

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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The National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) was established in 1998 to integrate the existing library services which had been in operation from 1857. The NALIS operates the National Library, the Public and School Library Systems and the subject specialist libraries serving Government Ministries.

The most significant achievement of the organization for the year 2002-2003 has been the completion and opening of the new National Library Building.

The National Library stands juxtaposed to three historic landmarks: The Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Red House and Woodford Square in downtown Port of Spain.

This state-of-the-art, ultra modern library facility is the administrative seat and focus point of NALIS' libraries and information service centers in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Heritage Library, which is the flagship library in the new building located on the second floor is the custodian of all material relevant to Trinidad and Tobago, (Trinidadiana) as well as that which is relevant to the wider Caribbean, (Caribbeana). This library recognizes a responsibility to present the society to itself, to generate, initiate and facilitate important research and explore and harness primary sources of orally transmitted knowledge. In addition, there are government publications, information files, maps, newspapers, full text online databases and periodicals in a wide cross section of subject areas such as business, finance and education. The library collects First Day Stamp Covers and photographs of people, places and buildings.

Apart from the Heritage Library, the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago houses a children's library, a young adult library and an adult library with reference services.

The National Library is the center for filling all information needs whether for research, leisure or entertainment. Patrons enjoy the casual reading of journals, borrowing books, listening to lectures, surfing the Internet or finding out about Trinidad and Tobago's history, peoples and places and finding information to enable them to make informed decisions. They can listen to music, watch a movie, discuss current issues, photocopy material using smart access card copiers, or use one of the 121 computers made available to the public. The libraries in the building are equipped with self-check-out system, to fast track the borrowing process.

The building also houses the offices of the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Director, the Management Team, the divisions of Finance, Human Resources, Educational Library Services, Public Libraries and Information Networks. The latter division manages the use of the information and communications technologies for the delivery of library services in the building and throughout the national library network. The offices of the Corporate Secretary and Public Relations and Marketing Officer are also located here.

In addition to these services, the National Library makes available for public use, its cinema with seating capacity for 100 persons, the Amphitheatre with seating accommodation for approximately 300 persons, its multipurpose lecture rooms, and spiraling cylindrical atrium with skylight which is great for exhibitions.

The Media Centre provides the latest in local, regional and international news. The bookshop and the cafeteria will also be open to the public.

This National Library facility is open to everyone as it bids welcome to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed, all visitors to Trinidad and Tobago. The professional, courteous staff is well trained in accessing information in the shortest time possible.

The National Library of Trinidad and Tobago also welcomes differently-abled citizens to the library.

For the visually challenged, services are available in large print, Braille, audio formats, recorded books and talking books. The assistive technology employed includes the JAWS (Job Access With Speech) voice synthesizer, Magic Professional Screen Magnifier for those with low vision, the Braille Embosser, which translates text to Braille and also prints, and the Poet OCR reading machine for reading documents to the visually challenged. This machine can read a book to the visually impaired. These services are available in the Children's and Adult libraries.

For the hearing impaired, there is Next Talk software which allows hearing impaired persons to communicate with library staff via a computer system and telephone line.

The National Library of Trinidad and Tobago provides easy access to persons in wheel chairs via ramps at street level and elevator access from the ground floor to the other service levels. Water fountains and bathroom facilities are designed for easy accessibility to wheel chair users. There are special workstations for the mobility impaired, as well as Dragon Naturally Speaking software for those unable to use a mouse or manipulate a keyboard.

This facility is like no other in the Caribbean, and is ranked among the best internationally.

NALIS

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