

SOUTH AFRICA

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SOUTH AFRICA
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STATUS

The National Library of South Africa was formed on 1 November 1999 following the enactment of the National Library Act, 1998. It is an autonomous statutory institution linked to the Department of Arts and Culture and is controlled by a Board appointed by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

The National Library maintains two campuses, in Cape Town and Pretoria, but instead of a geographical division, follows a structure of six national library programmes which are operational in both campuses. The Centre for the Book, in Cape Town, is also incorporated in the structure as a project of the National Library, without being one of the programmes. In terms of a Ministerial decision the Office of the National Librarian, which is the head office of the National Library, is based in Pretoria.

TRANSFORMATION

The first Board of the National Library was appointed in February 2001 by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. The Board has overseen the restructuring of the two former institutions. A national transformation team representing various sectors within the Library was formed to assist the Board with transformation of the two old institutions into the National Library of South Africa.

New staff were recruited to fill the new top structure. Only four staff members who were members of the old management team are part of the new management structure, which now consists of the National Librarian as the chief executive officer, the Deputy National Librarian, six programme executives and four executive heads for the support departments. The employment equity targets set by the Board were reached with these

During the first 17 months of its existence the National Library has adopted four strategic directions to guide the institution toward the future. They are;

- ?? Holding a mirror to the nation
- ?? Building a bridge to the information society
- ?? Levelling the playing field for access to information
- ?? Creating a dynamic, united learning organization

The strategic directions were fleshed out into strategic thrusts which provided the framework for a draft corporate plan and business plan.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Operational activities continued despite staff shortages which had already existed in the two institutions before amalgamation. The operations of the Library cover the following broad areas: collection building; bibliographic organization; information provision; document supply; and preservation. Two new functions, heritage and information awareness, have been added in the National Library Act. Over the past year, a new programme was developed to carry out these functions.

LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The National Library obtained a grant from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation for the acquisition of the new Millennium integrated library management system. Such a system was identified as one of the critical factors for the successful amalgamation of the two former national libraries and for enabling them to work together on an integrated computer system in order to overcome some of the problems of the big geographical divide between the two campuses. The system was acquired in September 2001 and implementation is well advanced.

LEGAL DEPOSIT

The Legal Deposit Act of 1997 made provision for the institution of official publications depositories in each of the nine provinces of the country. The National Library has been laying the groundwork for this much needed new service. However, no funding has yet been provided and at the moment it is being considered to move the new function to the South African National Archives, which already has provincial archives and thus some of the infrastructure that will be required.

COLLECTIONS

OUTREACH

Funding was obtained from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to conduct a survey into the public and community libraries in South Africa. The project was successfully completed very recently, with the University of Pretoria as project leader. The results were published as a report and a directory of the public and community libraries in South Africa, titled *Public and community library inventory of South Africa*. It is hoped that the information will be useful for planning purposes, as general information about the geographical distribution and the state of public and community libraries in the country. It is planned that the information will be updated regularly. It can be viewed on the website of the National Library of South Africa at <http://www.nlsa.ac.za>.