gender, age and ethnic affiliation. Hence in South Africa, the public library especially has a critical role to play not only in the nurturing and growing of a democracy but also to be a gateway to participation in society through lifelong learning and access to information for its citizens.

Understanding the South African LIS context

Historical overview

The foundation of libraries in South Africa, dating back to the turn of the 19th century, are steeped in British and Dutch colonial histories as well as the histories of religious, voluntary, cultural and political organizations that shaped the growth of reading and readers, and promoted the establishment of libraries, resulting in a mixed but rich library heritage and legacy (Dick, 2007).

According to records held by the National Library of South Africa (see Figure 1), in 1818 Lord Charles Somerset, Governor of the Cape Colony, issued a proclamation launching the first South African Public Library with the stipulation that a wine tax be levied:

to place the means of knowledge within the reach of the youth of this remote corner of the Globe, and bring within their reach what the most eloquent of ancient writers has considered to be one of the first blessings of life, 'Home Education'. (National Library of South Africa, n.d.)

In 1873 it became the legal deposit library for the Cape Colony. From 1916 until 1954 it received all printed items published throughout the country.

While the South African Public Library was playing a role in the Cape Colony, similar developments were unfolding in the Transvaal where the Staats-Bibliotheek der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (the State Library of the South African Republic) was created with a donation of books from the Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde. The Staats-Bibliotheek



Figure 1. South African public library (circa 1871), NLSA.

was formally constituted on 21 September 1887. The demand for a public library was met in 1878; however, the inability to continue this service resulted in the State Library adopting a dual role in 1893 as public library and national library until 1964. Interestingly the first exchange agreement was signed between the State Library and the Smithsonian Institution of Washington in 1898. From the early 1930s, the State Library began to evolve as a central library for South Africa, with a national lending system and a centre for bibliographic information (Committee of Higher Education Librarians of South Africa, 2015).

Given the nature and stature of these libraries, South Africa then had two national libraries co-existing until 1 November 1999 when they were amalgamated into the new National Library of South Africa under the National Library of South Africa Act (Act 2 of 1998).

Libraries were also influenced by the spatial divide, which resulted in separate facilities ranging from well-constructed library buildings to container libraries to mobile libraries to areas with no facilities available for the majority of people. The former four provinces (Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State and Cape Province) of the historical dispensation had well-structured public library services, which are still in existence today. In 1974 the doors of the Johannesburg Public Library and the Natal Society Library, Pietermaritzburg, historically white or European libraries, were opened to all. Other city libraries followed this trend.

The introduction of Bantu education under the Bantu Education Act of 1953 resulted in entrenching an inferior education for black South Africans. This was exacerbated by the closure or destruction of many functioning black school libraries or community libraries, the deliberate under-resourcing of schools

and the provision of inferior education. The 16 June 1976 school uprising in Soweto, which escalated to other parts of the country, impacted indelibly on the socio-political landscape in South Africa. The historical legacy of race-based higher education institutions; separate LIS training facilities; and the quality of LIS education have had a far-reaching impact on current LIS practice, professional mindsets and development.

While mainstream library services were affected by the complexities of apartheid in South Africa, Dick (2007) provides a fascinating history of alternative libraries that shaped education, literacy and political thinking in historically disadvantaged areas during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The current nine provinces, which incorporated the former homelands, have all established provincial LIS systems. However, the inequalities and disparities in service delivery in certain provinces reflects the disparities of historically disadvantaged areas. The history of South Africa therefore makes it a national imperative to build an informed nation, remove inequalities, create self-reliance amongst individuals through access to information technologies, and build vibrant sustainable communities. The 20 years since democracy have seen a concerted effort to redress these inequalities and reinvent libraries as lifelong learning support centres as well as community development partners.

Current socio-economic context: Opportunities for libraries

Post-apartheid South Africa has experienced a myriad of changes since 1994. Government, organizations and citizens have made and are committed to making positive and constructive changes that promote a democratic civil society. While there is great national and international pride in our achievements, illiteracy, unemployment and primary basic education are fast emerging as major national challenges.

Today, many South Africans still do not have access to information, which could make a difference to the quality of their lives or circumstances. This is exacerbated by the digital divide which impairs the functional and cognitive development of the majority of South Africans.

The South African National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, launched on 15 August 2012, (National Planning Commission, 2013) aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 through uniting South Africans, unleashing the energies of its citizens, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, and enhancing the capability of the state and leaders

working together to solve complex problems. This is an opportunity for the LIS sector to identify its role within the context of the NDP.

Key success factors for the NDP include the ability of each South African to make a contribution towards the realization of this vision and for communities to mobilize to take charge of their future. The project will assist in realizing this vision. Amongst the many milestones identified in the NDP, the following are applicable to the LIS sector.

- **NDP milestone:** Increasing the quality of education so that all children have at least two years of preschool education and all children in Grade 3 can read and write

Current status: Over 5.6 million South Africans are under the age of four, while 4.8 million children are aged five to nine, and close to 4.6 million are between the ages of 10 and 14 (Statistics South Africa, 2012).

Early childhood development is critical for fostering literacy and numeracy skills. Public libraries and librarians have the opportunity to influence the early development of children through age appropriate activities, access to reading material in indigenous languages, use of the play method to inculcate values and hygiene, interactive toys for developing vocabulary and language skills, and general enquiry. The fact that the majority of households do not have books means that the first interaction a child has with a book is at a library or school. The same is applicable to technology – many children encounter computers, audio-visual material and computer gaming for the very first time in a public library. Hence the critical need for products and services that address the developmental needs of children.

- **NDP milestone:** Making high-speed broadband Internet universally available at competitive prices

Current status: According to the State of Broadband report:

- 41% of South Africans use the Internet, thereby placing the country fifth in Africa and 92 out of 192 countries
- South Africa is ranked 111 out of 183 countries for fixed broadband penetration with 2.2 out of every 100 people enjoying fixed broadband subscriptions
- South Africa is ranked at number 62 out of 170 countries for mobile broadband with a connection rate of 26 out of every 100 people

- South Africa is ranked 44 out of 128 countries on the percentage of households with internet access (25.5%). (Broadband Commission, 2013)

For many communities, the public library is the only place that provides access to computers and the Internet. Current initiatives in public libraries include the provision for Internet connectivity on a very limited scale depending on the location of the library. There is an increased demand from users for ICT services which are inadequately met due to limited ICT skills of staff, library ICT resources and bandwidth; and on the other hand there is a huge need to create an awareness of and the skill in the use of ICTs for access to information amongst communities.

- **NDP milestone:** Broadening social cohesion and unity while redressing the inequities of the past

Current status: The iniquities of the past were based on the withholding of information and education from the majority of Black (African, Indian and Coloured) citizens. The National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS), in collaboration with the Department of Arts and Culture and the National Library of South Africa, commissioned in 2008 the Library Transformation Charter 'to align the LIS sector with the spirit and values enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa and its Bill of Rights' and to address national imperatives including:

- social and economic development;
- poverty eradication;
- social cohesion and inclusion;
- nation building;
- diversity and responsiveness;
- entrenching a culture of reading;
- developing a national literature in South Africa's indigenous languages.

For this milestone to be achieved, freedom of access to information needs to be entrenched as a right and a reality amongst historically disadvantaged communities. The local public library should be located as the community hub which is able to facilitate access to local and community information, e-governance, primary and general health information, educational opportunities, cultural awareness and understanding, etc. An informed and educated citizenry fosters social cohesion and unity.

- **NDP milestone:** Strengthening youth service programmes and introduce new, community-

based programmes to offer young people life-skills training, entrepreneurship training and opportunities to participate in community development programmes.

Current status: Of the total population of 51 million, 60% is under 35 (Statistics South Africa, 2012). The youth (15–34 years) accounts for the highest proportion (70.9%) of the unemployed (4.7 million). In this age category 31.4% or 3.3 million young people are not in employment, education or training (Statistics South Africa, November 2012). According to the General Household Survey 2011, compiled by Statistics South Africa, 'by the age of 22, 56.6% of the youth are neither attending any educational institution nor working. The youth is at risk of becoming unemployable and falling into chronic systemic poverty' (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

A more pro-active stance needs to be adopted by libraries towards community outreach and development. Communities should benefit from public libraries' educational programmes, regular in-house training programmes on how to use computers and the Internet for various purposes such as email, job searches, government information, etc. Libraries need to focus on services for youth and provide an environment for learning, development and a positive socializing support mechanism for the marginalized and unemployed youth. Such initiatives will encourage the community to perceive and realize the value that the library adds to their lives and contribution towards community upliftment.

Given this context, libraries in South Africa are poised to participate in the development of an educated and engaged citizenry. Libraries as institutions that should and want to provide access to much-needed information have made great strides in offering services, resources and information to their users.

LIS landscape at a glance

Legislation and governance

The South African LIS sector is fortunate to function within a comprehensive legislative framework. The following laws have a direct impact on the LIS sector:

- The Copyright Act (98 of 1978)
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)

- The Legal Deposit Act (54 of 1997)
- The National Library of South Africa Act (2 of 1998)
- State Information Technology Agency Act (88 of 1998)
- The South African Library for the Blind Act (91 of 1998)
- The Public Finance Management Act (Act 1 of 1999 as amended by Act 29 of 1999)
- The National Council for Library and Information Services Act (6 of 2001)
- The South African Public Library and Information Services Bill (2010), which aims to determine the national norms and standards for public libraries.
- The Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007 (amending the South African Schools Act of 1996). The Department of Basic Education gazetted for comment regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure wherein a school library/media centre is listed as a core education area together with the specifications for its minimum size.
- The Protection of Personal Information Act (4 of 2013).

In addition to the above, there are other laws and policy documents that have an implication for LIS such as:

- The National Archives and Records Services Act (43 of 1996)
- The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DAC, 2013)
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol
- The Marrakech Treaty to facilitate Access to Published Works for persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise print Disabled

The oversight of libraries reside within the following government agencies:

- The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) has oversight of the nine Provincial Library Services and six Metropolitan Library Services through the US\$190m Public Library Services Conditional Grant. The National Library of South Africa is also an agency of the DAC.
- The Department of Basic Education is responsible for funding school libraries and ensuring the implementation of the regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure. There are

almost 25,000 schools with only approximately 8% with fully functioning school libraries.

- The Department of Higher Education and Training, through its subsidies to the 23 universities and 50 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, makes provision for the establishment of academic libraries in support of teaching, learning and research.
- Department of Science and Technology is responsible for scientific research, technology and innovation that contribute to economic growth and socio-economic development of the country. Libraries attached to the nine research councils and national research facilities are designed to support the research mandates of the respective entities.

The National Council for Library and Information Services

The National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS) was established in terms of the National Council for Library and Information Services Act, 2001 (Act No 6 of 2001). The main aim of the NCLIS is to advise the Minister of Arts and Culture, the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Training on matters relating to LIS in order to support and stimulate the socio-economic, educational, cultural, recreational, scientific research, technological and information development of all communities in the country. The functions of the Council are to develop and coordinate LIS in the country.

Members of the Council are appointed by the Minister of Arts and Culture through an open nomination process for a period of three years. The most recent and dynamic project undertaken by the NCLIS was the commissioning of the Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter, which was signed off by the Minister of Arts and Culture in 2014 and provides a clear and coherent plan for LIS in alignment with the National Development Plan so that the vision of an informed and reading nation becomes a reality (DAC and NCLIS, 2014).

National Library of South Africa

Until 1 November 1999, South Africa had two national libraries, the South African Library, founded in 1818, in Cape Town, and the State Library, founded in 1887, in Pretoria. These two libraries were subsequently amalgamated to establish a new dual-site (Cape Town and Pretoria) National Library governed by the National Library of South Africa Act, No 2 of 1998.

The primary aim of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) (<http://www.nlsa.ac.za/>) is to collect, record, preserve, and give access to the national documentary heritage from its locations in Pretoria and Cape Town. It has wide-ranging collections, which includes rare books, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, books published in South Africa, periodicals, government publications, official foreign publications, maps, technical reports, Africana and newspapers. Many of these are available on CD or microfilm, in digital format or accessible online.

In terms of Section 6 of the National Library of South Africa Act, the National Library is managed by a Board appointed by the Minister of Arts and Culture. Board members are selected from a shortlist drawn up by an advisory panel after a public call for nominations. The Chief Executive Officer of the National Library, known as the National Librarian, serves as an ex-officio member.

The National Library of South Africa's core functions are described in Section 4 subsection 1 of the National Library Act, No 92 of 1998, and cover the following broad areas:

- to build a complete collection of published documents emanating from or relating to South Africa;
- to maintain and extend any other collections of published and unpublished documents with the emphasis on documents emanating from or relating to Southern Africa;
- to promote the optimal management of collections of published documents held in South African libraries as a national resource;
- to render a national bibliographic services and to act as the national ISBN agency;
- to promote optimal access to published documents, nationally and internationally;
- to provide reference and information services, nationally and internationally;
- to act as the national preservation library and to provide conservation services on a national basis. As part of this service, the National Library is host to the only mass de-acidification facility on the African continent;
- to promote awareness and appreciation of the national published documentary heritage; and
- to promote information awareness and information literacy.

Centre for the Book, Cape Town. The Cape Town-based Centre for the Book (CFB) is the outreach unit of the NLSA for the promotion of a culture of reading, writing and publishing in the local indigenous languages

through a variety of book related activities nationally. It is also host to the Children's Reading Centre, an early childhood development facility which caters for children from 0 to 7 years. The aim hereof is to provide opportunities for children to read for pleasure, write their own stories and engage with storytellers.

The CFB has initiated and continues to facilitate several projects in support of the development of children's literature and inculcating a culture of reading amongst children in South Africa. These projects include Isiqalo (First Words in Print), an IBBY award-winning project that fosters family literacy through a series of children's books written in local languages; the Mount Ayliff Children's Library located in the rural town of Mount Ayliff, Eastern Cape; children's book clubs in primary schools; and the annual promotion of International Literacy Day. From time to time the Centre for the Book, through its children's literature programme (CLP), facilitates capacity building workshops for children's authors and illustrators.

Implementation of RDA in South Africa. Since the publication of the full draft of the RDA (Resource Description and Access) in 2008, the Bibliographic Services Programme at the NLSA was tasked to form a professional committee to inform the South African cataloguing community about RDA as a replacement for the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules as the internationally accepted standard for descriptive cataloguing (De Waal, 2013). The RDA-SA Steering Committee has hosted several national training programmes and decided in 2012 that a phased and voluntary approach would be adopted for the implementation of RDA in South Africa.

The South African Library for the Blind

Conceived and founded in 1918 by Josephine Wood in Grahamstown with a collection of 100 Braille books, the South African Library for the Blind (SALB) (<http://www.salb.org.za/>) is now a national legal entity constituted under the South African Library for the Blind Act 91 of 1998. It provides 'a national and international library and information service to the print-handicapped, free of charge as far as is reasonable possible, by producing reading material in alternative formats' (salb.org.za).

The SALB is mandated to:

- provide a free library and information service that is responsible for the needs of the blind and the print-handicapped user;

- build up a balance and appropriate collection of South African and other documents and on to make them accessible for the use of blind and print-handicapped readers;
- produce documents in special mediums such as Braille and audio formats for use by its readers;
- develop standards for the production of such documents;
- research production methods and technology in the appropriate in the appropriate fields;
- acquire and disseminate the technology required by blind and print-handicapped people to read.

Today the SALB is a government-funded institution with over 4000 members nationwide, 10,000 Braille books and 13,000 audio books; has an arrangement with the South African Post Office for the provision of free delivery and return of books; and holds the unique position of being the only library of its kind on the African continent.

Public libraries: Community development partners

The Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS, 2014) asserts that: 'the public library is an essential component of a modern democracy, an enduring agency uniquely tasked with providing opportunities for education, culture, literacy and information provision to reach all citizens free of charge'. Libraries are fast emerging as strong community partners for development and social transformation. Services and programmes are designed and offered to enhance literacy rates, a culture of reading, early childhood development, youth empowerment, socio-economic development and e-governance thereby locating them in the heart of communities.

The role of public libraries in South Africa is fast being redefined as it continuously moves away from the recreational to the educational. Public and community libraries actively support the educational priorities for both primary and secondary education, as well as adult education. Currently there are 25,000 schools of which less than 8% have active school libraries or resource centres. This has resulted in public libraries being over-burdened and at times unable to meet the demand for project material due to a large-scale dependence on print material.

The need for the development of a culture of reading is a national imperative to raise the literacy rates amongst youth and adults so that they can acquire improved or new skills to compete adequately in the labour market. Locating appropriate technologies for accessing information; repurposing physical space for new services; and training public users and staff in the

Table 1. Geographical spread of libraries, 2013 (NLSA).

Province	Population Size	Land area by province	Total no of libraries
Eastern Cape	6 562 053	13.9%	144
Free State	2 745 590	10.6%	173
Gauteng	12 272 263	1.4%	234
KwaZulu-Natal	10 267 300	7.7%	174
Limpopo	5 404 868	10.3%	74
Mpumalanga	4 039 939	6.3%	111
Northern Cape	1 145 861	30.5%	253
North West	3 509 953	8.7%	102
Western Cape	5 822 734	10.6%	347
TOTAL	51 770 560	100%	1612

use of appropriate ICTs are also emerging priorities for public libraries. Without access to information redressing inequalities cannot succeed.

There are currently 1612 public and community libraries which are serviced by the nine provincial library services and 381 public libraries serviced by the six metropolitan library services systems for a total population of 51 million (see Table 1). This works out to one library service point for 31,600 people. There are huge differences amongst the provincial services based on budgets, demographics and the spatial divide. Resources and service provision are hampered by the geographic spread and location of libraries. Library-related skills are also diverse and attempts are being made to standardize the policies and procedures so that the national objectives around libraries may be realized.

There is a high concentration of public libraries in urban cities of those provinces (KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, Gauteng, Free State) which were historically the only four provinces in the former South African dispensation with established library infrastructures. Currently the nine provinces, including the above four, now include areas from the former homelands and tribal authorities which did not have library and telecommunication infrastructures. Hence provinces together with the National Government through the conditional grant are committed to establishing library infrastructures and services but are constrained by limited budgets and appropriate skills to serve certain communities.

Public library services are a provincial competency in South Africa as declared in Part A of Schedule 5 of the South African Constitution. Prior to these constitutional provisions, this function was shared between provinces and local authorities with local authorities providing and maintaining buildings and staff, and provinces providing the professional and technical

Table 2. Connectivity in public libraries, 2013 (NLSA).

PROVINCE	Number of libraries with Internet access (Staff)	Number of libraries with public Internet access	Number of libraries without Internet access	Total number of libraries
EASTERN CAPE	80	27	64	144
FREE STATE	171	158	2	173
GAUTENG	150	88	84	234
KWAZULU NATAL	101	68	73	174
LIMPOPO	58	38	16	74
MPUMALANGA	102	102	9	111
NORTHERN CAPE	121	77	132	253
NORTH WEST	97	97	5	102
WESTERN CAPE	203	203	144	347
TOTAL	1083	858	529	1612

services. In the current dispensation this arrangement largely continues, although the legislation does not specifically provide for this. This rather anomalous constitutional provision has resulted in the decline of services and infrastructure in certain areas over the last 10 years instead of keeping pace with the increasing demands of a modern developmental democracy. The location of public libraries has also been influenced by former apartheid spatial planning, where now every effort is being made to locate libraries in former townships, informal settlements and rural areas.

In 2007/2008 the National Government through the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) made available Conditional Grants from the Community Library Services Grant of approx. US\$190m over a period of six years to redress inequalities in the LIS sector, improve existing services, develop infrastructures and stock of books in public libraries to enable local communities to have access to information and knowledge to improve their socio-economic conditions. The intention is to have transformed urban and rural library infrastructure and services targeting previously disadvantaged communities. The six Metropolitan Library Services are autonomous entities who also benefit from the Conditional Grant. The grants have so far been used, inter alia, to:

- build more libraries and to upgrade library buildings;
- buy, equip and deliver mobile libraries and container libraries for communities;
- appoint more staff, and extend opening hours;
- expand and improve ICT connectivity;
- develop and implement a new provincial ICT system;
- upgrade security and improve library assets;
- buy more library material;
- stock more books in indigenous languages.

The Conditional Grant, while it supports the redress of providing public libraries in historically disadvantaged areas, has not totally succeeded in realizing this aim. Although there is a national strategy for this grant, implementation has been slow and a challenge at some provincial and local levels. The disparities in governance, infrastructure, staffing and conceptualization is evident in the varied results of implementation (see Table 2).

There is general acknowledgement that the provision of ICTs and relevant services in public libraries would increasingly become essential for bridging the digital divide in the country. For many urban and rural communities, the only place that provides free access to computers and the Internet is a public library. While there is an increased demand from users for ICT services this may be inadequately met due to limited ICT skills of staff and library ICT resources. Limited bandwidth capacity, slow speed, inadequate and outdated hardware and software, limited capacity for IT services and systems management challenge the sustainability of the current infrastructure. On the other hand there is a huge need to create an awareness of and the skilling in the use of ICTs for access to information amongst communities. The NLSA is currently involved in rolling out Internet connectivity to the nine provinces; the installation of a standardized library management system as well as the marketing of the Conditional Grant.

There is wide-scale cognizance that the best way to address and support the transformation of libraries into community hubs is to invest in staff development and training. The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) has adopted continuing professional development (CPD) as a strategy to ensure that library and information workers have access to current trends and developments. LIASA, through its CPD programme has identified computer literacy, social media, advocacy, library management,

library leadership, communication, marketing, library systems management, developing strategic plans and financial management as critical training needs. It believes that better-trained staff will be able to articulate clearly and effectively the role of libraries in South Africa and will encourage South Africans to take full advantage of the libraries' resources.

Given this context, public libraries in South Africa are poised to participate in the development of an educated and engaged citizenry. The opportunity exists to demonstrate how public libraries may be located as community development partners and how it contributes to the national imperatives related to education, youth unemployment, community development, and upskilling and reskilling of library professionals at a local level.

Academic and research libraries

In 2001 the National Plan for Higher Education detailed the restructuring of the South African higher education landscape, which up until 1994 was fragmented and uncoordinated. This resulted in the merging of 'historically white/historically black' universities, technikons and colleges; dismantling the divide between universities and colleges; attempting to redress the educational imbalances at historically disadvantaged institutions; strengthening the link between teaching and research; aligning research with economic goals and creating environments for learners to 'have access to quality education, and graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession' (Council for Higher Education, 2000).

The merging of the 36 higher education institutions (HEIs) resulted in 23 institutions – 11 traditional universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology. Two new universities were launched in 2013/2014. These mergers also posed huge challenges for the merging of libraries in these respective institutions. The culture of learning and quality of education, as part of redressing the institutional imbalances also impacted on the future of the libraries, their roles, responsibilities, resources, staffing and funding models. Many libraries sought out best practices of successful mergers to inform the tasks and processes to follow.

Academic and research libraries are increasingly playing a pivotal role in support of teaching, learning and research. Technology, library space and design, dynamic user services and staff development have emerged as strong drivers for change in academic libraries. The national research imperatives and the demand for more quality graduates has also influenced how academic and research libraries respond

and align themselves to these institutional strategic imperatives.

Academic libraries in South Africa have emerged as intensely technologically enabled and driven environments. An assessment of the sector indicates that the predominant focus is aimed at strategic alignment of services and the broader information services environment, with core elements being:

- the enhanced integration of access management services that allow for on-demand access to resources over a distributed networked environment;
- the employment of wireless technologies;
- changing procurement strategies to focus on networked-based information resources;
- the integration of ILMS functionality with other non-library related systems (finances, registration, virtual research and learning systems, access systems, etc.);
- the incorporation of web-based discovery-to-delivery and the supporting related peripheral applications.

Due to the socio-economic divide between students from historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups in South Africa; lack of library resources in school libraries; and language differences, information literacy (IL) has become a strategic imperative. Academic libraries offer IL programmes that include orientation programmes, basic library skills, introduction to the online catalogue, the use of electronic databases; and referencing and plagiarism. Some libraries have embedded IL programmes into their university curriculum.

Digital literacy has been introduced to support students with media literacy, ICT literacy, digital scholarship, and communications and collaboration in an academic context. This will enable students to participate in digital networks for learning and research; use of digital devices; study and learn in e-environments; and participate in emerging academic and research practices in a digital environment (JISC, 2014).

Web tools such as Twitter, Facebook, paper.li, libguides and other social media tools and applications greatly impact on the academic library environment. These are considered as value-added services, or potentially value-adding applications for raising the visibility of institutional research output, communication with students and marketing.

South African academic and research libraries have recognized the importance of the global Open Access (OA) Movement for the dissemination of knowledge and cultural heritage, and increasing the visibility of

its research output with the rest of the African continent and the world. Many academic libraries have taken the lead in facilitating Open Access initiatives including OA mandates, institutional repositories, observing OA Week and facilitating their institutions becoming signatories to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities.

CHELSA. Subsequent to the higher education restructuring process and mergers, the Committee for Higher Education Librarians in South Africa (*CHELSA*) (<http://www.chelsa.ac.za/>) was established in 2004. *CHELSA* replaced the Committee of University Librarians and the Committee of Technikon Librarians. Core to this formation was the importance of instilling quality library services within the redefined higher education library services.

CHELSA strives through visionary and visible transformational leadership to ensure that the higher education sector is provided with optimal access to information for the purpose of learning, teaching, research and community development. *CHELSA* will support knowledge management practices in academic and research libraries. It has also established a memorandum between South African university libraries, which relates to the mutual rendering of certain library and information services and the cost-efficient sharing of resources for purposes of maintaining and improving library and information services for higher education and research in South Africa (*CHELSA*, 2015).

SANLiC. The South African National Library and Information Consortium (*SANLiC*) (<http://www.sanlic.org.za/>), a non-profit company serves the interests of South African higher education libraries and national research council libraries. *SANLiC* facilitates affordable access to scholarly electronic information in support of the teaching, learning and research activities of its members through collective negotiations with publishers and aggregators and actively promotes the use of high quality, open access electronic information resources. It also works closely with member institutions on the following:

- electronic information resources site licensing;
- evaluation and management of electronic information resources;
- marketing and promotion of electronic information resources;
- training;
- communication, liaison and lobbying.

School libraries

Given the legacy of apartheid's separate education policies, the right to education for all, as enshrined by the Bill of Rights, has emerged as a national legislative imperative. However the quality of education 20 years into democracy still remains vastly unequal.

The legacy of the historical fragmented education system is the majority of under-resourced Black schools in urban and rural areas. School libraries are available in only 8% of public schools, which are predominantly former Model C schools, which are government schools administered and funded by a governing body of parents and alumni, adequately resourced and staffed. The absence of school libraries denies the majority of learners access to quiet and stable learning spaces, appropriate supplementary learning and reading materials, audio-visual and digital media and other learning aids. The lack of a reading culture is exacerbated by this absence.

Active lobbying by civil society entities for new schools, upgrading of facilities, school libraries and skilled staff is premised on the belief that equality and education enable equal opportunities in life. The LIS sector has added its voice to the lobby for 'One School, One Library, One Librarian' and for the minimum norms and standards for school libraries to be implemented.

Legal deposit libraries

South Africa has five legal deposit libraries to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Legal Deposit Act (54 of 1997). The Act makes provision for:

- the preservation of the national documentary heritage through legal deposit of published documents;
- the preservation and cataloguing of, and access to, published documents emanating from, or adapted for, South Africa;
- access to government information;
- a Legal Deposit Committee.

Five copies of every book published are to be deposited with the five legal deposit libraries which are:

- Msunduzi Municipal Library, Pietermaritzburg
- Mangaung Public Library, Bloemfontein
- National Film, Video and Sound Archives
- National Library of South Africa
- Library of Parliament, Cape Town.

Special libraries

South Africa has a large array of special libraries located in government departments, national and provincial parliaments, private business or corporations, hospitals and museums, and non-governmental organizations. Like international counterparts, they advance the interests and goals of their parent organizations, and provide physical or virtual access to specialized information resources via traditional library services or knowledge management services. Special libraries are organized under various associations, which include LIASA's Special Libraries Interest Group (LiSLIG); the Special Libraries and Information Services (SLIS); the Organization of South African Law Libraries (OSALL) and the Southern African Online User Group (SAOUG) (DAC, 2014).

LIS education and training

LIS education and training in South Africa has been affected by access to information, changing user needs and demands, emerging technologies, and reforms in higher education. The Transformation Charter (DAC and NCLIS, 2014) asserts that:

the training of librarians for the 21st century is a daunting challenge which must be faced for South Africa to become competitive as a nation. Librarians and information professionals are central to a buoyant knowledge economy. LIS staff has a double agenda: to teach the information competencies needed to redress the inequalities of the past and to build the competencies for a rapidly globalizing world.

Presently there are nine universities that offer LIS graduate programmes in support of the LIS sector. Currently there is a variety of academic programmes offered at undergraduate (diplomas and Bachelors degrees) and postgraduate (postgraduate diploma, honours, Masters and Doctoral degrees) levels. The lack of uniformity of LIS education has contributed to confusion amongst educators, students and employers. A national conversation has commenced between educators and practitioners, which will now include LIASA as the SAQA-approved professional body.

Professional association

Since its inception in 1997, the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) (www.liasa.org.za), a registered non-profit organization, has been the acknowledged professional association that represents the South African LIS sector nationally and internationally. It represents the unification of library organizations, which was a process initiated

in January 1995 by the two former independent and race-based professional associations, the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) and the South African Institute for Library and Information Science (SAILIS).

In December 2014, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) approved the recognition of LIASA as a professional body and the registration of the professional designation, Professional Librarian. This recognition was awarded as per the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, Act 67 of 2008. This recognition enables LIASA to:

- Set the standards of professional practice;
- Accredite qualifications;
- Award the designation based on proven competence;
- Ensure the CPD of practitioners;
- Supply the list of qualified librarians to the National Learners Records Database (NLRD), a database of all professional graduates in South Africa.

LIASA engages widely with the national Departments of Arts and Culture, Basic Education, and Higher Education and Training which have oversight of public, school and academic libraries respectively; is an ex-officio member of the legislated National Council of Library and Information Services (NCLIS) and engages with various international library associations.

LIASA has adopted a partnership mindset with all LIS stakeholders in support of its corporate projects, which include:

- South African Library Week;
- the annual LIASA conference, which includes grants that enable public librarians and international experts to attend and attended by approximately 700 delegates;
- the hosting of the 2007 IFLA WLIC in Durban;
- the hosting of the 2015 IFLA WLIC in Cape Town, 15–21 August 2015 with the theme *Dynamic Libraries: Access, Development and Transformation*;
- its publications, the LIASA-in-Touch (http://www.liasa.org.za/publications/liasa_in_touch) and the open access South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science (<http://sajlis.journals.ac.za/pub>);
- continuing professional development (CPD), a strategic imperative for workplace skills development.

With a current membership of 1600, LIASA is growing steadily with a presence in all nine provinces and the broader LIS sectors. It has 10 branches and 10 interest groups representing various LIS disciplines. While LIASA has a permanent office in Pretoria on the campus of the National Library of South Africa, its strategic governance resides within the LIASA Representative Council and the LIASA Executive Committee. The core leadership comprising of the President, President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer and Public Relations Officer are elected through an open electoral process for a two-year term. These professionals are drawn from the various LIS sectors and institutions and acknowledged for their leadership, management skills and expertise. LIASA leaders have contributed variously to national and international LIS leadership.

As the professional association, LIASA has achieved several of the strategies (membership, corporate brand and identity, CPD, leadership development, lobbying and advocacy and regional engagement) identified in its formative years (Tise, 2004) and now as the SAQA-approved professional body, LIASA is positioned to take the LIS sector to new levels of professionalism and lead the sector, through its members as drivers of social change.

South African Library Week

South African Library Week (<http://liasa.org.za/node/519>) was initiated in 2001 by LIASA to be an annual national event recognized by Government to showcase all types of libraries across the country, as well as engendering an understanding of the important role that libraries play in a democratic society, namely, advancing literacy and community development, making the basic human right of freedom of access to information a reality, promoting lifelong learning and social justice, and respect for multiculturalism amongst all South Africans.

For many years Library Week was observed variously and independently during the course of the year. After extensive consultation with its membership LIASA made the following proposal in 2001:

That the week within which 20 March falls should be South African Library Week. In the event of this day falling within a weekend, then the week preceding it would be celebrated as South African Library Week. (LIASA, 2013)

The choice of the date was based on research into the history of libraries in South Africa. The South African Public Library, now known as the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town Campus) was the first library to be established in South Africa by a government proclamation on 20 March 1818. Furthermore,

- 2002: 'Free your mind – Read!'
- 2003: 'Your Right to Read!'
- 2004: '1994–2004: Libraries in a Decade of Democracy'
- 2005: 'Libraries: Opening the doors of learning and culture to all'. This theme coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Charter.
- 2006: 'Libraries: Partners in learning, nation building and development'
- 2007: 'Libraries: Your key to the future'
- 2008: 'From local to Global @ your library'
- 2009: 'Access for all @ your library'
- 2010: 'Reading changes lives'
- 2011: 'Read in your language @ your library'
- 2012: 'Develop @ your library'
- 2013: 'Educate Yourself @ your library'
- 2014: 'Celebrating Libraries in 20 years of democracy: Check in @ your library'
- 2015: 'Connect @ your library'

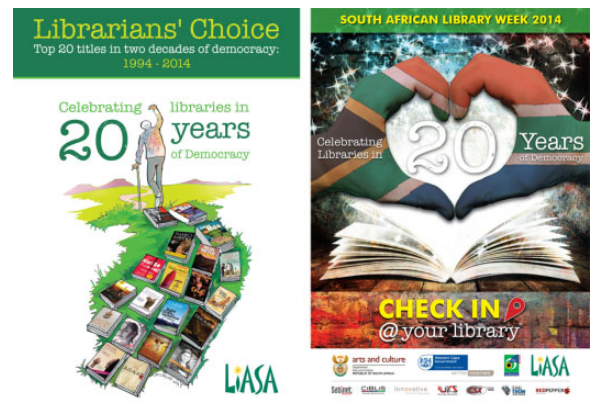


Figure 2. SALW 2002–2015 themes and SALW 2014 posters.

since 1994 South Africa has celebrated Human Rights Day on 21 March and the Bill of Rights recognizes the freedom of access to information as a basic human right. Hence SALW has been able to link an important historical event with a crucial date in our new democracy. This proposal was strongly supported by the then Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology,

South African Library Week was officially celebrated for the first time in 2002 and has since become a highlight on the national LIS calendar. Since then SALW has been driven by LIASA, which confirms the dates and theme every year.

SALW Themes 2002–2015 (see Figure 2)

This has now become a partnership initiative between LIASA, the Department of Arts and Culture, the National Library of South Africa and the library services of the host city and province. Exposure has been broadened through social and mainstream media.

Grants

During these 20 years huge investments have been made in the form of grants from both national and international entities that have bolstered the sector and enabled collaboration amongst various LIS stakeholders. As a sector, it has been on the receiving end of:

- approximately US\$190m for public libraries that have been made available as Conditional Grants from the Community Library Services Grant that is managed by DAC;
- over US\$25m in grants from external donors including the European Union, Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

These grants have contributed to the enhancement of existing library buildings, design of new buildings in partnership with local governments, purchase of library resources in all formats and new technologies, training and development of librarians with a special emphasis on library leadership development (South African Library Leadership Project and the Carnegie Library Leadership Project), technology in academic libraries (Carnegie-funded M.IT programme located at the University of Pretoria), research support (Carnegie-funded Research Libraries Consortium project) and scholarships for acquiring professional qualifications (the LIASA Next Generation Public Librarians Project).

Technology in South African LIS

South African LIS automated and migrated in sync with the international trends. In certain cases, where libraries could not automate at the same time as their national counterparts, later automation initiatives slotted in with the then viewed latest technological developments, e.g. going from a completely manual-based environment to 'turnkey' library management system (LMS) solutions.

Prior to computerization, South African libraries, as with their international counterparts, also made use of manual systems, including the Brown system for circulation, accession registers for acquisitions, and cardex systems for serials. Starting in the early 1970s several libraries implemented mainframe-based technologies such as the DOBIS/LIBIS library managed system, running on IBM mainframe infrastructure or used in-house developed solutions developed to run on mainframes. From the 1980s libraries migrated to, or implemented, 'turnkey' solutions such

as the vendor-based URICA or ERUDITE library management systems. (Musiker, 1986).

In 1979 the South African National Library Advisory Council (NLAC) initiated a national project to investigate the feasibility of establishing a library network and national union catalogue, the South African Library Network (SALNET), which subsequently received consensus from South African libraries. The main purpose for the establishment of the network would be to facilitate resource sharing amongst South African libraries through shared cataloguing and an interlibrary loan service. The groundwork for this project, also known as the Computerized Cataloguing Network Project (CCNP) was laid by the former MARC Working Group of the NLAC who already started with feasibility studies as early as 1970. The MARC working group was also responsible for the development of SAMARC (South African MARC) based on UNIMARC at this time, which as a standard would have a great impact on future developments (Malan, 2008).

In describing the principles that guided the formation of the network, Malan (2008) noted their significance at that time and their application today, but that also when there were deviations from these principles, significant problems emerged. These principles were:

1. the system should be as simple as possible within the framework of a networked central library system;
2. participation in the network should be cost effective for libraries;
3. the purpose of the system should be to serve the user and not only the librarian;
4. the autonomy of local library systems and computer centers should always be taken into account;
5. the system should lend itself to the creation of a central database with high integrity; and
6. the central database should provide good coverage of materials in participating libraries.

These recommendations were presented by NLAC to the Department of National Education and were accepted by Government in 1981. The South African Bibliographic and Information Network (SABINET originally referred to as SALNET) was officially constituted on 28 February 1983 with 46 libraries and information centres making a 10-year commitment to establish the network.

After 32 years, Sabinet is still fulfilling its original mandate by providing infrastructure and service to allow libraries to share and ultimately drive down their costs.

With the changes in networking and distributed computing in the 1990s, and the advent of scale of economies approaches within the various established post-apartheid academic library consortia, several large-scale implementations through donor-funding was made possible (Thomas, 2004). The then Gauteng and Environs Library Consortia (GAELIC), Eastern Seaboard Association of Libraries (ESAL), the South Eastern Academic Libraries' System (SEALS) and the Free State Libraries and Information Consortium (FRELICO), implemented the Innovative Interfaces Inc. (III)'s Millennium integrated library management system. The exception to this was the implementation of the Aleph 500 ILMs within the Cape Library Cooperative (CALICO) (Darch et al., 1999).

In the restructuring period post-1994, numerous changes were affected in local governments as well. Numerous town and city local governments were restructured into metropolitan local governments. As with academic consortia, local governments merged and streamlined service offerings which included establishing single LMS options within a metropolitan district library services, where local library systems (such as the PALS system) were replaced by the larger Erudite system.

In the 2000s the South African library sector embraced the large-scale integration of web-based delivery services, including online content (citation indices, journals and books); digitization initiatives and access services; wireless and distributed networking; and importantly, developed infrastructure that allowed for web and Internet access. In addition, the LMS systems employed are internationally accepted solutions and thus the same developments were affected locally as international developments were incorporated into these very systems.

The post-2000 and current environment include the evolution of systems and applications that can and often do, function as external initial data retrieval systems. Being developed as perceived 'one-stop-shop' options, the traditional LMS is optionally one of the resources interrogated or link to through these systems. Examples of these systems/applications include Ex Libris' Primo, III's Encore Synergy as data retrieval applications, and Ex Libris' SFX as link resolving applications (Allwright and Van der Walt, 2012).

In addition digital content management systems, e.g. III's ContentPro, OCLC's CONTENTdm, and Ex Libris' Digitool function completely separate from the LMS, yet is integral to the delivery and discoverability of digital content (normally digitized locally). The incorporation hereof has been driven by the establishment of institutional repositories at research-intensive universities.

Cloud computing significantly impacted on the traditional LMS environment and allowed for additional options in terms of collaboration initiatives. Cloud computing allows for on-demand as required computational infrastructure over a network with the significant difference being in the rendering of LMS environments as a software-as-a-service (SaaS) option as opposed to 'ownership' and management of the infrastructure required if hosted locally. An example of enhanced collaboration is the South East Academic Libraries System (SEALS) consortium wider infrastructural and support base for collaboration within the academic Eastern-Cape region. Initially looking at a single integrated LMS, SEALS activities continually progressed to establishing means for the dissemination and discovery of information in support of teaching, learning and research at the various constituent institutions through the deployment of services within a cloud-based computing environment (Allwright and Van der Walt, 2012).

The last five years have seen unprecedented growth and use of mobile technologies (e.g. smartphones, tablets) which required libraries to adapt services to accommodate the changes in user behaviour. It is often the case now that systems librarians and related technology-focused units focus on the delivery of services and resources aimed at an increasingly larger community of users that do not necessarily, or primarily, make use of front-end computing technologies such as desktops, as well as their expectation that these applications will now allow for a level of 'interactiveness' and access in places of their choice.

Conclusion

Given its history and commitment to redress, South African LIS is well positioned to 'redefine, re-imagine, repurpose and reinvigorate' itself by locating libraries as cornerstones of democracy, reconceptualizing services, practices and LIS education, promoting libraries as desired learning and community spaces, and by entrenching our own best practices (Satgoor, 2013). In celebrating the achievement of libraries in 20 years of democracy, it also affirms that the outlook for the future of South African LIS is indeed exciting.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Segametsi Molawa (LIASA President), Annamarie Goosen (LIASA National Office), Larshan Naicker and Wynand van der Walt (Rhodes University Library), Ros Hattingh and Pierre Malan (Sabinet).

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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