

SOUTH AFRICA & THE 2nd DECADE OF DEMOCRACY: WHAT MAKES OUR LIBRARIES SPECIAL

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OCLC EMEA REGION



Regional Service Centre participation

- Europe
- Middle East
- Africa



South Africa – nine provinces



South Africa – Grahamstown



Rhodes University Eastern Cape



Context Setting: Nelson Mandela



Rhodes University Graduation 2007



Context Setting: Flag



Proudly South African



National legislative framework



The legislative framework to ensure “the right of access to information” for all citizens is enshrined in:

- Constitution adopted in 1996
- Bill of Rights of the Constitution
- Promotion of access to Information Act & its amendment

The LIS legacy



- LIS have developed over 150 years in South Africa
- Pre-1994 separate structures for education (school and HE) and public libraries for different racial groups
- Marked discrepancies between LIS in urban & rural areas
- Even today, LIS in townships, informal settlements & rural communities leaves much to be desired
- Competing for resources being directed towards policies to alleviate poverty, eradicate illiteracy, improve levels of social & economic development, social cohesion & nation building

LIS in South Africa



- The National Library
- Academic libraries serving 23 HE institutions
- Public & community libraries functioning under provincial & local authorities (statistics vary from 1200-1800)
- 9416 school libraries (statistics vary)
- 77 government department libraries
- Special libraries serving needs of research, industry & corporations

Legislative framework for LIS



- National Library of South Africa (NLSA) Act
- South African Library for the Blind Act
- National Council for Libraries & Information Services Act (NCLIS)
- Legal Deposit Act

National Library of South Africa



- National bibliographic & preservation agency in SA
 - build complete collection of published documents emanating from or relating to SA
 - maintain & preserve collections
 - provide access to collections
- NLSA situated in Pretoria & Cape Town
- New National Library building opened 1 August 2008
- 2008 CCNY announced grant of \$2 to enhance ICT at NLSA (Pretoria)

Academic libraries in Higher Education – “driven transition”



- Legacy split along a binary divide between universities & technikons
- HAI institutions: magnificent & advanced academic libraries
- HDI institutions: rundown, poor ICTs, inadequate facilities for growing student numbers, disparity in allocation of resources
- 2000 Size & Shape of Higher Education Task Team issued seminal report for a new national framework to reconfigure the HE system
- 2004-2005 major restructuring intervention known as “size and shape” reduced the sector from 36-25 institutions through mergers
- 2008 bedding down the sector in merger aftermath

New HE landscape



- Traditional libraries with strong research capacity & high numbers of PG students (8 separate & 3 merged)
- Universities of Technology oriented to vocational qualifications with some PG & research capacity (3 separate & 3 merged)
- Comprehensives – new institution focusing on teaching but also conducting research & PG studies (2 separate & 4 merged)
- National Institutes to serve provinces with no previous HE service provider (2)

Public & Community Libraries – the legacy



- P&CL followed the tradition of colonial masters in Britain
- Uneven distribution of libraries & access aligned along racial lines
- Access hindered by geographic & economic barriers eg distance & cost
- Public & Community Libraries Inventory of SA (PaCLISA)
2000-01 & 2003-04 estimated 1800 libraries = 30
libraries/1 million people or 31 000 people per library
- Focus on traditional services rather than development role

P & CL sector challenges



- Lack of school libraries led to increasing learner demands for materials to support projects & group work
- High usage by learners - use libraries for 50% opening hours
- Low usage around lending of materials for reading
- Average opening time – 40 week vs 90 week in Cuba
- 74% of libraries do not have Internet connectivity
- 65% of library staff do not have computers & rely on manual systems for routine administration

But what is special...



- Vegetable & flower gardens in library grounds & hosting of workshops
- Adult basic education workshops
- Establishment of isiXhosa reading clubs to promote language
- Small business corners with workstations & e-resources
- School project services & homework clubs
- Provision of HIV/AIDS information in appropriate formats for young people

And even more important...



- 2005 SA Government approved R1 billion (US\$111m) over 3 years to upgrade, improve & expand the sector
- KPMG Consultants undertaking extensive research
 - Phase 1: impact assessment study in 9 provinces
 - Phase 2: status report & creation of a funding model
 - Phase 3: plan of action to detail expenditure focus area
- 2007/08 conditional grants (range \$1.6m-\$2.4m) to each province
- Budget status @ Oct 2008: 4 under; 3 over; 2 on target
- Eastern Cape province: expenditure \$1.1m/\$2.4m

The 2nd decade of democracy - what about school libraries



- Education spending largest single item in national budget at 17.8% of the total in 2006
- SA school learners perform badly in tests of literacy & numeracy
- Age of school going population: 21% of 43m population younger than 19 years
- Rural poverty: 70% of people live in densely populated ex-homelands with limited infrastructure & distance from economic opportunity
- Continuing high rates of drop-outs & failures
- Catch up in backlogs of basic facilities: 50% schools were without water and 24% with no access to water (1996).
- Redress of historical disparities: School library facilities funded by fees levied by governing board – viewed as “luxuries”

Legislative framework...towards improved school libraries



- SA School libraries Act – no mention of libraries
- Curriculum 2005 (introduced in 1995) & Revised National Curriculum Statement (2005) seemed “library-friendly”
- 1999 survey determined 32% schools had on-site libraries & 12% access to some sort of box services
- Curriculum 2005 is resource hungry & impact hit Public Libraries
- 2007 National School Library Policy approved
- Teacher’s Toolkit will be available in 11 national languages to improve literacy in schools

Key players in the LIS arena



- National Council for Library & information Services (NCLIS)
- 2001 NCLIS Act
- Positioning libraries as strategic & transforming resources in interest of social change & economic development
- 2008 Library Transformation Charter to set vision for a transformed library sector, supporting education & the development of a reading culture
- Library Transformation Charter (2nd draft) available on the NLSA website (www.nlsa.ac.za)

Library & Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)



- 1997 established as the national library association
- In collaboration with NCLIS & Arts & Culture Ministry has placed public libraries on government's agenda
- 2007 hosted 73rd WLIC/IFLA conference in Durban
- South African Library Week celebrated during week of Human rights day (18 March – Sharpeville Day)
- Annual conferences & Interest Groups
- Publications

Literacy & Libraries – the legacy



- In a democratic society citizens should have access to information & the skills to use it effectively
- Research shows
 - a lack of reading culture in SA
 - high level adult illiteracy
 - low level functional literacy
 - shortage of reading materials in national languages, other than English & Afrikaans
- Libraries lack capacity to participate in adult education programmes (23% active)

Why are our libraries special?



- SA LIS is striving to meet the developmental needs of a young democracy
- LIS compete with national agendas including poverty alleviation, social change & economic development, social cohesion & nation building
- The needs are enormous:
 - library spaces for learners & students where their homes have neither space nor sufficient light
 - develop lifelong reading habits so that social cohesion & critical thinking can be developed

Why are our libraries special?



- Strengthen libraries across the education sector (primary & high school as well as tertiary sector)
- Provide adequate funding for the role that librarians play in society
- Improved ICT infrastructure & connectivity across the LIS sector
- Adequate funding & development of infrastructure for public access computing
- Information literacy development at all levels of education bringing educators & trainers in LIS to work together

Conclusion



- South Africa & LIS are a nation & sector still in transition
- In the end what makes the libraries in South Africa so special are the librarians, individually and collectively, who provide the leadership and vision to the sector, who continue to revitalize, inspire & motivate libraries and their staff to strive towards filling all the goals of economic & social development identified by our people.

Further information about the LIS sector in South Africa



- Libraries for the future: progress & development of South African libraries edited by T Bothma, P Underwood & P Ngulube. Published by LIASA & IFLA. 2007
 - Chapter 2: Library & information service structure in South Africa – Ina Fourie
 - Chapter 5: Current developments in public libraries in South Africa – Sally Witbooi
 - Chapter 6: Academic libraries in the second decade of democracy – Gwenda Thomas
 - Chapter 7: The conundrum of school libraries in South Africa – Genevieve Hart & Sandy Zinn
 - Chapter 10: Libraries, literacies & learning: retrospect & prospects – Karin de Jager, Mary Nassimbeni & Peter Underwood
 - Chapter 14: South African LIS futures & the tale of the fisherman's wife: can we predict & create positive change – Christine Stilwell
- Library & Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) website (www.liasa.org.za)

Thank you!

