

The South African Library  
as a State-aided national library  
in the era of apartheid:  
an administrative history

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This study was supervised by  
Professor Howard Phillips  
whose wide knowledge and attention to detail  
were of inestimable value

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## ABSTRACT

The Public Library in Cape Town was founded in the earliest days of British civil rule in Southern Africa, as a Government-funded free library of reference with the purpose of educating and enculturating the 'youth' of the Cape Colony along European (especially English) lines. Government funding being withdrawn in 1829, the Library became an autonomous subscription library while continuing to provide access to its reference collections free of charge. During the ensuing 125 years the Library (known as the South African (Public) Library) became increasingly dependent on Government financial aid to provide certain 'national' functions. By 1954 it was the pre-eminent research library in sub-Saharan Africa and enjoyed total autonomy within the limits of its 1893 Act of the former Cape Colonial Parliament.

This study follows the transformation of the South African Library into a State-aided national library after it had divested itself of its local circulating services in 1955 and its subsequent existence with limited autonomy and increasing financial difficulties. During the transformation process, the National Party came into office in 1948 and introduced its authoritarian, centralizing style of administration. Many of the new Government's policies conflicted with the ethos and practices of the South African Library, particularly the promotion of White Afrikaner culture in the place of the Library's generally White Anglophile culture, and the implementation of racial policies in the place of the Library's non-racialism. By the time the implications of National Party 'apartheid' policies became evident, it was too late for the Library to revert to its previous state.

The scope of this administrative history of the Library in this era is limited to an analysis of themes which illuminate the relationship between the State, the Library, the Library's users, and the library profession at large during the development and eventual downfall in 1994 of National Party rule. The central themes are the Library's struggle to retain maximum professional autonomy in the context of its almost total dependence upon the State for its funding; the degree of State funding being determined by Government's perception of the Library's legitimacy and contribution to its policy priorities.

Despite providing distinguished services to research (both formal and informal), especially in the humanities, and having perhaps the best collection in the country of published and manuscript material relating to Southern Africa, the South African Library was unable to attract the funding needed to sustain its rapidly growing collections and overwhelming amount of use. When the National Party left office in 1994, the Library was already on the point of financial collapse, and the incoming African National Congress Government had more pressing priorities. The South African Library failed, and in 1999, together with the State Library in Pretoria (which was itself in difficulties), became part of the National Library of South Africa in a development which, fifteen years later, must still be considered a compromise.

Since the author considers the two-site compromise to be unsustainable, the study concludes with a review of various proposals which were put forward by library professionals between 1955 and 1994 which may profitably be revisited.

The research was based on documentary records in the extensive administrative archive of the South African Library. This has been supplemented from published sources and recollections of the author and former colleagues.

**The**  
**SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY**  
**as a state-aided**  
**NATIONAL LIBRARY**  
**in the era of**  
**APARTHEID**

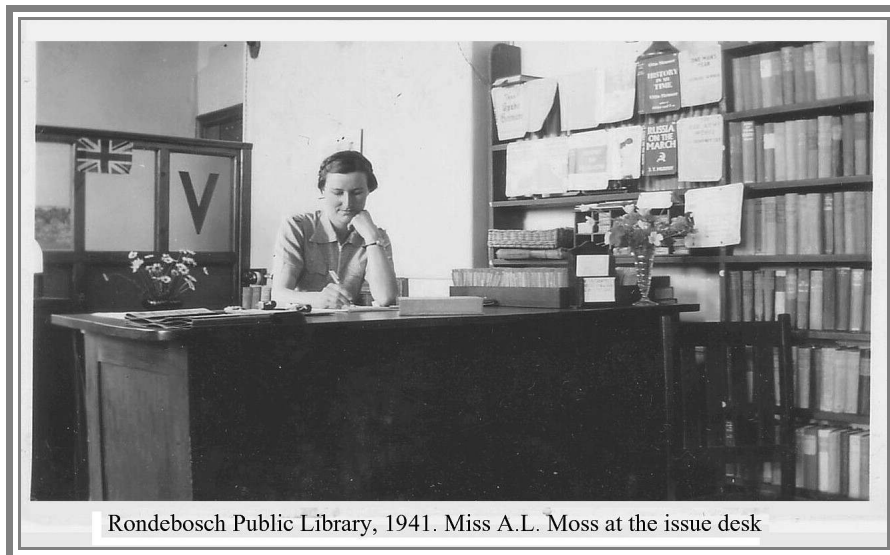
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**An administrative history**

Peter Ralph Coates

Cape Town  
2014  
(as accepted, 2015)

*Dedicated  
to the memory of my aunt  
Audrey Lilian Moss  
1920-2009  
who loved books and library work.*



*The Author acknowledges with gratitude  
the patient guidance of Professor Howard Phillips,  
and the support of the former National Librarian John Tsebe  
and his staff in Cape Town, without whose assistance  
this study could not have been undertaken.  
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and my sisters who were a constant source of encouragement and support.*

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## PREFACE

The South African Library was a service institution with preservation and reference functions, invaluable in its day for both current and historical research. Although the Library was founded as long ago as 1818, and became a national library in 1954, it lacked a history in the dictionary sense, based on distinct events. Instead, its record reveals a ceaseless managerial struggle to preserve its autonomy (partially attained) while depending upon the State for adequate funding (largely unattained). Did it fail as the Millennium ended because of a perceived lack of legitimacy, or was its demise due to human failings, as in classic tragedy?

This ground-breaking administrative study traces the progress of the South African Library from the time it became a national library shortly after the National Party came to power in 1948, and 1994, when National Party rule ended and the African National Congress led Government of National Unity took office. The study is not a comprehensive record of the Library's history. Topics were selected for analysis which demonstrated relationships between the Library, its users, the State and the library profession respectively. These topics have been clustered into six Chapters in which every effort has been made to associate developments at the South African Library with its social and political milieu. A seventh Chapter contains the author's conclusions. These seven chapters are now presented for examination.

Considering the paucity of literature on the development of library services in the Western Cape in particular, and South Africa in general (see pages xi, xiii-xvi), a Prologue has been provided, not for the purposes of examination but as a matter of courtesy, encompassing library transformation between 1928 and 1952, demonstrating why the South African Library sacrificed its autonomy to become a State-aided institution. Likewise, following Chapter seven (conclusions), an Epilogue offers the very briefest overview of events beyond that tipping-point in 1994, when the study officially ends, to 1999, when the South African Library was subsumed into the National Library of South Africa. It is to be hoped that these last, dramatic years of the South African Library will one day be the subject of their own academic study.

Footnote numbers begin afresh at the start of each section. Citations for published material follow two elements of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.<sup>1</sup> On the first citation of a specific work in a section, the author (with initials), title and publication details are provided in full, but subsequent citations of the same work are shortened to author (with initials), abbreviated title and date (in parentheses). Annual, biennial or triennial reports of the South African Library or Committee or Trustees or Board (there is great diversity) are identified simply as 'South African Library. Report'; Similarly 'State Library. Annual Report'.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Main titles follow rule 17.50 (headline style), subtitles follow rule 17.51 (sentence style). While rule 17.64 prescribes 'sentence style' for non-English titles, this has not been adopted in this study for Afrikaans-language titles.

## PREFACE

Manuscript material is cited by repository and collection, virtually all in the South African Library administrative archives (pp.xvii-xix, *infra*). Written and verbal communications and interviews are cited as 'Communication [name], [date]', or 'Interview [name], [date]'. The form of a date is in the style of day, month and year; a range of years is indicated year to year '1949-1954' but for one twelve month period spanning two years, the century is not repeated '1954-55'.

In the body of the text, upper case<sup>2</sup> has been used for State (the South African State), Province (the Cape Province), Library (the South African Library), Government (the South African Government), and City (the City of Cape Town) but in lower case when no specific entity is intended. Official publications of the national Government and of Parliament referred to in the text and in footnotes, should be assumed to be South African unless otherwise stated. These are listed in 'Sources Consulted' under 'Secondary Sources: Official Publications: South Africa'. The Government Gazette of the Union/Republic of South Africa, being officially a newspaper, is treated as a journal and is referred to simply as Government Gazette. Short titles of Acts of Parliament are in regular type.<sup>3</sup>

British English usage and spelling has been adopted with a few exceptions. Translations from Afrikaans are by the author. Population groups are designated Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites, and the major dichotomy is White and non-White (rather than White and 'Black' as a collective term embracing Blacks, Coloureds and Indians indiscriminately lumped together as is currently the vogue, making it difficult to distinguish black-Blacks from Coloureds and Indians). Coloureds and Whites feature prominently in this study, while Blacks and Indians do not.

Designation of ranks used at the South African Library varied over time. To avoid being excessively pedantic, certain standard designations have been used throughout this study. The chief executive officer is consistently referred to as 'Director' (for The Secretary, The Librarian, Chief Librarian, or Director) and his deputy as 'Deputy Director' (for Assistant Librarian, Assistant Chief Librarian, Assistant Director and Deputy Director). The word 'Board' refers to the Committee, the Trustees, the Council, or the Board. The name 'South African Library' in common use since the nineteenth century has been used consistently, and not 'South African Public Library' which was its juristic name from the passing of the South African Public Library Act of 1893 until December 1967.

Pictures, inserted where space permits, are credited in 'Sources Consulted' (p.350).

The author has based the narrative upon documentary evidence as far as possible to limit bias resulting from an insider's perspective. He used this Library from 1958. After transferring from the Public Service as a library assistant in 1964, he completed his professional qualifications in 1982, became a member of Library management in 1987, and retired in 2000.

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<sup>2</sup> Following Oxford University Press usage 'capitalization' in: F.H. Collins, *Authors' and Printers' Dictionary: a guide for authors, editors, printers [etc.]* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp.53-54. (A 1973 edition also exists.)

<sup>3</sup> Following British Standards Institution's Copy Preparation and Proof Correction, BS 5261: Part 1: 1975, rule 12.3(i).

# INTRODUCTION

No single 'grand narrative' will be found in this study of the nominally autonomous South African Library which was funded by the State. The following account focuses on the period 1954, when the Library became a fully State-supported institution, to 1994 when the National Party 'apartheid' Government was superseded by the democratically elected Government of National Unity led by the African National Congress. The text submitted for examination consists of twenty-seven sections chosen to illustrate the relationship between the South African Library and local and national authorities, and the organized library profession respectively, organized into six Chapters. Each section is a self-contained essay on a specific theme. The time-frames of sections and chapters are not mutually exclusive, nor do sections necessarily run consecutively. As explained in the Preface (p.v), a Prologue and an Epilogue have been added, not for examination, but to provide a better understanding of where the South African Library came from and how it ended.

Typical of a bureaucratic structure, the South African Library's managers operated in a maze of evanescent issues, matters demanding the most urgent attention only too often having the least lasting significance. The selection of topics for the sections and the manner in which they are treated have an admitted managerial bias. Each Chapter (with its short introduction) can be considered to be a lens through which the Library's changing environment may be viewed.

The Library's dependence on Government for financial support required proof of its legitimacy in the context of the State's policies. But, to provide an impartial and professional service acceptable to the diversity of users in South Africa (which is more a territory than a nation), this unique and iconic institution<sup>4</sup> needed to be demonstrably autonomous of Government and its apartheid policies. There always existed a measure of suspicion of its independence by the public.<sup>5</sup> In a democratic society no such contradiction should exist because an agency of the State (such as the South African Library) would have shared the legitimacy of the elected Government.

The dominating issue facing the South African Library was funding. As seen from the Library's point-of-view, local and national authorities needed to be persuaded to provide dependable revenue for it to regain and then maintain its aim to be an autonomous general library of reference for the benefit of individuals in pursuit of knowledge. From the National Party Government's point of view, once it committed itself to take full financial responsibility for the South African Library in 1954, it was necessary to determine how the Library could best be fitted

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<sup>4</sup> The author has elsewhere made a case for the South African Library being in fact an Athenaeum, or learned society on the lines of the London Institution rather than simply a library (P.R. Coates, 'Was the South African Library an Athenaeum?' in: *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 66(4), October-December 2012, pp.13-23.)

<sup>5</sup> The most frequent manifestation of this suspicion related to the requirement that all publications had to be deposited under legal deposit legislation, which was imagined to be part of the censorship apparatus.

## INTRODUCTION

into that coherent national plan for cultural institutions it was gradually developing, in other words, whether it possessed legitimacy - something which the Library's iconic status suggested but could not readily be proved. Secondary issues included the implementation of Government policies. The Library's principal strategy which characterized its record as a national library, was to balance maximum autonomy of professional service to its users on one hand, against the policy objectives of Government (such as segregation of population groups, promotion of the Afrikaans language, cultural and political mind control through censorship and propaganda, and a traditional but patently unjust administration of the Library's non-White staff) on the other hand. From 1928, libraries were seen by the State as a tool of White nation-building. But by the late 1980s, Government gave up controlling information policy, both national libraries<sup>6</sup> being cast off to sink or swim under a policy of framework autonomy.

While this study is concerned in the first instance with the South African Library, considerable attention has of necessity been devoted to the State Library in Pretoria, which shared most of these difficulties, but also engaged from 1960 in a determined and damaging struggle to wrest from the South African Library its pre-eminence as The national library of South Africa. The State Library proved itself as amenable to National Party policies, during that Party's long term in office, as these policies conflicted with the ethos of the South African Library, making the final outcome in the State Library's favour virtually predictable from the start. In a democratic state where political control changed more frequently, such an outcome may have been different.

The South African Library's boast was that very few serious works of South African history were published without its assistance.<sup>7</sup> Yet despite providing resources for and assistance to many historical researchers (professional, academic and amateur), no critical study exists of this iconic institution through the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> This Library was a service organization which managed to avoid dramatic incidents and scandals. At best it only facilitated an end product such as an academic's research paper, a student's dissertation, an author's book, or just personal development (that 'strangely beneficial influence' which Cape Colonial Prime Minister J.C. Molteno<sup>9</sup> ascribed to the South African Library in the 1880s). Although the South African Library proved of inestimable value to its users, and was credited with providing the best reference service in the

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<sup>6</sup> In this case the South African Library in Cape Town and the State Library in Pretoria.

<sup>7</sup> F.R. Bradlow, 'Douglas Varley and the Quarterly Bulletin, the Friends of the South African Library and 'Africana' in: Sapling: staff news-sheet of the South African Library, 3, October 1961, p.21. Attention is drawn to the list of 'Some Books Written with the Assistance of the South African Library' up to 1970 in Annexure 1 which excludes a much larger quantity of journal articles and theses. After 1970, this record was discontinued.

<sup>8</sup> W.P.H.A. Tyrrell-Glynn's thesis covering the period up to 1961 is assessed under 'Literature review'.

<sup>9</sup> The author could not locate the source of this often repeated quotation.

## INTRODUCTION

world, the present study investigates those aspects of the South African Library's history which demonstrate the indifference of the authorities and hostility of its sister institution towards it. Judging only from a bureaucratic point of view, Professor R.B. Zaaiman declared that it lacked legitimacy<sup>10</sup> which provides a clue why the South African Library never could secure adequate financial support.

Apart from the gratitude of satisfied users and much-publicized exhibitions of bibliographical treasures, the administrative and supportive nature of its work resulted in a low public profile and a singular absence of 'events' providing scope for writing a history as formally defined.<sup>11</sup> One might indeed question whether any library has a history beyond a conglomeration of mundane matters like its establishment, some notable directors, accommodation problems and solutions, donations and acquisitions, generally in chronological order.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Thomas Kelly (who wrote the magisterial work *A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain, 1845-1975*), stated that so many of the library histories he consulted were almost completely insulated from every other kind of development, either national or local. 'Unless the history of an individual library can be related to the wider background, it ceases to have any real value.'<sup>12</sup> A library is characteristically the progeny of a parent body (a university, a research organization, a municipality or a club) which defines its role and undertakes responsibility for its financing. The nominally autonomous South African Library (and since 1964 its sister institution the State Library) were exceptions to this daughter-parent relationship, and the source (in the author's opinion) of many of their difficulties. This differentiating factor suggests an opportunity for an historical study. Theirs were records of struggles over a long period to define their functions and protect their autonomy while convincing the national Government that they played a necessary national role.

In preparing this study, a literature survey was made of the on-line catalogues of the University of Cape Town Libraries and the National Library of South Africa (principally the Cape Town campus) as well as the Internet, for literature relating to national libraries as a distinct type of library, literature relating to histories of libraries in South Africa (the national libraries in particular), and literature relating to the South African bureaucracy. The results were below expectation.

It is notoriously difficult to find a generally-accepted definition of a national library; at best

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<sup>10</sup> R.B. Zaaiman, 'Die Stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Tydsgees van 1818, 1937 en 1990' in: *Mousaion*, 9(1), 1991, pp.3-23. Zaaiman was at the time the Director of the State Library.

<sup>11</sup> History: 'Continuous methodological record of important or public events; study of past events, esp[ecially] human affairs; aggregate of past events, course of human affairs; whole train of events connected with persons, things, etc. (...)' (Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 7th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp.472-473.) Attention is especially drawn to the emphasis on the word 'events' which persists in the online version of this dictionary at [www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/history](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/history), accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Kelly [taped interview with D.E. Gerard, College of Librarianship, Wales, 1975], quoted by J.G. Ollé, *Library History, Outlines of Modern Librarianship series* (London: Bingley, 1979), p.58.

## INTRODUCTION

it is possible to compile a list of functions - none of them particularly exciting - which a national library might carry out. Arundel Esdaile in his important compilation *National Libraries of the World*<sup>13</sup> published originally in 1934 (substantially revised in 1957) did not attempt a definition, rather, each national library outline in the book follows a set pattern: brief history, buildings, catalogues, usage, departments, staff, funding, and (importantly) its place in the national system. It is in the latter aspect where differences defy a universal definition, a problem which troubled South African authorities also. Another point of relevance to the present study was Esdaile's contrasting of eclectic British-influenced national libraries (which the South African Library emulated) with the Germanic centralizing style (characteristic of the mind-set of Pretoria and Potchefstroom-based library academics in the 1950s to 1970s, of whom A.L. Dick<sup>14</sup> has written).<sup>15</sup> This German approach is analysed in depth by M.F. Stieg in *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany*.<sup>16</sup> A body of literature has grown up around the concept of a national library, and the issue was subject to a long investigation in South Africa by a ministerial advisory council from 1967 to 1981. The principal published works inevitably cite the report of the 1958 UNESCO Conference on National Libraries in Europe.<sup>17</sup> R.C. Bengé had the courage, in *Libraries and Cultural Change*,<sup>18</sup> to question the continuing need for national libraries; the debate has often centred on defending the national status of certain existing libraries (as in the South African case), exemplified by the essay 'National Libraries' in the 1980 ALA *World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services*.<sup>19</sup> Frequently-cited writers on this topic include K.W. Humphreys,<sup>20</sup> who classified essential and inessential

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<sup>13</sup> A.E. Esdaile, *National Libraries of the World: their history, administration and public services* (London, Grafton, 1934), and second edition, edited by F.J. Hill (London: Library Association, 1957).

<sup>14</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Science for Ideology? P.C. Coetzee and the professionalization of South African librarianship' in: *Mousaion*, 19(1) 2001, pp.67-68; 'Scholarship, Identity and Lies: the political life of H.J. de Vleeschauwer, 1940-1955' in: *Kleio*, 34, 2002, pp.5-27; 'Book Burning and the Complicity of South African Librarians, 1955-1971' in: *Innovation* 28, June 2004, pp.33-35.

<sup>15</sup> A.E. Esdaile, *National Libraries of the World* (1957), p.ix.

<sup>16</sup> M.F. Stieg, *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany* (Tuscaloosa, USA, University of Alabama Press, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> *National Libraries: their problems and prospects. Symposium on National Libraries in Europe, Vienna 8-27 September 1958* (Paris: UNESCO, 1960), p.34 (also in: *UNESCO Manuals for Libraries*, 11, 1960).

<sup>18</sup> R.C. Bengé, *Libraries and Cultural Change* (London: Bingley, 1970), pp.224-225.

<sup>19</sup> *ALA World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services* (Chicago, American Library Association, 1980), pp.391-393.

<sup>20</sup> K.W. Humphreys, 'National Library Functions' in: *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries*, 20(4), July-August 1966, pp.158-169, and by the same author, *A National Library in Theory and Practice* (London: British Library, 1988).

## INTRODUCTION

national library functions, and M.B. Line.<sup>21</sup>

There is an extraordinary dearth of both general and specific South African library histories. A commendable ground-breaking project was undertaken by Public Service Chief Librarian S.J. Kritzinger<sup>22</sup> during the 1940s and 1950s to record the histories of the more important libraries in South Africa. A work by Theo Friis<sup>23</sup> provides an historical overview (based on Kritzinger's work) in Chapters 3 and 4 of his book on contemporary public library practice. A monograph by Elizabeth Taylor<sup>24</sup> deals with libraries generally up to 1967 and is the last to rely on Kritzinger's essays. In 1986 Taylor's work was completely updated and extended by Reuben Musiker,<sup>25</sup> and this appears to be the latest comprehensive work on the subject. Two books (one by Marguerite Peters<sup>26</sup> and another more recently by Jacqueline Kalley<sup>27</sup>) dealing with library services for non-Whites focussing on the former Transvaal province were both originally written as university dissertations.

The National Socialism of many leading library professionals of this era makes the reading of M.F. Stieg's *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany*<sup>28</sup> especially valuable on account of the parallels which may be drawn respecting South African library centralization and control. By the early 1960s the South African library profession had been substantially Afrikanerized,<sup>29</sup> with suspected Afrikaner Broederbond members at the head of virtually every library service, university library, and faculty of librarianship in the country, as well as the Potchefstroom-based South African Library Association (SALA), some of whose leaders had been interned during the Second World War for subversion (not least the future Director of the State Library, H.J. Aschenborn, and a President of SALA, H.M. Robinson). Others with pronounced Nazi sympathies included P.C. Coetzee,<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> M.B. Line, 'The Role of National Libraries: a reassessment' in: *National Libraries 2, 1977-1985* (London: ASLIB, 1987), pp.5-18.

<sup>22</sup> S.J. Kritzinger, 'Historical Survey of the More Important Libraries in the Union of South Africa', a series of articles which appeared in *South African Libraries*, during the course of 1946-1954. The articles were issued as off-prints, and bound sets of varying completeness may still be found in library collections.

<sup>23</sup> T. Friis, *The Public Library in South Africa: an evaluative study* (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962).

<sup>24</sup> L.E. Taylor, *South African Libraries* (London: Bingley, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> R. Musiker, *Companion to South African Libraries* (Craighall, Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1986).

<sup>26</sup> M.A. Peters, *The Contribution of the (Carnegie) Non-European Library Service, Transvaal, to the Development of Library Service for Africans in South Africa* (Pretoria: State Library, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> J.A. Kalley, *Apartheid in South African Libraries: the Transvaal experience* (Lanham, USA: Scarecrow Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> M.F. Stieg, *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany* (1992).

<sup>29</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Book Burning' (2004), pp.33-34.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.34.

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Professor of Librarianship at the University of Pretoria and long-time Chairman of the State Library Board, and his close friend, convicted Nazi war criminal and Professor of Librarianship at the University of South Africa, H.J. de Vleeschauwer.<sup>31</sup> Sobering works dealing with South African Nazi-type movements which penetrated both librarianship and the public service have been written by P.J. Furlong<sup>32</sup> and C. Marx.<sup>33</sup>

Histories of specific libraries (with the exception of R.F. Kennedy's exhaustive history of the Johannesburg City Library,<sup>34</sup> and Ruben and Naomi Musiker's 1998 history of the libraries of the University of the Witwatersrand<sup>35</sup>) consist of published or unpublished university theses. These include Norah Buchanan's history of the libraries of the University of Natal which also surveys the histories of other university libraries,<sup>36</sup> Rosemary Holloway's recent history of the Kimberley Africana Library,<sup>37</sup> and Wanda Thomas' work on Germiston Public Library.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the foregoing, a thesis on the Randfontein Public Library by Ethel van der Westhuizen<sup>39</sup> sets that library's history firmly within a social-political context, specifically the 'Reconstruction and Development Program'.

James Ollé's observations relating to British and American library histories are equally applicable in South Africa. Most library histories since the Second World War (when education in librarianship transferred to tertiary educational institutions) are thesis-histories and represent their non-historian authors' only venture into historiography; the resultant literature is predictably dull and 'serenely oblivious of its human aspect', making it hard to stimulate wide interest.<sup>40</sup> Histories of individual libraries are usually written by insiders who had access to the records (which may have

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<sup>31</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Scholarship, Identity and Lies: the political life of H.J. de Vleeschauwer, 1940-1955' (2002), pp.5-27.

<sup>32</sup> P.J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: the impact of the radical right on the Afrikaner nationalist movement in the Fascist era* (Hanover, USA: Wesleyan University Press, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewabrandwag* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> R.F. Kennedy, *The Heart of a City: a history of the Johannesburg Public Library* (Cape Town: Juta, 1970).

<sup>35</sup> R. and N. Musiker, *Wits Library: a centenary history* (Johannesburg: Scarecrow Books, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> N. Buchanan, 'A History of the University of Natal Libraries, 1910-2003' (PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> R.J. Holloway, 'History and Development of the Kimberley Africana Library and its Relationship with the Kimberley Public Library' (M.Inf thesis, University of South Africa, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> W.M. Thomas, 'A History of the Germiston Public Library and its Influence on Library Development in South Africa' in: *Mousaion* 2(6), 1979 (special number).

<sup>39</sup> E.H. van der Westhuizen, 'Die Bydrae van die Randfonteinse Openbare Biblioteek tot die Heropbou- en Ontwikkelingsprogram' (M.Inf thesis, Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> J.G. Ollé, *Library History* (1979), pp.19-20, 22.

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survived by good fortune or through mere oversight). Their readership consists primarily of librarians.<sup>41</sup> Reinterpreting South African librarianship generally in the frame of political transformation in the 1990s, P.J. Lor's essay 'A Distant Mirror'<sup>42</sup> is worthy of note.

Turning to the national libraries of South Africa, the South African Library in Cape Town and the State Library in Pretoria have been written about to a greater extent than any other library in South Africa. The ground-breaking series of historical essays by S.J. Kritzingler commences with notes on the South African Library and the State Library respectively.<sup>43</sup> Two thesis-histories (by Hans Aschenborn in 1965<sup>44</sup> and William Tyrrell-Glynn in 1972<sup>45</sup>) cover a much earlier period than the present study, and on the occasion of the South African Library's centenary, a chronology was compiled in 1917 by the Director at that time, A.C.G. Lloyd.<sup>46</sup> In 1965 a highly-abridged history of the State Library brought the record of that Library forward to 1964 when it ceased to be a lending library.<sup>47</sup> Various journal articles describing the contemporary circumstances of the two libraries are historically of little significance.

A paper by A.M.L. Robinson, Director of the South African Library, reviewing the history of national libraries internationally and the South African experience, was presented at the 1978 South African Library Association conference in Johannesburg.<sup>48</sup> It does not venture beyond 1968.

To mark its sesquicentenary in 1968, the South African Library commissioned a collection

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, pp.50, 46-49, 26.

<sup>42</sup> P.J. Lor, 'A Distant Mirror: the story of libraries in South Africa' in: *Daedalus*, 125(4), Fall [northern] 1996, pp.235-265.

<sup>43</sup> S.J. Kritzingler, 'Historical Survey' (1946-1954): The South African Library in: *South African Libraries*, 13(4), April 1946, pp.79-85; The State Library in: *ibid.*, 14(1), July 1946, pp.15-18.

<sup>44</sup> H.J. Aschenborn, 'De Staatsbibliotheek der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1887-1900' (PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, 1965). What appears to be a two-part abstract of this thesis was published under the joint authorship of J. Ploeger and H.J. Aschenborn entitled 'Die Staatsbiblioteek: Deel 1, Die Geskiedenis van 'n Skenking', and 'Deel 2, Van 1887 tot die Hede' in: *Lantern*, 16(1), September 1966, pp.48-62. However, the '... tot die Hede' ('... to the Present') consists of two short paragraphs covering the period 1900 to 1964, anticipating a forthcoming article (see note 47).

<sup>45</sup> W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn, 'An Account of Some Early Libraries and Book Collections at the Cape of Good Hope, with Special Reference to the Establishment of the South African Public Library' (M.Bibl thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1972).

<sup>46</sup> [A.C.G. Lloyd], 'Annals of the South African Public Library [1818-1918]' in: Report of the Trustees of the South African Public Library, 1917.

<sup>47</sup> 'Supplement: Historical Contribution' in: State Library, Annual Report, 1964-65, pp.37-48, more than half of which consists of a list of the names of all known Board members.

<sup>48</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, 'National Libraries: their history and development with special reference to South Africa' in: Papers Presented at the [South African Library Association] Conference, Johannesburg (Potchefstroom: The Association, 1978), pp.416-430.

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of articles on various aspects of the Library's history and collections, which was commercially published.<sup>49</sup> This is a valuable source of information about the distant past, but provides little specifically about the Library's relationships with the authorities or the profession which is a central theme of this study. The semicentenary of the library's Quarterly Bulletin in 1995 was marked by a similar, though slighter compilation of articles.<sup>50</sup>

In 1983 William Tyrrell-Glynn completed a very extensive doctoral dissertation on the history of the South African Library from the date of its becoming a subscription library in 1830 (after Government support was withdrawn) up to the departure of Director D.H. Varley in 1961.<sup>51</sup> This thesis overlaps the earlier portion of the present study. While it is undeniably a monumental compilation of facts, it is not a good work of history. Tyrrell-Glynn makes no attempt to draw together or analyse issues, nor does he set developments in any kind of social, administrative, political or other context. He provides no commentary on the events about which he is writing, and fails to distinguish between important and trivial matters. In the period of interest to the present study, no reference is made to efforts by Government to implement racial segregation at the Library (though the matter was under constant discussion from 1958, was the proximate cause of Varley's resignation in 1961, and implemented in 1963), yet the issue of Afrikaans and English bilingualism at the Library, which caused a brief stir in the press in the first quarter of 1945, is dealt with at inordinate length<sup>52</sup> without associating this with the National Party's political program or the appointment at that time of a Deputy Director who spoke no Afrikaans. No attempt is made to determine how becoming a State-aided institution in 1954 affected the functioning of the Library in practice, the nature of the relationship between the Library and the Government, nor any influence it may have had on the style of Varley's leadership. Varley's resignation and departure from South Africa in 1961 after an illustrious career is not explained, and perfunctorily recorded in a single sentence.<sup>53</sup> Tyrrell-Glynn devotes many times as much space to the resignation of Deputy Director I.M. Murray in 1945,<sup>54</sup> who is best-remembered for the quarrel in 1938 which led to the early retirement of the then Director, A.C.G. Lloyd. The range of sources consulted by Tyrrell-Glynn is very limited, chiefly newspaper cuttings, the Library's annual report, Board minutes, and

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<sup>49</sup> South African Library: its history, collections and librarians, 1818-1968, ed. C. Pama (Cape Town: Balkema, 1968).

<sup>50</sup> Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library 50 years, 50(1-2), September-December 1995.

<sup>51</sup> W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn, 'The History of the South African Public Library, Cape Town, 1830-1961' (D.Phil thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1983), 582 pp.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, pp.487-491.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p.524.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p.486.

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the professional magazine *South African Libraries*.

A thesis by Maryna Fraser<sup>55</sup> on the bibliographical function of a national library is in quite a different league. Fraser seeks to define a national library in the rapidly evolving South African professional context of the post-war period. Her list of 'essential' and 'desirable' functions of a national library follows the typology of Humphreys.<sup>56</sup> Her study, while setting out to cover the bibliographical work of both the South African Library and State Library, provides a far better evaluation of the two libraries in its introductory chapters than Tyrrell-Glynn does and also draws international comparisons. However, the bulk of her dissertation is not relevant to the present study.

Some years after the death of former State Library Director Matthew Stirling in 1965, a memorial volume was compiled<sup>57</sup> containing a diversity of essays, some of them historical, which have proved indispensable sources for this study. For Director Hans Aschenborn's 66th birthday in 1986, the State Library published another very useful compendium of essays as a *Festschrift*.<sup>58</sup>

Initially the literature on national libraries dealt with current issues, but especially after 1994 the tendency was for published articles to anticipate radical changes. P.E. Westra (Director of the South African Library) and R.B. Zaaiman (at the time Director of the State Library) produced a joint paper entitled 'The Two National Libraries of South Africa' (1991)<sup>59</sup> which was a great deal more balanced than G. van N. Viljoen's 1965 paper 'Die Nasionale Biblioteke van Suid-Afrika',<sup>60</sup> but for all it foresaw of the future, it, too, could as well have been written in 1965. Westra may not have been aware at the time their paper was prepared, that Reg Zaaiman had delivered a stinging critique of the South African Library in a University of South Africa seminar (14 August 1990). In his opinion the South African Library lacked authenticity in 1818, in 1937 and in 1990 when compared with popular expectations of libraries at those dates and had always lacked legitimacy.<sup>61</sup> Considering the prominence of the speaker and the sweeping claims he made (which were not

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<sup>55</sup> H.M. Fraser, 'The National Library, with Special Reference to its Bibliographical Function' (MA thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1973), 325 pp.

<sup>56</sup> K.W. Humphreys, 'National Library Functions' (1966), pp.158-169.

<sup>57</sup> *Give the People Light: essays in honour of Matthew Miller Stirling*, Contributions to Library Science series, no.13 (Pretoria: State Library, 1972).

<sup>58</sup> *National Libraries: some South African perspectives on challenges and opportunities, a tribute to H.J. Aschenborn at sixty-five*, ed. by J.A. Boon, P.J. Lor and K.P. Prinsloo. Contributions to Library Science series 33 (Pretoria: State Library, 1986).

<sup>59</sup> P.E. Westra and R.B. Zaaiman, 'The Two National Libraries of South Africa' in: *Alexandria*, 3(2), 1991, pp.101-119.

<sup>60</sup> G. van N. Viljoen, 'Die Nasionale Biblioteke van Suid-Afrika' in: *South African Libraries*, 33(2), October 1965, pp.46-54. (Address delivered at the SALA Conference, 1965.)

<sup>61</sup> R.B. Zaaiman, 'Die Stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek' (1991), pp.3-23.

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backed up with evidence), these assertions may contain a grain of truth and are considered seriously in the present study.

Turning to the State bureaucracy, the author identified and consulted two relevant studies in this sparsely-studied field. The first, a thesis by Barry Standish on the public service,<sup>62</sup> is particularly valuable as it includes statutory bodies and the Department of National Education, providing statistical analysis which would otherwise be difficult to locate. He draws attention to the major problem of the exercise of political control over a bureaucracy informed by self-interest. Another serious problem he highlights is the dearth of data, or, if available, its lack of comparability. The figures he cites immediately pre-date the 1983 constitutional changes which split-up the Department of National Education and demonstrate that the employment of non-Whites in the public service was already widespread owing to the dearth of White candidates. In common with other writers, he does not identify the legal authority upon which non-statutory job reservation in the clerical and administrative grades of the public service (still being applied in the early 1980s) was based.

On the structure of the South African public service a couple of years earlier, while still at its most bloated, Johannes du Plessis wrote a dissertation<sup>63</sup> assessing the Public Service Commission's co-ordination and regulation of staff recruitment and benefits. This was pertinent to the South African Library whose criteria for personnel qualifications, salaries, service conditions and inter-transferability of its staff were determined by the Commission, causing the Library considerable difficulties. Du Plessis compares the practices of the South African Public Service Commission with similar bodies in other countries. However, much of the thesis is exceedingly technical.

Deborah Posel published an important paper on class and power in the public service<sup>64</sup> which is of special significance in this study respecting the callous official attitude to non-Whites' remuneration and the manner in which reform was blocked, the latter being the special subject of Nondas Bellos' survey of senior public servants about the time of the 1994 elections.<sup>65</sup> Graeme Moodie presents a more favourable view of the senior officials of the Department of National Education and their well-meaning interaction with the universities.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> J.B. Standish, 'State Employment in South Africa' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), 273 pp.

<sup>63</sup> J.E. du Plessis, 'Gesentraliseerde Beheer oor die Personeeladministrasie van Staatsdiensdepartemente, 1894-1979' (D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1980), 292 pp.

<sup>64</sup> D. Posel, 'Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: paradoxes of the apartheid State' in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25(1), March 1999, pp.99-119.

<sup>65</sup> N. Bellos, 'South Africa's Democratic Experiment: is the incumbent senior civil service apartheid's rear guard?' (PhD thesis, University of Colorado, Denver, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> G.C. Moodie, 'The State and the Liberal Universities in South Africa: 1948-1990' in: *Higher Education* (Amsterdam) 27, 1994, pp.1-40.

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### NOTES ON SOURCES

Books, journal articles and other secondary sources providing background information were consulted widely and influenced the narrative. There are several Acts of Parliament, Provincial Ordinances and Government Regulations pertinent to matters raised in this study, and reports of a number of official committees of inquiry into the State-aided institutions and the national libraries. These have been listed in 'Sources Consulted' at the end of this study (pp.323-350).

Turning to other resources available to the researcher investigating the national libraries (the South African Library in particular), the present study would not have been feasible without access to the administrative archive of the South African Library, now part of the Manuscripts Collection of the National Library in Cape Town, to which the author was kindly granted access by the former National Librarian, John Tsebe. This archive is well-ordered and possesses a detailed inventory.<sup>67</sup> The official signed and bound minutes of the Board from 1822 to 1999 are in the direct custody of the Special Collections Department (although working copies of most Board agendas and minutes from 1954 to 1999 may be found in the administrative archive). The minutes up to 1984 were indexed on cards<sup>68</sup> which may be consulted in the Special Collections Department. Other records from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are fragmentary, but that period is of little relevance to the present study. Systematic filing of correspondence commenced with the appointment of Director D.H. Varley in 1938,<sup>69</sup> and the archive increased in volume and complexity after the Library became a State-aided institution in 1954. The files occupy 91 linear metres of shelving, arranged in three divisions: MSL (incorporating the unbound Board minutes, ledgers, wage and salary registers, general administrative matters and chronologically arranged copies of outgoing correspondence), MSM (correspondence up to 1984 arranged by an eclectic subject scheme), and MSN (correspondence from 1984 arranged by subject according to a hierarchical classification scheme). Incoming correspondence was usually filed in the MSM and MSN series. The archive is noticeably deficient in respect of copies of more recent correspondence by email.

The equivalent administrative archive of the State Library exists but is not in a satisfactory state. The author was not able to consult the files. The files up to the 1960s were mislaid during the move to the Library's present building in 2007 but have recently been located, and the remaining files are in the keeping of the National Librarian's administrative staff. The files occupy 119 linear metres of shelving. The subject index to the filing system prior to 1993 is lost so the archive is

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<sup>67</sup> National Library of South Africa, Manuscripts Collection. 'South African Library (1818-1999) Administrative Archives: MSL, MSM, MSN', compiled by P.R. Coates, 1999, revised 2011. Unpublished, 59, xi pp.

<sup>68</sup> The necessary competence was no longer available after the retirement of the Library's Secretary, Mrs R.P. Brown, in 1984. (Author's comment.)

<sup>69</sup> The lack of early correspondence is noted by A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences, Part 2', in: *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, 36(2), December 1981, p.66.

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effectively inaccessible. Some water damage in 2013 was reported.<sup>70</sup>

The archives of the Departments of Education and Cultural Affairs in the State Archives, Pretoria, were not accessed. Files of the Department of Education, Arts and Science have been listed on the National Archives (Central Archive Repository) database, but careful analysis of records located by known correspondence reference numbers has failed to reveal any systematic filing method by which groups of related documents can be retrieved. Written enquiries regarding inventories were not answered, leaving one to presume there is none.

The South African Library's printed reports are available from 1830<sup>71</sup> but become increasingly useful repositories of information from the start of Varley's directorship. This is the source of most financial and statistical information used in the study. Naming staff on the establishment together with their rank at the end of each reporting period commenced with the 1977-1978 biennial report (imitating the practice of the State Library's annual reports since the financial year 1968-69). Annual reports of the State Library are available from 1910 to 1998 and contain a wealth of information about the activities of that Library. Editions after 1950 were consulted for this study. Reports of this kind are inevitably designed to reflect as favourably as possible on the respective institution. An abstract of the activities of the two libraries (usually reflecting the year to October), may be found in the annual reports of the Department of Education, Arts and Science and its successors, but are of little research value except to demonstrate what the Department considered to be flattering to its own image. Reference was made to the annual reports of the Government's permanent Public Service Commission (afterwards the Commission for Administration).

There were serial publications compiled by the South African Library other than the annual or biennial reports which have been valuable sources of information. The Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library (since 1946), the external News from the South African Library (1986-1997), and staff magazines including *The Sapling* (1951-1973), *South African Library Newsletter* and *Staff Bulletin* (1978-1999) were all careful to cultivate a positive image of the South African Library and avoid criticism of Government and its policies.

Finally, the author acknowledges with gratitude correspondence and discussions with several past staff of the South African Library, see 'Sources Consulted' (p.331).

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<sup>70</sup> Information from D. Drijfhout and personal inspection by the author, December 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Annual reports are available from 1830 (according to the National Library online catalogue); they were issued biennially between 1954-1955 and 1979-1980, annually (corresponding to the financial year) 1981-82 to 1986-87, then by calendar year from 1987 onwards. The last published report was for 1996, a report was compiled for Tabling in Parliament for 1997, while reports for 1998 and 1999 were partially drafted but never completed. The title varies.

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South African Manuscripts Collection (MS).  
Views of the two aisles of the South African Library's administrative archives.  
Left aisle contains MSL, right aisle contains MSM (left side) and MSN (right side).

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Douglas Varley and his staff, 1961.

## Prologue. LIBRARY TRANSFORMATION, 1928-1952

In South Africa, ruled by nationalists under Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog, policy priorities were already presaging the principal policies of the post-1948 National Party apartheid Government: national sovereignty and White pre-eminence. Pressed by Hertzog, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration of 15 November 1926 which promised Dominions such as South Africa independent statehood. Shortly afterwards, the President and Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation of New York visited South Africa as part of a tour of the new Dominions, which owing to its timing and the countries visited, suggests an intervention to expand United States interests in former British colonies. During that visit they were persuaded by Matthew Stirling, shortly to become the Director of the State Library, to intervene in South Africa's library affairs. Leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church also sought the Corporation's help to resolve the Poor White question, even though the secular authorities had begun to address this issue for themselves. In 1928, the Corporation sent two leading librarians to survey the library situation, and in 1929 instigated a major survey of the Poor White situation. The purpose of the Carnegie Corporation may have been to deflect South Africa from social democratic tendencies, such as the 1928 plans of the British Labour Party for a 'socialist commonwealth' with nationalized land, power and transport, and better social services.

Asserting its sovereignty, the South African Government broadened the scope of the Department of Labour to include Social Welfare (April 1935), and a year later (April 1936) appointed the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa, on which the Director of the South African Library played a leading part. The findings of this Committee, presented to Parliament in 1937 and published in 1938, served as a blueprint which guided the development of library provision up to 1962, putting policy direction back in local hands. But before much could be done, the Second World War intervened.

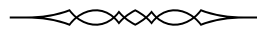
The 1937 blueprint called for free public libraries to replace subscription libraries, the extension of free library services to rural areas, and special library services for disadvantaged groups such as juveniles, the blind, and 'non-Europeans'. University and college libraries needed to be developed, and existing libraries of Government departments co-ordinated. Of special importance to this study was the resolution that there should be two national libraries, recommending that both relinquish their existing lending library services.

From his arrival in 1938 as the new Director of the South African Library, D.H. Varley spent the next fifteen years energetically implementing this blue-print in the Western Cape. During this transitional period, from limited library provision for an estimated 3% of the White population developed a modern and comprehensive free library service. This is the subject of this Prologue, and is exemplified in the four Sections which follow. Each Section in this and subsequent Chapters is designed to illustrate the South African Library's interaction with Government, other entities such as the South African Library Association, and its users in the context of operational autonomy and financial dependence.

## PROLOGUE



The Lending Department, February 1946



“... as inviting as a police station and as cheerful as a morgue,”  
said Library Board member A.Z. Berman in March 1937.

## Prologue, first section : The Carnegie Corporation's interventions in South Africa

The withdrawal of Government funding in 1829 thwarted the South African Library's aim to become a centre of learning at the Cape along the lines of the London Institution.<sup>1</sup> It survived as a subscription lending library but offered a free reference service to the general public. Despite many drawbacks, the South African Library collections were, a century later, unrivalled in South Africa,<sup>2</sup> and comparable with major libraries overseas.<sup>3</sup> Both library and political environments in South Africa were ripe for rapid change in the inter-war years. A feature of that environment was rapid urbanization and the associated Poor White question.

In 1927, Matthew Stirling (the progressive librarian of the Germiston Public Library, afterwards Director of the State Library, Pretoria) met the visiting President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Dr F.P. Kepple, and its Secretary, James Bertram, and persuaded them of the need to investigate the backward state of library provision in South Africa.<sup>4</sup> The Carnegie Corporation's generous funding of libraries in the United States of America and elsewhere was legendary.

Two Commissioners, Milton Ferguson of California and Septimus Pitt of Glasgow, were sent to South Africa in 1928. They each submitted a report to the Carnegie Corporation, which published them separately with identical titles in 1929.<sup>5</sup> Their investigation culminated in a national conference on library matters (Bloemfontein, 15-17 November)<sup>6</sup> which was attended by representatives of all levels of Government, universities, and libraries including two delegates

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<sup>1</sup> P.R. Coates, 'Was the South African Library an Athenaeum?' in: Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa 66(4), October-December 2012, pp.13-23.

<sup>2</sup> In 1934, for example, the South African Library's book stock was double its next contender, the Johannesburg City Library, and three times that of the next, namely the State Library in Pretoria, although in terms of books circulated, it was far exceeded by Johannesburg, and just behind the State Library (Official South African Municipal Yearbook, 1934-35, pp.553-556). It circulated the highest proportion of non-fiction and serious literature in the Cape Peninsula (for 1930-1950 circulation figures, see Annexure 2), albeit at the highest cost to the subscriber (for comparative subscriptions rates 1949, see Annexure 3). Statistics by topic are not readily obtainable to allow comparison with other centres.

<sup>3</sup> L.E. Taylor, *South African Libraries* (London: Bingley, 1967), p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Surveys had recently been undertaken in the United States in 1926-27 (its four-volume report entitled *A Survey of Libraries in the United States*) and in Canada 1927-28 (its report entitled *British Columbia Library Survey, 1927-1928*). In 1933 a more comprehensive survey of Canadian libraries was sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> For bibliographical details, see note 10 below.

<sup>6</sup> T. Friis, *The Public Library in South Africa: an evaluative study* (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962), p.79; 'Matthew Miller Stirling 1889-1965' in: *South African Libraries*, 34(1) July 1966, p.5; L.E. Taylor, *South African Libraries* (1967), p.18. The South African Library was represented by Eric Walker, the South African historian and member of the Library's Board, and A.C.G. Lloyd the Library's Director.

## PROLOGUE

from the South African Library. The resolutions of the conference emphasized the need for a country-wide co-ordinated, free library service, including provision for 'non-Europeans'.<sup>7</sup> This initiative by the Carnegie Corporation in 1928, would, it was hoped, set off a revolution in thinking about libraries, not least the development of free public libraries in South Africa.<sup>8</sup> South African Library Director Lloyd had been closely involved throughout the Commissioners' visit, and the following year spent six months in Britain, most of it at Commissioner Pitt's library in Glasgow.<sup>9</sup> The Carnegie Corporation followed this up with generous grants. The South African Library Association was established in 1930 with Carnegie encouragement.

The 1928 conference had avoided specifying which existing library should be the central library,<sup>10</sup> but in 1932 the Carnegie Corporation designated the State Library to be the 'Central Library of South Africa' managing inter-library loans, and provided \$125,000 to make this possible.<sup>11</sup> In a rather unfortunate metaphor - considering Nazi book-burning taking place in Germany at the time - Charles Christie (a South African Carnegie Trustee) saw this grant as 'the application of the torch to the pile they had built'.<sup>12</sup>

This brings us to the other arm of the Carnegie intervention in South Africa, namely the investigation of the Poor White question and its consequences. Assistance was requested in 1927, and the Corporation approved the survey in 1929. A detailed sociological investigation,

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<sup>7</sup> T. Friis, *The Public Library* (1962), pp.79-82 summarizes pages 16-23 of M.J. Ferguson, *Memorandum. Libraries in the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia and Kenya Colony*. (New York, Carnegie Corporation, 1929).

<sup>8</sup> Similar surveys were funded by the Carnegie Corporation in New Zealand by R. Munn and J. Barr who published *New Zealand Libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*. (Christchurch: Libraries Association of New Zealand, 1934), and in Australia by R. Munn and E.R. Pitt, whose report was entitled *Australian Libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement* (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1935).

<sup>9</sup> One may speculate that Lloyd assisted Pitt write his 'Memorandum' which was published during 1929. Stirling travelled to the United States of America in the same year.

<sup>10</sup> Commissioner Pitt favoured Pretoria for the central library though Cape Town or Bloemfontein were possible (S.A. Pitt, *Memorandum. Libraries in the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia and Kenya Colony*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1929, p.21), Commissioner Ferguson seemed to be of the same opinion (M.J. Ferguson, *Memorandum. Libraries in the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia and Kenya Colony*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1929, p.23). The conference made no specific recommendation (T. Friis, *The Public Library* (1962), p.80).

<sup>11</sup> The South African Library may have been the first choice. Dr Loram (a Carnegie South African Trustee) requested that the South African Library takes responsibility for the Carnegie non-European circulating library, but Lloyd, then just back from Britain, needed the support of the Superintendent-General of Education for the use of Coloured schools as library depots, which was declined (NLCT-MC MSM G10 (1917-1955), Loram to Lloyd, 23 October 1929, etc.)

<sup>12</sup> C. Christie, 'Andrew Carnegie and the Free Library: a centenary address to the Transvaal Branch of the SALA', 29 January 1936, p.2, (offprint no.5 from *South African Libraries*, 3(4), 1936).

## LIBRARY TRANSFORMATION, 1928-1952

conducted by the Columbia University-trained sociologist E.G. Malherbe, supported by two American sociologists, resulted in a report in five volumes,<sup>13</sup> a landmark in the history of sociology in South Africa.<sup>14</sup> The inquiry concluded with a National Congress at Kimberley in October 1934 where the future 'Architect of Apartheid,' Dr H.F. Verwoerd, in an address, urged that preferential employment be given to Poor Whites.<sup>15</sup>

It was believed that libraries would play a role in social upliftment and ideological moulding of Whites in South Africa, a concept which was the rationale of the free library movement in the United States of America. Here the Carnegie Corporation was providing vast amounts of money for library development, including segregated provision for Black Americans (segregation was acceptable to the Carnegie Corporation). The attitude of the American Commissioner Ferguson towards South African non-Whites was very plain. 'An effort should be made,' he wrote, 'to prove that Coloured children have the capacity for such educational adjuncts [books]'; while the 'natives' around Johannesburg are unlettered and 'the library has never before attempted to bring its lifting power to bear in the gropings towards the light of so primitive a people'.<sup>16</sup> Referring to public libraries and 'the race problem', Ferguson wrote, '... it is feared that if the subscription method of support is not kept all these inferior races will be entitled to use the books on the same terms as those of European origin'.<sup>17</sup> Commissioner Pitt in his report assumed separate services to 'Europeans' at once, and 'non-Europeans' later.<sup>18</sup> The Corporation provided funding for box-library services to non-Whites, some \$32,000 (6.7% of its investment in South Africa amounting to \$479,180 between 1928 and 1954), of which \$11,500 was to be used in the Cape.<sup>19</sup>

In April 1935, the South African Government reclaimed the initiative by broadening the scope of the Department of Labour to include Social Welfare and in 1936 sponsored the work of an Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa. Its 1937

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<sup>13</sup> The Poor White Problem in South Africa: report of the Carnegie Commission, (Stellenbosch, Pro Ecclesia Press, 1932) 1, p.i; H. Giliomee *The Afrikaners: biography of a people* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), p.346.

<sup>14</sup> The Poor White Problem in South Africa, 5v., cited above. In the view of Dian Joubert, this was comparable in significance only to the Tomlinson Report of 1955 (*Toe Witmense Arm Was: uit die Carnegie-verslag, 1932*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1972, p.1).

<sup>15</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (2003), p.347.

<sup>16</sup> M.J. Ferguson, *Memorandum* (1929), p.27.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.10. Ferguson may here be reflecting the views he encountered, rather than expressing views of his own.

<sup>18</sup> S.A. Pitt, *Memorandum* (1929). p.19.

<sup>19</sup> F. Anderson, *Carnegie Corporation Library Program 1911-1961* (New York: The Corporation, 1963), pp.100-101.

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report would act as the blueprint for library development in South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Deputy Director of the South African Library, Ian Murray,<sup>21</sup> who made a tour of inspection of modern public library systems in Canada and the United States, funded by a Carnegie travel grant, returned filled with enthusiasm. Early in 1937, at his own expense, he published his report which was both critical and constructive. This action was viewed as insubordination by the Board, especially his remarks that the Library 'was out of touch with the community it is supposed to serve and with modern methods of library administration.'<sup>22</sup> Lloyd tendered his resignation, while Murray was granted eighteen months' unpaid leave.<sup>23</sup>

After the Second World War the Carnegie Corporation switched to funding education,<sup>24</sup> so while the pending visit by Commissioner Shepardson in June 1948 put the South African Library in a flurry of activity working out what project funding the library could request, such as a proposed national register of manuscripts,<sup>25</sup> Shepardson, during his visit, made it clear that Carnegie Corporation was unlikely to provide assistance.<sup>26</sup> An urgent application in 1951 to fund the purchase of a microfilm reader was also rejected.<sup>27</sup> However, in 1957 the Carnegie Corporation made an unsolicited donation to the South African Library of 350 books 'portraying contemporary America, and explaining its origins'.<sup>28</sup>

It is a commonplace in writings relating to South Africa that the library interventions of the Carnegie Corporation were beneficial (such as the glowing tribute paid by Christie<sup>29</sup>) and may

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<sup>20</sup> T. Friis, *The Public Library* (1963), pp.79-90, 165-169; A.M.L. Robinson, 'National Libraries, their History and Development with special reference to South Africa,' in: South African Library Association. *Papers Presented at the Conference, Johannesburg (Potchefstroom, the Association, 1978)*, pp.423-436; L.E. Taylor, *South African Libraries* (1967), pp.18-19.

<sup>21</sup> Ian Milne Murray was formerly lecturer in Economics at University of Cape Town and took up his duties as Assistant Librarian at the South African Library in March 1930 (South African Library. Report, 1930, p.[1]).

<sup>22</sup> I.M. Murray, *The Scope and Functions of the Public Library in Modern Democratic Communities* (Cape Town: the Author, 1937), p.39.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14, 28 April, 26 May 1937 and letters by Lloyd and Murray, Annex no.40, 41 to the Minutes .

<sup>24</sup> E.H. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy: the ideology of philanthropy* (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1983), p.61.

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 21(g) Memorandum for Mr Whitney H. Shepardson ..., June 1948.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 August 1948.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 30 May 1951. The microfilm reader concerned was British-made, not American, which may explain it.

<sup>28</sup> NLSA-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 6 August 1957; 4 February 1958.

<sup>29</sup> C. Christie, 'Andrew Carnegie and the Free Library' (1936).

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well be largely true. The South African Library received only faint praise by Ferguson<sup>30</sup> and a passing mention by Pitt, and was never a direct beneficiary of Carnegie funding. A problem identified by Ronald Benge in respect of Carnegie library grants was that they imported into the United Kingdom an American concept of endowing libraries which effectively relieved the authorities of their responsibility.<sup>31</sup> This may also be seen in South Africa: official reaction was only forthcoming with the Interdepartmental Committee's 1936-1937 investigation some eight years after Ferguson and Pitt's investigations, followed by further delays in giving effect to its recommendations due to the 1939-1945 war. The choice of the State Library as its vehicle in South Africa, although a logical one, brought with it conditions prescribed by the Corporation: its Director would be the Permanent Library Organizer of South Africa, the City of Pretoria had to provide sufficient funds to allow the State Library to provide a free public library service to Whites, that the State must provide an annual grant of £2000, and that three Carnegie Trustees should have seats on the Library's Board.<sup>32</sup> The agreement between the State Library and the Carnegie Trustees was ratified by the Department of the Interior and came into effect on 15 January 1933.<sup>33</sup> Edward Berman, writing about Carnegie Corporation's championing the cause of the disadvantaged (such as the Poor White investigation), says they did it on its own terms and insisted its officers should not be impeded in their work by the intended beneficiaries.<sup>34</sup> Berman's main interest was to demonstrate the degree to which American charitable foundations made or advanced American foreign policy throughout the world, confirmed in the case of the South African Library by the refusal to fund the purchase of a British-made microfilm reader, the unsolicited donation of American printed propaganda, and in 1936 the award of a study grant to Ian Murray to inspect public library work in the United States which had the result of trying to deflect the South African Library towards American-style public library work and away from its national library objectives.

The poverty survey of 1929-1933 exemplified the scientific methods of High Modernism. It fed (albeit unintentionally) into the policy of legislated White preference and Verwoerdian apartheid. In this instance, knowledge gained through the Poor White inquiry in South Africa

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<sup>30</sup> M.J. Ferguson, Memorandum (1929), pp.5-6.

<sup>31</sup> R.C. Benge, 'Life without Father: the post-Carnegie period' in: *Library Association Record*, 59(2), February 1957, pp.49-52, and in his book *Libraries and Cultural Change* (London: Bingley, 1970), pp.163-164.

<sup>32</sup> There were three Carnegie Trust Board representatives to 1964, reduced to two and finally one up to 1987 after which the Board comprised solely of Government appointees.

<sup>33</sup> P.C. Coetzee, *Die Carnegie-Biblioteeksending van 1928* (Pretoria: State Library, 1975), pp.17-20.

<sup>34</sup> E.H. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations* (1983), pp.1-2.

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was used (as was so much High Modernist thinking in general) for terrible purposes.<sup>35</sup> Jeremy Seekings makes a good case for seeing the real purpose of this Poor White initiative by the Carnegie Corporation being to derail the South African Government's own efforts to develop a welfare state for Whites and Coloureds and solve the Poor White problem in its own way.<sup>36</sup>

These Carnegie Corporation interventions usurped the proper roles of the South African authorities which had clearly attempted nothing in the library field and achieved little in the field of social welfare. But the secondary motive driving the Carnegie endowments and grants was to spread United States influence in the British Dominions, as claimed by Berman,<sup>37</sup> and should not be ignored.

The favour shown to the State Library by the Carnegie Corporation at this time and subsequently, while both of the Corporation's consultants considered the South African Library's future lay in an amalgamation with the Library of Parliament, does indicate their belief that the South African Library was not, in their opinion, a legitimate recipient of their financial assistance. From the perspective of the South African Library this may have been a blessing, as it could remain autonomous of the Carnegie Corporation and the control it exercised over a much more compliant State Library. One should keep in mind that the Corporation's South African representative, Dr Loram, did not espouse the liberal and non-racial ethos for which the South African Library prided itself.

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<sup>35</sup> 'Columbia University Libraries Oral History Research Office: Carnegie Corporation Oral History Project. First inquiry into poverty.' ([www.columbia.edu/culweb/digital/collections/oral\\_history/carnegie/special-features](http://www.columbia.edu/culweb/digital/collections/oral_history/carnegie/special-features), accessed 26 October 2012).

<sup>36</sup> J. Seekings, 'Not a Single White Person should be Allowed to go Under: Swartgevaar and the origins of South Africa's welfare state, 1924-1929'. ([www.cssr.uct.ac.za/sites/cssr.uct.ac.za/files/pubs/wp154.pdf](http://www.cssr.uct.ac.za/sites/cssr.uct.ac.za/files/pubs/wp154.pdf), accessed 12 December 2012), and *The Carnegie Commission and the Backlash against Welfare State-building in South Africa, 1931-1937*. CSSR Working Paper no.159. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Centre for Social Science Research, Social Surveys Unit, 2006.)

<sup>37</sup> E.H. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations* (1983), pp.2-8.

## Prologue, second section : Consequences of the Carnegie Intervention

The Carnegie Corporation and its local Carnegie South African Trust levered the library profession out of its rut. As noted in the first Section, the Corporation dictated its terms, and invariably held up for emulation American practice (whether desirable or not is not the issue, but the impairment of autonomy this implied). Carnegie money not only funded new library services (such as the 'non-European' services in the Transvaal and Cape Provinces) but moulded the minds and opinions of prominent librarians through study and travel grants, of which Ian Murray (Deputy Director of the South African Library) was a recipient.<sup>1</sup>

Murray spent three months during the latter part of 1936 visiting public libraries in Canada and the United States of America.<sup>2</sup> In April of the same year Library Director A.C.G. Lloyd was nominated by the Administrator to represent the Cape<sup>3</sup> on a Government-appointed fact-finding committee on libraries.

The Government's Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa was established by the Minister of the Interior<sup>4</sup> in a belated effort to reassert the authority of the State after the intervention of the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>5</sup> Both agreed that the subscription basis of library provision must be replaced by a free public library system throughout the Union (including rural areas) for which State funding was essential.<sup>6</sup> They also

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<sup>1</sup> F. Anderson, *Carnegie Corporation Library Program 1911-1961* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1963), p.12, mentions three South African university librarians being funded to study librarianship, and others receiving grants to make study tours, no names being mentioned. New York's Columbia University Library School was the institution of choice of several Afrikaans-speaking aspirant librarians, including G.V. Marais of Stellenbosch University, René Immelman, later of the University of Cape Town, and the Chief Government Librarian, S.J. Kritzinger. There were close ties between the Carnegie Corporation and Columbia University Library School which was second only to the University of Chicago as a recipient of Carnegie funding, some \$590,000 in the inter-war years, including subsidies for professional library training (*ibid.*, pp.72-73). H.C. van Rooy and his wife Johanna, both of Potchefstroom University Library, graduated at Columbia in 1948 (*Who's Who of Southern Africa*, 1972, p.1013).

<sup>2</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 April 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> State-funded institutions including the South African Library and State Library were this Department's responsibility.

<sup>5</sup> The Committee pointed out that the findings of the 1928 Bloemfontein conference which concluded the investigations of Commissioners Ferguson and Pitt 'have not as yet resulted in any government action being taken towards the betterment of the library situation in the Union' except its consent to the central role of the State Library prescribed by the Carnegie Corporation (*Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa* (Cape Town: Cape Times [for Government Printer], 1937), p.9).

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, pp.10-13 and following pages.

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agreed on library provision for juveniles, the blind, and 'non-Europeans'.<sup>7</sup> The largest part of its recommendations related to the national libraries, that 'a sharp distinction should be drawn between their functions as national and municipal libraries<sup>8</sup> respectively' and delineated the direction each should take: the State Library being the Central Library of the Union, and the South African Library to be the nation's Reference Library and repository of its literary treasures (urging an amalgamation between the latter and the Library of Parliament).<sup>9</sup>

Murray returned in 1936 filled with enthusiasm for America's modern, free public libraries and the proactive and wide-ranging services offered to their patrons (subsequently advocating Volksboekereye or 'People's book-collections'<sup>10</sup>). For decades, opinion on the South African Library had been divided between proponents of a national reference library along the lines of the British Museum Library (the view of Lloyd and most of the Board), and supporters of the idea of it becoming a popular lending library which Murray was determined it should be, which had the backing of City Councillor and Board member A.Z. Berman.

In 1932 the decorum of the Board had been disturbed by the nomination of the socialist A.Z. Berman as the City's representative. Berman, who strongly supported a free, popular library service, certainly tried to liven things up on the Board (describing himself as a 'Rebel Trustee') which the staid members had no choice but to endure in view of Berman's success in inducing the City to increase its grant.<sup>11</sup>

The report of the Interdepartmental Committee, although dated 1937, was only released in 1938 after its Tabling in Parliament. Murray's report on his visit to the United States of America he published at his own cost early in 1937, quoting (on the front endpaper) a statement by that ultimate unscrupulous capitalist, Andrew Carnegie: 'I choose free libraries as the best agencies for improving the masses of the people, because they give nothing for nothing. They only help those who help themselves.'<sup>12</sup> Murray, with a masters degree in

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp.15-17.

<sup>8</sup> The South African Library and the State Library were never municipal libraries, despite receiving subsidies.

<sup>9</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee (1937), pp.18-20.

<sup>10</sup> R.F.M. Immelman and I.M. Murray, *Volksboekereye: die biblioteek is die volk se universiteit* (Kaapstad: Unie-Volkspers, 1939). After completing his librarianship studies at Columbia University, Immelman travelled in North America, also spending time - seemingly together with Murray - visiting libraries in Northern Europe in 1938, then became Librarian of the University of Cape Town. This publication (the first in Afrikaans on librarianship) is a collection of articles first published in *Die Huisgenoot*.

<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 31 January 1935; South African Library. Report, 1934, pp.[1-2].

<sup>12</sup> I.M. Murray, *The Scope and Functions of the Public Library in Modern Democratic Communities* (Cape Town: the Author, 1937).

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economics, demonstrated in subsequent writings and actions his concern for the rights of 'the masses'.<sup>13</sup> After eulogising the situation in America,<sup>14</sup> excepting the woefully inadequate provision for Blacks in the southern states,<sup>15</sup> he turned to the failure of Government to introduce the co-ordinated library system recommended in 1928, censuring the Minister of the Interior for the excuse made at a subsequent conference that 'South Africa was not a nation of readers'.<sup>16</sup> He then condemned the City of Cape Town for its failure to support the free library movement.<sup>17</sup> Having disposed of the Government and the City, Murray turned to the South African Library itself, criticizing the irrelevance of its much of its stock, its uncritical acceptance of private book collections of all sorts, the decay of some of its most valuable material such as the newspaper collection, its supplying of ephemeral fiction to satisfy its paying clients, its obsolete classification system, and the rambling building unsuited to the purposes of a library. The South African Library's supreme fault was its lack of an objective. He continued:

The entire library position at Cape Town requires thorough re-organization and that the period of drift should cease. The present state of chaos is, no doubt, in part due to the joint responsibility of the Union Government and the Municipality of Cape Town, neither of which has ever made adequate financial provision for the institution, as well as the indifference of the public, to whom it means very little at present.<sup>18</sup>

Without consulting either the Board or the Director, he circulated copies of the report to the press which endorsed his views in editorial comments. 'Rebel Trustee' Berman was interviewed and gleefully contributed to the assault on the Library's reputation, describing the Library as 'a kind of old-age home where ancient and decrepit gentlemen are imitating research scholars in the British Museum, browsing among dust-laden tomes of Africana'.<sup>19</sup> Murray's action was viewed as insubordination by the majority of the board, especially his remarks that the Library 'was out of touch with the community it is supposed to serve and with

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<sup>13</sup> Ian Milne Murray: see page 6, note 21.

<sup>14</sup> I.M. Murray, *The Scope and Functions of the Public Library* (1937), pp.7-24.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, pp.25-26. Murray conceded that even segregated facilities for Blacks in USA fostered their use of libraries.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp.31-32. It was that Minister's Department which provided the greater part of the Library's income.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, pp.33-41. The City had just increased its grant and was a significant contributor to the Library's finances.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, pp.37-40.

<sup>19</sup> 'Library a Kind of Old-age Home: Sweeping Criticism by Mr A.Z. Berman' in: *Cape Times*, 8 March 1937.

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modern methods of library administration.’<sup>20</sup> Murray compounded the offence by releasing his report one week before the annual general meeting of subscribers, scheduled for 12 March 1937, also six weeks before the submission of the report of the Interdepartmental Committee to the Minister.

Predictably, Murray’s criticism and the comments in the press were raised at the annual meeting of subscribers, Berman again taking the lead, describing the Library as an anachronism. ‘At present it is as inviting as a police station and as cheerful as a morgue.’<sup>21</sup> Lloyd, who possessed a mercurial temperament,<sup>22</sup> believed that his position as Director had been compromised and tendered his resignation;<sup>23</sup> Murray, of a neurotic disposition and suffering bouts of depression, for his part applied for eighteen months’ unpaid leave from July 1937 to study librarianship in London and to travel in Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Lloyd had been perfectly aware that changes were necessary, and after his 1929 visit to Britain, made some changes such as placing lending stock on open access, but the Board would not budget for more costly changes like a new issue system or reclassifying the stock according to the Dewey Decimal Classification.<sup>25</sup> In 1930-1931 when the number of subscribers was in rapid decline, he had made a futile attempt to federate all the suburban libraries under the South African Library’s leadership,<sup>26</sup> but its 1893 Act made no provision for branch libraries,<sup>27</sup> while the exclusive subscription libraries (virtually private clubs) saw no reason to pool their resources and were afraid that, following the example of the South African Library, they would be expected to accept non-White members.

Lloyd remained in office until a replacement could be found in the person of Douglas

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<sup>20</sup> I.M. Murray, *The Scope and Functions* (1937), p.39. R.B. Zaaiman considered that Murray’s claims in this pamphlet proved that the Library had no legitimacy in 1937 (see Chapter 6, fifth section, p.255), but this judgement failed to take account of Murray’s aim to make the South African Library a Carnegie-style public library.

<sup>21</sup> *Cape Times*, 13 March 1937, p.19. Berman had made it clear at a board meeting years earlier that he favoured turning the Library into a free lending library for ratepayers (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 September 1934).

<sup>22</sup> S. Bradshaw (‘Memories of A.C.G .Lloyd’ in: *Sapling*: staff news-sheet of the South African Library, 2, January 1961, pp.13-14) describes Lloyd’s mercurial temperament; Murray had received counselling in 1936 and 1937 for a condition then known as ‘psychasthenia’ (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and depression (medical certificates may be found in NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1930-1955)).

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14, 28 April, 26 May 1937 and letter by Lloyd, Annex to the Minutes 40.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, and letter by Murray, Annex to the Minutes 41.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 30 October 1929; 27 November 1929 (Sub-committee on library re-organization).

<sup>26</sup> The records of this initiative may be found in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944) folder marked ‘infra.’

<sup>27</sup> W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn, ‘The History of the South African Public Library, Cape Town, 1830-1961’ (D.Phil. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1983), p.457.

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Varley. The vacancy had been widely advertised<sup>28</sup> and forty-two applications were received. The requirement was someone with academic and library qualifications and experience, under 40 years of age; the successful candidate to be proficient in Afrikaans and English within two years. The short-listed applicants were interviewed, either by a panel of two board members in Cape Town or another in London (Arundell Esdaile and Professor Eric Walker).<sup>29</sup> Esdaile and Walker wrote:

Mr Varley, aged 28 [26], has much the best combination of academic and technical qualifications. He has also studied library administration in various countries, and both in the Royal Empire Society Library and elsewhere has acquired a special knowledge of Africa. He is a good linguist, and it is worth mentioning that his wife (an ex-librarian) is the same. ... We have no hesitation in placing Mr Varley first on our list.<sup>30</sup>

Varley was appointed 'Librarian and Secretary', arriving in Cape Town on 18 March 1938, the 120th anniversary of the South African Library's establishment. Significantly for the future of South Africa and of the Library his arrival also coincided with the start of the commemorative Ox-wagon Trek which unleashed unprecedented Afrikaner nationalist enthusiasm.

Within three months of his arrival he had prepared a comprehensive memorandum taking the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee report as the blueprint for the Library's development, trusting that it had the ultimate backing of the State. Varley assessed the current position as very unsatisfactory, especially the Library's finances, personnel and accommodation, and proposed schedules of short-term and long-term objectives.<sup>31</sup> The board was justifiably impressed. When Lloyd had shown him around the Library,

he took care to warn me, once I had won the confidence of the Trustees, I probably had more real power - within the Library's limitations - than almost any librarian in the world. So I tasted power in my twenties, and learned pretty early on what it is like to exercise Power with Responsibility.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Advertisement in several journals and newspapers, that in the Times Literary Supplement dated 17 July 1937.

<sup>29</sup> South African Library. Report, 1937, p.[2]. No short-listed candidate had a public library background. Esdaile was Secretary of the British Museum, author of *National Libraries of the World* (1934) and the magisterial and often reprinted *Students' Manual of Bibliography* (1931, etc.) while Walker, the South African historian then at Cambridge University, was formerly an active South African Library Board member, representing the Library at the 1928 Carnegie Library Conference in Bloemfontein, and responsible for arranging the Library's Merriman Papers.

<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1, letter undated, ca. November 1937.

<sup>31</sup> This report has been abstracted from the Annexes to the Board minutes; only the cover page remains. (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, [29] June 1938: Annex 57). No other copy has been found. It has been quoted at length in W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn, 'The History' (1983), pp.447-460.

<sup>32</sup> D.H. Varley, 'Varley Valedictory' in: Sapling, October 1961, p.32.

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Varley agreed with the diagnosis (if not the solution) offered by Murray in his pamphlet. The South African Library had failed because of

1. The lack of a clearly-defined policy
2. A financial constitution determined by the 1893 Act of Parliament
3. Inadequate funds for sufficient library personnel
4. A building which he declared unsuitable for modern library conditions.<sup>33</sup>

Many of the long-term and short-term recommendations put to the board were eventually effected.<sup>34</sup> The point has been reached, Varley wrote, that unless it were reorganized in accordance with modern requirements, 'it will lose its leadership, and hinder fatally the cultural progress of South Africa.'<sup>35</sup>

Creating a free public library service in the Peninsula, and indeed throughout the Cape Province,<sup>36</sup> became Varley's primary objective. For this he needed to win over the City and Provincial authorities, assuming he was backed by the national Government. Without this first step, he emphasized, the South African Library could never be liberated to become that true national reference library envisaged by the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee. The immediate predicament was to convince the City of Cape Town to accept (as other cities and even smaller towns of the Union did) that a public library service was a municipal responsibility.<sup>37</sup>

Ian Murray (who requested an early reappointment after Varley took office<sup>38</sup>) had not obtained his qualification in librarianship. But, being somewhat older than Varley, he did not take kindly to his new situation.<sup>39</sup> By the time war broke out in 1939, little if anything had come

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<sup>33</sup> W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn, 'The History of the South African Public Library' (1983), p.448.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, pp.455-456.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.457.

<sup>36</sup> The South African Library had subscribers in all parts of the Peninsula and throughout South Africa (see Annexure 4).

<sup>37</sup> In 1936 the City of Cape Town grudgingly raised its annual subsidy to the South African Library in two stages from £1000 to £2420 (the least amount that would enable the Library to claim the maximum permitted Government grant on the £-for-£ principle and bring it into line with the Pretoria State Library's grant). Lloyd had struggled to extract even this small concession from the City Council, and it was only achieved by bypassing an obdurate Finance Committee, circularizing each individual Councillor. A copy of the printed circular of 20 November 1934 'To the Councillors, City Council of Cape Town', and Lloyd to Town Clerk 12 December 1933 are filed in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944).

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 May, 29 June 1938.

<sup>39</sup> Varley, in 1938 the youngest member of the staff, was sensitive about the matter and allowed Murray to create a virtually autonomous Africana Department, with cataloguing rules, subject heading code and a variant of the Dewey Decimal Classification differing from usage in the rest of the Library, a source of major difficulties later on.

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of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee's resolutions and further developments were shelved for the duration; Murray enlisted in the armed forces.<sup>40</sup>

Library matters were always considered to be an uncontentious topic on which a parliamentary session could end, not least the 1940-41 session. As the session drew to a close, Senator Jones (Natives' Representative) moved that Government's attention be drawn to the 1937 report, and in a long speech, quoted its claim that reading contributed to producing good citizens.<sup>41</sup> A considerable portion of the speech was devoted to the future of the State Library contrasting the Carnegie Corporation's generosity to that Library with Government's neglect of the South African Library which urgently required a new, fire-proof building. As many said before and since, Jones urged Government to amalgamate the South African Library and the Library of Parliament to form a great National Research Library of South Africa.<sup>42</sup> One Senator after the other spoke in favour of libraries and the national libraries in particular, including the Minister of the Interior (H.G. Lawrence)<sup>43</sup> who was careful not to make any promises. On that note of unanimity, the session ended. But talk is cheap. Nevertheless, the tide of official thinking had begun to turn in favour of libraries.

It would be Varley's strategy to exploit the flowing tide of support to provide free services to people in rural areas, to poorer (mostly Coloured) communities, and ultimately in the Cape Town metropolitan area. Only then could the South African Library divest itself of its lending department and concentrate on being the national Reference and Preservation Library. But it required commitment at all three levels of Government (central, provincial and municipal) which, as recorded in the following Sections, took another decade of strenuous effort on Varley's part to achieve. But Varley appears to have assumed that the Library's iconic status rather than tangible national services would give it sufficient legitimacy in the estimation of the authorities. It was only much later that he discovered that with funding would come the sacrifice of that autonomy which the Library was enjoying as a subscription library.

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<sup>40</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 June 1940. The Library made up the difference between his salary and army pay.

<sup>41</sup> Senate. Debates (Official Report) 42, 25 April 1941, col.1735.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, col.1740-1743.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, col.1748-1754.

PROLOGUE



South African Library commissioner R.W. Warner.

## Prologue, third section : The Way Forward

South African Library Director, A.C.G. Lloyd, knew that library services in Cape Town needed radical changes, but there was no means to cover the cost, nor any public agitation in support of free public library facilities. Free public libraries, in the opinion of some, were a manifestation of communism.<sup>1</sup> With a City Council prioritizing the provision of housing for the poor,<sup>2</sup> and a Library Board to whom there appeared to be no way forward,<sup>3</sup> there was a pervading sense of impending extinction. Both Lloyd and his Deputy, Murray, assumed any change would have the South African Library as the hub, administering a free public library service with branch libraries<sup>4</sup> underwritten by the City and the separate national reference division paid for by the State, similar to the situation then prevailing in Pretoria.<sup>5</sup>

D.H. Varley's appointment as Director in 1938 changed everything. Varley's advantages included the vigor of youth (aged 26), unquestioning self-assurance, a brilliant academic record, and the unwavering support of the Board from the outset.

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<sup>1</sup> DH Varley, 'Towards a National Library Service: presidential address' in: *Aspects of Library Work in South Africa: being papers read at the Conference of the South African Library Association* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1948), p.7. It should be noted that the promoter of free public libraries in the City Council was Library Board member A.Z. Berman, a prominent member of the Communist Party at that time.

<sup>2</sup> Housing projects at this time included Gleemore (1926), Bloemhof Flats, District Six (1931-1939), Athlone-Bokmakierrie (1933), houses in Q-Town, flats in the Malay Quarter and Kalk Bay (1939). In 1949, Government discontinued funding Coloured housing. (J.R. Shorten, Cape Town [cover title: *The Golden Jubilee of Greater Cape Town*] (Cape Town: Shorten, 1963), chapter 'Council Housing in Cape Town', pp.451-455.)

<sup>3</sup> 'Doubts as to the advisability of attempting to combine the functions of a free Municipal library with its primary duty as a National library of reference, together with the absence of any immediate prospect of securing the necessary funds have led the Trustees to the conclusion that it is impossible for them to take the lead at present' (South African Library. Report, 1936, p.[2]).

<sup>4</sup> D.H. Varley, *Aspects of Library Co-operation* (offprint from *South African Libraries*, January-April 1941), pp.7-9, lists the grounds of objection. Lloyd had proposed a union of Peninsula libraries in 1914, following the unification of suburban municipalities, and again in 1917, and revived the idea in the form of a federation in 1931; a committee was formed which expired in 1934 without anything coming of it (NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944), [untitled, undated report and analysis of Peninsula libraries]; Minutes of a meeting held at South African Public Library, 20 June [1931]).

<sup>5</sup> The State Library's lending service for Whites was subsidized from 1933 by the City of Pretoria in accordance with an agreement with the Carnegie Corporation. The City operated a rudimentary public library service for Blacks, while a book-box circulating service for Blacks known as the Carnegie Non-European Library which originated in the Germiston Public Library was taken over and run by the State Library, concentrating on the provision of study material. In 1959 the State Library opened branch libraries for Whites in the suburbs of Hercules and Pretoria West, with more planned, and in 1960 took over the City's service for Blacks with branches at Atteridgeville, Vlakfontein and Lady Selborne townships, followed in 1961 by a library for Coloureds at Eersterus. Following the Booysen Committee of inquiry, the Minister of Education insisted that the State Library relinquish its public library operations, which was effected on 1 July 1964. (Source: State Library. Annual Reports.)

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Varley concluded that without creating a free public library service in the Peninsula (or indeed in the Cape Province), the South African Library could never become the true national reference library envisaged by the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee.<sup>6</sup> Like Lloyd, he assumed at first that a free public library service would be administered by the South African Library. Two closely-argued memoranda by Varley, backed by the Board and addressed to the Town Clerk<sup>7</sup> raised issues of the insufficiency of the Library's funding to maintain its national responsibilities and the migration of the population to the suburbs which had reduced subscription income. He admits that separate facilities for Coloured readers might be necessary.<sup>8</sup> He asked to make representations to the responsible Council Committee. Eventually, through the advocacy of the outspoken Councillor and Board member Berman, the City's General Purposes Committee convened a conference of representatives of all eleven subscription libraries on 14 April 1939<sup>9</sup> to assess the situation, but the suburban libraries were unenthusiastic about change. A letter from the Town Clerk to the delegates made it clear that the City had not committed itself one way or another<sup>10</sup> although the fact that the idea was not rejected was sufficient encouragement for the Library's board to resolve

that the time has arrived for providing free facilities for the reading public of the Cape Peninsula, and that this should be effected by abolishing the existing subscription system and extending the present [South African Library] building to meet the increased requirements.<sup>11</sup>

Just as a break-through seemed possible, negotiations were suspended owing to the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. This was a setback to Varley's main purpose, but the concept of free public libraries fitted well with developing visions of a future 'welfare state' or a 'New Order,' held out as desirable outcomes of the War by the political left and right in

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<sup>6</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa (Cape Town: Cape Times [for Government Printer], 1937), p.19, 20.

<sup>7</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1939-1955). Memoranda dated 'September 1938' (5 pp.) and 10 March 1939 (4 pp.)

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC SAL. Board minutes, 10 March 1939, Annex (unnumbered): [Memorandum] 'For the information of the General Purposes Committee' [City of Cape Town], p.4. The only libraries admitting Coloured members in the 1930s were the South African Library and the free, Carnegie-backed, Hyman Liberman Institute library which Varley considered could, if necessary, be the centre of a Coloured service..

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, Varley's aide memoire of this meeting, 14 April 1939.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, Town Clerk to all delegates, 27 April 1939.

<sup>11</sup> South African Library. Report, 1939, p.[2]. The Board assumed that the service would be run by and from the South African Library.

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South Africa.<sup>12</sup> It would be very difficult for the City to repudiate responsibility after the war and find itself one of the last major centres without a rate-supported library service. In anticipation of inevitable change, Varley set about positioning the South African Library to ensure that when the cleavage eventually came, each half would already be viable.

Lloyd's campaigning for better subsidies from the City and the State bore fruit after Varley's arrival.<sup>13</sup> With an increased municipal grant, the Department of the Interior (according to funding regulations) balanced this with a substantial increase from its side in the financial year 1939-40.<sup>14</sup> These additional funds were immediately used for much needed library books and equipment such as catalogue cabinets and furniture, while Varley set up a private office for himself.<sup>15</sup> For the first time the Library's finances permitted some extension work to be undertaken.

One of Varley's projects was the Cape Libraries Extension Association, set up in October 1941<sup>16</sup> to provide free library services to poorer (in practice Coloured) communities, funded by small grants from the City and Province, and accessing what remained of a Carnegie grant<sup>17</sup> held

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<sup>12</sup> S. Dubow, 'Introduction: South Africa's 1940s,' and J. Seekings 'Visions, Hopes & Views about the Future: the radical moment of South African welfare reform,' in: *South Africa's 1940s: worlds of possibilities*, ed. S. Dubow and A. Jeeves (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005), pp.2-10 passim, and p.45 respectively.

<sup>13</sup> The City grudgingly raised its annual subsidy to the South African Library in two stages from £1000 to £2420 (the least amount that would enable the Library to claim the maximum permitted Government grant on the £-for-£ principle and bring it into line with the Pretoria State Library's grant). Lloyd had 'sweated blood and tears' to extract even this small concession from the City Council which had negligible commitment to library provision, and was only achieved by bypassing an obdurate Finance Committee, circularizing each individual Councillor. The printed circular of 20 November 1934 'To the Councillors, City Council of Cape Town,' (a copy in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944)), compared the £1000 Cape Town municipal grant with those of several South African towns and cities, including Krugersdorp £1000, Germiston £1425, Benoni £1600, Pretoria (to State Library) £2500, Durban £6225 and Johannesburg £34,759, all of which centres operated free public libraries. The City of Cape Town was subsidising the suburban subscription libraries to a total of £1329 a year (*ibid.*, Town Clerk to Lloyd 5 December 1933), much of which went straight back to the Council as rental and service charges (*ibid.*, Lloyd to Town Clerk 12 December 1933, also the Circular, p.[3].)

<sup>14</sup> The Department of the Interior simply applied the regulation pound-for-pound rule and carried out no investigation as to the Library's requirements, about which it was quite indifferent. This Department simply carried out its obligations laid down in the second schedule of the Financial Relations Act of 1913.

<sup>15</sup> South African Library. Report, 1939, p.[1].

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946), sub-folder *infra*. Agreement dated 28 November 1941.

<sup>17</sup> Between 1928 and 1951, the Carnegie Corporation of New York made a series of grants for library purposes in South Africa. These funds were managed by Carnegie South African Trustees through the State Library in Pretoria. A small amount of this (6.7%) was allocated for 'library service for non-Europeans' in the four provinces, and of this, 40% (or 2.7% of the whole) was for the Cape Province (F. Anderson, *Carnegie Corporation Library Program 1911-1961* (New York: The Corporation, 1963), pp.100-101).

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by the Hyman Liberman Institute.<sup>18</sup> Apart from twelve book box depots, library depots existed in Athlone (Q-Town) and Bloemhof Community Centre in the City, and later in Langa township. The Cape Libraries Extension Association operated from the South African Library,<sup>19</sup> run by a young librarian, J.E. Jonker,<sup>20</sup> under Varley's supervision.<sup>21</sup> The City's small grant was specifically for the CLEA, as it was known, which had wider responsibilities than just the library at the Hyman Liberman Institute (a cause of friction with the Institute's managers). After twelve months of vexatious negotiation, an agreement was reached between the CLEA and the Hyman Liberman Institute under which the CLEA would put the Institute's library into efficient order and operate it for two years (April 1942 to March 1944<sup>22</sup>) in addition to running the libraries at Q-Town, Bloemhof Community Centre and Langa, and distributing book boxes.<sup>23</sup>

Library services for rural areas had been recommended by the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee, for which purpose each Province was urged to appoint a Library Advisory Committee and a Library Organizer.<sup>24</sup> The Department of Agriculture had long served the Transvaal farming communities in this respect. The South African Library had a significant number of country subscribers throughout the Union and adjacent territories (Annexure 4), to

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<sup>18</sup> Between 1932 and 1934 the Carnegie 'non-European' scheme was managed by the Cape Non-European Library Committee (or Cape Coloured Carnegie Committee) on which Ian Murray represented the South African Library. The Committee faltered and handed over its assets to the Hyman Liberman Institute in Cape Town's District Six, where the scheme was administered by Christiaan Ziervogel until 1940 and by M. Warley to 1941. Warley's resignation brought the Institute's library and the book box system to a halt, leaving 8500 books (many in ruinous condition) and £400 remaining from the initial £1300 Carnegie grant.

<sup>19</sup> The South African Library's 1893 Act did not provide for branch libraries, hence the need to work through a surrogate organization. The State Library in Pretoria, having no such limitation, was able to open several branch libraries.

<sup>20</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences [part 1]' in *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, 36(1), September 1981, p.4.

<sup>21</sup> The South African Library Board approved the application to the City Council for a grant to launch a non-White library system in Cape Town and fully endorsed the proposal that such a service should operate from the Library building. (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 27 August 1941.) Varley provided Board members with a two page 'Memorandum on library facilities for non-Europeans at the Cape' (*ibid.*, Annex 66).

<sup>22</sup> Dates as recorded in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946), folder 'City Scheme'. Cape Libraries Extension Association. Minutes, 19 February 1945, draft of letter Varley to Batson, p.5; carbon copy of the letter itself, sent 5 March 1945, may be found in NLCT-MC MSB 137.2(5).

<sup>23</sup> The final 1942 agreement between the Hyman Liberman Institute and the CLEA could no doubt be found in the CLEA archives (NLCT-MC MSB 137), but there are numerous drafts in the Library's archives. Great emphasis was placed on the Institute's rights to the original book stock and the ownership of additional books purchased from the residue of the Carnegie grant it controlled (NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946), folder 'City Scheme'). Working with the Hyman Liberman Institute authorities was evidently vexing.

<sup>24</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee (1937), pp.10-14.

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whom books were regularly despatched in special book baskets.<sup>25</sup>

On 3 June 1939, the Cape Branch of the South African Library Association convened a public meeting to discuss the Interdepartmental Committee's recommendation. A 'continuation committee' was appointed, and on 19 August 1939, the Society for Book Distribution was formed, publicly launched on 23 September, and immediately began to collect books for a rural book box service. The South African Library, with its expertise in book distribution, was asked to run the service from the Library with a grant from the Province. Varley himself, with one of his staff, ordered, prepared and catalogued all the books which were sent out in batches of 50 per box, changed twice a year. The overwhelming demand demonstrated the need for a provincial library scheme.<sup>26</sup> Within a few months it was serving 38 rural centres which had no other library facility. In August 1940 the Cape Provincial Library Advisory Committee was convened<sup>27</sup> (the first of any of the Provinces) and Varley was predictably a member.<sup>28</sup>

The Society for Book Distribution relied on support from established libraries as well as cultural organizations for its book stock. For the enlightenment of participants in both the Society for Book Distribution scheme and the Cape Libraries Extension Association, Varley edited a bi-monthly magazine *Cape Libraries / Kaapse Boekerye* subsidized by the Provincial Administration. Varley was at the same time also editor of the journal of the professional association, *South African Libraries / Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteke*.

The Provincial Library Advisory Committee, with Varley and University of Cape Town Librarian Immelman as its most active members, set about surveying the current library situation in the Province, laying the foundation for the future Cape Provincial Free Library Service.<sup>29</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 presented another opportunity for Varley (with his board in tow) to demonstrate the value of reading and libraries. The South African Library

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<sup>25</sup> The standard lockable wickerwork book basket was purchased from the library for about 7s. 6d. Baskets containing five books selected randomly by Library staff or requested by the subscriber were despatched by rail or by post. A 1943-1954 register of railage and postage costs may be found at NLCT-MC MSL C3/5/3.

<sup>26</sup> South African Library. Report, 1939, p.[2]; 1940, p.4. The service operated from a basement room which had once been the kitchen of the South African Museum Curator's apartments in the west wing, a dark and cold place to work. This service as well as the CLEA was superintended for a time by a young librarian, François du Plessis, who afterwards became Assistant Librarian of Stellenbosch University (Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences [part 1]' in *Quarterly Bulletin*, 36(1) September 1981, p.4).

<sup>27</sup> T. Friis, *The Public Library in South Africa: an evaluative study* (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962), p.93.

<sup>28</sup> The Society for Book Distribution and the Advisory Committee eventually became part of the Cape Provincial Free Library Service when the first Provincial Library Organizer (S.J. Kritzingner) was appointed in September 1945.

<sup>29</sup> Thick files in the South African Library archive bear testimony to the prodigious amount of work done by Varley whose energy never seemed to flag.

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Association's conference in Cape Town (18-20 March 1940) recommended to government that reading material should be provided for the South African armed forces, endorsing an earlier memorandum by M.M. Stirling of the State Library and an appeal by R.F. Kennedy of the Johannesburg Public Library on the topic. But the Association went no further than to suggest its members donate books. Separate committees were formed to supply Books for Troops, the first at a meeting in the South African Library's Fairbridge Room in July 1940 (when Varley was chosen as chairman), followed the same year by another at the State Library, Pretoria. Both committees, with volunteer workers, did astonishing work throughout the war, sending books and magazines to South African military bases in South and East Africa, as well as providing reading material to troops on passing ships, and carefully-vetted books to South African prisoners of war in Italy and Germany. The purpose was to combine recreational with instructional reading.<sup>30</sup> It is estimated that over one million books and several million magazines were distributed during the war years.<sup>31</sup>

In Cape Town, although Books for Troops was not an official venture of the South African Library, the Board provided an upstairs room in the Library building, and several women on the staff gave enthusiastic support with secretarial, sorting and delivery work in their free time as their contribution to the war effort. At the end of 1942 the London-funded Royal Naval War Library opened a Cape Town branch and seconded their trained librarian, Mrs D.C. Jongens, to do the secretarial work as well as take charge of the Society for Book Distribution.<sup>32</sup>

These additional activities did not detract from the Library's usual operations. Opening hours were from 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week. Patronage of the Library's lending department had revived dramatically under Varley's control, partly due to wartime conditions but also to subscription incentives such as free tickets for subscribers' children and the revival of a children's section, a faster book-issuing method, and more books on open access. Circulation statistics were, in 1944, the highest yet in the Library's history (far exceeding the previous record set in 1932, and continuing to increase). A new standard of library service had been set, and, with the war coming to an end, it was time to force the issue with the City. The Board requested Military Intelligence to release Ian Murray (who was writing Allied propaganda at the time) as he would be required to run the South African Library while Varley prepared to confront a stubborn City

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<sup>30</sup> A.L. Dick 'Send your Books on Active Service: The Books for Troops scheme during the Second World War, 1939-1945' in: *South African Journal for Librarianship and Information Science* 71(2), 2005, pp.115-126. Owing to disputes between Stirling and Kennedy, the northern committee transferred to Johannesburg Public Library (p.117).

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.123.

<sup>32</sup> South African Library. Report, 1942, p.5; 1943, p.4.

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Council. Murray resumed his duties at the Library in January 1944.<sup>33</sup>

Backed by the Trustees, Varley reopened the matter of a free public library service with the Cape Town City Council in a letter to the Town Clerk dated 30 November 1943.<sup>34</sup> The following February Varley formally requested the appointment of a City Library Commission to gather accurate information and to make recommendations.<sup>35</sup> The request must have been well timed because a fortnight later the City Council agreed to the request, subject to the Library providing the administrative support at its own cost.<sup>36</sup>

The proceedings of the Commission are full of interest to the library historian, but unnecessary to include in this study and is the subject of another academic dissertation.<sup>37</sup> Varley drafted the report of the City Library Commission (described as 'ably-written'<sup>38</sup>) dated 'March 1945'.<sup>39</sup> It pointed out how the City lagged behind the other cities of the Union in the provision of free library services, especially to children and young people, to hospital patients, isolated readers, and the less-privileged sections of the community, 'both European and non-European'. An incremental approach was recommended as part of the City's post-war development plan, starting immediately with some short-term plans which would not affect the way the service would develop once a permanent Organizer of Extension Services was appointed. Top of the list was 'Hospital Service services to Europeans and non-Europeans', followed by the extension of services to the 'Added Areas' [townships] and central areas of the City. Travelling libraries and new branches would serve the population of the Peninsula, while none of the existing

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<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 January 1944.

<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1944-1955), Varley to Town Clerk, 30 November 1943; South African Library. Report, 1943, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944), Varley to Town Clerk, 7 February 1944. Varley proposed two Library Board members, Abe Bloomberg (the flamboyant attorney and Deputy Mayor) as chairman, with R.F. Immelman, University Librarian, and himself as professional advisors; the Council added a Communist Party member, Mrs Betty Sacks.

<sup>36</sup> Cape Town City Council. [Printed] Minutes, 29 February 1944, Finance and General Purposes Committee, pp.569-570; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes 29 March 1944; NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944), letters between Varley and Town Clerk 24 February, 3 March, 26 April, 1 May 1944.

<sup>37</sup> K. Laishley, 'Cape Town City Libraries, 1952-1972' (Master of Library and Information Science thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> J.C. Quinton, *The Library Profession in the Western Cape: the first half century, 1938-1988* (Cape Town: SAILIS Western Cape Branch, 1988), p.30.

<sup>39</sup> City of Cape Town. City Library Commission. Report and Recommendations to the City Council, March 1945. (Two versions exist, a 19-page mimeographed version as submitted to Council, and a printed 27-page version forming Annexure C, pp.1200-1226 of the City of Cape Town: Minutes of Council (ordinary meeting), Finance and General Purposes Committee, 26 April 1945.

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subscription libraries (which resisted a takeover) would be affected at this stage. The Central Library would move to new premises in the City centre. The report's recommendations were adopted in principle by the City Council on 26 April 1945,<sup>40</sup> Varley first discussing the best tactics with Councillor Bloomberg.<sup>41</sup> The Council set up a Library Special Committee. Until a Library Organizer post for a City Library Service had been created and filled, the first stage of the new library service would be operated by the South African Library on behalf of the City.

The City had long resisted providing commonly-accepted municipal services such as public transport and gas (electric power was an early exception). During the twentieth century there had been a gradual erosion of this position with the provision of public swimming pools, child welfare and medical clinics, a municipal orchestra, slum clearance, and economic and sub-economic housing. The existence of numerous subscription libraries in the Peninsula receiving grants from the City and the Province,<sup>42</sup> and the South African Library receiving grants from the City and central Government allowed the City of Cape Town to believe that, beyond these few insignificant grants, it had no responsibility for libraries, unlike other South African cities without a tradition of local subscription libraries. To change this mind-set was the challenge taken on by Varley. Whether it was strategic or just doing what was feasible, Varley's modernization of library services at and through the South African Library gave a practical demonstration of what could be achieved, which contrasted with the insular attitude of the suburban subscription libraries which obviously had no future. While the battle with the City Council was largely won in 1945 and the initial services were already bearing fruit, there was a long way to go yet before a public library service could be detached from the South African Library. The last obstacle was the insistence by the City that the Cape Provincial Administration share the cost of this urban library service. As to the suburban libraries, they would be free to remain independent in the face of competition from modern, well-stocked branch libraries, or join the City Library Service on the City's terms.

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<sup>40</sup> Cape Town. City Council. [Printed] Minutes, 26 April 1945, Finance and General Purposes Committee, pp.1191-1192.

<sup>41</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944), Varley to Bloomberg, 16 February 1945.

<sup>42</sup> Libraries in receipt of some measure of municipal funding were Die Afrikaans-Nederlandse Boekery, and subscription libraries in Camps Bay, Claremont, Green and Sea Point, Maitland, Mowbray, Muizenberg and Kalk Bay, Observatory, Rondebosch, Woodstock and Wynberg.

## Prologue, fourth section : Public Library Developments

When hostilities ended in 1945, that single focus of attention of the preceding six years was gone. Books for Troops in Cape Town ceased its work and its place was taken at the South African Library by the new Hospital Library Service,<sup>1</sup> started in November 1945.<sup>2</sup> Direct costs were recovered from the City of Cape Town, and this would prove to be the first practical step towards the creation of the City Library Service. The Cape Libraries Extension Association continued to operate with its own Committee (from which the Hyman Liberman Institute had withdrawn,<sup>3</sup> fearing the Institute's library would lose its distinctive Coloured character if taken over by the City<sup>4</sup>). Ian Murray having resigned in February 1945,<sup>5</sup> the Hospital Library Service and the CLEA were superintended by the Library's new Deputy Director A.M.L. Robinson.<sup>6</sup>

Issues which had been put aside due to the war could now be revisited, including the rural free library services envisaged in the report of the Interdepartmental Committee of 1937. The Cape and Transvaal Provinces set up library advisory committees which, after conducting surveys, reported in 1942 and 1944.<sup>7</sup> The development of rural library services created an overwhelming demand for qualified male staff.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 28 (1945-1946), Cape Hospital Board requests to set up a service, 30 June, 3, 24 July 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Serving initially Groote Schuur Hospital, New Somerset Hospital, Rondebosch Cottage Hospital and Wynberg Victoria Hospital, with service envisaged to Woodstock Hospital, Eaton Convalescent Home and Peninsula Maternity Hospital (NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946)); Mrs C.A. Inskip, MA, Lib. Dip (UCT) was in charge, assisted by volunteers.

<sup>3</sup> The Hyman Liberman Institute's library was later very reluctantly handed over to the City Library Service on 5 January 1954 after personal intervention by Mr A. Liberman, son of the late Hyman Liberman, founder of the Institute. (Cape Town. City Library Service. Annual Report, 1954, p.1.)

<sup>4</sup> Professor Edward Batson, Warden of the Hyman Liberman Institute, became increasingly fractious, especially in respect of the City Library Scheme (Correspondence 1944-1945 in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946), sub-folder 'City Scheme'). Batson was Professor in the Department of Social Science at the University of Cape Town, who, together with Prof. Hutt, administered the Institute as the base for their Social Science students' field work in District Six. (G. Steyn, Findings of a Commission of Inquiry appointed by the University of Cape Town ... into ... certain statements published in the Cape Argus of 1st December 1955 (University of Cape Town, 1957), p.[3].)

<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC MSL E2/2/1, salary ledger. It seems Murray relished working under Varley as little as Lloyd. He took up flower farming and died 6 October 1982 (South African Library Staff Newsletter, November 1982, p.[2]).

<sup>6</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences' [1] in: Quarterly Bulletin, 36(1), September 1961, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> R. Musiker, Companion to South African Libraries (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1986), p.171.

<sup>8</sup> The Transvaal Provincial Library Service commenced operations in 1944 when staff were appointed, while in the Cape, S.J. Kritzinger was seconded from the Agriculture Department Library in September 1945 and set up the basis of the future library service; the Orange Free State followed under H.M. Robinson in 1948, while Natal hesitated until September 1951 when Theo Friis was appointed and began to appoint staff (T. Friis, The Public

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Those who had served their country in the armed forces began to return to civilian life, often needing to catch up on lost opportunities for higher education. Men who had not enlisted obtained tertiary qualifications in South Africa or the United States. Those who had been interned on account of their opposition to the war effort had to pick up the threads once more after their release in 1945, but many had been able to lay a foundation for tertiary studies under several academic fellow-internees.<sup>9</sup> During the critical post-war staff shortage, library staff was recruited from among these internees,<sup>10</sup> setting the trend noted by A.L. Dick of 'the deliberate attempt in the 1950s and 1960s by government authorities to appoint Afrikaners (especially males) sympathetic to authoritarian Nationalist policies to senior [library] positions'.<sup>11</sup>

The rural library service of the Society for Book Distribution proving, as we have seen, to be an outstanding success, a deputation of prominent librarians (including Varley<sup>12</sup>) met the Administrator, Frank Joubert, in August 1940, persuading him to take the lead and appoint a Cape Provincial Library Advisory Committee to assess the existing situation and make recommendations. Varley was appointed to the Committee,<sup>13</sup> and tackled the job with typical zeal. Questionnaires were sent to every library in the Cape Province and the results were tabulated.<sup>14</sup> The Committee submitted their report in December 1942.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately the Administrator

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Library in South Africa: an evaluative study (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962), pp.93-101).

<sup>9</sup> Camp libraries were supplied through the agency of Afrikaans academics such as Prof. G. Dekker of Potchefstroom (who would become the first head of the Censor Board) and P.F. Coetsee of the State Library. The Camp School lecturers included Dr G. Eloff (genetics), Prof. H.G. Stoker (psychology), Advs J.F. Marais and B.J. Vorster (law), and H.J. van der Bergh and W.H. Kruger (police studies, by far the best-attended course). Diplomas were issued to successful students. (Agter Tralies en Doringdraad (Stellenbosch: Bond van Oud-geinterneerdes en Politieke Gevangenes, 1953), pp.216-249.), The Central Archives Repository has internment camp files (JIC) for H.J. Aschenborn, P.C. Coetsee, G. Cronjé, H.M. Robinson and H.O.K. Zastrau who feature in future sections.

<sup>10</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946), R.F. Kennedy writing to Varley, 2 June 1945, 'One of your colleagues found it necessary to scour the internment camps for suitable staff.' The colleague in question was probably René Immelman, Librarian of the University of Cape Town, who at this time acted as consultant to the Potchefstroom and Pretoria University libraries (South African Libraries, 41(5), April 1974, p.278).

<sup>11</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Book Burning and the Complicity of South African Librarians, 1955-1971' in: Innovation 28, June 2004, p.37.

<sup>12</sup> J.C. Quinton, The Library Profession in the Western Cape: the first half century, 1938-1988 (Cape Town: SAILIS Western Cape, 1988), p.28.

<sup>13</sup> South African Library. Report, 1940, p.4; T. Friis, The Public Library (1962), pp.93-94.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 27 (1940-1942). This file includes completed questionnaires and a mass of related paperwork.

<sup>15</sup> Cape Province. Public Libraries in Cape Province (Rural Districts): Survey of existing library conditions in 1940 and report of Provincial Advisory Library Committee (Cape Town: Province of the Cape of Good Hope, 1944).

## LIBRARY TRANSFORMATION, 1928-1952

had died suddenly on 22 September<sup>16</sup> and in the consequent power vacuum the report never reached the Provincial Executive Committee. Suspecting that the bureaucrats wished to suppress the report, the Committee refused to disband.

To revive the process, the South African Library's board and South African Library Association local branch organized a public meeting on 19 April 1944 (addressed by influential persons including the new Administrator, Brand van Zyl) and among other things demanded that the 1942 report be published.<sup>17</sup> The Committee was revived and with great tenacity during 1944-1945 (resisting obstructiveness by Administration officials) hammered-out a Provincial Library Ordinance which was eventually passed by the Provincial Council in 1948<sup>18</sup> (only to be quashed by the Governor-General over a technicality).

One outcome of the public meeting was the appointment of S.J. Kritzinger as Provincial Library Organizer in September 1945<sup>19</sup> and the formal establishment of the Cape Provincial Free Library Service the following month. As his first step he took over from the South African Library the Society for Book Distribution, relocating it from its dark basement room to an office in the new Provincial Administration Building in Wale Street. The services of Mrs Jongens were retained, and the system of book boxes continued as the nucleus of a Provincial Library Service for Whites.<sup>20</sup> In January 1946, the rural services of the Cape Libraries Extension Association were also taken over by the Province to form the basis of a separate Coloured rural service. Kritzinger travelled the length and breadth of the Province interviewing library committees and town councils about the proposed free library service. There was no shadow of doubt in his mind that the future Provincial Library Service should be conducted along strictly segregated lines.

Hier moet ek net weer beklemtoon wat ek reeds meermale in my rapporte neergeskryf het, naamlike dat 'n aparte diens vir nie-blankes 'n sine qua non is tot die sukses van die onderneming. Indien hierdie feit uit die oog verloor word, kan 'ikabot' oor die skema geskryf word, omdat hy by voorbaat dood gebore sal wees. Hierdie is by uitstek 'n diens vir die platteland en daar sal 'n 'deurmekaar-boerdery' nie geduld word nie. Hiervan is

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<sup>16</sup> Cape Argus cutting file 'François [Frank] Johannes Joubert', 23 September 1942.

<sup>17</sup> South African Library. Report, 1944, pp.3-4; J.C. Quinton, The Library Profession (1988), pp.28-29.

<sup>18</sup> J.C. Quinton, The Library Profession (1988), pp.27-28, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Salie Jacobsz Kritzinger, a librarian with a long public service record, qualified at Columbia University, New York (Handbook of Librarianship in South Africa (Johannesburg: South African Library Association, 1950), p.34).

<sup>20</sup> For an account of Kritzinger's activities in the Cape, see his mimeographed 'Report of the Free Provincial Library Service, year ended 30 September 1946,' and 'Oorsig van Werksaamhede, 31.7.1947,' probably intended for the Provincial Secretary. (Copies filed in NLCT-MC MSM 27 (1947-1957) and (1956, 1963-1964).)

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die Administrasie egter wel deeglik bewus.<sup>21</sup>

As a pilot scheme a Regional Library was begun serving the north-western Cape<sup>22</sup> where, other than circulating book boxes and trading store book rental services, conventional library facilities were minimal.<sup>23</sup> Kritzinger returned to Pretoria in 1947 on his promotion to Chief Librarian of Public Service Libraries and his place was taken by an Administrative Officer with no library background during the crucial years 1947-1949 when the original Provincial Library Ordinances were passed.<sup>24</sup>

During this time there had been no progress towards the envisaged City Library Service. The start-up funding promised to the South African Library by the City<sup>25</sup> was conditional upon subsidization from the Cape Provincial Administration on the pound-for-pound principle of the 'Molteno Regulations' of 1874, but the Province declined. So the Library was left to carry the cost of the nascent City Library Service itself.<sup>26</sup>

The Cape Provincial Library Advisory Committee, dominated by Varley, drafted a Provincial Public Library Ordinance in 1946<sup>27</sup> which made no provision for segregated services, but

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<sup>21</sup> 'I must at this point emphasize that which I have frequently written in my reports, namely that a separate service for non-whites is a sine qua non for the success of the undertaking. If this fact is lost from sight, then 'Ichabod' can be written over the scheme, which will be still-born. This is in essence a rural scheme, and 'muddled farming' will not be tolerated. The Administration is indeed thoroughly aware of this.' ('Oorsig van Werksaamhede,' p.[1], attached to his 'Report of the Free Provincial Library Service, 1946'; copy at NLCT-MC MSM 27 (1947-1957).) Emphasis in the original.

<sup>22</sup> It is instructive to recall that the Carnegie 'Poor White' survey prioritized the same district. The provision of reading materials and the awakening of a love of reading were put forward in the Carnegie Poor White survey as a remedy for a restricted intellectual environment. (E.G. Malherbe, 'Lees as Kompenseermiddel: Skoolbiblioteke' in: Carnegie-kommissie van Ondersoek: verslag oor die armblanke-vraagstuk, deel III: Onderwys en die Armblanke (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), pp.366-373, cited in: R.F.M. Immelman and I.M. Murray, Volksboekerye, 'n Pleidooi, (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1939), pp.26-27.

<sup>23</sup> The Official South African Municipal Yearbook, 1945-46, pp.452-453, lists small subscription libraries at Calvinia (6000 volumes) and Springbok (2,700 volumes). Libraries at Clanwilliam (2510 volumes) and Garies (2118 volumes) were listed for the last time in the 1935-36 edition (p.553) and had probably succumbed by 1945.

<sup>24</sup> The 1946 Draft Ordinance and the 1948 and 1949 Ordinances are discussed in the context of the Cape Town City Library Service below. The original Cape Provincial Free Library Service, where all the libraries were run directly by the Province, was a failure, and a new Cape Provincial Library Service with shared Provincial and Municipal responsibility was introduced by the Provincial Library Service Ordinance, no.4 of 1955. (T. Friis, The Public Library (1962), pp.95, 177-179; text of Ordinance pp.295-299, Regulations pp.303-309.)

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944), Varley to Bloomberg, 26 April 1944, pointed out that the cost to the City would be small, and that he and Immelman had provided their professional services without charge.

<sup>26</sup> South African Library. Report, 1946, pp.2-3.

<sup>27</sup> 'Draft Ordinance to make Provision for the Establishment of a Library Service for the Province and for matters incidental thereto.' (Copy in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946).) The expectation was that it would be laid before the Provincial Council in May 1946. (Cape Town City Council. Libraries Special Committee. Minutes, p.2, copy

## LIBRARY TRANSFORMATION, 1928-1952

Varley also produced a four page explanatory memorandum which, at the special request of the City's Executive Committee, proposed a new clause 'Separate provision for non-Europeans.'<sup>28</sup> Varley explained his own preference for libraries (either branches or travelling vans) located close to where people lived and not a 'rigid policy of exclusion'. The Draft Ordinance was kept in abeyance while the Provincial Library Organizer made his tours of inspection. In June 1948 the Ordinance received unanimous support<sup>29</sup> in the Provincial Council, only to be quashed by the central government on grounds that the Financial Relations Act of 1913 made no provision for Provinces to establish libraries. The Act was amended<sup>30</sup> and the Cape Provincial Library Ordinance passed through the Provincial Council again in 1949.<sup>31</sup> Provision was made for supporting municipal library services in the larger urban areas according to a subsidy formula which was roughly 50% of the cost of the service, eventually promulgated as Section 12 of the Cape Provincial Library Service Ordinance, no.10 of 1949.<sup>32</sup> Such an urban area service could set its own rules, differing from any prescribed in the Ordinance except Section 13, the requirement for separate facilities for 'Europeans and non-Europeans.'<sup>33</sup> Suburban subscription libraries which did not join the envisaged urban library service would lose their Provincial subsidy.

Despite the objections of Councillor Sam Kahn that adoption of the scheme would entail the introduction of racial segregation, the City duly applied for the right to set up an urban library service, which after a long delay<sup>34</sup> was approved by the Administrator of the Cape and

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in NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1923-1944).) No provision was made for segregated services in the original 1946 draft which may have been the reason Kritzinger made his comments on segregated services.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1945-1946) 'Cape Provincial Advisory Library Committee. Draft Ordinance. Provision for urban areas in Ordinance,' 25 August 1946 [typed original], p.3.

<sup>29</sup> Unanimity was stressed in the South African Library's Annual Report, 1948, p.1., which was in keeping with the tradition of all-party support in library matters, but was achieved by relieving local authorities of financial liability.

<sup>30</sup> Financial Relations Amendment Act, no.8 of 1949.

<sup>31</sup> Ordinance to make Provision for the Establishment of a Free Library Service for the Province and for matters incidental thereto, no.10 of 1949.

<sup>32</sup> For the full text of the Ordinance which was promulgated on 26 August 1949, see T. Friis, *The Public Library in South Africa: an evaluative study* (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962), pp.283-288.

<sup>33</sup> Varley, writing to Mollie Smith of the South African Institute of Race Relations about the pending implementation of a segregated library service in Cape Town, points out that the existing subscription libraries with the exception of the South African Library excluded non-Whites almost entirely, and that under the new scheme it will be up to the City Librarian to devise a way of providing a service to all population groups which will meet the criterion of the Ordinance, something which, he said, might need to be tested in the Supreme Court (NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1939-1955), Memorandum on City Library Scheme, June 1950).

<sup>34</sup> J.C. Quinton, *The Library Profession* (1988), p.34, notes the hesitant attitude before Friis' arrival in 1955.

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promulgated on 23 February 1951.<sup>35</sup> The post of Library Organizer was advertised, applications closing on 31 July.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile Varley would continue as 'Technical Advisor' to the City and the South African Library continued to act as the Central Lending Library 'for the time being'.<sup>37</sup>

B.G. Hood took up the position in May 1952<sup>38</sup> in the hectic period of the Van Riebeeck Festival in a City celebrating the tercentenary of White settlement in the subcontinent.<sup>39</sup> In October 1952, the City took over the operations of the Cape Libraries Extension Association<sup>40</sup> (which, after eleven years of South African Library administration, was in a flourishing condition) together with the Hospital Library Service.<sup>41</sup> The South African Library would continue its circulation department for another two years while the City incorporated the suburban libraries.

The City Library Service needed to establish its headquarters (in hired premises in Chiapini Street) and choose a site for its central library. Locating it as the town planners envisaged in the barren wasteland of the Foreshore (fancifully described as the 'Metropolis of Tomorrow'<sup>42</sup>) was clearly impractical. The Drill Hall site had merits, but the City Librarian favoured a new building on vacant ground between the South African Library and the Cathedral Hall, 'an almost perfect site,' because it was reasonably central and the public were accustomed to going there. Meanwhile the existing lending library premises could be hired from the Public Works Department. These were matters which required the urgent attention of the South African Library and the City.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Provincial notice 29, 1951, in: Official Gazette of the Cape of Good Hope, 2519, 23 February 1951, p.425.

<sup>36</sup> South African Library. Report, 1950, p.2; 1951, pp.2-3; 1952, pp.2-3.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 1949, pp.8, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Born in 1920 in Oamaru, New Zealand, Bryan Hood was a graduate of Otago University. During the war he served in the Fleet Air Arm as a pilot, stationed at Wingfield, Cape Town. He was familiar with the local library situation. Back in New Zealand he qualified in librarianship. As Deputy City Librarian of Wellington Public Library he was responsible for converting libraries there to a free system. He was City Librarian of Cape Town from 1952 to 1961. In June he left for Nigeria where he became Organizer of Studies in the new Department of Library Science at the University of Ibadan. He later ran a bookshop in Witney, Oxfordshire, UK, where he died in December 1968, aged 48. (South African Libraries, 29(3), January 1962, p.88; Cape Times [clipping], 6 December 1968.)

<sup>39</sup> It may be recalled that Varley arrived at an equally politically-charged occasion in 1938, with the setting out of the Ossewa Trek.

<sup>40</sup> The CLEA bookstock totalled 10,644 volumes, annual circulation 64,843 volumes, 3976 registered members, 7 libraries or distribution points, 2 trained librarians and 13 assistants (South African Library. Report, 1952, pp.2-3).

<sup>41</sup> The Hospital Service with a bookstock of 9956 volumes, an annual circulation of 75,540 volumes, a staff of two full-time librarians, and a delivery van, provided a free service to the seven largest hospitals (*ibid.*, p.3).

<sup>42</sup> Title of book by S.S. Morris, *Metropolis of Tomorrow: a development plan for the central city and foreshore areas* (Cape Town: City Engineer's Department, 1951).

<sup>43</sup> [Mimeographed] [cover title] 'City Library Service. Report on Development.' [inside] 'Further Report with Recommendations.' [Undated, circa October 1952.] pp.18-22 (copy may be found in NLCT-MC MSL A3/1).

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Eventually the City purchased the lending stock from the South African Library for £1,775 in 1954.<sup>44</sup>

Once the Cape Provincial Library Ordinance no.10 of 1949 was implemented, and a direct service commenced in a few regions entirely at the cost of the Province, it proved to be prohibitively expensive: the Provincial Free Library Service had been set up to fail. Once more it required pressure from a committed librarian, D.L. Ehlers, to amend the legislative basis of the Service. A new Ordinance was passed on 1 March 1955 transferring responsibility for local infrastructure and staff to the local authority, while the Province provided the reading matter and professional support. Once the Ordinance was promulgated, the well-qualified and dynamic Theo Friis was brought in as Director.<sup>45</sup> The subsequent success of the Cape Provincial Library Service and the large sums of money allocated for the purpose demonstrates once again that progress depended on leadership by committed individuals like Varley, Ehlers and Friis, not the bureaucrats. When the Provincial Library Service spun out of control in 1962-1963, the fault was ascribed in part to the disinterest of senior officials and the autonomy granted to its Director.<sup>46</sup>

Library provision was low on the bureaucrats' agenda, as Varley and the South African Library would soon discover. However, accepting funding from the Province placed the obligation on the City to provide racially-segregated library services (although in all other respects it was autonomous). The South African Library, which did not depend on grants from the Province, was under no such obligation.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> City of Cape Town. City Library Service. Annual Report, 1954, p.10.

<sup>45</sup> D.L. Ehlers, 'The Post-war Library Scene in SA' in: Give the People Light: essays in honour of Matthew Miller Stirling, Contributions to Library Science, no.13 (Pretoria: State Library, 1972), pp.39-42.

<sup>46</sup> Kaapse Provinsiale Administrasie. Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek insake beweerde Onreëlmattighede aangaande die Biblioteekdiens van die Kaapse Provinsiale Administrasie (J.H. Steyn, Kommissaris, 19 September 1963), p.10.

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 33 above.

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[Cape Argus.

A school visit to the Grey Collection: Mr Varley opens the Shakespeare first folio edition of 1623.

## Chapter 1. TOWARDS A NEW DESTINY, 1949-1954

The die was cast. For 120 years the South African Library filled the dual role of a free library of reference and a subscription lending library exercising unfettered autonomy. Although it would be a further five years before the two roles were permanently separated, the passing of the Cape Provincial Library Service Ordinance of 1949 enabled a free urban library service for Cape Town which could relieve the South African Library of its lending service. The Library's Board and its Director had done everything possible to bring this about, constantly pressing and prodding the reluctant City and Provincial authorities. They had even gone to the extent of running new public library services in the name of the City. All this was based trustingly on the resolutions of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union.

There were several assumptions which Varley and the South African Library Board made about the Library's future which were not tested. It was assumed that the Government endorsed the findings of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee on libraries; it was assumed that the Smuts Government of 1939 and now the Malan Government of 1948 would support those findings even though the war had intervened; it was assumed that the laissez faire attitude of the Department of the Interior, which allowed the institutions a high degree of autonomy would be continued by the Department of Education, Arts and Science (which had recently been charged with oversight); it was assumed that the role of the State Library as the Central Library of South Africa (co-ordinating inter-library loans and slowly constructing a union catalogue of non-fiction) was immutable, and most presumptuous of all, it was assumed that its own iconic status as the leading reference library in South Africa, the foremost centre of bibliographic skill, and curator of the nation's bibliographic treasures was unassailable. Significantly, it was assumed who the Library's future clients would be.

A combination of work-load and self-assuredness may be the reason why Varley did not test these strategic assumptions. In the course of time it became evident that few, if any, of them were valid. R.B. Zaaiman, who began his library career at the South African Library in 1947 would, in 1990, as head of the State Library, declare that in his opinion, his Alma Mater never possessed legitimacy.

Chapter 1 consists of three parts covering the years between the Conference on the Future of the South African Library in 1949 and 1954 when the law was finally changed allowing the South African Library to become a fully State-aided institution. This was a busy period of strategizing, planning and implementation. After gaining the heights and settling down to the task of being a national library, the story from Chapter 2 onwards will be a chronicle of a tedious journey across a nearly featureless plateau.

## CHAPTER ONE



“... a kind of old-age home where ancient and decrepit gentlemen  
are imitating research scholars in the British Museum,  
browsing among dust-laden tomes of Africana.”  
(A.Z. Berman)

## Chapter 1, first section : The Conference on the Future of the Library, 1949

It had long been the primary goal of the South African Library to be recognized as a national library devoted to supplying the information resources and assistance required by researchers. Since 1939 more than half of its income consisted of a Government grant-in-aid of so-called national functions, which increased significantly in 1947 and 1948.<sup>1</sup> The Library could not reach its goal so long as it maintained its subscription lending library service, which, although having a significant circulation of non-fiction, was largely devoted to supplying recreational reading matter.<sup>2</sup> In 1945 the City of Cape Town resolved in principle to set up a municipal public library system provided it was subsidized by the Cape Provincial Administration.

The passing of the Cape Provincial Library Service Ordinance on 16 June 1949 (opening the way as it did for the establishment of the City Library Service) was the turning point for the South African Library. Meaningful negotiations could now commence between the Library, the City and the State. Varley relied up to this point on the recommendations of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union, which he had quoted time and again as his authority for separating the circulating and reference services of the South African Library. But twelve years had passed and circumstances had changed.

One of the last acts of the United Party Government (defeated in the May 1948 elections) was to implement the recommendation of the Centlivres Commission to transfer the State-aided institutions<sup>3</sup> from the supervision of the Department of the Interior to the more appropriate Department of Union Education (renamed the Department of Education, Arts and Science on 30 August).<sup>4</sup> The new National Party Government's attitude to the South African Library was unknown, but it demonstrated a promising commitment to libraries by transferring S.J. Kritzinger, Chief Government Librarian, to the Department of Education, Arts and Science in December 1948 to co-ordinate library policy with general education policies.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a financial overview, see Annexure 5, 'Income 1920-1955'.

<sup>2</sup> For a statistical overview, see Annexure 2, 'Classification of Loans' (table).

<sup>3</sup> Since only certain of the institutions fell under the State-aided Institutions Act no.23-1931, the comprehensive term used was 'Auxiliary Educational and Cultural Services'.

<sup>4</sup> Public Service Enquiry Commission, Sixth Report (Commissioner A. van der S. Centlivres), 1948, [UG.54-1947], p.61, sections 429-430; Government Notice 825, in: Government Gazette 3965, 23 April 1948, p.5; Department of Education, Arts and Science. Annual Report, 1948 [UG.40-1950], pp.22-23. The transfer also involved the State Archives Service and the National Monuments Commission.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Education, Arts and Science. Annual Report, 1948, p.23.

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Since the 'Conference Resolution' format of 1937 had proved so useful, Varley envisaged a 'Conference on the Future of the South African Public Library,' organized again by the State, hoping to get firm commitments from top political office-bearers of the newly-installed National Party government at central and provincial level and from the City Council.

Chairman of the board, Adv. D.E. McCausland, interviewed the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, Dr A.J. Stals, on 3 June 1949, requesting a conference. The Secretary for Education responded on 17 June inviting the board to submit a clear statement of policy and a supporting memorandum which could form the basis of a possible government-convened conference of interested parties. Varley duly produced a comprehensive memorandum<sup>6</sup> for consideration of the Board at a special meeting on 22 June.

The choice was between becoming a purely national institution, or a hybrid institution like the State Library in Pretoria, which administered national functions as well as the Pretoria municipal library service. Varley warned against following the Pretoria model,<sup>7</sup> and pressed the Board to take a definite decision. 'Hitherto it has never been "the right time" for the Trustees to take a lead in the matter,' he wrote, 'but with the passing of the Provincial Libraries Ordinance, and the action that must follow within the City Council, the moment would seem to be ripe for a decision.'<sup>8</sup>

The Board affirmed that the South African Library should become the National Reference Library, concerned only with reference and research activities, funded wholly by Government, that its lending service be taken over by the City, and that the present building be replaced by one properly-planned as a national reference library as 'proposed by the President of the Senate in 1945.'<sup>9</sup> The chairman and the librarian were instructed to prepare a memorandum to serve as the basis of the proposed Conference.<sup>10</sup>

The Conference held on 21 September 1949 at the Library was a fiasco. It could not have been timed to have less influence on the Department of Education, Arts and Science. On 29

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<sup>6</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 21(g), 'Memorandum for Policy Meeting of Trustees, 22/6/49.'

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp.3-4.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> During the 1944 session, Dr L.P. Bosman had appealed in the House of Assembly for a new building for the South African Library (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 20 July 1944). In April 1945 a delegation of Board members took this up with the President of the Senate to explore the possibility of erecting a new building which would house both the South African Library's Africana and rare books and the Mendelssohn Collection held by the Library of Parliament (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1945-1959), 'Third Progress Report by the Librarian, 1938-1948', February 1948, p.5).

<sup>10</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, special meeting 22 June 1949.

## TOWARDS A NEW DESTINY, 1949-1954

August, Minister Stals relinquished the Education portfolio to concentrate on Health and Welfare,<sup>11</sup> while the new Minister, J.H. Viljoen, only took office on 19 October 1950.<sup>12</sup> The Secretary of Education, A.A. Roberts, appointed under the Smuts Government, had at that moment been replaced by a nominee of the new Government, H.S. van der Walt,<sup>13</sup> who had yet to orient himself in the new position. Thus no political figure or top official was present. The Department of Education, Arts and Science was represented by officials M.J. Smith and S.J. Kritzinger, the Library of Parliament by P. Ribbink (who sat in on the discussions but refused to participate), A. Sinton, a Member of the Provincial Executive Committee, J.E.P. Levyns, Provincial Accountant, and S.M. Leibbrandt, Provincial Library Organizer, A.A. Balsillie representing the City, and chaired by Library Board Chairman, D.E. McCausland, with Varley acting as Secretary.

The Board's views were presented in the form of yet another of Varley's comprehensive memorandums.<sup>14</sup> While not denying its necessity, the Conference declared that a new Library building was out of the question. The Provincial delegates contended that if the South African Library continued to operate a lending library after the City obtained its urban library area status, it could expect no aid from the Province, while Kritzinger, on behalf of the Education Department, warned that the government was no longer willing to subsidize the Library if it continued to offer a lending service.<sup>15</sup> Paul Ribbink categorically refused to respond to the idea that some arrangement should be reached between the Library of Parliament and the South African Library. The final resolution was that the Library should become a State-supported national reference and research library as recommended, and that pressure should be brought to bear on the City to take over the public library service as soon as possible.<sup>16</sup> Matters therefore remained more-or-less as they were. The Chairman told the Board rather defensively,

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<sup>11</sup> C.R. Swart, Minister of Justice, was caretaker Minister of Education, Arts and Science (August 1949 to October 1950).

<sup>12</sup> *Parlementêre Register: Parliamentary Register, 1910-1961* (Cape Town: House of Assembly, [preface 1970]), pp.26-27.

<sup>13</sup> *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, 9 (Cape Town: Nasou, 1971), p.225; *Dictionary of South African Biography*, 5 (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), p.643.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G10 as well as MSM 38 (1944-1955), 'Conference on the Future of the South African Public Library ... 21st September 1949: Memorandum as basis of discussion' (19 September 1949).

<sup>15</sup> This was inconsistent considering that the Department continued to subsidize the State Library which only relinquished its lending service in 1964,

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 September 1949, Annex 97: 'Conference on the Future of the South African Public Library ... 21 September 1949' [Typescript minutes].

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that although the meeting had produced no striking results as yet, this was the first time that the various authorities concerned had discussed the future of the Library at the same Conference table, and that the difficulties of the Library in attaining its aims had been made plain.<sup>17</sup>

The way forward depended on the Province's approval of the City's application to be an urban library area in terms of the new Ordinance. The new Secretary for Education addressed a letter to the Provincial Secretary to add weight to the outcome:

Uit die besprekings het dit geblyk dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek, benevens sy funksie as naslaanbiblioteek waarvoor hy oorspronklik ingerig is, ook nog belas is met die funksie van uitleenbiblioteek en in die behoeftes van die plaaslike leespubliek moet voorsien, terwyl laasgenoemde die verantwoordelikheid van die plaaslike owerheid self is, volgens die jongste provinsiale wetgewing hieroor. 'n Verdere anomalie bestaan daarin dat die Staat dusver hoofsaaklik die las van instandhouding van die inrigting moes dra. Dit is vanselfsprekend dat so 'n toedrag van sake nie onbepaald kan voortduur nie ...<sup>18</sup>

Still nothing transpired about the urban library area application. Letters from Varley to the Provincial Secretary during the following fourteen months went unanswered. The Library threatened to unilaterally shut down the lending department if there was no progress.<sup>19</sup> Varley was becoming aware of the passive resistance within the bureaucratic labyrinth. The board, following Varley's constant urging, was now, in 1949, publicly committed to casting its lot with central government so there could be no going back as the political agenda of the National Party revealed itself through repressive legislation in the early 1950s.

The subsequent establishment of the City Library Service which would relieve the South African Library of its Circulating Department has already been described in the fourth section of the Prologue.

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<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 September 1949.

<sup>18</sup> 'It appears from discussions that the South African Library's functions as a reference library, for which it was established, remains burdened with providing a lending service to the local reading public which is the responsibility of the local authority according to recent provincial legislation. Thus far the State has had to carry the burden of maintaining this institution. It is obvious that this situation cannot be tolerated indefinitely.' (NLCT-MC MSM G10 (1917-1955), Secretary for Education, Arts and Science to Provincial Secretary, Cape Town, 23 November 1949.)

<sup>19</sup> South African Library. Report, 1949, p.2.

## Chapter 1, second section : Putting its House in Order, 1948-1952

The Centlivres Commission, appointed under the previous Smuts government had recommended the transfer of the State-aided Institutions from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Union Education<sup>1</sup> as it was correctly felt that their functions were more akin to those of the latter Department.<sup>2</sup> Systematizing relations between the State and the Institutions was long overdue. But at the time of the 1949 Conference on the Future of the South African Library, C.R. Swart, Minister of Justice, was acting briefly as Minister of Education, and the Secretary for Education, A.A. Roberts, had just been replaced by H.S. van der Walt, so the change in Department had made no immediate improvement. Although in these circumstances the Conference was not able to elicit firm undertakings from Government representatives and was considered a failure, its report may well have been near the top of the pile when the J.H. Viljoen took up office as Minister of Education, Arts and Science on the same day, 19 October 1950, that Dr H.F. Verwoerd joined the Cabinet as Minister of Native Affairs.<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Education, Arts and Science had been tasked with the supervision of a wide range of new responsibilities with the intention that these should get more constructive attention than the Department of the Interior had hitherto given them. Minister Viljoen began a systematic review of the Department's functions for the White population group, according to National Party objectives.<sup>4</sup> In February 1951 the newly-appointed Minister visited the Library (a rare occurrence at any time) and agreed to receive a deputation from the Board a few days later to discuss the Library's accommodation requirements.<sup>5</sup>

The Centlivres Commission had criticized the lack of uniformity of employment in the Public Service and recommended that all officials, regardless of the authority for which they worked should be subject to the same service conditions, to be determined or amended only by

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<sup>1</sup> Effected in April 1948; the Department was renamed Department of Education, Arts and Science on 30 August.

<sup>2</sup> Public Service Enquiry Commission: Sixth Report (A. van der S. Centlivres, Chairman), 1948 [UG.54-1947], p.61, sections 429-430; Government Notice 825, in: Government Gazette, 3965, 23 April 1948, p.5; Department of Education, Arts and Science. Annual Report, 1948 [UG.40-1950], pp.22-23. The transfer also involved the State Archives Service and the National Monuments Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Parlementêre Register: Parliamentary Register, 1910-1961 (Cape Town: House of Assembly, [preface 1970]), p.27.

<sup>4</sup> Education of Blacks was transferred to the Department of Native Affairs under the Bantu Education Act, no.47 of 1953. Verwoerd, introducing the second reading of the Bill in the House of Assembly, 17 September 1953, stated 'they should be taught what would be useful to them in their future life, and his Department was best fitted to know the sort of education the overwhelming majority of Natives needed' (quoted from Keesing's Contemporary Archives of ... Important World Events, 9-16 January 1954, p.13350b). The Act came into force on 1 January 1954.

<sup>5</sup> South African Library. Report, 1951, p.2.

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the Public Service Commission, which (according to Du Plessis<sup>6</sup>) Government complied with during the period currently under consideration. In conformity with this policy, the Department of Education, Arts and Science grasped the nettle of the diverse State-aided institutions it had inherited.<sup>7</sup> The Secretary for Education, Arts and Science notified the South African Library about its objective to establish uniform salary scales for all the institutions subsidized by the State, as well as the provision of Government-approved pension and provident schemes, and as a corollary, apply a set of standard regulations to all State-aided Institutions in terms of the State-aided Institutions Act no.23 of 1931. The Department's letter was accompanied by a set of draft regulations which the Library was asked to consider, to be discussed at a conference proposed to be held in Pretoria in June 1952.<sup>8</sup> The State Library, Pretoria, with no special enabling legislation, came under the 1931 Act as far back as 1933,<sup>9</sup> but the South African Library, the South African Museum and the Natal Museum, although receiving State support, were subject to colonial-period acts and regulations of their own and should also be brought within the ambit of the 1931 Act.

This was what Varley envisaged for the South African Library as a national library. The moment had arrived. But it was becoming evident that the Library would have to sacrifice a large degree of its autonomy to the control of the Department, as the majority of State-aided Institutions had already done under the Department. The Library started this process under the *laissez faire* patronage of the Department of the Interior and a United Party Government. With the change of Government, meanwhile, and the passage of the initial apartheid laws of 1949-1951,<sup>10</sup> the unflinching progress by the National Party towards achieving an authoritarian and racially-determined future was already abundantly clear. The Library's point of no return had been passed, but it could not have remained as it was.

Varley worked through the draft regulations and submitted a memorandum to the Library's Board. He reminded members that they had long been committed to attaining full State support, and pointed out that although the proposed arrangement would result in increased

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<sup>6</sup> J.E. du Plessis, 'Gesentraliseerde Beheer oor die Personeeladministrasie van Staatsdepartemente' (D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1980), p.20.

<sup>7</sup> A Departmental minute, X6/93 4 July 1951 to State-aided Institutions referred to in a subsequent letter was not seen.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/2, Secretary for Education (X6/6) to State-aided Institutions, 18 April 1952.

<sup>9</sup> Government Notice 66, 'State Library, Pretoria,' in: Government Gazette 2085, 13 January 1933, p.79.

<sup>10</sup> In 1949, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act; in 1950 the Immorality Amendment Act, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, and the Suppression of Communism Act, in 1951 the Bantu Building Workers Act, the Separate Representation of Voters Act, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, and the Bantu Authorities Act (as listed in About.com: African History (<http://africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsalaws.htm>, accessed 19 November 2010).

## TOWARDS A NEW DESTINY, 1949-1954

salaries and benefits (for the White staff), the authority of the Board would be diminished since all functions of the Library and the Board would be strictly controlled by regulations; it could still recommend officials for appointment, but all appointments would be made by the Minister.<sup>11</sup>

The Conference of Representatives of State-aided Institutions, convened by the Department, was held in the Union Buildings, Pretoria, 30-31 July 1952. Varley represented the South African Library. The three former colonial institutions saw that there was no alternative but to agree to the repeal of their respective legislation. The concept of 'officers' and 'employees' intruded itself in the regulations as a veiled means of differentiating between Whites and non-Whites: in essence, 'officers' were permanent staff entitled to all benefits and high salary scales. Female officers were required to resign upon marriage, but could, with the Minister's specific approval, become 'employees' or casual workers, without pension benefits, with greatly reduced vacation and sick leave privileges and no provision for paid maternity leave. Non-Whites could only be classified as 'employees' and not 'officers' and could be hired and fired on one week's notice without reference to the Department (discussed in greater detail in later Sections). Varley was well aware of this. He and the Director of the South African Museum had fought for certain safeguards which they naïvely submitted to the Conference. For example, Varley in reporting back to the Board stated that his request that Coloured staff (who were not general labourers as Blacks commonly were in other parts of South Africa, but performed semi-skilled library duties requiring training) might be appointed to the fixed establishment and eligible for pension benefits had been accepted by the Conference.<sup>12</sup> He discovered subsequently that Minister Viljoen simply ignored the recommendations of the Conference.<sup>13</sup>

Late the following year, the Board was asked to comment on the draft of the State-aided Institutions Amendment Bill. It provided for the repeal of sections 1 to 22 of the South African Public Library Act of 1893 leaving only sections 23 and 24 which dealt with the Dessionian Collection.<sup>14</sup> Staff, regardless of population group, who already belonged to the Library's private

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<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A1 (folder 'State-aided Institutions'), 'Proposed Repeal of Library Act and Amendment of Regulations under Act 23 of 1931', 6 May 1952, tabled at Board meeting 21 May 1952.

<sup>12</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/2, Varley's report to the Board, 'Confidential. Conference of Representatives of State-aided Institutions ... at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, 30 and 31 July 1952'; 22 August 1952.

<sup>13</sup> The report on the Conference dated 22 August 1952 would have been distributed to Board members. A copy of the mimeographed document may be found in NLCT-MC MSL A3/2. The fact that the disputed clauses had been reinstated may be derived from a letter to the Secretary for Education, 19 August 1952 in the same file.

<sup>14</sup> Why these sections were allowed to remain is unclear. It required separate legislation (Dessionian Collection Act no.2 of 1967) to remove them from the statute book many years later and substitute a provision which acknowledges that the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church, Cape Town, was the legal owner of the books, but was not empowered to make regulations for their use which conflicted with the rules of the South African Library.

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provident fund could elect to remain or transfer to an appropriate government fund.<sup>15</sup> When the time came, four pensioners elected to remain, all active staff opting to transfer.

The State-aided Institutions Amendment Act no.48 of 1954 was promulgated on 29 October 1954, bringing the South African Library, South African Museum and Natal Museum under the provisions of the 1931 Act; at the same time the uniform code of regulations for all the Institutions was gazetted.<sup>16</sup> It was these regulations which would define the limits of the South African Library's autonomy, although the financial aid on which the Library would now depend entirely was not specified. Now that the framework was clear, the Library had to reorganize itself to give effect to its new status.



Central Branch of City Libraries after transfer in January 1955.

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<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 15 December 1953.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 2 November 1954; State-aided Institutions Amendment Act no.48 of 1954 and Regulations in: Government Gazette Extraordinary 5363, 29 October 1954, pp.1-30.

## Chapter 1, third section : The Transition

This section encompasses a variety of services which would change as the South African Library adjusted to its role as a national library at the end of 1954. With the promulgation of the amended Act and the Regulations at the end of October 1954, the details of the transfer of the South African Library's lending department to the City Library Service were negotiated. Notices of the change were posted to subscribers in December 1954 but for practical reasons the services were administered separately from 15 January 1955.<sup>1</sup> Hope was expressed that the small deposits would not be reclaimed and considered a donation to the Library.<sup>2</sup>

Preparation had been excellent and the transition was imperceptible. The lending service continued to operate from the same room, with the same staff now transferred to the Municipal payroll, and the same book-stock which the City had purchased. Many of the former subscribers were unaware that a major change had taken place. The reading room continued to be operated by the South African Library as before with the same mix of serious researchers, people using the 'quick reference' facility and those who occupied their time reading magazines or newspapers.

The South African Library could no longer serve the 'country subscribers'<sup>3</sup> (individuals as well as libraries with bulk-borrowing agreements such as Stellenbosch University Library and Simon's Town Public Library) who might join the City Library Service as paying members if they were able to borrow the books in person or look to the Cape Provincial Library Service, which had become dysfunctional (operating in only a few rural areas). The solution offered by Varley to letters of protest (which he personally answered in each case) was that such former country members should join their nearest public library, or arrange loans of non-fiction through the State Library. Responding to a reader living in the Bredasdorp areas, he wrote:

So far as readers outside Cape Town are concerned, this Library has never received a Provincial grant, and 'country subscriptions' such as yours have been carried on as a matter of convenience for the borrower concerned, but at an increasing 'loss' from an administrative point of view. Now that the Municipality have taken over our Lending activities, we are not able to arrange any longer for the posting of books to country subscribers.<sup>4</sup>

The question of racial segregation as prescribed by the 1949 Cape Provincial Library Ordinance as well as by the newly-promulgated national Reservation of Separate Amenities Act

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<sup>1</sup> South African Library. Report, 1954-1955, pp.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 38 (1944-1955), Staff memo: 'Transfer of Lending Facilities', 25 September 1954.

<sup>3</sup> See Annexure 4 for the geographical distribution of out-of-town subscribers.

<sup>4</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 20 (1928-1955), Varley to P.K. Albertyn, 11 January 1955.

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no.49 of 1953 was queried by the Board, but could not practically be implemented while the lending library remained in the existing South African Library building.<sup>5</sup>

Of the Library's 38 approved staff posts in 1954, four White female professional assistant posts and one Coloured male stack attendant post with their incumbents were transferred to the City Library Service on 15 December 1954, with Miss Ethel Anderson (with 24 years service) designated as the branch librarian.<sup>6</sup> It is not clear from the Library's archive whether a consultation process was followed. A most promising Coloured library assistant who was completing his library qualifications, Vincent Kolbe, was earlier in the year offered a superior position in the City Library Service which he accepted.<sup>7</sup> Varley made every effort to distance the South African Library and himself from the City Library Service, and their staff were assigned a separate staff room (adjacent to the South African Library's staff tea room) where the Hospital Library Service had been based. The staff at the lending counter were proverbial for their helpfulness and friendliness. A former subscriber, who wrote regretting the change, expressed her thanks

for the courteous, helpful & friendly treatment always accorded to me over this long period. My membership of the Library has been the means of providing me with one of the greatest joys of my life - the opportunity of reading and enjoying the many good books from your well-stocked shelves.<sup>8</sup>

Out of view of the Library's clients, notable changes were taking place. In the preceding section attention was drawn to the way Varley developed the lending library service so it could be viable when detached from the South African Library. But he was also developing and strengthening those services he considered appropriate to a 'British Museum Library' type of national library. The creation of a separate Africana Department with material acquired by purchase and legal deposit, with appropriate books extracted from the Library's general collections, was far advanced. For the time being it was housed in the top floor of the Fairbridge Wing, but Varley had always dreamed of the day when a new wing would be built to house it.

The other major development was the open access specialist Reference Department, which had been the project of Deputy Director Robinson (who claimed that Varley was ambi-

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<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 13 April 1954.

<sup>6</sup> South African Library. Report, 1954-1955, pp.2, 5, 11.

<sup>7</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 May 1954.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 20 (1928-1955), Miss J. Nichols to Director, 28 December 1954.

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valent about it<sup>9</sup>). The Octagon, built in 1922 to serve as the Reading Room, had a single service point allowing supervision of the researchers and students on one side, while (until 1929) serving subscribers ordering the books they wished to borrow on the other. The west hall had served as a reading room for casual readers reading magazines and newspapers since the departure of the South African Museum in 1897.

Following Director Lloyd's long visit to Glasgow in 1929, he created a Subscribers' Department with open access to some 20,000 books in the west hall<sup>10</sup> while the Octagon became a General Reading Room with a limited number of basic reference books on open access shelving.<sup>11</sup> The demand by the public for professional assistance increased during the 1930s. Since the 1920s, the original hall of the Library, the Alfred Room,<sup>12</sup> stood vacant except for the storage of books, having been used briefly for the 1952 Van Riebeeck Festival 'South Africa in Print' exhibition. After the exhibition was demounted, a regular user suggested that the hall be converted into a specialist reference room with a wide range of appropriate books on open access. The Board approving the idea, a collection of reference works, both transferred from the stacks or newly purchased, were gradually assembled and a team of professionally qualified staff formed.<sup>13</sup> The Reference Department opened to the public in 1954<sup>14</sup> and very soon met, if not exceeded, international norms of excellence and would in time become the de facto focus of the South African Library's usefulness. What made the Reference Department special was the quality of assistance the helpful professional team provided for its users. This centre of excellence never got the prominence given to the sparsely-used Africana Department (which opened in 1959), or the iconic Grey and Dessinian Collections and other bibliographic treasures which were used even less. In the author's considered opinion, it was this skewed prioritization which

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<sup>9</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences' [part 1] in: *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, 36(10), September 1981, p.9. Certainly Robinson's Reference Department to a large extent rendered Varley's cherished Africana Department superfluous.

<sup>10</sup> It opened in 1930, and in this west hall the City Library Service operated from December 1954 to July 1962.

<sup>11</sup> *South African Library. Report*, 1922, p.1; 1930, pp.1-2.

<sup>12</sup> So named after Prince Alfred, son of Queen Victoria, later Duke of Edinburgh, whose portrait hangs in that hall.

<sup>13</sup> *South African Library. Report*, 1953, p.2; A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences' [part 1], (1981), pp.9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Readers signed a visitors' book, stating the purpose of their visit, if they wished to use this Department. Many of these visitors' books have been preserved. No record was kept of users of the General Reading Room.

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underlay the library's later difficulties in obtaining a rightful place in the national information structure. The other difficulty was that the Reference Department was subsidized by the City to act jointly as its reference service, which gave the impression that it was a local rather than a national service, a perspective which will be evident in following chapters.

Two other measures were taken in anticipation of the transition to a national library. Varley was an Oxford graduate, and shortly before he commenced his studies there in 1929, the Bodleian Library started a support association, 'Friends of the Bodleian Library', which was at the time something of an innovation. In 1938 (the year Varley came to Cape Town) a journal, *Bodleian Library Record*,<sup>15</sup> was started. In 1943 Varley thought it befitted a national library also to have an Association of Friends of the Library<sup>16</sup> to compensate for the loss of Subscribers' representation on the Board. The *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library* could only be commenced in September 1946 once the war was over, and following the Oxford model, its volumes corresponded with the European academic year. The Association of Friends was launched on a national basis in June 1955, with the Governor-General E.G. Jansen (himself an avid book-collector) as its President.<sup>17</sup>

The South African Library had achieved its status as a national library of reference to carry out functions which Varley had conceptualized, based on the British model. But these functions had not been specifically endorsed by Government nor provided to meet the articulated wants of its hypothetical users. This was in the long term an insecure foundation on which to build. Varley (unconscious of its future significance) wrote in a 1947 editorial:

The part a National Library is called upon to play in the life of a nation is still only dimly appreciated in South Africa. The very title, 'National Library' has to some a grandiose and to some a hollow sound. To far too many of our compatriots it has no sound at all, for it does not come into their scheme of thinking.'

He proceeds to claim that such a Library should be the centre of the nation's cultural life, citing Canada, New Zealand and Australia. But in South Africa, whose culture? 'European,' he wrote.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A complete set from 1938 to 2006 is in the Library's periodicals collection.

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1945-1959), 'Third Progress Report by The Librarian 1938-1948', February 1948, p.4.

<sup>17</sup> South African Library. Report, 1954-1955, pp.3-4.

<sup>18</sup> [Editorial] 'The Meaning of a National Library' in: *Quarterly Bulletin*, 2(1), September 1947, p.1-2.

## Chapter 2. CONFORMITY, 1955-1963

The South African Library was now subject to the one-size-fits-all State-aided Institutions Act of 1931, as amended in 1954. The Library was no longer specifically incorporated by an Act of Parliament since its 1893 Act had been repealed. On the other hand, the State Library in Pretoria, lacking an earlier legislative foundation, and long under the same State-aided Institutions Act, benefited from accepted 'Central Library' functions, proclaimed by Government Notice 67, 13 January 1933.

The functions which the South African Library set out to perform as a national library had been laid out in section nine of the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa (1937), but they remained nothing more than recommendations. Douglas Varley's attempt to get an official endorsement of functions at the 1949 Conference on the Future of the South African Library failed. Therefore such aims and functions as the Library may have espoused (reference, bibliographic control and preservation) had no statutory legitimacy. This had a most injurious long-term effect, firstly on the Library's ability to claim adequate funding from the State, and secondly (since it possessed South Africa's largest and most valuable bibliographic resources), it was exposed to take-over attempts by other library services.

Despite having an accepted iconic status, the Library rapidly lost its position as leader of the library profession in South Africa once Varley departed. Having achieved the objective of becoming a State-aided institution, and no new objective taking its place, the momentum was lost. Each of the six sections in this Chapter serves to illustrate specific difficulties experienced by the Library in coming to terms with its new circumstances. The reader will observe that each of these sections have in common only the Library's lack of legitimacy to back it up, support its claims for proper funding, or defend its autonomy and thereby its liberal ethos.

The State had growing concerns about the place of the South African Library and the other institutions which it funded, and during this early period as a national library, it was assessed by a Committee of Inquiry in 1961. The outcome of that investigation would be to endorse the Library as a separate entity, but to circumscribe its autonomy, increase compliance with Government's political and administrative policies, and introduce the first consultative committees applicable to the Library.

The difficulty which any study of the South African Library faces is this, that while in theory the South African Library did not fit comfortably into a planning framework, there could be no doubt as to its utility to researchers.

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The Lloyd Africana Reading Room, opened 1959.

## Chapter 2, first section : A New Order

The National Party, securely in power after its decisive victory in the 1953 elections, strengthened its grip on the executive apparatus of the State. Senior Public Service positions were rapidly filled by Afrikaners,<sup>1</sup> usually members of the secret Afrikaner Broederbond.<sup>2</sup> Existing English-speaking officials were systematically purged, 'transforming the bureaucracy increasingly', as Deborah Posel claims, 'into an organ of Afrikaner nationalism'.<sup>3</sup> Interference with the constitution, the judiciary, the rule of law, the press, and other matters referred to by Merle Lipton, aimed to 'show where power lay and how the government used it'.<sup>4</sup> The extension of an unprecedented degree of State control by the Nationalist Government is reflected in the uniform Regulations<sup>5</sup> issued in terms of the State-aided Institutions Amendment Act in 1954, placing the institutions' finances, the creation of posts, appointments of staff, and benefits of office under the control of the Department of Education, Arts and Science.

When the South African Library was included under the Act on 29 October 1954, all the persons then serving on the Board were retained in office until 1958, the former subscribers' representatives becoming representatives of Government which now had a large majority.<sup>6</sup> At least four Board members<sup>7</sup> at that date were subsequently identified as holding high office in the Afrikaner Broederbond.<sup>8</sup> Gradually (as will be seen in subsequent Chapters) the bureaucracy

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<sup>1</sup> A survey by the author of the surnames in the South African Public Service List, 1925, reveals that at that date, although English names generally predominated, in the Department of Union Education, only 10% of the officials had English surnames.

<sup>2</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid South Africa, 1910-1986* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.283.

<sup>3</sup> D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: conflict and compromise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.270.

<sup>4</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1989), p.284.

<sup>5</sup> Originally, each institution drew up its own regulations. Uniform administrative regulations and salary scales were recommended in the 1950 Report of the Commission of Enquiry Regarding Certain State-aided Institutions (Pretoria: Department of Education, Arts and Science, 1950), *passim*. This Commission was set up after the second 1948 parliamentary session, demonstrating the new Government's commitment to firm administrative control.

<sup>6</sup> The 1954 Regulations under the State-aided Institutions Act, 1954, provided in addition for representation on the Board of two nominees of the City, one each of the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, and of entities contributing at least £500 to the Library's funds ('Regulations - State-aided Institutions', Government Notice 2201, 29 October 1954, in: *Government Gazette Extraordinary*, 29 October 1954, p.3).

<sup>7</sup> J. du P. Scholtz (nominated by Government in 1949), L.W. Hiemstra and A.J. van der Merwe (Government nominees in 1950), and W.J. du P. Erlank (representing Stellenbosch University from 1955 replacing H.B. Thom).

<sup>8</sup> Afrikaner Broederbond membership according to lists in I. Wilkins and H. Strydom, *The Super Afrikaners* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978), and J.H.P. Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power* (London: Rex Collings, 1979). Cross-checking these two lists published within a year of each other reveals few names common to both.

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extended its control over the functions which the Library might carry out, and especially who might be appointed.<sup>9</sup> Thus the autonomy of the Library was in reality nominal, curtailed by Government regulations, financial allocations, appointments to the Board,<sup>10</sup> and subtle influences of the Broederbond. The role of the Board changed from decision-making to monitoring.

When the Department announced the new Board in June 1958,<sup>11</sup> the only new Government representative was Theo Friis, Director of the Cape Provincial Library Service. The wisdom of appointing the Director of one library service to serve on the Board of another was distinctly questionable, as it seemed to place the Director of the South African Library in a subordinate position to the CPLS. This Board's term of office expired in March 1961. When the next Board was announced in April, to expire in 1963, there was at the outset only one change, although subsequently several significant changes occurred.

The labyrinth of the Public Service consisted of anonymous officialdom, both important and insignificant, who facilitated, neglected or blocked matters.<sup>12</sup> The Library Director (as with all other institutions as well as central government educational bureaux, training colleges and universities) had access the Department of Education, Arts and Science only through its gate-keeper, the Department's Secretary (later designated 'Director-General'). Every detail relating to staff appointments, resignations, conditions of service and all financial matters had to pass through his hands before obtaining necessary approvals or adjustments. According to figures provided by Barry Standish, this Department grew rapidly, from 1280 approved posts in 1945, to 3039 in 1955, 16,234 in 1965, and 22,646 in 1975, more than doubling to 48,823 in 1984<sup>13</sup> (the last figure before the new constitutional dispensation dismantled the Department).

The Secretary for Education, Arts and Science in 1954 was H.S. van der Walt, who retired in March 1957, replaced by his Under Secretary, J.J.P. Op't Hof whose Public Service

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<sup>9</sup> The purpose of the 1954 State-aided Institutions Amendment Act and regulations, according to the Booysen Report, was to promote uniform personnel administration and to prevent institutions creating posts for which there was no funding (Verslag van die Komitee van Onderzoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtinge, Voorsitter C.M. Booysen (Pretoria, Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962) 1, p.86. The Natal Museum complained that the Department had overturned its Board's decision to appoint an expert from overseas instead of choosing a local person (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1 (1956-1967), Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions. Minutes, 7 January 1959).

<sup>10</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1 (1956-1967), Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions. Minutes, 7 January 1959.

<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1956-1959), letter Department (X6/20/44) to Library, 16 June 1958, notifying appointments.

<sup>12</sup> The aim in structuring the bureaucracy, in Merton's view, is the complete elimination of a personalized relationship and non-rational considerations, and administration which almost completely avoids public discussion of its techniques (R.K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), pp.250-251).

<sup>13</sup> J.B. Standish, 'State Employment in South Africa' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), p.72. These figures included all staff posts, not only administrative grades.

## CONFORMITY, 1955-1963

experience dated back to 1922. His knowledge of the Department was thorough and he proved a capable and energetic administrator.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding this, the growth in staff numbers steadily increased his administrative workload. All the institutions complained bitterly of the Department's long delays in approving appointments, despite Op't Hof's reassurances.<sup>15</sup>

Op't Hof had barely taken up the reins of office when Minister J.H. Viljoen died (5 December 1957), superseded by J.J. Serfontein (remembered for pushing through Parliament the Extension of University Education Act no.45 of 1959, which racially-segregated the universities). Serfontein, with unnamed 'Departmental officials', was accused of undermining what remained of the autonomy of the State-aided institutions, overturning decisions of the Boards as if they were Government officials.<sup>16</sup> Varley advised the Secretary of the Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions that the solution would be to grant the status of an Advisory Board to the Committee of Heads, giving it direct access to the Minister.<sup>17</sup>

Although Cabinet Ministers were responsible for determining departmental policies, it was rare for the Department of Education, Arts and Science to be a Minister's only portfolio. J.H. Viljoen (in the Strijdom Ministry) also headed the Departments of Forestry and Health. J.J. Serfontein was simultaneously Minister of Social Welfare and Posts and Telegraphs. Jan de Klerk (in the Verwoerd ministries) also headed the Department of Internal Affairs in the years following the Sharpeville incident. The top permanent officials of the Department were able to wield almost autocratic powers and managed their Ministers. Deborah Posel (endorsing opinions of Max Weber) believes the State's internal cleavages and conflicts, and the struggles for supremacy between the executive and the South African bureaucracy played a major role within policy-making and administration.

The bureaucracy's bid for supremacy within the state stems partly from bureaucrats' control of information, and their technical expertise. The complexity and breadth of the executive's

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<sup>14</sup> For his services to education he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Stellenbosch University in 1960 ('Dr J.J.P. Op't Hof: 'n huldeblik' in: *Lantern: journal for knowledge and culture*, 20(2), December 1970, pp.85-93). Douglas Varley, writing to notify Op't Hof of his resignation in 1961, thanked him for his 'personal kindness and consideration over many years' (NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1, Varley to Op't Hof, 22 May 1961).

<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1956-1967), Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions. Minutes, 28 April 1958.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 7 January 1959. At issue in this instance was a Departmental directive that a senior vacancy at the Natal Museum should be filled by a local man, not one from overseas. A similar opinion was expressed in the name of the next minister, Jan de Klerk, within days of his taking office concerning the appointment of British-born Robinson as Library director, not South West African-born Aschenborn with pro-Nationalist 'struggle credentials' as Varley's successor (NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1, Op't Hof (S2/5/7/2) to Varley, 19 September 1961).

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 3 February 1959; MSL A4/1 (1956-1967), Varley to Dr R. Bigalke, 5 February 1959. This would indeed be recommended in 1961 (Booyesen Committee (1962), sec.5.12.14-19, p.89), a development, when adopted, which the institutions would come to regard as a barrier rather than a conduit.

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task is such that political decision-makers may have to draw heavily on the specialised knowledge and accumulated experience of state administrators. This gives the bureaucrats considerable leverage in advising policy-makers, and in defining and weighing the options between which policy-makers choose.<sup>18</sup>

Standish paid considerable attention to the role of the bureaucrat serving his own best interests by reinforcing his position within the bureaucracy. This includes, he wrote, increasing the size of his department in relation to other departments. One of the major ways in which a department may increase its size is by taking advantage of the uncertain knowledge of Government and offering biased information favourable to the department's growth. It occurs at all levels, resulting eventually in loss of political control, aggravated, in Standish's view, when the bureaucracy consists mostly of members of one political party,<sup>19</sup> although the role of the Afrikaner Broederbond in the Public Service tended to mitigate this by co-ordinating policy at all levels.<sup>20</sup> The burgeoning growth of the Department of Education, Arts and Science establishment (already shown) distinguished Op't Hof's tenure (1958-1967) but its growth in staff numbers in the mid-1960s corresponded with deteriorating capacity and skills.<sup>21</sup>

The significance of Op't Hof, the person, in liaison with the South African Library was considerable. His apparently favourable disposition towards the South African Library may explain why the Department on several occasions, especially respecting the agitation by Theo Friis in 1960-1961 and the concurrent Booysen committee of inquiry in 1961 (which will be noted presently), came to its defence. Op't Hof's correspondence with this Library always seems positive. During his term of office there was no official pressure on the Library to define or defend the functions it performed (reference, preservation and exhibitions), giving the impression that this was a settled matter. The treasures of the South African Library may have captured his imagination and feeling of European cultural pride. Op't Hof was said to be a man with cultivated tastes and featured frequently in official cultural contacts with Western European countries, especially Germany and the Netherlands. His personal interests lay in the theatre and in art.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid* (1997), p.21.

<sup>19</sup> J.B. Standish, 'State Employment' (1984), pp.27-29.

<sup>20</sup> A. Seegers, 'Towards an Understanding of the Afrikanerisation of the South African State' in: *Africa* [London], 63(4), 1993, p.482.

<sup>21</sup> D. Posel, 'Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: paradoxes of the apartheid State' in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25(1), March 1999), p.103.

<sup>22</sup> 'Dr J.J.P. Op't Hof: 'n huldeblik' (1970), especially pp.88-92. On retirement from the Department in 1970 he was nominated as a member of the South African Library Board (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1970-1975), Robinson to 'Volksoopvoeding', 27 May 1971). He became Curator of the William Fehr Art Collection in Cape Town instead.

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It was during the term of office of Op't Hof as Secretary for Education, Arts and Science and later of Cultural Affairs (1957-1970) that the South African Library developed rapidly with a gradually-increasing subsidy, and a subsidy formula which would have put financial planning on a much sounder footing if it had been persisted with. During his term of office, the long-awaited Lloyd Africana Wing was constructed (1958-1959) and the decision would be taken (in 1968) to rebuild the old wing of the Library and render it fireproof.<sup>23</sup> So far, the change to State-aided status had proved beneficial to the institution. But these were perhaps the last examples of Departmental generosity towards the South African Library. The events at Sharpeville and elsewhere in 1960, the declaration of the Republic, and the developing authoritarianism of the State in the 1960s would affect the economy and thus the State's ability to fund what it perceived to be peripheral issues. From this time, the status and legitimacy of the South African Library began to be questioned in official quarters.

Despite the benefits which accrued to the institution as a whole by coming under Government control, and despite the improved salary scales, leave benefits, statutory protection and subsidized retirement provision enjoyed by White 'permanent employees' (or 'officers'), there was a negative side to the new relationship with the Department, namely its prescriptions regarding the Library's Coloured staff who were classified as unskilled labour.

It is necessary at this point to state that since the South African Library's foundation, all white-collar workers and security staff (called Commissionaires) had been White persons, with a very small number of Coloured cleaners and messengers. From the 1920s, a few of the more promising Coloured cleaners had been given more responsible duties with increased wages, such as working in the bindery, setting out the current newspapers and magazines in the Reading Room, fetching book-stock from closed-access stacks (known as 'fetch-and-carry boys' regardless of their age<sup>24</sup>), applying property stamps, spine-marking newly bound volumes, or serving as the White staff's tea lady, once their basic cleaning duties had been completed. Afternoon and evening shifts were covered by casual staff such as schoolboys (mostly but not exclusively White) right up to the parting of the ways in 1954.<sup>25</sup> Once the Reference Department was established and the need to retrieve books grew, there was an increased need for 'stack attendants', so the Coloured staff compliment was extended (with the approval of the Department) by hiring more cleaners who might in time include more specialized work while retaining basic cleaning duties.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Announced August 1968 (South African Library. Report, 1966-1968, pp.1-2).

<sup>24</sup> In 1946 the ages of the eight 'boys' and three women were 58, 53, 51, 39, 38, 35, 31, 28, 23, 17 and 16 (NLCT-MC MSM 21 (1945-1955), 'Memorandum to Non-European Staff', 9 February 1946).

<sup>25</sup> J. Kam, 'Reminiscences of an ex-Sapling' in: Sapling 7, October 1965, p.48.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 28 January 1948: Annex, 'Memorandum on Non-European Staff'

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At the State Library, Pretoria, 'shelf attendant' posts were filled by Whites, and Blacks were hired as labourers.

In Chapter 1, third section, we noted briefly the provision in the 1954 Regulations which designated 'non-European' staff as temporary 'employees' with limited benefits, without protection against summary dismissal, and making no provision for subsidized pension or provident fund membership.<sup>27</sup> Using the provision in the Regulation that no employee should be prejudiced by the new regulations, Varley secured the right of ten Coloured staff already members of the Library's provident fund, to remain members of a State-subsidized provident fund. His correspondence (the earliest letters unanswered) extended over a period of seven months. Eventually an answer in the affirmative was received in January 1955,<sup>28</sup> subject to such staff being regarded as new members without their prior service being taken into account.<sup>29</sup> The Department's view was that institutions could pay long-serving non-White staff a £2 per month ex gratia pension (50 years' service being mentioned).<sup>30</sup> For five Coloured staff who joined the staff subsequently, Varley applied to the Department for a special dispensation in January 1960.<sup>31</sup> It was nineteen months before this was granted, by which time one of the five had left the staff.<sup>32</sup> A new pension fund was created for the State-aided ('Associated') institutions with an unspecified 'eligibility' for membership,<sup>33</sup> but the Library's Coloured staff remained in their existing State provident fund.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 'Regulations - State-aided Institutions' (1954), specifically pp.2-3 (definitions: 'employee' could be of any population group, only 'Europeans' could be a 'permanent employee', while 'staff member', either permanent or temporary, excluded 'non-Europeans'), p.4 (appointment of 'European' staff, temporary or permanent, required Departmental approval, 'non-Europeans' did not), pp.8-9 (leave entitlement for 'non-Europeans' very limited), p.17 (misconduct leading to dismissal: 'employees' could be summarily dismissed by the Director without the protection afforded to 'permanent employees'), and p.23 (definition of 'officer' eligible for membership of a pension or provident fund to be a 'permanent employee' which excluded non-Europeans). (The 'officer' and 'employee' distinction is encountered at least as far back as 1925.)

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G6 (1920-1955), Department (X6/96) to Library, 8 January 1955.

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 1 March 1955.

<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1956-1959), Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions. Agenda, 5 May 1956 (pencil note).

<sup>31</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G5 (1952-1961), Library to Department, 19 January 1960.

<sup>32</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 September 1961, which was Varley's last Board meeting.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 3 September 1963.

<sup>34</sup> The opinion of the Department (the Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions was told) was that that 'Bantu could be appointed on a permanent basis, in which case they have to contribute to the Pension Fund, [but] most Bantu employees actually prefer to receive their salary on the local tariff without deductions for pension fund' (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1 (1956-1967), Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions. Minutes, 12 October 1965).

## CONFORMITY, 1955-1963

Wage scales for the Coloured staff were also impacted by coming under Government control. In 1952, when the new Regulations were under discussion in Pretoria, only White salaries were considered. The Department noted that there were scales of wages for non-White messengers and cleaners in the Public Service (ranging between £96 and £288 a year), but that the South African Library was already paying relevant staff more than that, while the Public Service made no provision for non-White Binders' Assistants or Stack Attendants.<sup>35</sup> It was important that the salary scales should be officially approved since it was on this basis that the staff component of the Department's subsidy would be based. The Board instructed Varley to provide the Department with a duty-sheet of Messengers to demonstrate whether they should really be classed as semi-skilled Stack Attendants, even Library Assistants. Improved salary scales for Coloured staff<sup>36</sup> were approved by the Department without providing additional funding to cover the increased cost.<sup>37</sup> These wages were applied after the transition to the Library's new State-aided status in 1954 and remained unchanged until 1956.<sup>38</sup> In 1959 the Department (with Serfontein as Minister) introduced reduced wage scales for non-Whites, in many cases lower than what the Library's Coloured staff were paid, obliging the Library to make up the difference from other budget allocations.<sup>39</sup> In 1963 the concept of the 'local wage'<sup>40</sup> was introduced, which bedevilled matters for many years.

The whole issue of the status of the Coloured workers at the South African Library was unsatisfactory. Firstly, they were performing semi-skilled tasks for which they had not been properly graded (though had this work been properly graded, the positions would have been reserved for Whites, as at the State Library). Secondly, they still acted as cleaners for part of the day. Thirdly, because Government showed a determination to beat down non-Whites' scales of wages over time. The worst by far was yet to come, coupled with the destruction of District Six (the home of many of the Library's Coloured staff) and their relocation to distant townships on the Cape Flats. The wages paid to Coloured staff were only viable so long as they lived within walking distance of their work. Consideration of these matters will be continued in Chapter 4.

The point of this section was to demonstrate how the South African Library and its staff had to conform to existing bureaucratic provisions after 1954, many of their underlying

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<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 24 February 1953 (referring to letter from the Department, 16 February 1953).

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 31 March 1953; 26 May 1953.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 30 June 1953.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 3 April 1956. These consolidated scales included the former cost-of-living allowances.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 8 December 1959, referring to letter from the Department dated 16 November.

<sup>40</sup> Local Wage system, see Chapter 3, second section.

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principles dating back decades. But what the Library now faced would be pressure to conform to the rolling out of National Party policies, firstly moral and political censorship, secondly the development of what its promoters considered to be a rational framework by which the South African mind might be controlled, thirdly some early attempts to combine the South African Library with some other institution, such as the Library of Parliament, on grounds of efficiency, and finally the implementation of racial segregation. This negative side of the Library's dependency upon the State will form the themes of following sections.

Bladsy 14
FYN GOUD
Februarie 1953
FYN GOUD
Bladsy 15



### VERBYSTEREND ONTHULLINGS DEUR BEKENDE JOERNALISTE:

# HANDELSROETES VAN SKANDE—

## VOORHOEDE VAN ONSEDELIKE INVAL IN LONDEN!

**11.000.000 gebuit uit sonde!** Dit is die plunder wat gewaaltige onsedelikeid-organisasies, verweg om verdrag in te wys, wanhout diensende knoekers Londen misantroos vir die Kroningsreus. Hul skandeler planne om honderde straatvroue uit Frankryk vir hierdie doel „in te voer“, word hier vir die eerste keer openbaar. Dit is 'n uitdaging aan fatsoenlikheid, 'n uitdaging ook aan u en my, wat nie durf veronagsaam word nie!

polisie weet net so goed as mnr. Fernet dat byna vyfhoonderd Franse straatvroue gedurende die Fees van Brittanje op Londen toegesig het en dat die vervolging weens immorele voorstelle op straat destyds in die Britse hoofstad met byna vyftig persent toegesien het. Daar is alle rede om aan te neem dat die prostitusie-industrie vanjaar voorbereidings vir 'n veel groter oes tref. Hulle kan alken deur onoverwonne optreke van owerbuites gestuit word, en ons kan vasstel dat 'n spesiale „aanvoering-deling“ in Londen reeds die eerste waaie gedoen het.

**10.000 meisies op straat**

**WAT** het ons tydens ons besoek aan Frankryk, uitgevind?

Marseille het nou die grootste sentrum van onsedelikeid in die wêreld geword. In die afgelope vyf jaar was die stad die tuiste van 'n vicieuse skare straatvroue wat moet onder 10.000 dalen.

Waarom is Marseille die immorele „opvoedingster“ van die wêreld? Die antwoord is versprei deur die klein Mandé Simone, lid van 'n onsedelikeheids-bende wat deur twee Kooisokanne broers georganiseer is.

Sy het aan ons vertel: „In Marseille was jy altyd in bestaan maak. Enige Franse meisie weet dit. Daar is manne kan betelien. Sy het reeds aansoek gedoen om langs die „handboord“ na die noorde geneem te word. Sy sal waarskynlik 1100 aan „oordragings“ moet betaal.

Ook Lulu, 'n brumet met te rooi lippe, sien 'n „sakkeboek“ aan Londen, tegetmet. In haar skortjies maar gemaklike klanke het sy aan ons vertel: „Ee was vertien jaar oud toe ek na Marseille gekom het om 'n meisie te werk. Ee het kort tevore in my mantroubaes-elsamen geslaag. Einne n jaar was ek op die strate — en nou na agt jaar is ek nog daar.“

**Hulle word hier tee-wys gemaak**

**TOE** is ons voorgegaan aan Gabre en Raymond, Gray het agter die toonbank van 'n winkel in Marseille 110 per maand verdien. Nou verdien sy 110 per maand.

Raymonde is glo een van die meesle meisies in Marseille. Sy het drie jaar gelede met wanaans daar aangekom. Sy het soveel liere geloop dat sy nie haar haterbreking kon betaan nie — en ay het haar trouwe toe die om te meisie geneem om die peid te vind.

Al hierdie meisies is van plaas om Londen hulle Meisies gedurende die Kroningsjaar te maak.

Parry staan egter nie veel agter by Marvulle nie. Minstens 7.000 meisies maak 'n besoek in die opvarende naby die Champs-Élysées, Pigalle en die Linkeroewer.

Mnr. Fernet het aan ons vertel: „Dit is hier waar die meisies tevrede kom-

How censorship began – Fyn Goud, Februarie 1953.

## Chapter 2, second section : Purity and Politics.

With flaming headlines ‘Verbysterende Onthullings deur Bekende Joernaliste: Handelsroetes van Skande – Voorhoede van Onsedelike Inval in Londen!’ the popular Afrikaans magazine *Fyn Goud* published a translation from the radical British weekly *Reynolds News*, reporting that London was being taken over by French prostitutes for the 1953 Coronation celebrations.<sup>1</sup> The piece was plagiarized by *Keur* magazine.<sup>2</sup> This is how moral and political censorship of South African publications began.

The serious consequences of political censorship in South Africa, and the complicity of much of the library profession (pretending it was all about pornography, not politics) make it desirable to address this matter in some detail. Such opposition as there was centred on Varley personally supported by librarians of the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, while their parent institutions kept aloof.

The South African Library has been portrayed as a bastion of opposition to censorship: flattering, but not true. In instances when censorship was contested, it was its successive Directors from the inception of the Library, not the body corporate, which should be credited. Pringle and Jardine, his successor, were both in dispute with their own superiors (Lord Charles Somerset and the Committee of Library subscribers respectively) over censorship. The Board did, indeed, support Director F.S. Lewis who challenged Prime Minister J.G. Sprigg over the Martial Law confiscations in 1901-1902,<sup>3</sup> as well as Director A.C.G. Lloyd in 1918 when a Board member burnt a book of which she disapproved,<sup>4</sup> and yet again supported Director Douglas Varley in 1951 when a subscriber stole an allegedly ‘filthily obscene’ book he thought ought to be banned,<sup>5</sup> but in these three cases the ire of the Board was roused by the theft of library stock.

Following the end of the Second World War, the victorious nations experienced an upsurge of anxiety about moral standards and national loyalty. In South Africa, Louis Freed

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Amazing Revelations by Well-known Journalists: Trade Routes of Shame -Vanguard of Immoral Invasion in London!’ D. English and J. Knight, ‘Verbysterende Onthullings...’ in: *Fyn Goud*, Februarie 1953, pp.14-17.

<sup>2</sup> ‘’n Wêreld vol Dinge...’, in: *Keur*, Februarie 1953, pp.22-25, 39. *Fyn Goud* publishers sued the C.N.A., publisher of *Keur*, in the Witwatersrand Division of the Supreme Court on 2 February 1953 for copyright infringement, but the judge threw out the case on the basis that the court would not protect scandalous material (*Cape Times* cuttings, 13 February 1953).

<sup>3</sup> A.C.G. Lloyd, ‘Adventures in Book-buying’ in: *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library* 1(3), March 1947, pp.67-68; R. Vigne, ‘Pringle’s Posthumous Censorship under Martial Law’ in: *ibid.* 64(2), April-June 2010, pp.84-85.

<sup>4</sup> E.B. Mathieson, ‘Library Reminiscences’ in: *Sapling* 10, November 1967, p.33.

<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 20 (1928-1955), various letters in the case of Col. W.E. Long and *Nuit de Fête*, 1951-52.

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produced a dissertation for Pretoria University in 1949 (later published<sup>6</sup>) exposing European prostitution and sexual deviance in Johannesburg. In England this anxiety manifested as the 'purity campaign' against obscenity, pornography, prostitution and sexual deviance which began in 1951.<sup>7</sup> In the United States of America a more sinister and slightly earlier trend fed into McCarthyism which plunged the country into turmoil from 1945 to about 1954.<sup>8</sup> McCarthyism's avowed target was Communism, but it also sought-out all kinds of supposed deviant and un-American behaviour. A similar concern may be discerned at the same time during National Party rule in South Africa where Communism and anything like it<sup>9</sup> was prohibited from 1950.<sup>10</sup> The spread of youth delinquency and the 'Ducktail culture' in South Africa (examined specifically by Katie Mooney<sup>11</sup>) paralleled the 'Mods and Rockers' culture of the time in Britain.<sup>12</sup> In South Africa the 'moral panic' of the 1950s had additional piquancy, in that this alleged degeneracy might undermine White political pre-eminence.

The newly-elected National Party Government professed to be troubled by the plethora of sensational paperback novels and comics with lurid covers; indeed, it was the lurid covers even on serious works of fiction which were a significant cause of offence.<sup>13</sup> This category of literature labelled 'undesirable' attracted special condemnation when written in Afrikaans. It was anticipated that this would deprave Afrikaners and threaten their 'spiritual values'.<sup>14</sup> The 1952 South African Library Association Conference in Cape Town discussed the question of 'inferior literature' in Afrikaans. The idea that a National Book Council (proposed at the 1950 SALA Conference in Pretoria) might be empowered to exercise total pre-publication control over

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<sup>6</sup> L.F. Freed, *The Problem of European Prostitution in Johannesburg* (Cape Town: Juta, 1949).

<sup>7</sup> R.C. Bengtson, *Libraries and Cultural Change* (London: Bingley, 1970), pp.74-78.

<sup>8</sup> *The Growth of the American Republic*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford, 1969) 2, pp.631-635, 680-682.

<sup>9</sup> The term 'Communism' was no doubt thought to be self-explanatory, but could come to mean 'any opinion of which the government disapproves' (D.H. Varley, 'Trends Abroad: South Africa' in: *Library Trends*, 19(1), July 1970, p.144).

<sup>10</sup> Suppression of Communism Act, no.44 of 1950.

<sup>11</sup> K. Mooney, 'Die Eendstert Euwel and Societal Responses to White Youth Subcultural Identities on the Witwatersrand 1930-1964' (PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2007), especially Chapters 2, 5 and 7.

<sup>12</sup> E. Goode and N. Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: the social construction of deviance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp.22-30, 82.

<sup>13</sup> Cape Town. City Library Service. Report, 1955, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: apartheid censorship and its cultural consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.25-26.

## CONFORMITY, 1955-1963

publishing received widespread support, if S.J. Kritzinger is correct.<sup>15</sup> The moral panic was fuelled by the Afrikaans churches, cultural groupings and the print media.<sup>16</sup>

Moral panics do not rely upon facts. Traceable back to Classical times, they were first studied as a sociological manifestation after the Second World War by Stanley Cohen, a South African expatriate in Britain. His research is commended by Goode and Ben-Yehuda.<sup>17</sup>

At the height of the McCarthy era, a pernicious work written for the popular market appeared in the United States in 1954, quickly followed by a British edition. *Seduction of the Innocent* by Frederic Wertham<sup>18</sup> is described by Peter McDonald as 'a crudely mechanistic study of how comics "caused" juvenile delinquency'.<sup>19</sup> This work of pseudo-sociology purported to detect in publications of this kind not only overt encouragement of violence, vice and promiscuity, but also subliminal sexual imagery in the pictures. It had wide circulation in South Africa through the public library networks<sup>20</sup> and gave urgency to the call for censorship. But the spark which ignited panic was the appearance of articles on prostitution mentioned above.<sup>21</sup>

Prime Minister D.F. Malan (a former Dutch Reformed Church clergyman) seized on this situation to make some political capital and provide a smoke-screen behind which to increase State control over the population.<sup>22</sup> The Nationalists' successful 1948 election campaign was based on ideas expressed in recent books *Tuiste vir die Nageslag*, in *Regverdige Rasse-apartheid*, and in *Voogdyskap en Apartheid* by Geoff Cronjé, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pretoria, a prominent Nazi-sympathizer.<sup>23</sup> During the 'moral panic' over the corrupting effects

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Education, Arts and Science. Annual Report, 1952 [UG.12-1954], p.43. Kritzinger, as Chief Librarian of the Public Service, contributed this portion of the report relating to libraries.

<sup>16</sup> In 1953, leaders of the three main Afrikaans churches met the Minister of the Interior (T.E. Dönges) to demand censorship of locally-published material. The Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, expressed concern that the censorship net might in future be too widely cast (P. Kapp, *Draer van 'n Droom: die geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, 1909-2009* (Hermanus: Hemel & See Boeke, 2009), p.193). A.L. Dick ('Book Burning and the Complicity of South African Librarians, 1955-1971' in: *Innovation*, 28, June 2004, p.35) refers to churches claiming there was a flood of pornography.

<sup>17</sup> E. Goode and N. Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics* (1994), p.23.

<sup>18</sup> F. Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rinehart, 1954; London: Museum Press, 1955).

<sup>19</sup> P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police* (2009), p.23.

<sup>20</sup> The present author encountered the publication when employed in the Cape Provincial Library Service in 1961.

<sup>21</sup> P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police* (2009), p.22. White prostitution was an especially sensitive topic linked to the 'Poor White' question.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> J.M. Coetzee, 'The Mind of Apartheid: Geoffrey Cronjé (1907- )' in: *Social Dynamics* 17(1), 1991, pp.3-4.

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of inferior literature, the Government appointed a commission of enquiry into undesirable literature,<sup>24</sup> chaired by Cronjé. Since such an enquiry would impact upon libraries, the Cape Branch of the South African Library Association (SALA) proposed at the 1954 library conference that a sub-committee should draft representations to the commission, which was accepted.<sup>25</sup>

The SALA committee consisted of Prof. Gerrit Dekker of Potchefstroom University (who would head the future Censor Board),<sup>26</sup> Theo Friis (of the Natal Provincial Library Service, soon to be head of the Cape Provincial Library Service, who openly supported State censorship), S.J. Kritzinger, Chief Librarian of the Public Service and convenor-designate of the committee (unambiguously in favour of stringent publication control, even pre-publication censorship<sup>27</sup>), and Douglas Varley of the South African Library whose Cape Branch represented a minority anti-censorship position. Dekker kept on the sidelines and Kritzinger prevaricated until it was almost too late to meet the Commission's deadline.<sup>28</sup> Varley took the matter in hand himself in February 1955 and with his usual energy, surveyed the opinions of the SALA membership.

This task could hardly have come at a more inconvenient time for Varley who was busy trying to steer the South African Library in its new direction as a national reference library and making final preparations after many years to build a modern addition to the Library's buildings.

The other active member of the committee was Theo Friis, who was in the process of moving to Cape Town. He defended censorship as necessary at the present stage of South Africa's development, and accused Varley of taking an international perspective.<sup>29</sup>

Varley and Friis would never be able to co-operate on any professional matter (as demonstrated in the following two sections), let alone censorship. From the start this was a conflict between two very different value systems. Varley's British academic background<sup>30</sup> disposed him towards certain characteristic liberal attitudes, both in politics and literature, then

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<sup>24</sup> Announced in Parliament by the Minister of the Interior (Dönges) on 10 May 1954 (House of Assembly. Debates, 1954, col.4863).

<sup>25</sup> SALA Newsletter, 7(17), November 1954, p.184. Naming a sub-committee was left to the Association's Council.

<sup>26</sup> Dekker became first head of the Publications Control Board (P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police* - online version <http://www.theliteraturepolice.com/biographies/> accessed 25 February 2013).

<sup>27</sup> 'Ek is verder van mening dat die landswette so streng gemaak moet word dat 'n skrywer of uitgewer dit nie ligtelik sal waag om 'n publikasie wat ongewens is die lig te laat sien nie.' ('Furthermore, I am of the opinion that the laws of this land should be made so stringent that no writer or publisher would attempt to allow an undesirable publication to appear') (NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1954-1955), Kritzinger to Varley, 4 April 1955.)

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1954-1955), Circular Varley to SALA members and affiliated libraries, 7 February 1955.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, Friis to Varley 22 February 1955.

<sup>30</sup> The Editor [P.R. Coates], 'Douglas Harold Varley: a life's work in librarianship, part 1' in: *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 55(4), June 2001, pp.167-168.

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being challenged in South Africa. Friis, on the other hand, studied librarianship at the University of Pretoria under Professor P.C. Coetzee (whose admiration of National Socialism is no secret<sup>31</sup>) and subsequently in McCarthy-era United States of America at the University of Chicago.

The Cronjé Commission's 44 page (284 point) questionnaire<sup>32</sup> beguiled respondents into thinking the enquiry was about pornography. Librarians fell for the trick and responded to Varley's survey overwhelmingly in favour of censorship. Two paragraphs of the four-point version of Varley's watered-down draft submission which Dekker and Kritzinger were willing to accept were struck out by Friis.<sup>33</sup> The SALA Council, by deciding to consult the membership more widely (its commonest delaying tactic), deferred the decision beyond the closing date and thereby smothered it.<sup>34</sup> The South African Library's Board resolved not to return the Cronjé Commission's questionnaire, and refused to take any action unless requested by the Commission.<sup>35</sup> Varley was left to present his personal views before the Commission on 27 September 1955.

When the report was published late in 1957, the library profession discovered that, despite the hysteria, hardly any morally offensive publications in Afrikaans existed after all.<sup>36</sup> Rather, that the Bill accompanying the Cronjé report proposed a Publications Control Board whose main purpose was to suppress Communist thought and any political writing which affronted the Government,<sup>37</sup> in line with Cold War politics.

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<sup>31</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Science for Ideology? : P.C. Coetzee and the professionalization of South African librarianship' in: *Mousaion* 19(1), 2001, pp.67-68, also 'Scholarship, Identity and Lies: the political life of H.J. de Vleeschouwer, 1940-1955' in: *Kleio* 34, 2002, pp.19-21, and 'Book Burning and the Complicity of South African Librarians, 1955-1971' in: *Innovation*, 28, June 2004, pp.34-35.

<sup>32</sup> Office of the Commission of Enquiry in Regard to Undesirable Publications. Questionnaire. 7 March 1955. Copy will be found in NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1954-1955).

<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1954-1955), Friis to Varley 9 April 1955; Varley to Dekker 14 April 1955.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, Varley to Kritzinger, 27 April 1955. (This suggests co-ordinated manipulation from outside the Association, the Afrikaner Broederbond coming immediately to mind.)

<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 April 1955. There is no mention of this matter in the Library's report for 1954-1955. Considering the composition of the board, it is unlikely that it could have put forward any view critical of the Government. *Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, the prestigious Afrikaans cultural organization, took the same position, probably for the same reason (P. Kapp, *Draer van 'n Droom* (2009), p.195).

<sup>36</sup> D.L. Ehlers, analysing the evidence presented to the Cronjé enquiry, demonstrated that only 72 of the 3746 potentially undesirable Afrikaans titles examined by the Commission were 'generally undesirable' and since the 3746 titles represented three-fifths of all Afrikaans titles, the proportion found to be undesirable was 1.7% (comment in: *South African Libraries* 25(3) January 1958, pp.71-72).

<sup>37</sup> C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), p.35.

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A memorandum by the South African Library Association opposing the proposed law<sup>38</sup> 'was probably the last published statement of this professional body in defence of this aspect of the rule of law in South Africa', Varley wrote later.<sup>39</sup> The draft Bill was not included in the Government programme for Parliament in 1958, but eventually it was dusted off by H.F. Verwoerd in 1963, becoming the Publications and Entertainment Act, no.26 of 1963.<sup>40</sup> Thirty years earlier the National Socialists had set an example to their South African admirers, purging Germany of censored publications, with dramatic torchlight processions and bonfires of library books.

When fully developed, Nazi censorship encompassed all phases of the creation, publication, and dissemination of information and ideas; it oversaw authors, controlled the publishing industry, supervised the book trade, and controlled libraries. As a system ... it did succeed in its primary objective.<sup>41</sup>

Political censorship in South Africa met with little further opposition from the library profession. Perhaps if the SALA had possessed a Code of Professional Ethics, it might have been the foundation for more effective opposition.<sup>42</sup> The organized profession, in Bryan Hood's opinion, was timid and hesitant in its approach to many important issues, not least State censorship.<sup>43</sup> This matter illustrates the degree to which, under the new dispensation, Varley no longer had the Board behind him, nor the library professional association. The legal and political environment of South Africa was impinging directly on the professional autonomy exercised by the South African Library, and in this respect the Library's dependence on the State was not directly involved. This topic is taken up again in Chapter 3, third section.

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<sup>38</sup> Afterwards published in *South African Libraries*, 25(4), April 1958, pp.113-115.

<sup>39</sup> D.H. Varley, 'Trends Abroad' (1970), p.146.

<sup>40</sup> The implications of the Act are outlined in C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship* (1994), pp.60-64.

<sup>41</sup> M.F. Stieg, *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany* (Tuscaloosa USA, University of Alabama Press, 1992), p.78.

<sup>42</sup> At this time librarians in the United States of America and the United Kingdom did not yet have professional codes of conduct.

<sup>43</sup> B. Hood (and others), 'Literary Censorship and the South African Librarian: a symposium' in: *South African Libraries* 22(2), October 1954, p.39.

## Chapter 2, third section : A Tinder-box Building

The need for a new building for the South African Library significantly influenced the decision to become a State-aided institution, something which would be partially realized in 1959. On Varley's arrival in 1938, he found the Library complex consisted of three parts: the main wing facing the Public Gardens, an impractical, grandiose classical structure constructed between 1858 and 1863 as a Library and Museum,<sup>1</sup> and two substantial concrete-framed additions. The Octagon was opened in 1922, and the Fairbridge Wing in 1927, both having high aesthetic merit, but impractical. At no point did the floor levels of the three buildings correspond, nor was there any inter-connection at first floor level. Director Lloyd and his deputy Murray had both pointed out that the whole complex was unsuitable for use as a library, a judgement still valid in 2014. To Varley, the old wing facing the Public Gardens was nothing short of a 'tinder-box' which could burn down at any time destroying its priceless contents.

The original wing was constructed internally of timber throughout: roof framing, ceilings, stairs, internal columns, galleries, book shelves and floors, with no fire hydrants (the only fire-fighting equipment consisting of strategically-placed red fire-buckets filled with sand), and fire-rated doors between the old east wing and the Fairbridge wing only. However, the room containing the Grey Collection had been fire-proofed in 1893.<sup>2</sup> A fire breaking out in one part could quickly engulf the whole complex: a veritable 'tinder-box'. Never an annual report was issued without dire warnings about the fire-risk.

Varley's fears were not unreasonable. The destruction by fire of the library of the University of the Witwatersrand resulted in the loss of the valuable Gubbins Collection of Africana in 1931.<sup>3</sup> There had been enormous losses of European libraries during the Second World War to demonstrate how susceptible libraries were to fire.<sup>4</sup> During the war, the Library's valuable collections were moved to a top secret location out of the City.<sup>5</sup> The fire which destroyed the

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<sup>1</sup> The South African Museum quitted the west wing of the building in 1897 but remained the joint owner of the site.

<sup>2</sup> The wooden floor and ceiling were replaced with iron railway rails embedded in concrete, and cast iron Chubb fire-proof shutters were installed on the windows and the entrance door; the weight was so great there has always been a danger that the south-east corner of the building might collapse, as had threatened in 1903 when additional walls were hurriedly constructed to shore it up from below (South African Library. Report, 1893, p.[1]; 1903, p.[1]).

<sup>3</sup> R. Musiker, *Aspects of Wits Library History* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Library, 1982), pp.4a-6.

<sup>4</sup> The British Museum Library in central London was bombed twice, and its newspaper library in the suburbs was also bombed with devastating results (*International Dictionary of Library Histories* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001) 1, p.230).

<sup>5</sup> The Grey Collection and other 'treasures' went to Stellenbosch University in May 1942 (South African Library. Report, 1944, pp.5-6; NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1945-1959), 'Third progress report by the Librarian, 1938-1948'). De Beers Corporation in Kimberley was willing to store the books, but Varley was anxious that Kimberley itself might

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library of the Potchefstroom University College in February 1949<sup>6</sup> was a catastrophe the South African Library wished to avoid at any cost. While this fire was still fresh in everyone's mind, the Public Works Department's Fire Protection Officer inspected the South African Library building and reported:

It would be virtually impossible, without major building alterations, to protect the building against fire. The cost of such an undertaking would be prohibitive, and even then no assurance could be given that the scheme would be effective. The weak link in any scheme of fire protection in this building is the heavily timbered old portion thereof, which cannot be rendered fireproof.<sup>7</sup>

Internal fire-walls requested as a matter of urgency in 1941<sup>8</sup> were only built between sectors of the Library building in 1952.<sup>9</sup> Varley wanted the Public Gardens site cleared and an entirely new, purpose-designed structure erected.<sup>10</sup> The diversion of funds to the war effort of 1939-1945 was a major setback.

Discussions were opened with the Department of Education, Arts and Science in 1948 respecting a completely new building as part of the discussions on the Library's future,<sup>11</sup> and in the same year Varley took long leave and toured Europe and America inspecting current examples of library design.<sup>12</sup> In 1950 the collapse of a heavy plaster-and-lath ceiling was seen as an omen of disaster.<sup>13</sup>

Minister J.H. Viljoen was persuaded to visit the Library and see the problem at first-hand, which he did in February 1951. In the discussions which followed, the Minister refused to disturb

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be at risk (Author's files, Kimberley Africana Library, correspondence 4, 5, 15 and 26 March 1942).

<sup>6</sup> J.S. du Plessis, *Geskiedenis van die Potchefstroomse Universiteitskollege vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys 1919-1951* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit, 1975), pp.240-242.

<sup>7</sup> South African Library. Report, 1949, pp.2-3.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 1941, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 21 May 1952.

<sup>10</sup> Members of Parliament to raised the issue in their respective Houses. Senators Jones, Hollander and Van Niekerk in the Senate, 25 April 1941; Dr L.P. Bosman, in House of Assembly, 10 April 1944, Minister of Public Works (Clarkson) responding 11 April 1944. In each case the debate took place in the dying days of the respective sessions, and were productive of nothing.

<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 September 1949, Annex 97.

<sup>12</sup> South African Library. Report, 1948, p.2.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 1950, p.1.

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the State's priority list for new buildings,<sup>14</sup> although emergency measures were agreed upon, notably bricking up unnecessary doorways and fitting steel shutters to the rest, compartmentalizing the building into a limited number of fire-zones, effected in 1952-53.<sup>15</sup> At this stage it was already conceded that no more than an additional wing for the Africana, Dessinian, Grey and manuscript collections could be contemplated. The Public Works Department did not have available staff to draft plans for such an extension but conceded that the Library might commission an architect in private practice to prepare preliminary plans at its own cost.<sup>16</sup> B. St C. Lightfoot (of Lightfoot, Twentyman Jones and Kent, Cape Town) was selected.<sup>17</sup> A.P.S. Conradie, a student of architecture at the University of Cape Town, drew plans for a thesis (illustrated on p.134) which provide some idea of the kind of building the Library might have expected in the 1950s.<sup>18</sup>

When preliminary talks began in 1952 to make the South African Library a fully State-aided institution, hopes were raised that a new wing would soon follow. An unexpected obstacle was discovered: the existing buildings were the property of the Public Works Department, but the land was still registered as jointly-owned by the respective Boards of Trustees of the South African Library and the South African Museum. If the Supreme Court had made an order transferring the site to the Library, transfer fees in excess of £10,000 would be payable. After several options had been explored, Government agreed to make provision for the transfer of the land to the State as part of the 1954 Act amending the status of the South African Library; a servitude was added that the land 'shall be used only for the purpose of a public library'.<sup>19</sup> Plans for a three-storey (initially five-storey) detached building facing Queen Victoria Street were drawn and provided for on the Government estimates.<sup>20</sup>

Building work commenced in January 1957 and the finished building was opened on

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 1951, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 1952, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 28 February 1951.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 31 October 1951.

<sup>18</sup> Copies of the plans are filed at the National Library. Cape Town, AF.727.9.CON. Lightfoot, an external examiner for the School of Architecture, may have suggested the project and supplied Conradie with the specifications Varley had compiled. Albertus Petrus Snyman Conradie (1925-1999) is best remembered for his innovative Dutch Reformed Church buildings of triangular form with narrow spires (D. Goldblatt, *South Africa the Structure of Things Then* (Cape Town: Oxford, 1998), pp.234-235).

<sup>19</sup> [Mimeographed] D.H. Varley, 'South African Library: Ownership of Site and Buildings', 3 March 1954 (for distribution to board members); State-aided Institutions Amendment Act, no.48 of 1954, section 6 and second schedule.

<sup>20</sup> South African Library. Report, 1954-1955, p.1, 3.

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7 April 1959 by the Governor-General Dr E.G. Jansen.<sup>21</sup> It was named after A.C.G. Lloyd, the former Director, who had died while the building was under construction. The building was not the success which was hoped for. The Director's office suite and the top floor stack rooms (including the new Dessinian Room) proved to be unendurably hot, and the tea room for White staff was much too small; the double-volume Africana Reading Room on the ground floor was also hot and its tall windows admitted intense sunlight from noon to sunset. The space allocated for the Africana books proved to be barely sufficient for the existing collection, with little room for growth. Provision made for envisaged open access art and map departments which never came about were taken over for book storage. Overall the design was unsatisfactory. Once again, this new structure was poorly-integrated physically and aesthetically with the existing buildings<sup>22</sup> (presumably because at the concept stage, the older buildings were expected to be demolished and replaced with further modern structures). The original structure remained a serious fire risk

On the positive side, the provision of the Africana wing was one of the most significant benefits conferred on the South African Library as the result of becoming a State-aided institution. Ongoing and ultimately fruitless efforts to secure a completely new building on a new site will be taken up in Chapter Four, when the National Party Government was willing to provide an entirely new building, provided the Library was willing to accept a site in Zonnebloem (former District Six) to fit in with Government's social-political agenda.

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 1956-1957, p.2; 1958-1959, pp.1, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ameliorating these problems formed an important part of the design brief for the redevelopment work undertaken in the 1990s.

## Chapter 2, fourth section : The Empire-builder

Varley's future plans for the South African Library were based on strengthening the Library's autonomy and developing a national reference and research institution of world class, presuming that the new foster-parent, the Department of Education, Arts and Science, would be both benign and generous. It was never generous, while such autonomy as the Library actually exercised at executive level came, in reality, as the result of Departmental indifference.<sup>1</sup>

Once the turbulent years of reorganization (1944-1954) were over, the Library became an insular, inward-looking institution<sup>2</sup> characterized by a considerable degree of professional autonomy entrusted to committed, competent staff, who performed their duties with little reference to, or direction from, top management.<sup>3</sup> It is suggested that this mix of autonomy, commitment and competence created a distinctive institutional ethos,<sup>4</sup> making it a satisfying place to work, but contributing ultimately to its downfall.<sup>5</sup>

The Library staff could congratulate themselves on their extraordinarily fine bibliographic resources built up despite persistent financial austerity, with major resources such as the newspaper collection, the Fairbridge Collection and the Grey Collection coming to it by donation, and material of all sorts arriving by legal deposit. If an item was required it would usually be found in the collections. Seldom was it necessary to arrange inter-library loans from other libraries, and when it was, the lender was most often the Library of Parliament with which

<sup>1</sup> Responding to a question about the allocation of funding by Departmental officials, P.E. Westra (director 1981-1998) said 'Government does not think. The officials didn't give a damn. The institutions that screamed loudest got more money. There was nobody in the Department of Arts and Culture [post-1994] who was really interested in libraries or had any idea what we were really doing. ... Nobody cared. A few officials did now and then. It was a bureaucracy. They had hardly any money to give to museums and libraries.' An exception was Minister G. van N. Viljoen who had been Chairman of the State Library board. (Interview 10 October 2012.)

<sup>2</sup> Karel Schoeman observes that 'In 'n samelewing wat gedurende die loop van die twintigste eeu al hoe vinniger verander het, het die Biblioteek wesenlik gebly wat dit was, selfgenoegsaam terend op die reputasie wat dit reeds geniet het ...' ('In a rapidly changing twentieth century society, the Library remained essentially what it was, content to the end with the reputation which it already enjoyed ...'). (Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek: autobiografiese aantekeninge (Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 2002), p.524.)

<sup>3</sup> J.H. Frylinck, on his appointment as Assistant Director of the South African Library noted: 'I could only marvel at the way the SAL seemed to run itself. But on closer observation, one sees that this illusion is created by tried and trusted systems and experienced staff ('Impressionist Sketch of [a] Well-known Institution', in: S.A. Library Newsletter 62, October 1983, p.[2]).

<sup>4</sup> In his farewell address, 29 September 1961, Varley said, 'A library like this does not cease to be when one Chief goes and another comes. While I have been here, I have begun many things: some have flopped, some have succeeded, some still need cultivation and care. ... [W]hat would please me most would be to know that what I had started here was being carried on in the same spirit, as if I had not gone away at all.' (Sapling: staff news-sheet of the South African Library 3, October 1961, p.34.)

<sup>5</sup> This professional autonomy contributed to the loss of managerial control during the Library's critical last decade.

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the South African Library had a close working relationship. As a preservation library, it was reluctant to lend its Africana stock to other libraries, for which it was often criticized.

Staff competence has its monuments in the South African Bibliography to the year 1925,<sup>6</sup> begun while Varley was director, the 1952 exhibition catalogue South Africa in Print (for many years a model of excellence for librarianship students), and several other fine specialist bibliographies. At a later period, the cataloguing of the Grey and Dessinian Collections,<sup>7</sup> and the arrangement and description of the iconographic and cartographic collections all demonstrated professional excellence. The culture of autonomy permitted a flexible (even subversive) approach to issuing banned material, and the (equally subversive) disregard of the racial segregation which would shortly be imposed on the Library.

The South African Library's value to researchers arose from its unique combination of professionalism, impartiality and bibliographic resources. With an air of contented self-sufficiency permeating the South African Library, it should be no surprise to discover that external co-operation and strategy were not an institutional strengths.<sup>8</sup> H.M. Fraser observes that in the whole period of transformation up to 1955 no consultation had taken place between the South African Library and the State Library to discuss their respective functions: both claimed to be the national reference library, the national bibliographical centre, and the publisher of legal deposit accession lists.<sup>9</sup> Initiatives for co-ordination were taken by others: in view of the South African Library's new General Reference Department, the City Librarian undertook not to replicate a reference function.<sup>10</sup>

The centralizing outlook of the National Party Government was inimical to autonomous institutions, particularly those which it funded. The South African Library was an anomaly. As stated repeatedly in this study, while it had statutory status as a State-aided institution, it no longer

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<sup>6</sup> South African Bibliography to the year 1925 (v.1-4, London: Mansell, 1981; v.5, 6 Cape Town: South African Library, 1991, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Cataloguing the Grey Collection was undertaken by Mrs B.V. Churms (Obituary, in: Quarterly Bulletin 66(3), July-September 2012, pp.45-46), the the Dessinian Collection by H.G.A. Dawe (Obituary, in: Quarterly Bulletin 65(3/4), July-December 2011, p.94.

<sup>8</sup> For example, before 1983 there was no forum for discussions with colleagues in the Western Cape. Few South African Library staff saw merit in joining the library association (and those who were pressured into doing so rarely participated in its meetings or conferences). The director chided his staff in 1980 for their noticeable lack of interest in the library association generally and their poor attendance at the Jubilee Conference held at Sea Point. (South African Library Staff Newsletter 29, October 1980, p.[1].)

<sup>9</sup> H.M. Fraser, 'The National Library, with Special Reference to its Bibliographical Function' (MA thesis, Potchefstroom University, 1973), p.85.

<sup>10</sup> Cape Town. City Library Service. Report, 1954, p.10.

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had legally-defined functions.<sup>11</sup> However much its services might have had practical utility, those services were of its own choosing and had no standing in law.<sup>12</sup> It was therefore vulnerable to empire-building by other role-players in the library and information sector. For three decades it resisted attempts to find a place for it within a centrally-controlled system.

Following the promulgation of the 1954 State-aided Institutions Act, attempts were made to take over the Library either as a whole, or to strip it of its functions. After the passing of the Provincial Library Service Ordinance, no.4 of 1955, the Cape Provincial Library Service rapidly expanded under its new power-hungry Director, Theodorus Friis, who aimed to monopolize library services in the Province and incorporate the South African Library. Another contender was the State Library, faced with the possibility of losing its heavily subsidized Pretoria city library service. It needed to broaden its limited range of defined functions<sup>13</sup> by garnering related activities which were being performed by the South African Library, thereby rendering its position unassailable and raising the profile of the ambitious Hans Aschenborn.<sup>14</sup> A third contender at this time was the Chief Public Service Librarian, Salie Kritzinger, who proposed a national library unit within the Department of Education, Arts and Science. Each proposal had merits and drawbacks. The present section deals only with the schemes of Theo Friis.

Soon after his arrival in Cape Town, Friis<sup>15</sup> met Varley and Hood to air his views about existing local libraries having bookstocks and functions which could overlap with the services of his proposed Provincial Central Reference Libraries in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Kimberley, whose long-established collections he planned to incorporate. At this time, the South African Library's Reference Department had only been in operation a few months and, being a joint service with the City Library Service (whose Central Branch was operating - as it would for some years - across the foyer), would serve an essentially local purpose. It was anomalous for

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<sup>11</sup> The State-aided Institutions Amendment Act of 1954 repealed most of the South African Public Library Act of 1893 without specifying its new aims and functions.

<sup>12</sup> The proposed functions were put forward in a statement requested by the Secretary for Education in 1950, appearing in the Library's Annual Report, 1951, pp.1-2. In essence the statement proposed that the South African Library be the national reference library of South Africa and the national bibliographical centre.

<sup>13</sup> The State Library's functions as the Central Library of South Africa appeared in Government Notice 67 of 13 January 1933, in: Government Gazette 2085, 20 January 1933, pp.79-80.

<sup>14</sup> Aschenborn was appointed Sub-Director of the State Library in 1958, after the internal promotion of the ageing and seemingly ineffective P.F. Coetsee in the place of Matthew Stirling who had retired. Although Aschenborn only gained the title of Director in 1965, it is evident that he had been effectively at the helm from the start.

<sup>15</sup> Theo Friis who took office as Director of the Cape Provincial Library Service on 1 March 1955, had been Library organizer of the Natal Provincial Library Service, and previously worked in the Transvaal Provincial Library Service and Public Service library posts. Soon he chaired the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Western Cape Advisory Committee and the Board of Adult Education (Western Cape). He served on the South African Library Association's Library Co-operation Action Committee.

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a national library to operate such a service, concerned to a large extent with non-South African queries (see Annexure 6 for a typical cross-section of topics). Friis was correct and Robinson was wrong: such a service was properly a public library function, and the Cape Provincial Library Service would be the best-suited to fund and operate it. Although the South African Library's reference service would be excellent, its existence deflected the Library from its specialized purpose to serve researchers only, not the general public which eventually overwhelmed it. In the Greek tragedies, it was flaws in the characters of the protagonists which led to disaster.

An informal approach failing to produce the desired results, and convinced his idea of central reference libraries was the right one, Friis invoked the intervention of the Under-Provincial Secretary and a meeting was arranged at the South African Library on 19 August 1955, at which it became clear that Friis intended to undermine the Library's viability to get his own way. He objected to the South African Library and the City Library Service each stocking expensive reference works<sup>16</sup> which would overlap the proposed stock of the Provincial Library's Central Reference Departments. He was determined that the South African Library should not compile a national union catalogue of books (as was suggested by the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee) which the State Library had actually begun<sup>17</sup> (in terms of their arrangement with the Carnegie Corporation). Such a bibliography featured on the South African Library's published list of proposed national functions. It would overlap the provincial union catalogue he proposed to start.<sup>18</sup> In Friis' view, an autonomous South African Library was illogical, especially its Reference Department. Varley submitted a spirited defence.<sup>19</sup>

Friis expressed a firm belief in compulsory co-operation among all libraries. As much an advocate of centralized State control of libraries as he was of State control of books and publishing, Friis was also a strategist.<sup>20</sup> Already in 1958 (the year he was nominated to the board of the

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<sup>16</sup> The City Library Service had an agreement with the South African Library, which had just opened its new and well-stocked Reference Department, that this would serve as the City's reference library, for which the South African Library would receive a subsidy from the City Council (Cape Town. City Library Service. Report, 1954, p.10). The 'expensive reference works' he envisaged would all, at that date, be non-South African publications.

<sup>17</sup> After languishing for several years, this catalogue had increased to some 300,000 entries by 1953, including records from the South African Library (State Library. Annual Report, 1953, p.9).

<sup>18</sup> The Cape's provincial union catalogue did not survive Friis' term of office. In 1964 the catalogue was abandoned and in February 1965 the cards donated to the State Library (State Library. Annual Report, 1964-65, p.8).

<sup>19</sup> 'Memorandum on a meeting held in the Fairbridge Room of the South African Public Library ... 10th August 1955, to consider the question of overlapping of services...' (This Memorandum was evidently mimeographed for distribution to Board members. A copy is in the author's possession.)

<sup>20</sup> His achievements speak for themselves. He is eulogised by C.J. Fourie in his extraordinary publication *Laat Beginner - Vroë Blomme: 'n filosofies-historiese oorsig van die ontwikkeling van die Natalse Provinsiale Biblioteekdiens, 1971-1994* (Pietermaritzberg: [the author], 2003), pp.[ii], 3.

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South African Library), he was planning not only the incorporation of the South African Library, Port Elizabeth Public Library<sup>21</sup> and Kimberley Public Library<sup>22</sup> as corner-stones of his Cape Provincial Library Service, but also the merger of the State Library into the Transvaal Provincial Library Service.<sup>23</sup> From a bureaucratic point of view this had merit and meshed well with the National Party Government's centralizing and systematizing programmes (see Chapter 4). Expecting ultimate success, Friis made legislative provision for Central Reference Libraries in Section 5 of the Library Services Amendment Ordinance, no.11 of 1960 (amending Section 9(3) of the 1955 Ordinance). Shortly before this, Varley had been called to the office of the Provincial Secretary, when the Province offered to erect a specially-designed building in Cape Town to which the South African Library would contribute the book-stock.<sup>24</sup> Friis' master plan threatened to derail years of work which Varley had invested to develop the South African Library into an autonomous, non-partisan, world-class research library.

Between 1959 and 1962, a SALA Action Committee on Library Co-operation, including Friis and the Pretoria-Potchefstroom axis of the library profession<sup>25</sup> as members, spent much time and Government funding devising a master plan<sup>26</sup> entailing a National Library Council (see Chapter 4, second section) which would control all libraries in South Africa and cut out overlapping services in the name of economy and efficiency. Varley, countering Friis' published accusations against the South African Library for allegedly overlapping the services of the Cape Provincial Library Service, wrote that the central planning which was being propagated could become a 'tyrannical master.'<sup>27</sup> The plan was adopted, regardless, by a special Pretoria conference of the South African Library

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<sup>21</sup> In July 1960 it was reported that the Cape Provincial Library Service had expropriated the iconic Public Library building in central Port Elizabeth from the its trustees, and that it would be used as the regional Central Reference Library and Provincial Library headquarters (SALA Newsletter, 12(1) July 1960, p.8).

<sup>22</sup> In 1959 the trustees of the Kimberley Public (subscription) Library realized that an arrangement with the Provincial authorities was inevitable if the library were to continue, but in coming to an agreement with the City Council, a strict condition was laid down that the Africana and Special Collections Department should remain the property of the people of Kimberley (R.J. Holloway, 'The History and Development of the Kimberley Africana Library and its Relationship with the Kimberley Public Library' (M.Inf thesis, University of South Africa, 2009), pp.80-81).

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, 'Notes on the Meeting of the Committee of Enquiry into the Needs of State-aided Institutions [Booyesen Committee] with the Board of Trustees of the S.A. Library...May 2, 1961', pp.2-3.

<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes 27 May 1960.

<sup>25</sup> The South African Library Association was based in Potchefstroom and controlled by University staff.

<sup>26</sup> Cape Argus, 15 September 1959 [press cuttings file 79657].

<sup>27</sup> South African Libraries, (undated offprint, ca. July 1960), pp.121-124. Varley makes the point, on Friis' claim that he was motivated by the need for economy, that grossly overlapping services were provided by the Cape Provincial Library Service in the name of separate facilities for Whites and non-Whites (p.123).

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Association in June 1962.<sup>28</sup> By this time, Varley had resigned and left South Africa, believing there was no further role for him, or for his professional principles which were constantly being eroded.<sup>29</sup> Ironically, circumstances were about to change. The Booysen Committee of Inquiry (1961-1962) on which Friis had staked the highest hopes did not share his view that the two national libraries ought to be part of the respective Provincial Library Services.<sup>30</sup> The National Conference of Library Authorities held in November 1962 explicitly resolved that co-operation, though desirable, should not be at the expense of autonomy.<sup>31</sup>

The tide had turned against Friis and his megalomania, his centralizing efforts rejected both by a government inquiry and the wider library profession, and his ambitions<sup>32</sup> unattainable. He began to prepare the way to exit from the Provincial Library Service and go into business.<sup>33</sup> He was managing a brewery from his library headquarters office, and purchasing the majority of the library service's books (many of dubious merit) through book-selling businesses in which he had significant or controlling interests. After he left the Provincial Library Service in October 1963, declared by the Steyn Commission to be unfit to hold office in the Public Service,<sup>34</sup> his successor abandoned his grand plans for absolute control.<sup>35</sup> At the same time he resigned from the South African Library Board.<sup>36</sup>

But the autonomy which the South African Library strove to maintain was not producing a functionally coherent and authentic national library organization.

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<sup>28</sup> Programme for Future Development: introduction and proposals [to be] submitted to the Conference [of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5-6 November 1962] by the South African Library Association (Pretoria: The Association, 1962).

<sup>29</sup> Conversation with D.H. Varley in England, ca. September 1985.

<sup>30</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings (Pretoria: Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetyenskap, 1962), (Booyesen Committee report) I, p.11, par.1.13.3. 'Beide biblioteke dien dus as nasionale biblioteke en daar kan met heelwat regverdiging aangevoer word dat hulle as sulks reg geplaas is onder die beskerming en beheer van die sentrale regering.' ('Both libraries serve as national libraries and it can justly be asserted that as such they are correctly placed under the patronage and control of the central government.')

<sup>31</sup> Programme for Future Library Development in the Republic ..., as adopted by the National Conference of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5 and 6 November, 1962 (Potchefstroom: South African Library Association, 1963), pp.4, 6.

<sup>32</sup> 'The Director of Libraries in South Africa' is how Friis' grandson in 2010 understood his role (<http://london2thecape.wordpress.com/about/>, accessed 26 February 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Cape Times, 22 October 1963 [Cape Argus press cuttings file 79657].

<sup>34</sup> Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek insake Beweerde Onreëlmatighede aangaande die Biblioteekdiens van die Kaapse Provinsiale Administrasie (Steyn Commission), (Kaapstad: Kaapse Provinsiale Administrasie, 1963).

<sup>35</sup> Cape Provincial Library Service. Report, 1963-1964, p.13. The Central Reference Department which Friis had already set up within the Service was downgraded to an adjunct to the Book-selection and Processing Department.

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 October 1963, Friis' letter of resignation dated 24 October.

## Chapter 2, fifth section : Government's Special Representative

It is necessary to go back a few years. The last Board of the old South African Library was retained as the first Board under the new dispensation. When its term of office expired on 1 April 1958, the Secretary of Education, Arts and Science announced that Theo Friis<sup>1</sup> and Dr J.G. Meiring<sup>2</sup> would replace Leo Marquard and J.J. Spies.<sup>3</sup> Friis, as head of the Cape Provincial Library Service, may have solicited his appointment to advance his own plans. His presence would create an uncomfortable situation for Varley, as the two men had taken irreconcilable positions over censorship a few years before,<sup>4</sup> and Friis blamed Varley by innuendo for the failure of the original Cape Provincial Free Library Service.<sup>5</sup>

While the South African Library's new wing was under construction in 1958, Varley took the opportunity to have a long-overdue vacation in England,<sup>6</sup> unaware of Friis' schemes. Friis was planning a new Provincial Library headquarters in Cape Town,<sup>7</sup> and Central Reference Libraries for Cape Town, Kimberley and Port Elizabeth.<sup>8</sup> The South African Library (as we saw in the previous section) would become the Cape Provincial Library Service's Cape Town Central Refe-

<sup>1</sup> Theo(dorus) Friis: see previous section, note 15.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobus (Cobus) Gerhard Meiring, educated at Stellenbosch and Leipzig, was Cape Superintendent-General of Education, 1953-1959, and would become first Rector of the University College of the Western Cape, 1960-1967 (Who's Who of Southern Africa, 1972, p.673).

<sup>3</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1956-1959), Department (X6/20/44) to Library, 16 June 1958.

<sup>4</sup> See the discussion of censorship in Chapter 2, second section : Purity and Politics'.

<sup>5</sup> T. Friis, *The Public Library in South Africa: an evaluative study* (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962), pp.93-95. Friis, ignoring the fact that it was the Provincial Council in 1948 which fatally amended the Draft Ordinance, blamed the drafters of that Ordinance in 1946 (Varley and Immelman) on grounds that they had no public library experience, whereas in truth Varley had, since 1938, been head of the South African Library, which was then a lending library, while Friis' own experience of public libraries, at organizational level, commenced when he was employed as a regional librarian in the Transvaal Provincial Library Service for a few months in 1951 before moving to head the Natal Provincial Library Service in September. He therefore had no hands-on public library experience. The passage in his book was clearly written with the intention of discrediting Varley. On the other hand, Friis allows the reader of his book to credit him with the successful 1955 revised Ordinance, neglecting to state that it was D.L. Ehlers who drafted it and prepared it for the Provincial Council before Friis was appointed Director in Cape Town (D.L. Ehlers, 'The Postwar Library Scene in SA' in: *Give the People Light: essays in honour of Matthew Miller Stirling* (Contributions to Library Science, 3), (Pretoria: State Library, 1972), p.40).

<sup>6</sup> 1 October 1958 to 1 February 1959 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 30 September 1958). His only other visit 'home' was his six-month furlough ten years earlier in 1948.

<sup>7</sup> 'New Library Block for City' (Cape Argus, 12 September 1959) '...designed for apartheid with separate entrances for Europeans and non-Europeans and separate store rooms for books for European Libraries and non-European Libraries.'

<sup>8</sup> Cape Provincial Library Service. Report, 1958-1959, pp.6-7.

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rence Library, in which case the new wing would be ready-made for the purpose. But he would not achieve this unless Varley was removed.

Friis was appointed to the South African Library Board on 16 June 1958. Although he missed his first meeting, he attended on 5 August and it was no doubt he who insisted that the Minutes be in both Afrikaans and English.<sup>9</sup> Attending his next meeting on 2 December (knowing Varley would be absent), he demanded to know what the Library's policy was with regard to separate facilities for different races, to which Chairman Justice van Winsen replied that no discussion of the matter had ever taken place. He recommended that the status quo be maintained, and further discussion should await Varley's return in February.<sup>10</sup> At the February meeting the matter was raised (Varley minuting the discussion in unusual detail), when only one complaint about the Library's users' population group could be recalled - relating to the crowding of the Library by predominantly Coloured school children preparing for examinations. Friis offered to formulate a resolution to be adopted at the next meeting,<sup>11</sup> which he duly did.

(a) Dat die Raad van Kuratore van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek, in agneming van die sosiale struktuur waarin hy hom bevind en die landswette van die gemeenskap wat hy moet bedien, hom in beginsel ten gunste van aparte geriewe vir blank en nie-blank in die biblioteek verklaar.

(b) Dat 'n onderkomitee van die Raad benoem word om ondersoek in te stel hoe hierdie besluit die beste uitgevoer kan word met inagneming van moontlike koste en die biblioteekbehoefte van alle rasse.

(c) Dat uitsluitel op die vraag of die deel van die biblioteek wat tans aan die stadsraad van Kaapstad verhuur word vir 'n verdere termyn verhuur moet word, uitgestel word totdat die verslag van die onderkomitee oorweeg is.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Varley had quickly acquired an adequate command of the Afrikaans language, but would not have trusted himself to undertake the Afrikaans translation. The August 1958 minutes may have been translated by his Secretary, Mrs Graves (who retired the following November). Subsequent minutes, in the interests of confidentiality and on the recommendation of Board member L.W. Hiemstra, were sent for translation to Mrs M.E. Rothman of Swellendam, who passed the work on to her daughter, Miss A. Rothman (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1956-1959), correspondence 17 December 1958, et seq.) Later, R.F.M. Immelman of the University Library checked the Afrikaans until the thoroughly bilingual W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn was appointed Assistant Director in June 1962.

<sup>10</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 2 December 1958.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 3 February 1959.

<sup>12</sup> '(a) That the Board of Trustees of the South African Public Library, taking into account the social structure within which it finds itself and the statute law of the community which it must serve, declares itself in principle in favour of separate facilities for white and non-white. (b) That a subcommittee of the Board be nominated to institute an investigation how this decision can be carried out, taking into account the possible costs and the library requirements of both races. (c) That a decision on the question of whether that part of the library which is presently hired to the city council of Cape Town should be leased for a further period should be deferred until the report of the subcommittee has been considered. (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 3 February 1959.) The resolution appeared in Afrikaans in both the English and Afrikaans versions of the minutes.

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After discussion, it was resolved 'by a majority vote' to appoint the desired subcommittee without adopting the requested principle. The matter then seems to have been swept under the carpet.

Apart from the harm the introduction of racial segregation would do to the proud non-racial ethos of the South African Library, Friis' letter also provides an insight into his pathological need to assert his self-importance. He addressed it not to Varley by name, nor to the 'Chief Librarian' (Director) of the South African Library but used the alias 'Secretary of the Board' - the same person, but emphasizing a role subordinate to himself, a Board member - and signed himself 'Namens die Minister van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap'.<sup>13</sup>

The years 1959 and 1960 were difficult ones for Varley. He had looked forward to the development of the Africana Department in its own building. But now it was a reality, he was distracted by Theo Friis (and his proxy, the Provincial Secretary) and much of Varley's energies were diverted to answering and repudiating wild, spurious claims. Friis argued that the South African Library was not a legitimate national library, to which Varley wrote a closely-reasoned response quoting international examples.<sup>14</sup> In December 1959, Friis objected to the use in the Board's minutes of the name South African Library, which he maintained was legally 'South African Public Library' to which Varley replied that the Minister had sanctioned that usage.<sup>15</sup> Friis did not hesitate to complain of limited Afrikaans content in the Quarterly Bulletin which irritated Varley,<sup>16</sup> and he had specifically asked that the matter be placed on the agenda for that day's Board meeting. He wrote with pointed sarcasm (emphasis added):

Hierdie praktyk stel ons as Raad natuurlik bloot aan ernstige kritiek, veral as ons wil beweer dat ons 'n openbare biblioteek is met 'n nasionale karakter.<sup>17</sup>

It was decided that the Editor (Varley) would write the editorials alternately in each language.<sup>18</sup>

In February 1960 Friis wrote a closely-typed three page memorandum to the Provincial Secretary in which he presented an extremely biased picture of the South African Library system.

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<sup>13</sup> 'In the name of the Minister of Education, Arts and Science' (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1956-1959), Friis (BD 404) to Secretary of the Board, 6 March 1959). There were also seven other Government representatives on the Board.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1956-1959), 'National Libraries in South Africa', 13 May 1959.

<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 8 December 1959.

<sup>16</sup> It was well-nigh impossible to persuade Afrikaans-speakers to contribute material in Afrikaans, since English secured them a wider readership.

<sup>17</sup> 'This practice exposes us as a Board to serious criticism, especially if we wish to pretend that we are a public library with a national character' (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1956-1959), Friis (on Provincial Library Service stationery) to Varley, 25 November 1959). The patronizing tone of all Friis' correspondence with Varley was very offensive.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 8 December 1959.

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matically overlapping or undermining the Provincial Library Service, giving supposed examples too numerous to list here, concluding that the take-over of the South African Library by the Province was the only solution, calling for immediate negotiations with the Department of Education, Arts and Science to this end.<sup>19</sup> This Memorandum coming into his possession, Varley had it mimeographed and distributed to the Board, accompanied by his ten-page refutation of Friis' assertions which had been entirely unsupported by evidence.<sup>20</sup> A few of the remarks may be mentioned: it was not true that his Library spent its acquisition budget buying the same books as the Province; it was not true that the Library only served the residents of Cape Town; it was not true that the Library had only an archival function; it was not true that the Library could not deliver a reference service owing to shortage of funds; Friis' claim to represent the Minister of Education was misleading as the Department had confirmed that he was appointed in his personal capacity like all the other nominees; it was not true that every Chief Librarian had been brought out from England;<sup>21</sup> and on, page after page, he demonstrated that the roles of a public library service and a national library were entirely different. In conclusion, Varley claimed that there was a powerful lobby group throughout South Africa which would not allow a 'take-over' of the kind Friis proposed. An appendix quoted numerous authorities to show that the South African Library, although not declared so in law, was truly a national institution. However, this lack of certainty posed a threat.

Between the date of Friis' memorandum and Varley's refutation, the two men met in Johannesburg at a meeting of the South African Library Association's Action Committee on Library Co-operation where Varley was outnumbered by supporters of the political far-right, Theo Friis, H.M. Robinson and H.C. van Rooy. When the meeting asked Friis whether or not he had approached Government about the merger of the national and provincial libraries, he gave assurance he had not. But it soon emerged that he had indeed held discussion on the matter with Secretary for Education, Op't Hof, which he excused as merely informal.<sup>22</sup> The meeting proceeded to discuss the need for co-ordinated, centralized acquisitions for South African libraries (along the lines of pre-war Germany, the Einkaufshaus, or EKH<sup>23</sup>), an anathema to Varley.

The Board, by a majority decision taken at its meeting of 9 February 1960, resolved to approach the Government for an increase in the State grant. Friis (evidently in the minority) asked

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<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1960-1963), 'Oorvleueling tussen die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Kaapse Provinsiale Biblioteekdienste', 2 February 1960.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 'Mr Friis' Memorandum: Comments by Mr Varley', 3 March 1960.

<sup>21</sup> Only Directors F.S. Lewis (1889- 1908) and D.H. Varley (1938-1961) had been recruited in England.

<sup>22</sup> South African Library Association. Action Committee on Library Co-operation. Minutes, 18 February 1960 (copy in NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1960-1963)).

<sup>23</sup> M.F. Stieg, *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), pp.79, 104-105.

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that his position be minuted, that the Board should not ask for further funding until Government policy regarding separate facilities for different races had been implemented, and that a request for increased funding was premature in view of representations the Province was making to the Minister about the problem (in his opinion) of overlapping services.<sup>24</sup> The following week the Chairman of the Board secured an interview with Secretary for Education Op't Hof, who was in Cape Town for the Parliamentary Session, and was assured that an application for funding would be considered and should be made at once before any discussions between the Province and Minister Serfontein took place; but the Board would need to inform the Minister what its plans were with regard to separate facilities 'which was the declared policy of the Department'.<sup>25</sup> So the Board formed a fact-finding subcommittee to calculate the cost and make recommendations,<sup>26</sup> which were duly presented to the following Board meeting, when it was agreed that the Minister should be told, if he asked, that a proposal had been made which involved certain costs to implement and required further discussion.<sup>27</sup> Friis submitted a Memorandum contesting the findings of the subcommittee, claiming the estimated costs had been inflated, defending segregation as essential 'to prevent creating a favourable atmosphere for social integration of the races concerned'.<sup>28</sup>

No meeting with the Minister could be arranged, Op't Hof informing the Library that the National Advisory Council on Further Education had initiated an investigation into the needs of all the State-aided institutions, to which the Library might submit a memorandum.<sup>29</sup> This investigation became known as the 'Booyesen Committee' (see next section and Chapter 3, first section).

Friis' insolence and harassment made Varley's position as Director of the South African Library unendurable. He could not allow any instance of intimidation or misrepresentation by Friis to pass unnoticed. Every assertion or claim was immediately answered in a closely-argued memorandum supported with facts and authorities. His energies were sapped by this man with his pathological urge for power and control, deflecting him from the great bibliographical works he set himself to undertake in his remaining years as Director of South Africa's premier national library, and needed to achieve in order to demonstrate to the State Library, where new management had taken office, that the South African Library remained the leader in that field. Any

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<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 9 February 1960.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 9 March 1960.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, The committee: J.P. Duminy, W.J. du P. Erlank, J. du P. Scholtz, L.W. Hiemstra, with D.H. Varley *ex officio*.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 5 April 1960.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 19, 'Notes on the Report of the Fact-finding Committee on the Possible Provision of Separate Facilities ... Submitted by Theo Friis ... 5 April 1960' [distinguishable as the report in purple ink].

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 27 May 1960.

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prospect of early relief was removed when, in February 1961, the Department extended Friis' term of office on the Board to March 1964.<sup>30</sup>

On the positive side, Varley and the Library clearly had the good-will and support of the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, J.J.P. Op't Hof, and it would be instructive to discover how Friis originally obtained his appointment to the Board and how his term of office on the Board came to be renewed.<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to observe that Friis was driving issues such as bilingualism and segregation when there were a number of leading Afrikaner Broederbond members already on the Board who could have done so had they felt it was important. One may ask, was Friis trying to impress them with his display of orthodoxy?



Green and yellow apartheid signs  
applied in 1963, removed from the tables in 1972.

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<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1960-1963), Department (X6/20/44(25)) to Varley, 21 February 1961.

<sup>31</sup> Both at Friis' first appointment to the Board and its renewal, the Minister of Education, Arts and Science was J.J. Serfontein.

## Chapter 2, sixth section : Apartheid Implemented

'Apartheid has come to the Public Library' was the newspaper headline on 6 September 1963. 'Dr A.M. Lewin Robinson said to-day that after a visit to the library by the Deputy Minister of Education (Mr M. Viljoen) it was agreed with the trustees that separate tables be made available for Europeans and non-Europeans.' The report drew attention to the sign 'Readers are respectfully requested to use the tables indicated by the notices', which were yellow for Whites and green for non-Whites. In the Reference Department plastic signs were attached to the tables, while the General Reading Room was divided down the middle: Whites on the right and non-Whites on the left.<sup>1</sup> The arrangement came into effect on 1 September. The Board had previously instructed the staff on no account to publicize the matter.<sup>2</sup> Varley, who had tried every stratagem to avoid segregation or at least delay it, had by this time resigned and left the country.

Varley's letter of resignation (sent to acting Chairman of the Board Hiemstra on Thursday 11 May 1961<sup>3</sup>) came as a shock. It was common cause that Varley personally, and the autonomy of the Library generally, had been under relentless attack by Theo Friis of the Cape Provincial Library Service. The Booyesen Committee<sup>4</sup> had visited the Library on 2 May when he presented a convincing case to the Commissioners in defence of the Library's autonomy, with a devastating exposure of the shortcomings of Friis' beguiling plan.<sup>5</sup>

Varley never explained his reasons for accepting the position of Head of the Library of the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury<sup>6</sup> (now Harare) which came with the rank of Professor. Even when the author pressed him years later for some kind of explanation he responded,

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<sup>1</sup> Cape Argus, 6 September 1963; the newspaper report erroneously switched the colours around.

<sup>2</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 April 1963; MSM 21(c) (1959-1965), Staff memo 12/63, 30 August 1963.

<sup>3</sup> NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1 (1961), Varley to Hiemstra, 11 May 1961 (informal and formal letters). His resignation was accepted at a special meeting of the Board on 16 May (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 16 May 1961).

<sup>4</sup> The Booyesen Committee was established in December 1960 by the acting Minister of Education, Arts and Science, B.J. Vorster, at the request of the National Advisory Council on Further Education. C. Murray Booyesen was an Afrikaans linguist and lexicographer and former Superintendent-General of Education of Natal, 1950-1954.

<sup>5</sup> 'Notes on the Meeting of the Committee of Enquiry ... with the Board of the S.A. Library ... May 2, 1961 ...', pp.2-3 [mimeographed] (a copy filed NLCT-MC MSL A3/3); Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtinge, Voorsitter C.M. Booyesen (Booyesen Committee report) I, (Pretoria, Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962), p.5, par.1.6. The Commissioner noted that Varley tendered his resignation during the course of his inquiry (ibid., pp.46-47).

<sup>6</sup> The position may have been offered to him without being advertised since no advertisement appeared in SALA Newsletter or the British Library Association Record. The Times Literary Supplement was not checked.

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I have had a good many cogitations on the subject of my departure from Cape Town in 1961 & I have felt that you did not really accept my attempted assurance that, yes, I went and wasn't pushed. It was I suppose unthinkable at the time that someone in my then position, with ten years to go could possibly have chosen the path I figured out which gave me a real opportunity to tackle real problems.<sup>7</sup>

His position had become very uncongenial. He received insufferable and undeserved insolence from Friis. In February 1961, when the new Library Board was announced by the Minister, all the members, including Friis, were reappointed.<sup>8</sup> Friis distanced himself from the Library Board, appearing as an individual before the Booysen Committee of Inquiry.<sup>9</sup> Friis had support within the professional association which was now dominated by right-wing elements.<sup>10</sup> Segregation of population groups within the Library had been demanded by Friis and now appeared to be inevitable. South Africa was days away from becoming a Republic which could affect Varley's status, being a British citizen.<sup>11</sup>

More fundamentally, with the City and Provincial library services established, the South African Library transformed into a State-aided institution, the Lloyd Africana Wing built, and the Mendelssohn Revision Project launched, his career objectives had all been achieved. The loss of personal power (which he alluded to in his farewell address<sup>12</sup>) and the need to work within the rules of the public service must have been significant contributing factors. He is reported to have been disillusioned with his deputy Lewin Robinson.<sup>13</sup> He needed to move on,<sup>14</sup> and the vacancy in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) presented the opportunity to do something constructive and improve his professional status. The Board accepted his resignation 'with extreme regret' agreeing

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<sup>7</sup> Personal correspondence. Letter Varley to Coates, 7 September 1998.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1960-1963), Department (X6/20/44/44(25)) to Varley, 21 February 1961.

<sup>9</sup> Friis appeared before the Committee on 5 May 1961, the same day the official delegation of the Board presented its evidence (Booyesen Committee report I, pp.6, 7). There is no indication whether a memorandum was presented, as volume III of the report (containing the written submissions) was not circulated with volumes I and II.

<sup>10</sup> H.M. Robinson, President of the South African Library Association and fellow-member with Friis on the Action Group on Library Co-operation, appeared before the Committee on 24 May 1961 (Booyesen Committee report I, p.6).

<sup>11</sup> In 1961, Afrikaans-speakers headed virtually every major library or university department of librarianship.

<sup>12</sup> 'Varley Valedictory' in: Sapling 3, October 1961, p.32.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with M.F. Cartwright, 27 July 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Varley recorded a visit by the retired tea-lady Sarah, who had told him with great insight that she understood his situation: 'Your going from the Library,' she said, 'was just like a servant who has been with a lady for a very long time, but who decides, entirely on her own, to go and serve another lady; and she is free to do so' (Sapling 3, October 1961, p.33-34).

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to forego the six-month notice requirement.<sup>15</sup> He left on 30 September 1961.

Lewin Robinson, his successor, would be more pragmatic. In 1963, Theo Friis, the original protagonist of apartheid in the Library and the constant driving force behind its implementation,<sup>16</sup> had the satisfaction of knowing that the laws of this land had been applied at last. Seven weeks later he resigned from the Board of the South African Library.<sup>17</sup>

The sub-committee on separate facilities had presented several alternative schemes to the Board<sup>18</sup> which would not recommend any of them unless the Department funded the cost involved.<sup>19</sup> The matter was referred to the Booyesen Committee of Inquiry into the needs of all the State-aided institutions to which the Library submitted a memorandum.<sup>20</sup> It was the practice of the South African Library Board to support majority decisions.<sup>21</sup> Friis, refusing to support the Board except on his own terms, wrote to Varley with calculated rudeness,

U is natuurlik bewus van my standpunt, wat heelwat van u memorandum verskil, oor die hele aangeleentheid wat nou deur die Komitee ondersoek word. Onder omstandighede is dit vir my dus onmoontlik om langs hierdie weg my sienswyse aan die onderkomitee of die Komitee van die Departement te laat toekom.<sup>22</sup> (Emphasis added)

Varley tendered his resignation a month later.

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<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 16 May 1961, 22 August 1961.

<sup>16</sup> When Acting Secretary for Education, P. Grobbelaar, visited the Library in 1962 to check on implementation of apartheid, he told Lewin Robinson that the Minister, Jan de Klerk, was pushing the issue on 'pressure from the Province' [Friis] (NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, Robinson aide memoire 'Meeting with Grobbelaar', ca. September 1962).

<sup>17</sup> Friis resigned as Director of the Cape Provincial Library Service in September 1963, ahead of the judgement of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry into irregularities including fraud, bribery, corruption, and operating private business undertakings without permission in office hours, the commissioner drawing attention in particular to his boundless ambition and egotism, his autocratic behaviour and recklessness, and the evidence he presented which was entirely devoid of truth (Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek insake Beweerde Onreëlmatighede aangaande die Biblioteekdiens van die Kaapse Provinsiale Administrasie (J.H. Steyn, Kommissaris), 19 September 1963, passim). He resigned from the Board of the South African Library on 24 October 1963 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 October 1963), and the Minister appointed Dr A.P. Treurnicht in his place.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3 and A4/2 (these files contain most of the correspondence on segregation, 1961-1963).

<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 April 1960.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 27 May 1960.

<sup>21</sup> A rare instance of a breach of collegiality occurred when A.M.L. Robinson was appointed Deputy Director in 1945 despite having no knowledge of Afrikaans; the appointment was approved by a 'majority vote'. One of the minority, probably C. Louis Leipoldt, took up the matter in the press, but anonymously.

<sup>22</sup> 'You are naturally aware of my point of view, which differs considerably from your memorandum, on the whole situation which is now being investigated by the Committee. Under these circumstances it is therefore impossible by this means to convey my views to the subcommittee or the committee of the Department'. (NLCT-MC MSL A3/3 Friis (on Provincial Library stationery) to Varley, 5 April 1961.)

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The Booysen Committee's report agreed the South African Library required more posts and better funding, but predictably made segregated facilities the precondition.<sup>23</sup> While waiting for the release of the report, a letter came from the Department stating that Minister Jan de Klerk (newly appointed) demanded the implementation of separate facilities by 1 January 1963.<sup>24</sup> Government always gave the impression that they provided library facilities for non-Whites on the assumption the existing facilities were for Whites, as demonstrated by the following letter from the Department a few days later,

Na aanleiding van klagtes ontvang dat nie-Blankes deur sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings toegang verleen word tot lesingsale slegs vir Blankes bedoel, word aandag daarop gevestig dat die gebruik van lesingsale en ander akkomodasie beskikbaar vir byeenkomste, ooreenkomstig Regeringsbeleid tot Blankes beperk moet word. Enige afwyking van hierdie beleid is onderhewig aan die voorafgaande goedkeuring van die Minister van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap.<sup>25</sup>

The lunch-hour public recorded music and literary recitals which had been initiated by Varley in 1948 and presented each week in the Fairbridge Room to a (potentially) mixed audience, linked to book displays on related topics, were prudently discontinued by Robinson in August 1962.<sup>26</sup>

The separation of public facilities would finally be effected in 1963. When this took place, the new chairman of the Board, Mr Justice Diemont, issued an official statement which was published under the headline 'Apartheid in library is mild'.<sup>27</sup> The Cape Times ran an editorial on the subject headed 'Separate Tables'.

There is a depressing symbolic quality about the imposition of apartheid on the South African Library in Cape Town - a measure not of the library authorities' seeking, but one forced on them by the Government. (...) [W]hat can one say of separate tables in a library

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<sup>23</sup> Booysen Committee (1962), p.47. This condition was superfluous for the State Library, Robinson said, because it neither lent books to non-Whites nor admitted them to the Reference Room (Cape Times, 9 October 1963).

<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, Secretary for Education (O 5/2/2) to Chief Librarian, South African Library, 3 October 1962.

<sup>25</sup> 'With reference to complaints that some State-aided institutions have granted non-Whites access to lecture halls intended solely for Whites, attention is directed to the [fact] that the use of lecture halls and other accommodation suitable for gatherings, must, according to Government policy, be restricted to Whites. Any deviation from this policy is subject to prior approval by the Minister of Education, Arts and Science.' (NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, Secretary for Education (O.3/8) to All State-aided Institutions, 22 October 1962.) Jan de Klerk had taken office as Minister of Education that month.

<sup>26</sup> South African Library. Report, 1962-1963, p.10. The pretext was that most people now had their own high-fidelity record players (A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences', pt.1, in: Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, 36(1), September 1981, p.8).

<sup>27</sup> Cape Times, 9 October 1963.

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where students and scholars go to consult the Encyclopaedia Britannica and make notes for their theses? There, surely, people are as nearly equal as human beings can be this side of the grave. It would be nonsensical to talk of a clash of cultures or manners in this connection. As for racial friction, we have yet to hear of a brawl in the hushed and hallowed precincts of a reference library.<sup>28</sup>

One may ask, did Friis (the driving force behind the implementation of apartheid) believe in segregation so very strongly, or was he ingratiating himself with the ruling elite? The latter seems more likely when one considers the other topics he chose for special attention, such as the promotion of the Afrikaans language.

Since 1924, public service entrants were required to be bilingual, which worked to the advantage of Afrikaners, as few English-speakers bothered to become proficient in Afrikaans.<sup>29</sup> The Afrikaner Broederbond had long been committed to inserting its members in positions of leadership within the bureaucracy, with education being prioritized.<sup>30</sup> Rank and file positions in the public service were also systematically Afrikanerized.<sup>31</sup> By the 1960s, the major libraries and library services as well as the South African Library Association were firmly under Afrikaner political domination.<sup>32</sup>

Varley had always been careful to appoint bilingual staff, the exception being his deputy, Lewin Robinson,<sup>33</sup> who replaced Murray in 1945. There was a rapid increase in Afrikaans-speaking White staff<sup>34</sup> (the Coloured staff being invariably Afrikaans-speaking), despite which, the Library, with a long colonial history, preserved an in-built 'English' ethos. Its large non-fiction book stock, its special collections and the 'treasures' were distinctly Anglophile, and the common language within the Library was English. This ran contrary to a deliberate policy in the 1960s to Afrikanerize

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 14 October 1963.

<sup>29</sup> Public Service Commission. Annual Report, 1924 [UG.18-1925] p.4; M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid South Africa, 1910-1986* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1986), p.259.

<sup>30</sup> J.H.F. Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power* (London: Rex Collings, 1979), see especially pp.66-67, 159-161; I. Wilkins and H. Strydom *The Super-Afrikaners* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978), pp.116, 327.

<sup>31</sup> D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: conflict and compromise* (Cape Town: Oxford, 1997), pp.270-271; also same author 'Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: paradoxes of the apartheid State' in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25(1), March 1999, pp.99-119 *passim*, especially 100-101, 104-105.

<sup>32</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Book Burning and the Complicity of South African Librarians, 1955-1971' in: *Innovation*, 28, June 2004, p.34.

<sup>33</sup> The Board's surprising selection of Lewin Robinson as Varley's successor despite the fact that in fifteen years as deputy he had made no progress in learning Afrikaans is dealt with later in this section.

<sup>34</sup> Librarian Barbara Churms commented on this after a break in service between 1950 and 1970 ('Barbara Churms' *Reminiscences*' in: *Sapling* 11, November 1970, p.31).

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English-speaking South Africans and to relegate the English language to use for international contacts.<sup>35</sup> Board member Scholtz took exception to the Anglo-Saxon bias of periodicals displayed in the Reading Room and requested more European cultural and historical titles.<sup>36</sup> Afrikaans writers, poets, journalists and linguists like Scholtz were well-represented on the Board.<sup>37</sup>

When the apartheid notices were made in 1963, the wording was referred to three Board members to be checked for the purity of the Afrikaans language translations. Prof. Scholtz made some minor changes, while Prof. Erlank may not have replied. But Prof. J.P. Duminy (Principal of the University of Cape Town) deplored the fact that such a move had to be introduced.<sup>38</sup>

A selection sub-committee of the Board was formed<sup>39</sup> to fill Varley's position of 'Chief Librarian and Secretary' (as the Director's position was designated at that time). Advertisements were placed locally and abroad.<sup>40</sup> There were four applicants.<sup>41</sup> Besides Antony Meredith Lewin Robinson,<sup>42</sup> there were Hans Jürgen Aschenborn (Deputy Director of the State Library), Jean Gideon Kesting (Organizer of School Libraries, Cape Province), and Stephanus Cornelis Jacobus van Niekerk (Library Organizer, Orange Free State Provincial Library Service). There was no application from abroad which is hardly surprising with the events at Sharpeville and Langa fresh in everyone's mind; Aschenborn and Robinson met the requirements and were interviewed. Aschenborn was a good candidate (and may well have proved to be the best candidate in several respects), but he placed too many conditions upon his appointment: he was leaving for Europe on

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<sup>35</sup> T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: power, apartheid and the Afrikaner civil religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p.286.

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 19 December 1961.

<sup>37</sup> Linguists included L.W. Hiemstra, 1950-1978, and Professors J. du P. Scholtz, 1949-1984, W.J. du P. Erlank, 1954-1967, W.E.G. Louw, 1968-1979, and R.H. Pfeiffer, 1981-1994.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, Duminy to Lewin Robinson, 9 April 1963.

<sup>39</sup> Sub-committee: Davie, Van Winsen, Friis, Hiemstra and Scholtz (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 July 1961).

<sup>40</sup> The applicants were to be suitably qualified, bilingual, with a recognised university degree, diploma in library science, at least ten years experience in a large public or academic library, a wide knowledge of South African literature, experienced bibliographer, and knowledge of foreign languages, with experience of rare books an added recommendation (advertisement in SALA Newsletter, 12(11) May 1961, p.215).

<sup>41</sup> Applications and related correspondence will be found in NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1 (1961), and specifically relating to Robinson in NLCT-MC MSL F3/1/2 (N-Z: 'Robinson').

<sup>42</sup> Born and schooled in England, he came to South Africa aged 15. He obtained his BA at Rhodes University College and the Diploma in Librarianship at London University, becoming Fellow of the Library Association in 1943. Thereafter he worked in the libraries of the Universities of Natal and Cape Town (NLCT-MC MSL F3/1/2 (N-Z: Robinson) and MSM 21(b) (1959-1966), Curriculum Vitae, 21 May 1962; Sapling 4, October 1962, p.6-7). Robinson's original appointment in 1945 was hotly contested on grounds of his lack of proficiency in the Afrikaans language.

## CONFORMITY, 1955-1963

31 August to spend several months touring and attending conferences and, on his return, felt obliged to remain on at the State Library for a while because it had subsidized his studies.<sup>43</sup> His claimed doctoral thesis through the University of Pretoria proved to be only at the proposal stage.

Robinson was recommended by the sub-committee by a majority vote<sup>44</sup> and appointed for two years, conditional upon becoming fluent in Afrikaans during that time, failing which he should relinquish the post.<sup>45</sup> Since this would be one of the most important turning points in the South African Library's history, and arguably a wrong choice was made, it is worth reproducing extracts from the letter of recommendation sent by the chairman to the Secretary for Education.

By die ontstaan van die vakature het vanself die vraag gerys watter tipe van bibliotekaris as opvolger vir mnr. Varley gesoek moet word: 'n organisator, uiteraard gewens vir 'n instelling wat ekstensief werk en waaraan 'n groot administratiewe bedrywigheid verbonde is; dan wel 'n vakman met diepgaande kennis van die humanora en veral van die hulpwetenskappe in verband met Africana, 'n gebied waarop die Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek vermoedelik die vernaamste instelling in die land is. Die Kuratore het gemeen dat as niemand kan gevind word wat albei hoedanighede, dié van organisator en dié van geleerde, in gelyke hoë mate in hom verenig nie, die voorkeur dan - met die oog op die aard van die S.A. Biblioteek - moet gegee word aan die persoon wat eerder uitmunt in die tweede as in die eerste kwaliteit. ... Die Kuratore is daarvan oortuig dat mnr. Robinson nader kom aan die ideaal wat hulle voor oë gehad het as enig ander applikant. Hulle was goed daarvan bewus dat mnr. Aschenborn waarskynlik 'n meer dinamiese en ondernemende organisator sou wees as mnr. Robinson; daarteenoor staan egter dat mnr. Robinson in aansienlik hoër mate die ander hoedanighede besit wat die Raad onontbeerlik ag in die Hoofbibliotekaris van die S.A. Biblioteek.<sup>46</sup>

The letter proceeds to emphasize Robinson's intimate knowledge of the Grey and Dessinian

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<sup>43</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3/2/1, Van Winsen to Secretary for Education, 14 October 1961.

<sup>44</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 15 August 1961, sub-committee's report.

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 22 August 1961. The Minister was said to be exceedingly wroth to learn Aschenborn had not been appointed, and demanded a full explanation (NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1 (1961), Op't Hof (S2/5/7/2) to Director, 19 September 1961; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 September 1961).

<sup>46</sup> 'When the vacancy arose, one obviously asked what type of librarian should be sought to replace Mr Varley: an organizer, naturally desirable for an institution involved in extensive activities with which great administrative responsibilities are associated; or alternatively, an expert with a penetrating knowledge of the humanities and particularly the supplementary disciplines associated with Africana, a field in which the South African Library is probably the foremost institution in this country. The Trustees reckoned that should no-one be found who combines both qualities, that of organizer and that of scholar, in equally high measure, the preference - with an eye on the nature of the South African Library - should be given to the person who excels more in the second than in the first quality. ... The Trustees are convinced that Mr Robinson comes closer to the ideal which they envisage than any other applicant. They were well aware that Mr Aschenborn would evidently be a more dynamic and enterprising organizer than Mr Robinson; in contrast Mr Robinson actually possesses to a distinctly greater extent that which the Board regards as essential in the Chief Librarian of the South African Library.' (NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1 (1961), Chairman to Secretary for Education, 14 October 1961.)

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Collections and the extensive Africana Collection garnered during his 16 years service in the Library. He had an adequate reading knowledge of Afrikaans, but the Board could not recommend him for permanent appointment until he had demonstrated his ability to speak the language fluently. Robinson was appointed in an acting capacity on his existing salary with a supplementary acting allowance which could be withdrawn should he fail to learn to speak Afrikaans, when he would return to his former position.<sup>47</sup>

Robinson demanded a higher salary and that his vacated post of Deputy Director be filled (as he could not manage the job without assistance).<sup>48</sup> The Department authorized filling the Deputy Director's post, but when this came before the Board at its next meeting, Friis asked what would happen if the Deputy Director post were filled and the Booyesen Committee altered the post structure in the way he had recommended.<sup>49</sup>

The Deputy Director post was advertised, but there were only two applicants, one of whom was travelling overseas and unavailable for the interview.<sup>50</sup> At this time the Library was experiencing difficulty filling a range of posts from professional down to clerical grades which the Department reserved for Whites. The lack of candidates could be explained in part by the growth of library service positions exceeding the rate at which the universities turned out graduates, but writers have shown that in the 1960s all parts of the public service as well as industry were experiencing difficulty obtaining Whites to fill vacancies.<sup>51</sup>

William Tyrrell-Glynn<sup>52</sup> was the only applicant to be interviewed and was duly offered the

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<sup>47</sup> NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1 (1961), Secretary for Education (S2/5/7/2) to Chairman, 12 November 1961.

<sup>48</sup> NLCT-MC MSL F3/3/2/1, Department to Van Winsen, 17 November 1961; *ibid.*, Robinson to Van Winsen, 20 November 1961.

<sup>49</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 19 December 1961. Friis was convinced the Booyesen Committee would inevitably support his logical view of the future of the South African Library, in which case Robinson could be dispensed with if he failed to learn Afrikaans, and existing Provincial Library Service Central Reference staff could fill the top posts.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 13 February 1962. The applicants were W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn and L. Wertheimer.

<sup>51</sup> D. Posel ('Whiteness and Power' (1999), pp.102-104) refers to the development of the 'administrative state' and the consequent ballooning of the public service and a diminishing number and quality of those available for appointment. J.B. Standish ('State Employment in South Africa' MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984, p.165) writes that the growth of public service positions in the 1950s occurred at a time of increasing White labour shortages, when political policies prevented increasing the number of Blacks in the public service. M. Lipton (*Capitalism and Apartheid* (1986), pp.33-34), refers to the post-Sharpeville boom in the 1960s in which the shortage of White labour led to the 'floating job bar' for non-Whites in industry. Such a stratagem was not available in the public service where a Whites-only policy in clerical and administrative grades continued to be strictly applied until the early 1980s.

<sup>52</sup> William Henry Percy Aloysius Tyrrell-Glynn was a senior library assistant in the Stellenbosch University Library. Prior to that he had been employed in the Cape Provincial Library Service since Friis took charge. His first 13 years of employment were spent in the Cape Provincial Administration. He was a graduate of UNISA. (NLCT-MC MSM 21(b) (1959-1966), Curriculum Vitae, 21 May 1962; Sapling 4, October 1962, p.7.)

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position. His advantages included his public service background and his thorough fluency in Afrikaans and English, compensating for Robinson's deficiency.<sup>53</sup>

Anticipating matters slightly, this is an opportunity to mention Robinson's permanent appointment. Designated Acting Chief Librarian until he demonstrated his proficiency in Afrikaans, the two-year period of grace expired on 22 August 1963 unnoticed (everyone's attention at that time being distracted by Friis' investigation for corruption). It was only in May 1964 that the Board awoke to the situation. Robinson had made no meaningful progress, pleading pressure of work,<sup>54</sup> and could not do so even then as he planned to take long leave during 1965 to visit the United States of America on a Carnegie grant. The Board, unsure how to determine Robinson's actual language proficiency but not inclined to terminate his appointment which it was entitled to do, granted him a further year's grace.<sup>55</sup> He eventually took classes, and with colleagues seated either side of him at the Library tea table coaching him,<sup>56</sup> succeeded in passing Afrikaans at matriculation level. His permanent appointment was confirmed in July 1967.<sup>57</sup>

Shortly after Robinson became Acting Director, the Booyesen Committee submitted its report to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science. Dated March 1962, it appears to have been distributed to the institutions only in June. Robinson now had to prepare comments on the report for the Board, of which a few are noted here. He believed the South African Library had been better-treated than the State Library (which had to give up the Pretoria public library service). The South African Library would continue to serve as the central reference library of the City and the Province. Overlapping of services between the South African Library and the State Library were considered to be minimal, but the National Libraries Co-ordinating Committee which was proposed had in any case been accepted in principle. Robinson was opposed to dropping 'Public' from the Library's name. Booyesen's insistence upon racial segregation, he said, was no surprise.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Tyrrell-Glynn had passed the Public Service Language Tests in both languages in the first grade (1955), and had both languages as BA subjects; he was married to an Afrikaans-speaking wife and Afrikaans as well as English were spoken in the home (NLCT-MC MSL F3/1/2 (M-Z: Tyrrell-Glynn) Curriculum Vitae, 1981).

<sup>54</sup> He was putting the finishing touches to his PhD thesis on English periodical literature in the Cape Colony (which was compiled to a considerable extent in working hours), was Editor-in-Chief of the 'Mendelssohn Revision Project' on behalf of the National Council for Social Research, and had responsibilities as lecturer in bibliography at the University of Cape Town in Varley's place. All this, and editing the Quarterly Bulletin, did indeed keep him busy.

<sup>55</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 May 1964.

<sup>56</sup> The Editor [P.R. Coates], 'Death of a Titan: Thea Smit 1920-2005', in: Quarterly Bulletin 59(2), April-June 2005, p.48.

<sup>57</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 22 June 1967.

<sup>58</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1960-1963). [mimeographed] '(Confidential.) Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Needs of the State-aided Institutions: Memorandum by the Acting Chief Librarian, July 1962.'

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Although the Booyesen Committee had endorsed the South African Library's legitimacy as a national library, the absence of a legal foundation remained a distinct weakness. The acceptance by the Committee of the South African Library's general reference service (such as might be provided by a well-developed urban public library service rather than a national library), was expedient at a time when the City Library Service was not yet able to do so. But this acceptance was given by the Committee fully aware of Friis' Central Reference Library plans for the Cape Provincial Library Service. The South African Library was thus allowed to continue as a hybrid institution, still offering both a local and national service. The excellence of the general reference service made it almost impossible, afterwards, for it to be given up. A national library serving all levels of specialization, not only the highest (as favoured by the Meijer Committee's report in 1981<sup>59</sup>) certainly allowed the Library to be of widest utility to academics and amateurs alike.

That the South African Library and its current activities emerged unscathed in the Booyesen Committee's report may have been due to the goodwill of the Booyesen Committee's secretary, S.J. Kritzinger, and the Secretary for Education, J.J.P. Op't Hof.<sup>60</sup>

The 'Varley era' had ended. Varley never missed an opportunity to promote the interests of the Library, nor had he been too busy to take on new challenges. 'Some things have flopped', he said on leaving, 'some things have succeeded', adding that 'some still need cultivation and care.'<sup>61</sup> To the end of his life, Varley was aggrieved that after twenty-six years, during which he transformed librarianship in the City and the Province, no-one published a tribute to his achievements, something which the present author undertook after his death.<sup>62</sup> Colleagues were possibly relieved to see him go, as he had the knack of claiming and defending the professional moral high ground with unanswerable facts. Apartheid South Africa had entered a phase in which Varley's liberal principles were unacceptable. Cultivation and care became the watch-words of a Library which, outwardly at least, now conformed to Government policy.

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<sup>59</sup> This anomaly is considered at length in Chapter 4, second to fourth sections and Chapter 5, first section (pages 141-180).

<sup>60</sup> Varley wrote to Op't Hof on departure thanking him for 'personal kindness and consideration over many years' (NLCT-MC MSL A3/3/2/1 (1961), Varley to Op't Hof, 22 May 1961).

<sup>61</sup> 'Varley Valedictory' in: Sapling 3, October 1961, p.34.

<sup>62</sup> The Editor [P.R. Coates] 'In Memoriam: Douglas Varley (1911-2000)' in: Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa, 55(3), March 2001, pp.94-97; and 'Douglas Harold Varley: a life's work in librarianship,' in: Quarterly Bulletin, 55(4), June 2001, pp.166-178, and 55(1), September 2001, pp.20-31.

## Chapter 3. CONTROL, 1962-1979

**D**irector A.M. Lewin Robinson settled down to carry on the work of D.H. Varley at the South African Library, in particular steering the monumental bibliographical work (known as 'The Mendelssohn Revision Project') which would be completed some 20 years later. He took over as editor of the Library's *Africana Nova* (the national bibliography), the *Quarterly Bulletin*, and the 'Grey Bibliographies' series. It fell to his lot to implement the segregated facilities for Whites and non-Whites in 1963. Robinson fully met the expectations of the Board as a craftsman with a deep knowledge of the Humanities, especially those auxiliary fields related to *Africana*. But his appointment had been premised on the false assumption that the South African Library's pre-eminence was unassailable.

South Africa became a Republic in 1961 and the National Party Government tightened control over the population, systematically implementing its apartheid policies. The resurgence of the State Library under the control of Hans Aschenborn, posed an unexpected challenge to the South African Library's iconic status. For the first time the two national libraries were required to co-operate and be represented on a variety of co-ordinating committees and councils. Proceedings in these forums and correspondence from the Department were conducted in the Afrikaans language, to Robinson's distinct disadvantage.

Chapter 3 consists of five sections which illustrate administrative developments arising from the Booyesen Committee's report, the control of staff (especially the deteriorating position of Coloured staff) and the Library's related financial position in the later 1960s and 1970s, censorship legislation controlling what the citizens might read (directly affecting the Library's service), and its converse, the systematic promotion among Whites of approved Afrikaner culture, politics and view of history, in other words, indoctrination. The Library's autonomy was circumscribed and its response was passively compliant.

The only major innovation which Robinson had proposed, open-access specialist Departments in several subject fields, was still-born, and even the elite *Africana* Reading Room was used by dwindling numbers of researchers. However, its Reference Department (essentially a public library function) was earning an enviable reputation for excellence, assisting South Africans as well as foreigners, despite the developing 'fortress mentality' of the Government illustrated in Chapter 5.

The South African Library was one of the few places where lay people and academics of all shades of opinion could access their source material without distinction, where segregation was discretely abandoned in 1972, where political activists of diametrically opposed views might be found sharing a table. Its official functions of preservation and exhibition received official precedence over its reference service.

## CHAPTER THREE



The South African Library Board in Session, November 1967

	Chairman	
W Tyrrell-Glynn	Justice M Diemont	A M Lewin Robinson
L W Hiemstra		J G Meiring
A J van der Merwe		A H Honikman
W E G Louw		J E P Levyns
V C Davie		J Newton-Thompson
J du P Scholtz	Absent	F R Bradlow
	A P Treurnicht (resigned)	

## Chapter 3, first section : Corporate Cultures

The Booyesen Committee of Inquiry (see Chapter 2, fifth and sixth sections) investigating the requirements of the nine museums, four art galleries, two national libraries, one botanical garden and one zoo which came under the care of the Department of Education, Arts and Science could not proceed before their functions had been defined. There were no generally-accepted definitions of the functions of this miscellany of institutions, nor any uniformity in the way they formulated their own functions, if at all.<sup>1</sup> It was noted in the Introduction that the concept of a national library was difficult to define, although consensus existed on functions which should be carried out nationally. The Booyesen Committee report traced the way the State Library had become the provider of study material and managed inter-library loans, while the South African Library was the premier preservation library with associated bibliographical functions. While both were 'so-called' national libraries, the Committee felt there should be no doubt about the matter.<sup>2</sup>

Maryna Fraser notes that in the period of transformation (1954-1955) no consultation had taken place between these two libraries to discuss their functions.<sup>3</sup> Douglas Varley and Matthew Stirling, the respective Directors, had little affinity for each other. Varley ignored the State Library,<sup>4</sup> whose Director to 1958, grandiloquently designated 'State Librarian', was known to be guided in his actions by astrology,<sup>5</sup> whereas Varley was a rationalist without metaphysical beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Stirling was not concerned with what people read, so long as they read something,<sup>7</sup> while Varley advocated reading of only the best literature.<sup>8</sup> Stirling declared that the writing of history

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<sup>1</sup> Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap. Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings [Booyesen Committee report] (Pretoria: Die Departement, 1962) I, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Booyesen Committee report (1962) I, p.39.

<sup>3</sup> H.M. Fraser, 'The National Library, with Special Reference to its Bibliographical Function' (MA thesis, Potchefstroom University, 1973), p.85.

<sup>4</sup> Varley avoided using the name 'State Library' and persistently referred to it as 'The Central Library' on account of its Carnegie Corporation funded national administrative functions, as if this were somehow a different institution from that which operated the public library for Pretoria, which it did until June 1964.

<sup>5</sup> 'His own belief in [astrology] was so strong that many of his actions and decisions were determined by the positions of the Signs of the Zodiac' (M. Knox-Shaw and L. Percival, 'Matthew Miller Stirling' in: Give the people Light: essays in honour of Matthew Miller Sterling, Contributions to Library Science 13 (Pretoria: State Library, 1972), p.13).

<sup>6</sup> Alison Turner (Varley), interview, 24 March 2013.

<sup>7</sup> M. Knox-Shaw and L. Percival, 'Matthew Miller Stirling (1972), p.12.

<sup>8</sup> B.G. Hood, D.L. Ehlers and D.H. Varley, 'Literary Censorship and the South African Librarian, a symposium' in: South African Libraries, 22(2), October 1954, p.45. Also many references in his correspondence on censorship.

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should be an offence,<sup>9</sup> while Varley had a keen interest in African history. The two Directors (one from Scotland, the other from England) were as unlike as possible. Each library was a self-contained unit performing all the usual library functions.

The State Library could not be so easily dismissed after Stirling retired. Though the ageing P.F. Coetsee took over through internal promotion and adopted the title of Director, the crucial change was the appointment of H.J. Aschenborn, firstly as Deputy Director in 1958,<sup>10</sup> then in 1965 as Director.<sup>11</sup>

There had been no meaningful contact between the two libraries before the meeting which took place on 17 March 1960 in Cape Town, between Coetsee and Aschenborn, and Varley and Robinson respectively, ostensibly to discuss legal deposit matters. Varley was suspicious of their motives from the start and kept detailed notes of the proceedings. The visitors discussed reducing the number of legal deposit libraries from five to two, professing a solicitous concern for economy on behalf of publishers.<sup>12</sup> Varley was taken aback when he discovered the real purpose of the meeting was their plan to take over much of the South African Library's bibliographic programme. They wanted the South African Library (in a spirit of co-operation, of course) to discontinue its established national bibliography *Africana Nova*,<sup>13</sup> because the State Library had decided to start up something similar called the South African National Bibliography, averring that they were unaware of the South African Library's publication.<sup>14</sup> Their first edition was at that moment already in the press. Although Varley was convenor of the South

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<sup>9</sup> M.M. Stirling, 'Twenty-one Years of the Library Movement in South Africa' in: *South African Libraries*, 17(4), April 1950, p.145. (Originally delivered as a paper at the 1949 South African Library Association conference. He began as follows: 'Although a firm believer in the destruction of all histories and in making the writing of history an offence, I can see little harm in this comparatively innocent excursion into the past. Whatever the merits, if any, of recorded history may be they are far outweighed by its evils. Its chief functions are undoubtedly to perpetuate wars, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, greed and fear. If we lived reasonably there would be no need to delve into the past or plan for the future, but to achieve this would mean a complete reformation of our educational system. ...')

<sup>10</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1958, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 1964-65, p.[5]. In March 1965 Aschenborn was already officially the Director. Coetsee had by then been entirely effaced, and is last noted in July 1964 preparing newspapers for microfilming (*ibid.*, p.9). Aschenborn was always effectively in charge (interview with P.E. Westra, 10 October 2012).

<sup>12</sup> This proposal was subsequently rejected by the 1960 South African Library Association Conference (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1960-1963), 'South African Library Association: 15th Annual Conference ... Report by the Chief Librarian', p.2).

<sup>13</sup> *Africana Nova*, established September 1958, continued the quarterly bibliography of current *Africana* accessions appearing in the Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library since 1946.

<sup>14</sup> Incredible, because *Africana Nova* had been deposited in the State Library on legal deposit and Aschenborn prided himself on his knowledge of available bibliographies. Furthermore, Aschenborn's rival publication followed the format of *Africana Nova* exactly, except his did not include works on South Africa published abroad.

African Library Association's Bibliographic Committee, he had no prior knowledge of the State Library plans. Varley pointed out that reference, preservation and bibliographical functions had long since been assigned to the South African Library, which had already produced numerous high-quality published bibliographies and was responsible for revising Mendelssohn's famous Bibliography, while the State Library's acknowledged functions (other than being the public library of Pretoria) were lending study material and inter-library loans (and the related union catalogue), but not bibliographies. Unfortunately, no formal agreement on the division of functions existed - something which the Booyesen Committee would attempt to address. Varley declined to change what the Cape Town library was already tasked to undertake.<sup>15</sup>

Once the Booyesen Committee had been appointed (in part at the behest of the South African Library Association's Action Committee on Library Co-operation), the State Library Board invited the South African Library Board to hold joint discussions in Pretoria to prepare a common submission to the enquiry and create a united front on their national functions.<sup>16</sup> The Cape Town Board, well aware that it would be under attack by Theo Friis of the Cape Provincial Library Service, and suspecting they had everything to lose by compounding with the State Library, replied that they would present their own evidence before the enquiry and that any such meeting should await the publication of the Committee's report.<sup>17</sup>

A detailed minute was kept of the South African Library's presentation to the Booyesen Committee on 2 May 1961. It presented arguments against falling under a single National Library Board, and opposed forming part of a unified institution which included the State Library. As to becoming an integral part of central Government as a National Library Directorate, this would deprive it of public legitimacy. Its role should continue to be that of the national reference and bibliographical centre and remain autonomous<sup>18</sup> as that way it could best serve the diversity of its clients and their information needs.

The State Library presented its submission to the Booyesen Committee in April 1961, emphasizing that it was 'the Central Library' of South Africa, and in line with the approaching proclamation of the Republic, wished to resume the title of 'The State Librarian' for its Director. The State Library also wanted to remain free of the bureaucratic prescripts of the public service which would restrict its development, not because there was any fundamental disagreement with the apartheid Govern-

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<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 21(g), 'Aide-memoire of Discussions with the Director and Deputy-Director, State Library, Pretoria, 17.3.60 in the Office of the Chief Librarian, S.A. Library, 17 March 1960.'

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3 (folder Booyesen Committee), P.F. Coetsee to Varley, 28 March 1961.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Varley to Director, State Library, 25 April 1961.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2, 'Notes of the Meeting of the Committee of Enquiry into the Needs of State-aided Institutions with the Board of Trustees of the S.A. Library...', 2 May 1961. (Recorded by Mrs D.E. Smit.)

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ment's policies which it happily implemented. There were clear indications that Aschenborn hoped to acquire a monopoly of national functions for the State Library.

Varley was unable to arrange discussions with the State Library before Aschenborn left for his visit to Europe on 31 August<sup>19</sup> and his own final departure for Rhodesia on 30 September, but did sketch out some guiding points for his successor Lewin Robinson. He warned that the State Library's presentation to the Booysen Committee referred to the need for one central institution with the authority to act should large co-operative projects fail - the South African Library's Mendelssohn Revision Project was one such project, and that the State Library considered itself as that central authority - and, in Varley's view, was just as liable to sabotage other South African Library projects as it was already doing in respect of *Africana Nova*. Robinson was warned to 'scotch this particular snake early in any negotiations that may follow between our two national libraries.'<sup>20</sup>

On returning from his tour of Europe in January 1962, Aschenborn convened a meeting at the State Library in Pretoria to preempt the findings of the Booysen Committee. From the State Library's side it was pointed out it had been the Central Library since 1933 and aimed strategically to achieve a 'united national library system.'<sup>21</sup> The memorandum put in by Lewin Robinson emphasized the South African Library's role as national reference library and guardian of bibliographical treasures.<sup>22</sup> The discussions were very aggressively pursued by State Library representatives. Invited delegate Hendrik Robinson (President of the South African Library Association) spoke at length hinting at serious overlapping of functions (which on scrutiny proved fallacious), State Library Director Coetsee asserting that come what may, they would not give up their South African National Bibliography. The South African Library's Board Chairman Mr Justice van Winsen managed to hold his own over *Africana Nova*. Lewin Robinson contributed little (probably on account of proceedings being conducted in Afrikaans), except to fall back on the South African Library's special collections, mentioning, inexplicably, the Alain White fairy chess collection.<sup>23</sup>

The release of the Booysen Committee's report vindicated the South African Library's position by declaring (emphasis added) that

die S.A. Openbare Biblioteek beskou moet word as die hoof-bewaarplek van die land se letterkundige skatte, veral die humanoria, en die belangrikste sentrum vir bibliogra-

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 2, sixth section, pp.84-85.

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2. D.H. Varley, 'Notes by the Chief Librarian on Consultations with State Library ... allocations of responsibilities ...,' 10 August 1961. [Carbon copy of typescript, heavily amended.]

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 'Oorsig oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteekwese, 30 Januarie 1962.'

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, Undated document, signed A.M.L. Robinson.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 'Samespreking tussen die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Staatsbiblioteek, 25 Januarie, 1962.'

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fiese dienste ... Die Staatsbiblioteek is weer die sentrum van die land se inter-biblioteek-leenstelsel met die daarmee gepaardgaande bibliografiese werksaamhede om ten beste uitvoering daaraan te gee. Sy funksie is dus - (a) om 'n voorraad op te bou waaruit hy aansoeke van ander biblioteke kan bevredig sonder om hulle noodwendig te dupliseer; (b) om waar sy eie versameling te kort skiet as skakel op te tree.<sup>24</sup>

This did not give the State Library what it wanted, the South African Library's bibliographical function. The report proceeded to recommend that if the two libraries could not agree on a division of functions, the Department would need to step in. To reduce future conflict, a Co-ordinating Committee should be established for the national libraries, while a Ministerial National [Advisory] Library Council was desirable<sup>25</sup> and needed to be discussed at the forthcoming National Conference of Library Authorities.

State Library's Coetsee wrote threateningly to Robinson that their South African National Bibliography was a continuation of their earlier lists of legal deposit, and the overlapping by *Africana Nova* had to be eliminated.<sup>26</sup> Again in August he warned that unless the South African Library co-operated, the Department would convert both libraries into full State institutions.<sup>27</sup> One needs to note that *Africana Nova*, which included works about South Africa published abroad, had a wide distribution at a nominal charge, which undercut the sales of State Library's rival national bibliography. Robinson replied that he understood the Booyesen Committee had clearly defined their respective functions, and that their recent correspondence was therefore a caution to the South African Library not to become complacent.<sup>28</sup> At the September Co-ordinating Committee meeting, Aschenborn suggested that the contents of *Africana Nova* should be restricted to only the most important items of *Africana*.<sup>29</sup>

The State Library urgently needed to garner as many national functions as possible

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<sup>24</sup> '... the S.A. Public Library must be regarded as the chief repository of the country's literary treasures, especially in the humanities, and the most important centre for bibliographical services ... The State Library on the other hand is the centre of the country's inter-library loan system with those necessary associated bibliographical activities required to perform them to the best effect. Its functions are thus - (a) to build up a stock from which requests from other libraries can be satisfied without unnecessary duplication; (b) to act as an intermediary should its own stock be deficient.' (Booyesen Committee report (1962), sec.3.6, p.41.)

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, sec.3.6.2, 3.7, and 3.8, pp.41-43. For a further discussion of the Advisory Council, see Chapter 4, second section.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2, Coetsee to Robinson, 12 April 1962.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, Coetsee to Robinson, 19 August 1963.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, Robinson to Coetsee, 27 August 1963. He enclosed a copy of the official functions of the South African Library as defined by the O&M Office of the Department of Education, Arts and Science (copy not seen). On file is a copy of the functions assigned to the State Library including limited bibliographical services, ca. 25 February.

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2, Co-ordinating Committee. Proceedings, 26 September 1963.

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because the Booyesen Committee had insisted that its national and local public library services be separated,<sup>30</sup> and it needed a secure foundation if it were to survive as an autonomous institution. It was not happy with the financial provisions the Committee proposed. To side-step the Booyesen Committee's report, they obtained from the Department an O&M inspection in 1963<sup>31</sup> which supported its request for generous additional financial assistance, but this was turned down by the Department on the grounds that the two national libraries were already costing the government too much.<sup>32</sup> Aschenborn had produced a stiff-covered mimeographed memorandum of some 21 pages which proceeded step by step, in mind-numbing detail, to trace all the resolutions of the South African Library Association's Action Group on Library Co-operation, entitled (in Afrikaans) 'The National Library [singular] of South Africa' and concludes with the findings of their 1963 O&M study.<sup>33</sup>

The National Libraries Co-ordinating Committee which the Booyesen Committee recommended, and the Minister accepted, had been anticipated by the two national libraries by their meetings in 1960 and 1962. But the parallel process being propagated by the South African Library Association's Action Committee on Library Co-operation, was tending towards an authoritarian structure by which all publicly-funded libraries would be centrally controlled through legislation. A document was compiled by the Association and endorsed by a special general meeting of the Association in Pretoria in June 1962<sup>34</sup> for adoption at a National Conference of Library Authorities sponsored by the Department of Education, Arts and Science to be held in November 1962. The aim of this conference was to update the findings of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa and provide new directions in library matters. In the event, this Conference reaffirmed the autonomy of libraries, while recommending voluntary co-operation.<sup>35</sup> The Conference endorsed the existing 'two

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<sup>30</sup> Booyesen Committee report (1962), sec.3.28, pp.50-56; Minister Jan de Klerk issued instructions accordingly on 9 October 1962 (State Library. Report, 1963-1964, p.5).

<sup>31</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1963-64, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2, Co-ordinating Committee. 'Proceedings of a meeting of representatives of State Library and South African Library in Pietermaritzburg, 26 September 1963.'

<sup>33</sup> H.J. Aschenborn, *Die Nasionale Biblioteek van Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria: Staatsbiblioteek, 1963). The South African Library's copy of this document was filed with the minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee, so one may suppose it was distributed then, and possibly also handed out at the concurrent South African Library Association conference.

<sup>34</sup> Programme for Future Development: introduction and proposals [to be] submitted to the Conference [of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5th and 6th November 1962] by the South African Library Association. (Pretoria: South African Library Association, 1962.)

<sup>35</sup> Programme for Future Library Development in the Republic of South Africa, as adopted by the National Conference of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5th and 6th November, 1962 (Potchefstroom: South African Library Association, 1963), pp.4, 7. See Chapter 2, fourth section, p.72.

national library' situation, asking that Government ratify the national status of these two libraries, the Afrikaans text of the resolution adding 'in wetgewing' ('in legislation') which is absent from the English version, and specifying seventeen functions which the national libraries should perform. Of these, two were the exclusive domain of the South African Library, four were shared, while eleven were existing functions (or extensions of existing functions) of the State Library.<sup>36</sup> The Conference resolved that the Minister should appoint a South African Library Advisory Council with a permanent secretariat to assist him implement the desired consultation and co-operation.<sup>37</sup>

Reviewing these years, it is obvious that there had been an about-turn in the fortunes of both national libraries: the South African Library from the activism of the Varley era was entering two decades of stagnation under Lewin Robinson (as illustrated in the following sections), while the State Library, from the stagnation of the Stirling era was moving to what would be three-decades of activism in the Aschenborn era. It is ironic that although Aschenborn failed to become Varley's successor as Director of the South African Library, he took up Varley's mantle as leader of the nation's library services.

Despite its low profile, Robinson could truly say of the South African Library a few years later that, within the limits of its (static) range of functions, there had been 'steady if unspectacular development'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the 1960s, during the term of office of Jan de Klerk as Minister of Education, Arts and Science (1963-1969) and J.J.P. Opt't Hof as the Secretary for Education and for Cultural Affairs (1957-1970), was a generally good period for the South African Library in a financial sense. Its dependance on the State had resulted in diminished autonomy. It had legitimacy in the eyes of the National Party Government in so far as it was the custodian and protagonist of the European cultural icons of the Whites-only State. The Library could exploit this so long as it co-operated. The Director, rather naïvely, failed to perceive the possibilities open to him. In Chapter 4, first section, it will be apparent how the Library missed the opportunity available to it at this time to obtain the urgently-needed new building Government offered to erect on dispossessed land in District Six, not because of moral principles, but owing to chronic indecisiveness.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, pp.5-6.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp.40-41.

<sup>38</sup> South African Library. Report, 1966-1968, p.1.

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Newspapers in the West Wing Basement, 1964.

## Chapter 3, second section : Administrative Control

Control of the State-aided institutions by the Department of Education, Arts and Science encompassed the control of staff posts, appointments, emoluments and terminations besides other operating costs. Personnel costs invariably formed the foundation of various schemes for determining the State's annual grants and the largest component of expenditure, calculated on the size of the White establishment, while Coloured staff (regarded as casual labour) and paid at extremely low 'local labour rates' were not included in the critical 'S' (staff) factor.<sup>1</sup>

It was desirable that the determination of the 'S' factor of each institution be undertaken in a scientific manner, rather than on a haphazard basis of representation to the Minister from all quarters. In the case of the South African Library, it had been accepted as a State-aided institution in 1954 with its existing staff complement of 38, both White and Coloured, with salaries and wages adjusted to the prevailing Public Service rates.<sup>2</sup> The establishment remained unchanged until 1961, the year the first major investigation of the Library took place, namely that of the Committee led by C.M. Booysen.<sup>3</sup>

In Chapter 2, sixth section, and Chapter 3, first section, those aspects of the Booysen Committee investigations relating to the functions of the South African Library and its place in relation to lines of authority was discussed. However, the Booysen Committee's primary task was to determine staff and financial needs. Director Varley compiled an eleven-page 'Memorandum'<sup>4</sup> for the Committee which, after providing some general facts about the Library, requested increased funding for book purchases to fill gaps in the collection and cover a recent 42% increase in book prices, then listing the existing and desired upgraded and additional posts required to carry out existing and envisaged functions.<sup>5</sup> The Booysen report recommended the

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<sup>1</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3 and A4/2, 'Notes on Meeting of the [Booyesen] Committee of Enquiry...' 2 May 1961, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> The South African Library had paid many of its Coloured staff more than the allowed Public Service rate, and the Board hoped that this could be regularized by grading these employees as 'stack attendants' (a recognised grade for White public servants), but by the time the Library came under the Department, this had evidently not been approved (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 August 1952, 24 February, 31 March, 26 May and 30 June 1953).

<sup>3</sup> The aim of the Booysen Committee (1960) was to report on the requirements of State-supported institutions under Act 23 of 1931, with the eye on the effective fulfilling their respective functions (Verslag van die Komitee van Onderzoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtinge (Booyesen Committee report) (Pretoria, Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962), I, p.4).

<sup>4</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, 'South African Public Library ... Committee of Enquiry ... Memorandum', 30 March 1961. Board member Theo Friis distanced himself from this report (see Chapter 2, sixth section, p.81).

<sup>5</sup> The 'Memorandum' requests three extra posts for graduates, six for unqualified assistants, one book restorer and two caretakers (all assumed to be White), as well as four Coloured assistants. By accepting the status of Coloured assistants as (temporary) 'employees' instead of at least trying to grade them according to the library assistant or attendant duties they actually performed, this opportunity to have them appropriately graded in permanent posts

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solicited additional annual funds for book acquisitions,<sup>6</sup> while it provided for the immediate re-grading of the post of Director and Deputy Director as well as several other existing posts, but created only two extra professional posts and two new posts for unqualified assistants, to be phased in over two subsequent financial years. Provision was made for funding three extra Coloured assistants (but carefully avoided mentioning 'posts'). All this was subject to the South African Library implementing separate facilities 'for non-Whites'.<sup>7</sup> Segregation was duly effected on 1 September 1963, and Government kept its part of the bargain by accepting the Booysen Committee's administrative and financial recommendations.<sup>8</sup> On appointing Dr A.P. Treurnicht to the Library's Board in the place of Theo Friis soon afterwards, the Ministry directed him to give money matters his particular attention.<sup>9</sup> The annual State grant increased by 19% on average for the next three years (tapering off to 14% and 10% in the financial years 1967-68 and 1968-69).<sup>10</sup>

During the 1960s, the South African economy reached the climax of a continuous post-Second World War boom. This generated demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour which Whites could no longer meet, while the rationale for apartheid to protect the lower ranks of the White population was rapidly disappearing.<sup>11</sup> Demand increased White and non-White mobility in the job market. After making concessions to Coloured State employees in the early 1960s, Prime Minister Verwoerd specifically reversed these concessions,<sup>12</sup> which explains the way the State's Coloured employees had their wages and benefits cut. Simultaneously, slum clearance under the Group Areas legislation was adding to their transport and other subsistence costs in the Peninsula. By 1968 the South African Library was losing its more-skilled Coloured staff and unable to fill the vacancies at the prescribed rates of pay. Other institutions in the Western Cape faced the same problem and jointly pressured the Department to grant higher wages.<sup>13</sup>

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was missed. At the State Library, such duties were performed by Whites in permanent positions.

<sup>6</sup> Booysen Committee report (1962) III, Bylae C.1 (three page abstract filed NLCT-MC MSL A3/3).

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p.3 (see Chapter 2, sixth section).

<sup>8</sup> South African Library. Report, 1962-1963, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1964-1967), Secretary for Education (O5/3/1/1) to A.P. Treurnicht, 21 December 1963.

<sup>10</sup> The State Library's State grant increased in a similar proportion (18% per annum) during the same five years).

<sup>11</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: biography of a people* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), pp.597-598; M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1989), pp.212-213; A.D. Lowenberg and W. Kaempfer, *The Origins and Demise of South African Apartheid: a public choice analysis*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp.40-41.

<sup>12</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid South Africa, 1910-1986* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.301.

<sup>13</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 24 April 1968; 11 August 1969; NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1968-1969), Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions. Proceedings (unofficial notes by Lewin Robinson), 21 June 1969.

With prosperity still prevailing, the Department of Education, Arts and Science was split in January 1968 into a Department of Higher Education and the Department of Cultural Affairs which would actively promote the enculturation of South African Whites (see Chapter 3, fourth section).<sup>14</sup> The State-aided institutions came under the aegis of the latter Department. A new committee of inquiry into the institutions' requirements in the new context was immediately set up, chaired by Dr F.J. de Villiers.<sup>15</sup> The Minister's kinsman, H.C. van Rooy of Potchefstroom University, was appointed as the Committee's library specialist. Like the earlier Booysen Committee, it had to determine the institutions' staffing and financial requirements.<sup>16</sup>

In January 1968 the Secretary for Cultural Affairs wrote to what were now designated 'cultural institutions', informing them of the appointment of the De Villiers Committee, outlining its mandate and requesting written submissions.<sup>17</sup> This would have been a rare chance for the Library to present its case for bettering its research and preservation facilities and, moreover, since the aim of the Department was to promote White culture, the opportunity to stress its bibliographic treasures. Unfortunately, full advantage of this opportunity could not be taken because the Director and staff were feverishly preparing one of the Library's largest exhibitions to mark its 150th anniversary. A provisional memorandum, motivating existing functions, the continuation of *Africana Nova*, and the Library's role as guardian of South Africa's 'literary treasures' was sent off on 27 February. A substantial number of additional posts was requested. This was followed by a completed nineteen-page questionnaire with supporting memoranda.<sup>18</sup> A Supplementary Memorandum requested nine specialist librarian posts, and provision for seven additional 'Departmental Reading Rooms' as well as conference and lecture rooms<sup>19</sup> (which the Committee would reject as excessively costly). The State Library, for its part, produced a thick, bound Memorandum containing coloured charts, diagrams and statistical tables, which Robinson observed dryly, was a remarkable document.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This will be expanded in the next section of this Chapter.

<sup>15</sup> De Villiers was a leader in the scientific field, founder of the South African Bureau of Standards, Chancellor of the University of South Africa, Chairman of the National Film Board, and holder of numerous other positions.

<sup>16</sup> *Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings* (De Villiers Committee report) ([Pretoria]: Departement van Kultuursake, 1968), p.6.

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/4, Secretary for Cultural Affairs (A1/7/20) to South African Library, 29 January 1968.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, Robinson to Secretary of the Committee of Enquiry, 27 February 1968; Robinson to Secretary for Cultural Affairs, 2 April 1968; Secretary for Cultural Affairs to Director, 4 April 1968.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, Robinson to Secretary of the Committee, 27 June 1968.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, Robinson to Aschenborn, 2 April 1968. A copy of the Memorandum is in this file.

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The Committee visited on 13 June. Its subsequent report disappointed the South African Library in some respects. While the Library had requested twenty-six White posts and an increase of twelve Coloured employees over the next five years, the Committee recommended only ten additional staff (eight White, two Coloured), better funding, a generous annual acquisitions grant, and the creation of a paper restoration laboratory.<sup>21</sup> The Library would be granted all ten recommended posts, two at senior professional level, all of which could be filled immediately.<sup>22</sup> The State Library had requested one hundred additional staff (including three 'Bantus') introduced over five years, but was to be granted thirty-six new posts, having lost six temporary posts.<sup>23</sup> The Committee recommended a revised key scale of improved salaries for Whites at all institutions (though improved wages and benefits for skilled non-Whites was rejected as unnecessary<sup>24</sup>), and the introduction of a subsidy formula was adopted,<sup>25</sup> fixed for the next five years.<sup>26</sup>

Even before the fiscal quinquennium had elapsed, the formula was suspended by order of the Cabinet<sup>27</sup> and the following year's grant was cut by 5%, the Government finding itself without funds.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> De Villiers Committee report (1968), pp.219-232 *passim*, and a typed list of recommended posts facing page 228.

<sup>22</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/4, J.J.P. Op't Hof (O4/3/1) to South African Library, 27 February 1969 (to be read in conjunction with the De Villiers Committee report, p.228, with annotation in pencil); NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14 May 1969.

<sup>23</sup> De Villiers Committee report (1968), p.214; State Library. Annual Report, 1968-69, p.7. The Department's ruling that vacant posts would not be funded - mentioned in the Department's letter to the South African Library (NLCT-MC MSL A3/4, J.J.P. Op't Hof (O4/3/1) to South African Library, 27 February 1969) - may have been intended to scotch the State Library's plan to obtain additional posts without an intention of filling them.

<sup>24</sup> This was the same year (1968) that Coloured representation by Whites in Parliament was abolished and the Coloured Representative Council was established.

<sup>25</sup> De Villiers Committee report (1968), pp.251-253, 254, 269-274; NLCT-MC MSL A3/4, J.J.P. Op't Hof (O4/3/1) to South African Library, 27 February 1969. The introduction of a subsidy formula had been considered by the Booyesen Committee in 1961 (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2, Notes of a meeting, Enquiry into the Needs of State-aided Institutions, 2 May 1961, p.3). Anticipating the De Villiers Committee, Dr T.H. Barry of the South African Museum drafted a formula for the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions based on approved establishment posts (MSL A4/1/1, [mimeographed] 'Urgent: Funding of State-aided Institutions' [undated, possibly January 1968]).

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/4, J.J.P. Op't Hof (O4/3/1) to South African Library, 27 February 1969. The formula proved to be unsatisfactory, resulting in a reduced grant for 1970-71 (South African Library. Report, 1971-1972, p.3).

<sup>27</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1970-1975), Department (O4/3/4) to South African Library, 13 December 1971. A subsidy formula was reintroduced in 1973 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 9 August 1973).

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 February 1972. A critical shortage of funds for cultural institutions at this moment was undoubtedly caused by the introduction of secondary education for Blacks, which from 1972 was funded directly from the fiscus, the cost of which grew rapidly (O. Crankshaw, *Race, Class and the Changing Division of Labour under Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.78-79; M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1986), p.61).

What is of special significance in this study was a trend by which the interests of the non-White employees at all the cultural institutions were systematically compromised. The National Party split along ideological lines in 1969.<sup>29</sup> While conservative elements could be ejected from the Cabinet, such elements still occupied their positions of authority in the bureaucracy. To retain the loyalty of White officials, the National Party Government awarded a salary increase with effect from January 1971, despite the Treasury's inability to fund the increase (the institutions being required to pay the increases out of already depleted funds near the end of the financial year).<sup>30</sup> Since Coloureds no longer had even the vestige of representation in Parliament, their interests were now of no account in Government.

All the South African Library posts in the white-collar category were filled by Whites. In the blue-collar category, the security posts were filled by Whites; technical posts (bookbinders and photographers) were reserved for Whites. In the 1970s, with the phasing-out of apprenticeship, Whites could not be obtained to fill artisan posts,<sup>31</sup> and trained Coloured staff were allowed to occupy permanent posts with enhanced pay<sup>32</sup> while remaining 'employees'. Among the 'unskilled' group were the Coloured stack attendants (retrieval staff) upon whom the closed-access South African Library depended.<sup>33</sup>

The Director could take on or dispense with Coloured staff at will, while every appointment or promotion of a White staff member needed the approval of the bureaucracy, and occasional queries from Pretoria showed that each application was thoroughly checked to ensure the post was vacant, and the applicant's qualification for the post, language proficiency, marital status, the appropriate salary notch, and population group.<sup>34</sup> Extreme delays occurred while awaiting

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<sup>29</sup> In 1969 the National Party split along so-called enlightened ('verligte') and conservative backward-looking ('verkrampte') lines. Dr Albert Hertzog who led the conservative faction established the Herstigte Nasionale Party, but failed to win seats in the 1970 elections (H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaner* (2003), pp.557-558).

<sup>30</sup> South African Library. Report, 1971-1972, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1986), p.222.

<sup>32</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 May, 9 August 1973.

<sup>33</sup> At the State Library, Pretoria, 'shelf attendant' posts were filled by Whites during these years, and their Black staff were more distinctly engaged on labourers' work such as cleaning. The South African Library formerly hired White schoolboys as stack messengers, recalled by J. Kam ('Reminiscences of an ex-Sapling', *Sapling* 7, October 1965, p.46), for afternoon and evening shifts. This blurred grades and associated pay: the Coloured stack attendants were required to clean the Library before opening time, then perform their messenger duties (see NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 28 January 1948 - Annex, 'Memorandum on Non-European Staff'). In 1971 the stack attendants refused to do further cleaning duties (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 February 1971, Administrative Officer's report).

<sup>34</sup> The Population Registration Act, 1950, was in force before the Library became a State-aided institution. The practice of appointing only Whites to the clerical and administrative grades of the Department of Education, Arts and Science followed the 'Civilized Labour Policy' introduced in 1924. In 1981 Dr T.H. Barry (of the South African Museum on behalf of the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions) established that no legal bar existed

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authorization.

The pool of White recruits had reached its limit.<sup>35</sup> Time and again the Library had professional posts which could not be filled, although the competition for White librarians in the Cape Town area was nowhere near as keen as it was in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand area.

Apart from Coloured staff who already belonged to subsidized pension or provident funds when the Library became a State-aided institution in 1954, the regulations under the State-aided Institutions Act specifically excluded non-Whites (being forever temporary 'employees' not 'officers') from joining subsidized pension or provident funds. However, in 1961 the Department made a concession for four of the senior Coloured staff appointed after 1954, declaring them permanent staff and thus permitted to join a government provident fund.<sup>36</sup> Others who joined after 1954 were barred from membership.<sup>37</sup>

In 1964, the Department informed the Library that so-called 'unskilled' non-White staff would be paid according to a 'local wage' system (that is, the lowest pay a worker would accept in any geographical area according to Department of Labour records) and the starting wage would be R366 per annum (less than the Library was already paying).<sup>38</sup> The government was now intransigent in its refusal to allow the State-aided institutions' non-White employees to be placed in permanent positions. Vacation (15 days per annum at entry-level) and sick leave benefits (15 days per three year cycle) were far lower for non-White employees than for entry-level White officers (32 days and 120 days respectively).<sup>39</sup>

Indifferent to the starvation-level local wages for non-Whites adopted as the standard by

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to employing suitably-qualified non-Whites in any post in the Public Service, only a public service policy (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (sub-folder 1978-1980), Committee agenda for 5 March 1981, 'Oopstelling van Poste by Verklaarde Inrigtings', p.2). Formal job reservation required a 'determination' by the Minister of Labour under Sec.77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act (1956), of which none related to the Public Service. The Department maintained the policy by exercising its power of veto.

<sup>35</sup> J.B. Standish ('State Employment in South Africa' (MA. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), p.201) came to the conclusion that increasing shortages of skilled labour prevented pure apartheid from ever being fulfilled.

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 September 1961.

<sup>37</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/2 (sub-folder 1972), A.M.L. Robinson comments on the Memorandum on the Subsidy Formula, 18 December 1972.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 9 September 1964, refers to a Departmental Circular.

<sup>39</sup> 'Regulations - State-aided Institutions', Government Notice 2201, in: Extraordinary Government Gazette, 5363, 29 October 1954, part X (pension fund membership, applicable only to 'Officers', and excluded non-White 'Employees'), pp.21-30, and part IV (leave at reduced rates applicable to non-White 'Employees'), pp.7-14. The 1969 Regulations increased vacation leave for non-White entry-level employees by three days, with 15 years service (virtually half one's expected term of employment) required to reach parity with entry-level white-collar White officers; sick leave remained at 15 days per cycle for entry-level employees ('Regulations - Cultural Institutions Act, 1969', Government Notice 1168, in: Government Gazette 2483, 11 July 1969, part V, pp.13-26).

the Public Service Commission, the Department declared in August 1968 that non-Whites did not qualify to receive the eagerly-anticipated Christmas bonuses<sup>40</sup> (bonuses for Whites were not affected). The Board's Chairman took this up personally with the Department, resulting in it being sanctioned for one last time in December that year,<sup>41</sup> the Department's position being that a directive had come from the Minister of Finance with the specific endorsement of the Cabinet, and could therefore not be questioned.<sup>42</sup> All the while the Library and the other institutions were losing Coloured staff faster than they could be replaced and trained.

Responding to the 1969 non-White labour crisis experienced by the cultural institutions in the Western Cape, the Committee of Heads of Cultural Institutions pressed the Department of Cultural Affairs to improve the position and wages of Coloured staff.<sup>43</sup> A memorandum was prepared by Lewin Robinson proposing streaming Coloured staff into three grades with more realistic wage scales: 'cleaners' (no entry educational level), 'semi-skilled assistants' (with at least Std.7 or Grade 9), and 'stack attendants, laboratory assistants, assistant binders' (with at least Std.8 or grade 10).<sup>44</sup> The proposal was referred to the new Ministerial Advisory Council for Declared Institutions, which at its first meeting, systematically deferred and referred matters, thereby smothering attempts to ameliorate the lot of this class of worker, a typical tactic throughout the bureaucratic labyrinth, where unambiguous refusals were rare. The Council endorsed the Public Service Commission's pernicious 'local wage' system and upheld the exclusion of non-Whites from Government pension schemes.<sup>45</sup> The Department's answer was to specify one flat rate for all non-Whites of R492 a year regardless of age, education or experience.<sup>46</sup>

In May 1970 the Department proposed significant improvements, providing rates for different classes of library work ranging from R720 per annum for cleaners to R840 for printers'

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<sup>40</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 29 August 1968. The Department had in fact already provided the funds (R456) for the 1968 non-Whites' bonus (see South African Library. Report, 1966-1968, p.20).

<sup>41</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 December 1968.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 25 March, 14 May 1969. The White staff of the Library contributed individually towards 'Christmas boxes' organized by the director (for example NLCT-MC MSM 21(c) (1971-1973), Staff Memo 29/73, 6 December 1973). Coloured staff bonuses were restored in 1974 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 7 February 1974).

<sup>43</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1968-1969), Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions. [Proceedings], 21 April 1969.

<sup>44</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/2 (1970-1972), Draft on file, by Robinson, forms part of the memorandum 'Salarisskale en Besoldiging' presented to the meeting of Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions, 27 April 1970.

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/2 (1970-1972), Advisory Council for Declared Institutions, Minutes and Resolutions, 10 June 1970. The Advisory Council for Declared Institutions was set up in terms of sec.12 of the Cultural Institutions Act, no.29 of 1969.

<sup>46</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 11 August 1969.

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and binders' assistants (again a flat rate regardless of length of service),<sup>47</sup> but the Treasury refused to fund these increases.<sup>48</sup>

Two years later, the institutions in Cape Town returned to the matter of appointing Coloured staff in permanent posts to relieve the shortage of White artisans. A closely-argued memorandum was drawn up jointly by the South African Library and South African Museum and sent to the Department in June 1972, pointing out that it was unrealistic to treat all Coloured employees as unskilled labour, requesting their appointment to permanent posts on the same salary scales as Whites doing the same work, allowing more skilled Whites to do more demanding tasks. This Memorandum was signed by the Directors of all the declared institutions in Cape Town.<sup>49</sup> No response being received, Hans Aschenborn (then chairman of the Committee of Heads) went to see the Director of Cultural Affairs in the Department (re-amalgamated with Education) in December 1972, who admitted he had done nothing about it.<sup>50</sup> Eventually a reply was received, written patronizingly at great length, outlining a myriad of bureaucratic steps necessary before the matter could be seriously discussed in Committee, amongst which were the following: The matter had to be applicable to and negotiated with all State Departments; it could not only apply to Coloureds; entry grades were an unspecified problem; he believed the 'local wage' system offered many advantages to non-Whites; the Committee's Memorandum had provided data for five institutions in Cape Town, so every other institution would also need to be surveyed (with the task of every non-White employee fully described), and a slew of other information which first needed to be gathered,<sup>51</sup> essentially smothering the proposal.

About May 1972 the Declared Cultural Institutions in Cape Town were issued with improved wage scales for Whites based on Public Service scales to be back-dated to April.<sup>52</sup> But the Cabinet had summarily suspended the cultural institutions' subsidy formula (only recently implemented and forming the basis on which the institutions had drawn up their budgets) and the expected subsidy amount had not been paid.<sup>53</sup> Institutions were already raising bank overdrafts at their own cost to meet their most-pressing obligations before the cost of this salary

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 21 May 1970.

<sup>48</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/2 (sub-folder 1971). Report by I.C.J. Pienaar to Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions (undated, about 1971); *ibid.*, T.H. Barry to Robinson 18 August 1971.

<sup>49</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/2 (1972 'Job Reservation'), [Memorandum on the use of non-White staff], 13 June 1972.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, (1973), Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions. Minutes of EXCO, 19-20 March 1973.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, Secretary for National Education (S3/1/10) to Director of South African Museum, undated [ca. April 1973].

<sup>52</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 1 June 1972.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 10 February 1972.

## CONTROL, 1962-1979

increases for Whites was added.<sup>54</sup> Vacant White and Coloured positions were frozen. In March 1973 the board had to borrow money once more to pay an emergency increment in a bid to retain the few remaining trained Coloured staff. Finally in May 1973 the Treasury funded a 17½% wage increase for Coloureds, back-dated by one month.<sup>55</sup> Elections were due in 1974 and public service salaries for Whites were further increased<sup>56</sup> but withheld from the non-White staff.<sup>57</sup>

The Library's only threatened Coloured staff walk-out arose in January 1976. Wage increases had been promised in February 1975 retrospective to July 1974 (the date the White staff had received their increments),<sup>58</sup> but could not be paid because funding from the Treasury failed to materialize, forcing the Library to again pay an unauthorized increase out of funds budgeted for other purposes just to retain the staff.<sup>59</sup>

Government hubris reached its peak in May 1976 when the Department of National Education warned institutions against paying their 'Bantus' (all non-Whites intended) above prescribed local rates; such wages were to be reduced immediately not only by the monetary excess, but also by the value of any additional benefits in kind.<sup>60</sup> Should this lead to additional costs, the circular observed, the institutions had to make savings elsewhere in their budgets.<sup>61</sup> By the time this circular reached its destination, the Soweto uprising had begun.

Whether Government or the Department liked it or not, the administration of the country solely by White males was no longer a possibility. Lipton describes the situation in several State sectors which threatened to collapse - the Treasury, the Post Office, the South

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<sup>54</sup> The funding crisis seems to have arisen from the new policy on secondary education for Blacks mentioned elsewhere.

<sup>55</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 May 1973.

<sup>56</sup> Needing to keep the bureaucracy on its side during the 1970 elections and again in 1974, it did not dare to tamper with the benefits of its White employees. One-third of all Whites were employed in the State sector by 1970 (M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1986), p.41).

<sup>57</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 6 February 1975, Administrative Officer's report.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 6 February, 15 May 1975.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 5 February 1976; This was followed by an official 15% increment in July 1976 (*ibid.*, 5 August 1976).

<sup>60</sup> Since 1963 the South African Library's stack attendants and outside messenger received an annual shoe allowance (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 April 1963), and their tea club was subsidized by the Board (*ibid.*, 16 November 1966).

<sup>61</sup> NLCT-MC MSN S13/2, Circular S3/1/9, 19 May 1976. Accompanying this circular the prescribed local wage for the Cape Town area was listed: 'Bantu' male wages at R1080 per annum for labourers, R840 for females (R20.75 and R16 per week respectively), R1170 for Coloured males, and R900 for females (R22.50 and R17.30 per week). Slightly higher annual differential amounts were set for messengers, stack attendants, and binders' assistants, with the highest possible amount payable to a non-White person of R1620 per annum (R31.15 per week) (*ibid.*, Scale of wages for South African Library, 29 June 1976).

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African Railways and even the labour sector of the Defence Force - in the early 1970s.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps the most instructive indicator of the situation is the annual report of the Commission for Administration (formerly the Public Service Commission) for 1979-80. Traditionally the Public Service employed White males, but owing to their unavailability and an economy which was again experiencing boom conditions (besides significant conscription into the Defence Force or emigration), the Public Service was increasingly employing female workers, which is described as a disturbing trend which would soon make it difficult to fill managerial positions. Part-time female workers and (most objectionable of all) even housewives were being employed on a casual basis. 'As regards the utilization of Non-White labour, there has over the last few years, been a marked increase in the number of posts for Non-Whites in accordance with present government policy, according to which the various population groups should, as far as possible, be served by their own people'. Since June 1975 the percentage of non-Whites in the service increased from 47.7% to 53.6%, including 'larger numbers of Non-Whites in categories higher than the unskilled and semi-skilled classes'<sup>63</sup> (emphasis added). This trend, as it manifested in industry, was known as the 'floating colour bar'.<sup>64</sup> In five years the Public Service as a whole had grown by 6%, but in non-White education it grew by 86%.<sup>65</sup> So far, the South African Library had employed no Coloured person permanently in a post designated for Whites. This topic is taken up again in Chapter 5, third section.

It should be obvious that not only was the South African Library's dependence on State funding seriously constraining its autonomy, it was beginning to threaten its continued existence. But at this moment a Ministerial Advisory Committee was considering whether the South African Library served any purpose (see Chapter 4, second section).

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<sup>62</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1986), pp.235-238.

<sup>63</sup> Commission for Administration. Annual Report, 1979-80 [RP.59-1981], pp.5, 7.

<sup>64</sup> See for instance O. Crankshaw, *Race, Class and the Changing Division of Labour* (1997), pp.24-33.

<sup>65</sup> Commission for Administration. Annual Report, 1979-80, p.7.

## Chapter 3, third section : Mind Control – Censorship

Chapter 2, second section ended with the passing and implementation of the Publications and Entertainment Act no.26 of 1963 which considerably tightened State control over both imported and local publications. The Act made provision for a Publications Control Board of nine members (based in Cape Town) which could declare any publication undesirable, even academic studies if the Board considered the topic generally distasteful. Provision was made (later regretted) to appeal against rulings in the courts. As Christopher Merrett states, ‘The government claimed it was concerned to control indecency, blasphemy and communist views; while its opponents argued that the real aim was the wholesale control of dissidence.’<sup>1</sup> Minister Jan de Klerk (with portfolios of both Interior and Education) claimed that the law granted greater freedom of thought and expression than prevailed in most countries in the world, while Nadine Gordimer held that the Act was a licence for ‘cranks, crack-pots, and political informers ...’<sup>2</sup> The only mitigating circumstance was that general pre-publication censorship, as practised in Nazi Germany<sup>3</sup> and advocated by the Cronjé Commission, was not introduced beyond a provision for blanket bans on specific publishers, on types of material, and material on specified subjects. This came a year after the General Law Amendment Act no.76 of 1962 made it an offence to possess communist literature.<sup>4</sup>

White and Coloured persons who obtained their reading matter through public libraries were fed a highly refined diet of centrally selected publications through Provincial and Metropolitan library services providing ‘safe’ material and thus acting as pre-emptive censors.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), p.61.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> ‘When fully developed, Nazi censorship encompassed all phases of the creation, publication, and dissemination of information and ideas; it oversaw authors, controlled the publishing industry, supervised the book trade, and controlled libraries. As a system ... it did succeed in its primary objective.’ (M.F. Stieg, *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany* (Tuscaloosa USA, University of Alabama Press, 1992), p.78.)

<sup>4</sup> C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship* (1994), p.60. This 1962 Act extended provisions in the Suppression of Communism Act no.44 of 1950 as amended by Act 15 of 1954.

<sup>5</sup> On the topic of acquisition of contentious material, see *Cape Librarian*, January 1960, pp.19-20 (attempt to dispel the idea that the CPLS selectors controlled what the public may read); Cape Provincial Library Service. *Annual Report, 1957*, p.7 (Director’s claim that of 506 books banned in that year, only 17 were on the CPLS shelves, and all bought before he became Director); City of Cape Town. *City Library Service. Annual Report, 1955*, p.4 (on the financial consequences of buying books for a metropolitan library service which might afterwards be declared undesirable); R.F. Kennedy, *The Heart of a City: a history of the Johannesburg Public Library* (Cape Town: Juta, 1970), pp.316-317 (policy of avoidance in a metropolitan library service); C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship* (1994), pp.195-201 (impact on choice of research topics, library purchases and creative writing).

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The destruction of library services for Blacks can be viewed as a particularly heavy-handed manifestation of censorship. These services, limited though they had been, were decimated in 1953 by the Bantu Education Act which removed all aspects of education provision for Blacks from the provinces, including subsidization of libraries, for which no alternative provision was made.<sup>6</sup> All that remained for Blacks (who were prohibited from using 'White' libraries under the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953) were undistinguished services run by larger metropolitan areas.<sup>7</sup> Only the South African Library continued to serve all population groups equally.

That the purpose of the Government was to restrict what Blacks might read was evidenced at the South African Library Association annual conference held at the State Library in 1957, the theme of which was 'Libraries for Non-Europeans in South Africa'. Marguerite Peters spoke on 'Reading Tastes of the Non-Europeans' and several others (all of them White, 'owing to practical difficulties') delivered papers on the topic. C.W. Prinsloo of the Native Affairs Department spoke in defence of the Department's control of libraries for Blacks, saying that formerly, the provision of books in the vernacular had been controlled by religious denominations which wanted to inculcate their particular points of view which did not correspond with Government's development objectives for Blacks, and instead the work was being entrusted to Dagbreekpers, controlled by the Dutch Reformed Church. They eventually planned to set up a library department, but in the meantime, subsidies for libraries for Blacks had ceased.<sup>8</sup>

The only places where members of the public might consult books on perceived sensitive

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<sup>6</sup> R. Musiker, *Companion to South African Libraries* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1986), pp.43-44.

<sup>7</sup> The library service for Coloureds and Blacks run by the South African Library through the Cape Libraries Extension Association became part of the Cape Town City Library Service in 1952; the City of Johannesburg opened its first Black library in 1940, the same year that Durban Municipality took over the failed Natal Carnegie Committee's work, and by 1958, there was no library service for Blacks in the Orange Free State. In the Transvaal the Carnegie Non-European Library Service, which in 1949 had as many as eighty 'book box' service points providing study material, found itself in financial difficulties and was taken over by the Department of Native Affairs in 1956 which reduced the service points to eight, and eventually handed over the administration of this service to the State Library in 1961 (M.A. Peters, 'Historical Review of Library Services for Non-White Peoples in the Republic of South Africa' in: *Handbook of Southern African Libraries: preliminary articles* (Pretoria: State Library, 1970), p.xxix; J.A. Kalley, *Apartheid in South African Libraries: the Transvaal experience* (Lanham, USA: Scarecrow Press, 2000), pp.40-41; State Library. Annual Report, 1961, pp.4-5). The City of Pretoria established a separate library service for Blacks with branches at Atteridgeville, Vlakfontein and Lady Selborne townships, taken over by the State Library in February 1960 (State Library. Annual Report, 1960, p.22) which in turn became part of the new Pretoria Public Library Service in 1964 (M.A. Peters, 'Historical Review of Library Services' (1970), p.xxix). The Carnegie-funded Study Service for Blacks expanded in 1967 to provide formal reading facilities in hired premises in Pretoria, known as the Study Division with staff administered by the State Library but funded by the Department of Bantu Affairs (State Library. Annual Report, 1968-69, pp.18-19).

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1945-1959), D.H. Varley, 'Report to the Trustees ... on the 12th Annual Conference of the South African Library Association held in Pretoria 30 September - 4 October, 1957'.

or objectionable topics were the four libraries with legal deposit privileges<sup>9</sup> which included the national libraries, while academics might do so at their own university libraries, all of which were granted special exemptions. The best collections of works banned on account of political and literary content were held at the South African Library and the State Library, the latter, in addition, having a large repository of pornography, seized at the Johannesburg airport and elsewhere, kept under the direct supervision of its director.<sup>10</sup>

Censorship was the bane of the lives of librarians in South Africa, not, alas, because the majority of them had professional scruples against the practice of either literary or political censorship. The Afrikanerized bureaucracy (and most librarians worked in a bureaucratic environment) was conditioned to compliance and a tradition which emphasized external threats to the State, as Annette Seegers points out,<sup>11</sup> supported by Archie Dick.<sup>12</sup> Rather it was the nuisance factor of endlessly checking the Government Gazette for latest lists of banned items and authors,<sup>13</sup> withdrawing affected items and catalogue entries, and disposing of the books which irritated them.

In the case of the South African Library (and the other libraries with special exemption to possess banned material) there were requirements that banned items should be filed separately and kept locked away, that there should be a separate catalogue of such items, that only designated staff could have access to this material for specific purposes, that complicated and increasingly elaborate procedures were prescribed should a reader wish to use banned or prohibited material, and that full details of both the reader and the material used had to be kept accessible for inspection by designated officials. Merrett states the unpalatable fact, that had librarians as a body so chosen, the censorship apparatus could have been rendered unworkable.<sup>14</sup> Instead, they co-operated with the censors, often with notable vigor, imbued, as John Lindsay

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<sup>9</sup> The South African Library, State Library, Bloemfontein Public Library, and Natal Society Library, Pietermaritzburg. The fifth legal deposit library, the Library of Parliament, was not open to the public. University libraries received similar exemptions for academic purposes. Only the South African Library admitted non-Whites.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with P.E. Westra, 10 October 2012. One should bear in mind that such items could be essential for academic study, for example by the minister of religion who was researching the topic for a doctoral thesis entitled 'Christelike Seksuele Etiek' (NLCT-MC MSM 28 (1959-1980), correspondence October-November 1972).

<sup>11</sup> A. Seegers, 'Towards an Understanding of the Afrikanerisation of the South African State' in: *Africa*, 63(4), 1993, pp.482-486.

<sup>12</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Book Burning and the Complicity of South African Librarians, 1955-1971' in: *Innovation*, 28, June 2004, pp.33-34.

<sup>13</sup> South African Library Association. Western Cape Branch. Minutes, 4 October 1967. (Copies of these minutes may be found at NLCT-MC MSM 36 (1950-1970).)

<sup>14</sup> C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship* (1994), p.211.

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points out in respect of writings by prominent librarians C.J. Fourie and P.C. Coetzee, with a purpose of enculturating society according to a narrow and specific definition bordering on indoctrination: 'There can be no doubt that the librarian,' in the act of book selection, 'is a censor in society'.<sup>15</sup>

The South African Library Association, long under conservative Afrikaner (and Broederbond) control, willingly supported, rather than opposed, the systematic suppression of political thought opposed to the Government and of anything which might trouble the moral sensitivities of dominant religious denominations. The minority who held other opinions nevertheless acquiesced. The only complaint which received wide support among librarians related to the form of notices appearing in the Government Gazette, which were not in proper bibliographic style,<sup>16</sup> which hampered identifying, extracting and destroying proscribed items. The State Library, wishing to be in the van of progress, leaped into the gap, publishing a manual on censorship in quarterly parts with an annual cumulation.<sup>17</sup> The ever-growing bureaucracy administering a proliferating body of legislation never in practice found the time to check whether the South African Library (or, as far as the author knows, any other library) was complying with the terms of its exemption. Varley recalled that during his tenure two members of the Special Branch of the Police did indeed visit the Library with orders to examine its holdings on Communism. The policemen were shown the subject catalogue which at that time listed some five hundred items on the topic. 'But,' said one, 'which of these are for Communism and which are against?' This, it was explained, he would have to find out for himself. A week later, surrounded by piles of dialectic, the senior officer was asked how he was getting on, and his looks belied words. The following day his seat was empty.<sup>18</sup>

Several writers have observed that the overwhelming bulk of material submitted to the Publications Control Board was submitted by officials such as the police or customs officials, and not by members of the general public. Despite possessing statutory exemption, the South African Library experienced increasing harassment from officious customs and postal authorities who

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<sup>15</sup> J.M. Lindsay, 'Enculturation Revisited' in: *South African Libraries*, 41(5), April 1974, pp.271-273.

<sup>16</sup> South African Library Association. Western Cape Branch. Minutes, 4 October 1967. This proposition, and the call for an annual index, had originated in the 'liberal' Western Cape Branch and adopted by the annual conference in Bloemfontein. At the next annual meeting of the South African Library Association S.J. Kritzingler, Chief Government Librarian, reported (Minutes, 26 September 1968) that the index by Lexicon Publications was inadequate and the Association would investigate. (Copies of these minutes may be found at NLCT-MC MSM 36 (1950-1970).)

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 36 (1950-1970). By 1968, this index already covered 10,000 titles (State Library. Annual Report, 1967-68, p.22).

<sup>18</sup> D.H. Varley, 'Trends Abroad: South Africa' in: *Library Trends*, 19(1), July 1970, p.145.

were opening all parcels addressed to the Library and impounding books they considered problematic. Considerable losses were suffered as a result. One example in 1976 illustrates the predicament. When the South African Library appealed to Jannie Kruger, the Director of Publications, to have a consignment of impounded books released (list provided), he replied that the Library must first submit the actual books before he could consider the request.<sup>19</sup>

The 1963 legislation made provision for banning orders to be appealed in the courts. The regularity with which banning orders were set aside as a result, led the thwarted government to replace the Publications Control Board<sup>20</sup> with the Directorate of Publications, in terms of the Publications Act, no.74 of 1974. Appeals to the civil courts were now prohibited by the Act,<sup>21</sup> and an internal Publications Appeal Board set up instead. The mere possession of certain works could now be prohibited. Ridiculing the chairman and members of the Publication Board was declared a criminal offence, which deprived the press of much-needed levity. J.J. (Jannie) Kruger (a former journalist who succeeded H.F. Verwoerd as editor of *Die Transvaler*) who headed the new Board was, in the opinion of leading Afrikaans author André Brink, 'quite simply a fool.'<sup>22</sup> This 1974 Act had to be read together with other legislation which automatically banned anything emanating from a banned person or organization, however innocuous the matter might be. Censorship laws were applied by the South African Police, the Customs Department, the Post Office, religious and cultural groups, and individuals, as well as (from 1974) officers of the Directorate itself. It was (as Merrett entitled his book on the subject) a culture of censorship.

Following the lethal 1976 security clamp-down after the Soweto uprising and the consequent flight of capital, the Library was instructed by the Department of Finance (through the Department of National Education) to order foreign books only in exceptional cases.<sup>23</sup> Soon afterwards a 15% surcharge was imposed on all imported books to disincentivize overseas purchases, compounded by the requirement that such books had to be cleared by a registered

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<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1976-1980), correspondence 10 March, 7 April 1976. Peter McDonald called Kruger 'an autocratic buffoon' (P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: apartheid censorship and its cultural consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.53).

<sup>20</sup> Publications Control Board was chaired until 1968 by leading Potchefstroom academic Gerrit Dekker who was a member of the South African Library Association.

<sup>21</sup> The whole question of censorship in South Africa is thoroughly examined by Christopher Merrett in *A Culture of Censorship* (1994).

<sup>22</sup> A. Brink, 'Preface' in: J.C.W. (Kobus) van Rooyen, *A South African Censor's Tale* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2011), p.9.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1976-1980), Department of National Education circular D2/5/3, 20 September 1976.

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customs agent and not by the Library staff as heretofore, further increasing the cost<sup>24</sup> - a new way of restricting access to 'undesirable' opinions. However, access to alternative political points of view through the legal deposit libraries would soon be closed to the public.<sup>25</sup>

After the Publications Act of 1974<sup>26</sup> came into operation in 1975, the Library continued to grant access to banned books in terms of its existing exemption under section 5(5) of the 1963 Act,<sup>27</sup> but this did not cover granting access to publications banned under the Suppression of Communism Act and Internal Security Act, both of 1950, or the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956 for which a specific application to the Minister of Justice was required.<sup>28</sup> The Directorate withdrew all open exemptions from the beginning of 1978, leaving only exemptions for specific items. Application could be made for a new open exemption for material listed in Jacobsens Index of Objectionable Literature but excluding material declared 'possession prohibited' under the 1974 Act.<sup>29</sup>

New conditions for exemption were draconian. Apart from those classes of banned and prohibited material for which no exemption could be granted (either for possession or use), application had to be made separately for every user (full details of the person wishing to use each individual item, the reason for wishing to see it, and an explanation why no alternative could be used had to be provided) and for each banned item (the item itself had to accompany the application, fully identified with the number and date of the Government Gazette in which the banning notice had appeared, going back if necessary to 1963). Where a user needed to consult

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, Correspondence, May to November 1977; however, this being a Christian country, Bibles and other religious works were admitted duty-free (*ibid.*, Ministry of Finance to Chairman of Library board, 21 November 1977).

<sup>25</sup> This study deals with the South African Library, and in the context of censorship, the other three legal deposit libraries. The situation relating to university libraries was very similar and will not be referred to separately.

<sup>26</sup> The background to the Publications Act, no.42 of 1974, according to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Publications and Entertainments Amendment Bill, (1974) [RP.17-1974], pp.2-4, was a 1973 Inter-departmental Committee of Inquiry into the Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963. Proposed amendments were incorporated in a Bill (AB.61-1973) which was considered by a Select Committee of the House of Assembly (SC.7-1973) which requested that the committee be converted into a Commission of Inquiry with the same members. Its proceedings were held in camera to prevent adverse comment in the press. The Commission was chaired by J.T. Kruger, Minister of the Interior, assisted by a working group consisting of F.W. de Klerk, Dr A.P. Treurnicht and the State Law Advisor. Its purported aim was to uphold the Christian character of the State. The South African Library Board asked the Director to put the national libraries' position before the Select Committee (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 May 1973). There is no record of a submission to the Select Committee or the subsequent Commission of Inquiry.

<sup>27</sup> Requiring documentary proof of its exempt status for customs and postal purposes, the Library obtained a certificate from the Director of Publications in October 1972 (NLCT-MC MSM 28 (1959-1980). Director to Publications Control Board, 20 October 1972; J.J. Kruger (3/1/9/1v2) to the director, 25 October 1972).

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1970-1975). Secretary for Justice (10/3/2/3(VA)) to Director, 12 December 1972.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, (1976-1980). Directorate of Publications. Circular DP 3/3/1, 1 September 1977.

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the work of a listed person or a publication in which such person's words or statements were quoted, a similar application had to be made to the Secretary for Justice. Again, the work in question had to accompany the application (clearly impractical if these words appeared in bound newspaper volumes), but if the work was not already in the country and needed to be imported for consultation, a licence for that purpose had to be obtained from the Directorate of Publications. A copy of each approved application had to be filed and made available to persons authorized by the Directorate to inspect it. Numerous rules<sup>30</sup> prescribed how the banned material should be managed and (if permission was finally granted) used in the library.<sup>31</sup> Even Dædalus could not have designed a labyrinth so complex. In December 1977 the South African Library Director stopped the use of banned material completely.<sup>32</sup> Only in 1980 (five years after the promulgation of the Publications Act, in a new reformist period of South Africa's history) would the matter be resolved (see Chapter 6, section 2).

The extent to which banned material was consulted at the South African Library cannot be ascertained. Certainly the rules were applied up to 1977, and application forms were filed according to the regulations. (The file containing these applications is now missing.) It is reported anecdotally that while there was some demand for banned political and literary works, usage was very small compared with overall stock usage. It is likely that the need to complete application forms had exactly the inhibiting effect on users which the rules intended. Suspending access completely in December 1977 was, for Director Lewin Robinson, the lesser of two evils. Staff were forbidden to discuss the matter outside the Library or with its readers lest a mistaken view of the matter got abroad.<sup>33</sup> Hans Aschenborn, Director of the State Library, took up the matter of the unreasonable conditions for access personally with the Ministers of the Interior and of Justice (without result),<sup>34</sup> while Lewin Robinson and the Library of the University of Cape Town jointly sought legal opinion of Prof. W.H.B. Dean (which confirmed his worst fears).<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, Annexure, pp.1-5.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 'Letter of authorization ... under the Internal Security Act, sec.56(4)', 18 February 1983. In 1982 the Library had to register with the Directorate the names of staff authorized to have access to the stock in the course of their duties, the author being one of three at the South African Library so registered, after which his home was ransacked nine times in quick succession in suspicious circumstances, despite his being studiously apolitical.

<sup>32</sup> NLCT-MC MSN S10. Staff memo 24/77, 15 December 1977: 'Publications Act 1974.'

<sup>33</sup> South African Library Staff Newsletter 3, June 1978, p.1.

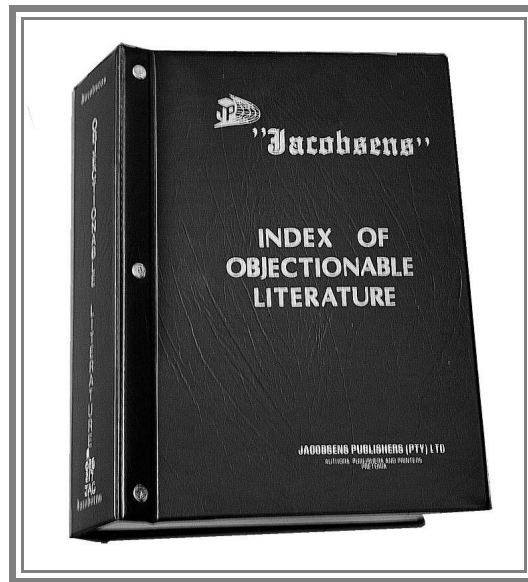
<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1976-1980). letters 16, 22 November 1977; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 2 February 1978.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, Copy of Dean's opinion, 13 October 1977, 16pp; comments by Lewin Robinson, 29 December 1977, 4pp.

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situation was explained at length by the Director to an indignant researcher into Black South African writing, Dr Ursula Barnett, ‘... I have felt it dangerous to give authority to my staff to make banned material available on request ...’<sup>36</sup> The author can attest to the fact, however, that some readers were surreptitiously provided with banned material by the staff, much as some librarians had done in pre-war Germany.<sup>37</sup>

If one takes the two-language policy (including compulsory tuition of half the high school subjects in the Afrikaans language) imposed on Black schools in 1975 as the high-water mark of Afrikaner hubris which led to the June 1976 Soweto uprising, then one may see the concurrent attempt to impose mind control through censorship as a similar manifestation of Afrikaner hubris. This insolent pride leads inevitably to nemesis (as already demonstrated in the case of Theo Friis). Hubris undergirds the practice of High Modernism, whose application in the sphere of librarianship and the place of the national libraries is the theme of Chapter Four.



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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, Robinson to U.A. Barnett, 2 February 1978.

<sup>37</sup> M.F. Stieg, *Public Libraries in Nazi Germany* (1992), p.106.

## Chapter 3, fourth section : Mind Control – Enculturation

Preventing South Africans accessing theories, ideas, literature and recreational material which the Government in the guise of various Departments and Boards of Censors deemed undesirable, was one aspect of mind control. Its counterpart with a similar objective was indoctrination by organs of the State, actively presenting theories, ideas, literature, forms of recreation, and an historical account considered suitable for White South Africans and the official portrayal of this country abroad. The national libraries were not immune from this aspect of mind control. This section concentrates on Government strategies for the enculturation of Whites through the creation of the Department of Cultural Affairs (1968-1970) and its successor, the Advancement of Culture Branch in the Department of National Education (1970-1994), the Director of which managed international cultural liaison and a range of cultural services, and had oversight of the statutory cultural institutions, the South African Broadcasting Corporation,<sup>1</sup> and a number of other State-sponsored entities. A comparison between the State's negligible support for public libraries for Blacks on the one hand and provision for Whites (through the Provinces and Municipalities) on the other exemplifies National Party enculturation priorities.<sup>2</sup>

The reader will recall (Prologue, fourth section, footnote 22) that the Carnegie 'Poor White' investigation undertaken in 1929-1930 recommended the promotion of reading as one long-term solution to poor-whiteism, a broadening of a restricted intellectual environment. Free public libraries, especially in the rural areas, were thus a necessity. Douglas Varley, Director of the South African Library, claimed the role of public libraries was to provide only the best literature.<sup>3</sup> The dictum of Matthew Stirling, Director of the State Library, was more liberal: it did not matter to him what people read, for they should not be forced to read 'improving' books.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The South African Broadcasting Corporation and all matters covered by the Broadcasting Act of 1976 were assigned to the Department of Posts and Telecommunications on 20 June 1979 (Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1979 [RP.18-1980], p.57), on which date T.N.H. (Punt) Janson became Minister of National Education.

<sup>2</sup> A Committee of Investigation into Library Services for Blacks (J.B. de Vaal Committee) considered the matter at length from 1963 to 1965, eventually recommending a co-ordinating committee on services for Blacks, Coloureds and Indians, but this only convened in 1971 (eighteen years after the funding of libraries for Blacks had been cut). The outcome was that responsibility for libraries for Blacks should be handed back to the respective provinces (R. Musiker, Companion to South African Libraries (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1986), pp.44-45).

<sup>3</sup> [D.H. Varley], 'Draft Statement on Literary Censorship in South Africa' (14 April 1955) prepared for the South African Library Association, expressing in paragraph 6 the view that affirmative action was needed by librarians, 'by the plentiful and powerful supply of good books on all subjects ... that the librarian can make his most effective contribution to this [undesirable publication] problem'. Copies may be found in NLCT-MC MSM 36 (1950-1970) and MSM G11 (1954-1955).

<sup>4</sup> M. Knox-Shaw and L. Percival, 'Matthew Miller Stirling' in: Give the People Light: essays in honour of Matthew Miller Stirling, Contributions to Library Science, no.13 (Pretoria: State Library, 1972), p.12.

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Trading stores across South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s which provided cheap novels, purchased wholesale for hire, did provide material which Stirling was seemingly content people should read. But during Professor Geoff Cronjé's inquiry into undesirable literature in 1955, objection to such novels was, by inference, that they were pornographic, portraying loose morals, gratuitous violence and sadism. Trading-store literature was generally in English, but what especially alarmed Cronjé was the way these cheap American paperbacks, thrillers, crime fiction and the like, were (it was alleged) being emulated by Afrikaans writers. He believed that the Afrikaners' spiritual values were being undermined.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of Cronjé's findings the 1963 Publications and Entertainment Act was eventually passed, as noted in the previous section. Instead of promoting superior literature in Afrikaans, as the literary watchdog Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie correctly predicted, the measure would inhibit writing of the highest literary merit and encourage mediocrity.<sup>6</sup> Promoting innovative writing was not Cronjé's aim; rather it was to foster a conservative environment for imagined Afrikaner values.<sup>7</sup>

Cronjé's academic colleague at the University of Pretoria, Professor P.C. Coetzee, a leading theorist in South African librarianship and member of the State Library Board, is today chiefly remembered for advocating in 1962 that the South African Library Association be a Whites-only professional organization.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that Coetzee firmly believed in the separation of the 'volke'<sup>9</sup> of South Africa on the grounds that each 'volk' possessed distinct cultural values

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<sup>5</sup> P.D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: apartheid censorship and its cultural consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.25-26.

<sup>6</sup> P. Kapp, *Draer van 'n Droom: die geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns 1909-2009* (Hermanus: Hemel en See Boeke, 2009), p.194.

<sup>7</sup> Geoff Cronjé's subsequent publications listed in the National Library's catalogue indicate his line of thought. The concept of the 'Afrikaner civil religion' is developed by T.D. Moodie, in *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: power, apartheid and the Afrikaner civil religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Science for Ideology: P.C. Coetzee and the professionalization of South African librarianship' in: *Mousaion*, 19(1), 2001, p.63, 79, 81-82; L.E. Taylor, *South African Libraries* (London: Bingley, 1967), pp.71-72; C.M. Walker, 'Library Associations in South Africa, 1930-2005' in: *Library Management*, 27(1/2), 2006, p.27. The resolution was proposed and seconded by Marguerite Peters and Theo Friis at the 1962 SALA Conference (included in the revised SALA constitution, adopted in 1963) in mistaken anticipation that this would be a Government requirement. When it became clear that Government would not demand it, attempts to rescind this resolution in 1967 (J.C. Quinton, *The Library Profession in the Western Cape: the first half century 1938-1988* (Cape Town: SAILIS Western Cape Branch, 1988), p.48) and 1977 (A.L. Dick, *op. cit.*, p.81) were rejected, both attempts opposed by Coetzee, says Dick (*op. cit.*, pp.81-82). Dick had the courage to label these proceedings as 'infamous'. This professional segregation was a principal reason for the ostracization of the South African Library Association and its successor by foreign and international library organizations (see Chapter 6, second section).

<sup>9</sup> 'Volk' (literally 'people' in an ethnic sense) is an emotive term, usually encountered in the context of the 'Afrikaner volk' whose values, customs and beliefs can be distinguished from all other groups, both other Whites, and a multiplicity of non-White ethnic and tribal groupings. (See *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.778-779.)

and traditions. The fact that Coetzee upheld the principle of apartheid obscures a line of argument, that, contrary to public librarians' cherished belief that they were in the business of educating the public (the poor man's university), what they were really engaged in was enculturation, helping readers conform to their cultural group, and that the public library was 'the most potent agency' for this task.<sup>10</sup> This is in line with the belief in the 1930s that libraries could, as mentioned, ameliorate the 'Poor White' problem: reading would help them conform to their role as Whites, and meticulous conformity was a recognized Afrikaner trait.<sup>11</sup>

As Coetzee wrote subsequently, official censorship was never as effective as the gatekeepers who control the media of communication.<sup>12</sup> His contemporary of Potchefstroom University and Chairman of the Publications Control Board, Professor Gerrit Dekker, urged librarians to give 'passive' readers positive guidance in this respect by means of thematic book exhibitions, lectures and discussions, and critiques of recent publications in library newsletters.<sup>13</sup> C.J. Fourie, head of the Natal Provincial Library Service and acolyte of Coetzee, believed that enculturation was the encompassing aim of a public library.<sup>14</sup> John Lindsay points out, in respect of writings by both C.J. Fourie and P.C. Coetzee, that their purpose was to enculturate society according to a narrow and specific definition bordering on indoctrination.<sup>15</sup> These remarks relate to public library work. But the national libraries were not immune from this tendency.

The decision of the 1962 South African Library Association Conference to declare the Association a Whites-only organization (in line with the promotion of 'volk' culture) followed the suggestion of Jan de Klerk (Minister of Education, Arts and Science) who gave the keynote address on that occasion.<sup>16</sup> On 16 July 1963, a deputation met with the Minister to report on the

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<sup>10</sup> P.C. Coetzee, 'The Public Library: has it an educational function?' [editorial] in: *South African Libraries* 34(2), October 1966, pp.29-32.

<sup>11</sup> A. Seegers, 'Towards an Understanding of the Afrikanerisation of the South African State' in: *Africa* (Africa Institute, London), 63(4) 1993, pp.484,487.

<sup>12</sup> P.C. Coetzee, 'Propaganda and Censorship' in his *Reading and Readers: lectures on readership delivered...at the Rand Afrikaans University* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1983), p.16.

<sup>13</sup> G. Dekker, 'Iets oor die Taak van die Bibliotekaris,' in: *South African Libraries*, 34(2), October 1966, pp.33-37.

<sup>14</sup> C.J. Fourie, 'The Encompassing Aim of the Public Library' in: *Libri Natales*, 1(11), May 1972, pp.3-7. Fourie was a student of Coetzee (see his eccentric publication *Laat Beginner...Vroeë Blomme* (Pietermaritzburg: the Author, 2003), which on pp.8-9 especially notes Coetzee's editorial referred to above) as well as an admirer of Theo Friis, who after his departure from the Cape Provincial Library Service, founded the Suid-Afrikaanse Kinderontwikkelingsstigting to promote anti-permissive, anti-communist and anti-foreign influences, aiming to strengthen White children against competition from Blacks' and, through appropriate reading matter, 'get rid of waywardness in the child' and 'strengthen his backbone' (*Cape Argus* 11 November 1972).

<sup>15</sup> J.M. Lindsay, 'Enculturation Revisited' in: *South African Libraries*, 41(5), April 1974, pp.271-273.

<sup>16</sup> A.L. Dick, 'Science for Ideology' (2001), p.63. See also footnote 8.

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results of the 1962 National Conference of Library Authorities, especially to press for the establishment of a ministerial advisory committee to oversee the implementation of its resolutions.<sup>17</sup> There was no immediate response from the Minister, who was at the time also the Minister of the Interior. But once free of other departmental responsibilities and responsible solely for Education, Arts and Science in 1967, he responded comprehensively.

At the height of his power, when dissent appeared to have been eliminated,<sup>18</sup> Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd was stabbed to death in Parliament on 6 September 1966. The pathologically self-assured proponent of 'righteous racial apartheid'<sup>19</sup> was eliminated from politics. Verwoerd had the support of most Afrikaans- and some English-speaking Whites as demonstrated by the Republic referendum results.<sup>20</sup> No-one else possessed the same charisma. Only weeks after Verwoerd's death, Piet Meyer, addressing the Afrikaner Broederbond leadership on the threat which Anglicization held for the future of Afrikaners, asserted that the only safeguard was 'the deliberate Afrikanerization of English-speakers so that English South Africans would eventually accept Christian National ideals, the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner history as their own'.<sup>21</sup> Meyer, as head of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (which fell within Jan de Klerk's portfolio), was ideally positioned to contribute to this enculturation.

De Klerk was a doctrinaire in politics.<sup>22</sup> His address at the 1965 annual meeting of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns was the last public defence by a Cabinet minister of separate development as the complete solution to the country's political problems.<sup>23</sup>

The 1960s were characterized by the declaration of the Republic, the development of a 'fortress mentality' among Whites, an increase in military conscripts by some 850% and period of service by 450% between 1960 and 1965, the unilateral declaration of independence by Southern Rhodesia in 1965, the Sharpeville massacre, the Rivonia Trials and other political show

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<sup>17</sup> L.E. Taylor, 'The South African Library Association' in: *Give the People Light* (1972), p.77. (See the Action Committee on Library Co-operation in Chapter 2, fourth and fifth sections, Chapter 3, first section above and Chapter 4, first section below.)

<sup>18</sup> C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), p.76, citing M. de Villiers, *White Tribe Dreaming* (1990), p.325.

<sup>19</sup> Verwoerd's friend and ideologue, Geoff Cronjé, wrote *Regverdige Rasse-apartheid* (Stellenbosch: SCV, 1947). (In the *Pharos Afrikaans-Engels ... Kernwoordeboek ...* (Kaapstad: Pharos Woerdeboeke, 2007), p.1369, 'regverdig' is the preferred Afrikaans term for 'righteous'.)

<sup>20</sup> T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (1975), p.284-285. Verwoerd envisaged that under the Republic, English and Afrikaans-speakers would become like bride and bridegroom.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p.286.

<sup>22</sup> *Dictionary of South African Biography 5* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), p.176.

<sup>23</sup> P. Kapp, *Draer van 'n Droom* (2009), p.408.

trials. One can see why Government embarked in 1967 on a desperate venture to enculturate or brainwash the White population by creating the Department of Cultural Affairs under Minister Jan de Klerk, entrusted to one of the most seasoned public servants, J.J.P. Op't Hof.<sup>24</sup> This complemented existing activities of the broadcaster, the military, and the Department of Information (created in 1961, but part of De Klerk's portfolio in 1966-1967).

As part of his planning, De Klerk, with a reputed love of committees,<sup>25</sup> recalled the request of the South African Library Association for a body to implement the resolutions of the 1962 National Conference of Library Authorities. The Minister created the NBAR (Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad or National Library Advisory Council) to advise him on library matters, with his wife's nephew Professor H.C. van Rooy<sup>26</sup> of the Potchefstroom University Library to be the Council's permanent chairman. It met for the first time in April 1968.<sup>27</sup> This ineffective Council served as a buffer between the national libraries and the Minister, in addition to the existing Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries and the Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions. The working of the NBAR is discussed in Chapter 4.

The Department of Cultural Affairs commenced operations in January 1968. Its objectives included preservation, fostering and developing the cultural heritage of the White population of the Republic. Reference is made to the Whites' spiritual and material assets: all that reflect their past and their present, their way of life, traditions, skills and pattern of living. The means to be adopted included lectures, camps, study weeks, vacation courses, study circles, reading circles and other club activities.<sup>28</sup> All the former State-aided institutions (now referred to as Declared Cultural Institutions), including the national libraries, came under the supervision of this Department.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Op't Hof headed the Department of Education, Arts and Science from 1957, rising from Under-Secretary, a position he had held since 1950. His transfer may have been an attempt to neutralize an official who had become too powerful for the Minister's comfort. Education now came under the new Department of Higher Education.

<sup>25</sup> The observation of Senator C.C. Henderson, representative of Natal (Senate. Debates 1, January-May 1969, col.722) during the second reading debate on the Cultural Institutions Bill.

<sup>26</sup> H.C. van Rooy, Potchefstroom University Librarian, academic and prominent figure in the South African Library Association, was the nephew of J.C. van Rooy, Rector of the Potchefstroom University for Christian National Education and at one time chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond (<http://www.vanrooy.org.za/b1.html#b1c3>, accessed 26 February 2013).

<sup>27</sup> For the history of the NBAR see P.J.W. Louw, 'Die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad: sy totstandkoming en werksaamhede' in: Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Biblioteek- en Inligtingskunde, 52(1), 1984, pp.1-9.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Cultural Affairs. Report, 1968 [RP.54-1969], p.1.

<sup>29</sup> The advancement of White culture immediately took practical form. Twenty-five offices were opened to foster culture among adults, collect folk songs and arrange folk tunes, present folk concerts, promote adult education meetings, offer financial assistance to (and thereby influence) the YMCA, Voortrekker Movement, Boy Scouts, Girl

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The South African Library was esteemed as the curator of South Africa's European cultural treasures, which were fortuitously on display in one of the largest exhibitions the Library had staged to mark its quinquacentenary in March 1968. The official perception of the South African Library prioritized heritage even though the overwhelming majority of its clients sought current information and made use of non-heritage material. When the De Villiers Committee of Inquiry visited the South African Library in June 1968 the great exhibition had already been dismantled. Nevertheless, its report concentrates on 'die bewaring en uitstalling van literêre skatte' ('the preservation and exhibition of literary treasures'), while the associated compilation and publishing of bibliographies was warmly supported,<sup>30</sup> reflecting Lewin Robinson's personal priorities. The report mentions its 'waardevolle' (valuable) reference service in only two sentences (as a by-product of the heritage function instead of the central function it had become) and altogether dismisses the proposed specialist research rooms as unwarranted.<sup>31</sup> The South African Library was officially legitimized by the Committee in terms of the indoctrinating aims of the Department of Cultural Affairs, which did not accurately represent the purpose for which the Library was being used in practice.

The De Villiers Committee recommended that the 1931 State-aided Institutions Act (as amended) be further amended to rename and upgrade the Committee of Heads of Declared Cultural Institutions as an advisory council.<sup>32</sup> Instead, the Department rushed through Parliament a completely new Cultural Institutions Bill (AB.43-1969)<sup>33</sup> which contained long-overdue provisions. In introducing the Bill in the Senate, Minister de Klerk declared that the constellation of Ministerial Advisory Committees proposed in the Bill obviated periodic

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Guides, and various boys' and girls' clubs. Youth camps and family camps were arranged. Choral singing and singing at festivals celebrating the Republic would be promoted. Immigrants were encouraged to attend presentations on South African culture. In 1969 courses for youth leaders were held in 44 centres (588 lectures), 50 holiday study and handicraft courses were arranged, while the Department took charge of the Youth Land Service Commission, and established eight other executive Commissions, and more besides (*ibid.*, 1969 [RP.49-1970], *passim*).

<sup>30</sup> Published bibliographies, it seemed to the author who, early in his career, was responsible for marketing them, were not in demand, and this branch of librarianship was an early casualty of computerization. The State Library, on the other hand changed to computerized methods for their South African National Bibliography in January 1968.

<sup>31</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings (voorsitter F.J. De Villiers) ([Pretoria: Departement van Kultuursake], 1968), pp.219-232.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp.288-289, Bylae E (Wetsontwerp), 3 pp.

<sup>33</sup> The draft Bill was received from the Department on 15 August 1968 requiring the comments of institutions by 25 August. The Boards and Directors of Cape Town institutions met urgently on 22 August and suggested extensive amendments. (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1968-1969).) In April 1969 the draft regulations had to be considered with equal haste (*ibid.*, undated documents).

committees of investigation.<sup>34</sup> It was a case of 'more haste, less speed' because three months later a special Government Notice was required to correct a multitude of errors.<sup>35</sup> The new regulations retained the discriminatory provisions against non-White and married female employees.

The Department of Cultural Affairs did not survive long after De Klerk became President of the Senate (the State's second-highest office) in June 1969. With economic boom conditions of the 1960s rapidly tailing off, cost-saving may have been a pressing reason for reuniting Cultural Affairs with Higher Education to form the Department of National Education from 1 November 1970. The Declared Cultural Institutions now came under the supervision of the Advancement of Culture Directorate with the same priorities as before.<sup>36</sup> In 1978 this Branch of the Department was giving special attention to 'physical and spiritual preparedness in order to meet the demands which an attack on the nation could impose'.<sup>37</sup>

The South African Library played its part in projecting a White-orientated cultural heritage by means of publications, microform reproductions, and exhibitions, none of which would disturb the cultural status quo. While publishing began during Varley's directorship, the tempo increased under Robinson, both directly by the Library and by the Friends of the Library. In 1970 the Library bought an offset litho printing machine,<sup>38</sup> operated by one of the Coloured binders' assistants, to cope with the demand for reprints, bibliographies, exhibition guides, Christmas cards, general publicity and the usual forms of office. However, the Library's flagship publication, the *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, continued to be printed commercially until 1987. For its part, the State Library also ran an extensive publishing program.

The *Quarterly Bulletin* began in 1946 to publicize the collections of the Library and to act as the national bibliography.<sup>39</sup> Its scope and editing aimed at the highest standards, which may explain why it reflects the interests of a relatively small circle of seasoned contributors (all White), and why less-experienced and emerging writers did not make the grade.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Senate. Debates 1, January-May 1969, col.718-722.

<sup>35</sup> Cultural Institutions Act, no.29 of 1969: Regulations - Correction Notice, Government Notice R3469 in: Government Gazette 2538, 9 October 1969, p.4.

<sup>36</sup> Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1 November 1970 - 31 December 1971 [RP.21-1972], pp.8, 6.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 1978 [RP.38-1979], p.21.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 17 February 1970.

<sup>39</sup> The latter content was transferred to the national bibliography *Africana Nova* (1958-1969), discussed elsewhere.

<sup>40</sup> The journal still exists at the time of writing (2014) with academic criteria which are more exclusionary than ever.

### CHAPTER THREE

Bibliographies and reprints published between 1952 and 1998 amounted to some 140 titles. Of all these items, none were written by Blacks, only three items (essentially pamphlets, published at a later period in the Library's history) were written by Coloureds, and perhaps seven or eight more were about the non-Whites of South Africa. The remainder dealt with White interests.

Microfilming followed a similar pattern. The Library began microfilming newspapers as an urgent preservation measure in 1947.<sup>41</sup> By 1988 some 158<sup>42</sup> titles of newspapers and journals were available for sale. The relatively few newspapers published in indigenous languages were mostly filmed after 1979.

The purpose of exhibitions was, nominally, to promote awareness of the collections and resources of the South African Library, but that said, those portions of the collections which were featured were largely White-orientated. The Van Riebeeck Festival exhibition of 1952, held in the South African Library, was a triumphalist celebration of European and settler culture to which the Library contributed many of its treasures.<sup>43</sup> Displays of books and accompanying reading-lists were a feature of the lunch-hour gramophone recitals but discontinued in 1962. Certain bibliographic treasures, such as the first and second folio editions of Shakespeare's works, were permanently on display.<sup>44</sup> Lecture and exhibition halls were on the list of facilities Varley wanted in a new building.<sup>45</sup>

The following examples provide some idea of the nature of these exhibitions. New Dutch books were exhibited in 1959, and in 1960 an exhibition celebrated fifty years of Union. A travelling Shakespeare exhibition was hosted that year. An exhibition of books from the Dessinian Collection marked its bicentenary in 1961, with 'Flora Africana' and German Africana the following year. The feature of 1964 was an exhibition commemorating 400 years of Shakespeare's birth, an international display of 'Beautiful Books' and a celebration of the centenary of the Western Province Cricket Club. Exhibitions of Jewish books, Canadian books, and the 'Book as a Work of Art', preceding the central event of 1968, the quinquacentenary exhibition, to accommodate which, the Octagon was cleared of readers.

With the appointment of a full-time exhibitions officer in May 1970 in a post

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<sup>41</sup> South African Library. Report, 1947, p.6.

<sup>42</sup> Microfilms of South African Newspapers and Journals for Sale, 1988 (Cape Town: South African Library, 1988), 20pp.

<sup>43</sup> The exhibition itself was designed and mounted by an independent committee.

<sup>44</sup> These suffering irreversible damage from years of exposure to bright light.

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 21(g) D.H. Varley, 'Memorandum for Policy Meeting of Trustees, 22/6/49' [mimeographed], p.3.

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recommended by the De Villiers Committee, many exhibitions large and small followed. In May 1971, ten years of the Republic was celebrated. After the interruption by building work (1971-1972), major exhibitions were resumed in the Octagon, such as 'One Thousand Years of Printing', 'Edgar Wallace', '150 years of railways', 'The Cape Times, 1876-1976', the United States Bicentennial, and William Caxton. There were usually six or seven exhibitions a year.<sup>46</sup> It was only in 1978 that the first exhibition of special non-White interest was mounted: 'Islam at the Cape' and in 1980 an exhibition of photographs on the destruction of District Six.

The autonomy exercised by the South African Library was definitely influenced by its dependence upon the State. The content of published works and exhibitions demonstrate that in one hundred and fifty years and more, the Library had not moved far from its founding aim of European enculturation, 'one of the first blessings of life, "Home education"'.<sup>47</sup> A great deal of resources were channelled to exhibitions since they were considered a basic function of the South African Library together with preservation. This priority is illustrated by the dedication of the large octagonal hall to exhibitions at the very time potential readers were being turned away from the Library on account of limited seating (see the following section).

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<sup>46</sup> Each edition of the South African Library's Report had a paragraph listing the major exhibitions, which did not include topical book displays marking the death of a famous author or politician or similar events.

<sup>47</sup> Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 21 March 1818, p.1. 'Home education' in the English is elucidated by the Dutch translation 'opvoeding in zijn Vaderland'. See P.R. Coates, 'Was the South African Library an Athenaeum?' in: Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa, 66(4), October-December 2012, pp.11-23.

## CHAPTER THREE



20 March 1968.

Acting State President the Hon. Tom Naudé opening an exhibition commemorating the South African Library's 150th anniversary.

On the left, Mrs Naudé, on the right Mr Justice Marius Diemont, Chairman of the Board, and Dr Lewin Robinson, Director, who wrote the speech.

## Chapter 3, fifth section : Access Control

Facilities available to the public at the South African Library in 1962 included the General Reading Room in the Octagon, where current newspapers, periodicals and 'quick reference' books were available to the casual reader. No record was kept of users of this Reading Room nor of their population groups.<sup>1</sup> The new Reference Room had been opened in 1954 in the old East Hall (Alfred Room, across the foyer from the lending service) in anticipation of the conversion of the South African Library to a purely national reference and research library, which took effect from January 1955. The Africana Reading Room in the new Lloyd Africana Wing, with its own entrance from Queen Victoria Street, opened in 1959 (picture on p.48). Qualified staff were present to assist readers in each of these reading rooms.

From the time the Reference Department opened, adult users were required to sign a visitors' book<sup>2</sup> stating generally the topic they were working on, but were otherwise not subject to any restriction. A similar visitors' book was maintained in the Africana Department.<sup>3</sup> Anecdotally,<sup>4</sup> the heaviest use was made of books on South African labour and trade unions, South African history and politics, sociology, education, and English literature. The prolific author H.V. Morton, who used the Library extensively after emigrating from England, was surprised and delighted at finding there most of the books he needed and expected to find only in London.<sup>5</sup> Current and back files of newspapers were in constant demand, which researchers came from all parts of South Africa and from abroad to consult. South African law reports were in daily use, while the large collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century British law reports were consulted occasionally. Statutes and government publications were in great demand, but the League of

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<sup>1</sup> Early in 1963 Government wanted to establish the extent of provision which needed to be made separately for each population group. User statistics were kept for a period of about a week (undated, prior to April 1963) with the following results: the Reference Room (24 seats): 416 White users took a seat to work, and a further 637 only made enquiries at the counter, while 156 non-Whites took a seat and 103 enquired at the counter; the General Reading Room (130 seats): 1,869 Whites sat at the tables while 920 consulted staff at the counter; 578 non-Whites sat at the tables and 210 consulted the staff; the Africana Reading Room (30 seats) had an undisclosed number of users of whom only two non-Whites had used the room since it opened four years earlier (NLCT-MC MSL A3/3, file 'Separate Facilities').

<sup>2</sup> Reference visitors' books have been preserved for 1954-1973, part of 1976, 1983-1985 (NLCT-MC MSL C6/1/1-17); subsequent records were kept on computer and were subsequently lost.

<sup>3</sup> Africana and Grey visitors books have been preserved for 1959-1985 (NLCT-MC MSL C6/2/1-2).

<sup>4</sup> The author, as part of his duties more than thirty years ago, analysed the subjects of books used in the Reference Room over a period of several months. The work was crowded out by more pressing duties, and the results now appear to be lost.

<sup>5</sup> H.V. Morton, 'A Writer in the South African Library' in: *The South African Library...1818-1968*, ed. C. Pama (Cape Town: Balkema, 1968), pp.189-192.

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Nations and United Nations deposit collections were infrequently consulted.

In terms of the resolutions of the National Conference of Library Authorities of 1962,<sup>6</sup> designated libraries would be responsible for acquiring very specialized or expensive works. The two national libraries were assigned groups of subjects in which they needed to specialize; in the case of the South African Library, it was the humanities, especially sociology, education, literature and history. Politics was not mentioned, although both national libraries developed large collections of political works, mostly relating to South Africa, and many of them banned.<sup>7</sup>

The General Reading Room in the Octagon could seat 130 persons, and, judging from complaints (especially relating to school children - including this author in the late 1950s - crowding out the room for private study), all seats could be occupied at times. In 1963 the users of this room were racially segregated by dividing the room down the centre with newspaper and journal racks. The current day's edition of Cape Town's daily papers were displayed on reading stands which were the objective of a headlong rush of readers when the library's doors opened at 9 am. In 1968 the Library planned to celebrate its 150th anniversary with a very large exhibition. The Octagon was deemed to be the ideal venue, so readers were transferred to the West Wing hall (vacated by the City Library Service in July 1962), and here it operated until the service closed permanently ahead of reconstruction work in 1971 (when casual users were redirected to branches of the City Library Service).<sup>8</sup>

The Reference Department served both as the main research reading room of the national service as well as the central reference library for Cape Town,<sup>9</sup> towards which the City of Cape Town provided an annual subsidy for the purchase of expensive books. Major local and international reference works were available for browsing on the open shelves, including encyclopaedias, published periodical and newspaper indexes, bibliographies of literature, science and history, and European genealogical resources, while it also stocked standard works on all subjects. But the Booyesen Committee's division of functions in 1962 and the ongoing City's grant presupposed that the Reference Department would be available free to everyone. The South African Library's legal deposit privileges implied a similar obligation.

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<sup>6</sup> Programme for Future Library Development in the Republic of South Africa, as Adopted by the National Conference of Library Administrators (Potchefstroom: South African Library Association, 1963), pp.7-10, 26, and *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Despite the time and energy which was expended on banned publications, they were relatively infrequently used, possibly because of the intimidatory regulations governing access to them.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 19 (1970-1976), notice dated 27 November 1970.

<sup>9</sup> Cape Town City Library Service. Report, 1954, p.10; Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtinge, Voorsitter C.M. Booyesen (Booyesen Committee report) I, (Pretoria, Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962), pp.47-48. This thwarted Theo Friis' bid to incorporate it into the Cape Provincial Library Service (see Chapter 2, fourth to sixth sections, *passim*).

## CONTROL, 1962-1976

Between 1962 and 1972, circumstances changed rapidly, especially in the arena of higher education for non-Whites with the creation, among others, of the University of the Western Cape,<sup>10</sup> but the South African Library was seemingly out of touch with these developments and their likely consequences. No provision was made to accommodate this new class of reader, in the belief that they were the responsibility of others, not the national library. So long as a General Reading Room facility had been available, the additional readers could be absorbed. Once this was closed permanently in 1971 and the Reference Department moved to temporary quarters providing for only seventy readers (divided between places for White and non-White users with some seats assignable according to demand), crowding by Coloured students caused a crisis, and the racial reservation of tables was a demonstrable absurdity. This ought to have given the Library pause to consider whether its acclaimed general Reference Department was indeed a national library responsibility, and did not more properly belong to the City Library Service, which was by now well-established. This could have been the opportunity to focus exclusively on the needs of researchers, as national libraries did elsewhere in the developed world.

When the Reference Department moved back to its renovated quarters at the end of 1972, racial segregation was quietly abandoned.<sup>11</sup> During that decade the ratio of Coloured to White readers changed dramatically.<sup>12</sup> The Library was swamped with desperate students, faced with woefully inadequate library facilities at the University of the Western Cape and unable to afford prescribed textbooks. Annual usage rose from 13,116 users (49,229 items retrieved from the stacks for use) in 1971, to 14,898 users (75,650 items) in 1975<sup>13</sup> and increasing after that.

After renovations, ignoring the critical shortage of seating in the Reference Department, the Library resumed using the Octagon as an exhibition hall. The first of a series of exhibitions being predictably 'Treasures of the South African Library' followed by 'Contemporary Botanical Books' and 'Fine Printing'.<sup>14</sup>

The rationale for permanently devoting a large hall to exhibitions when seating in the

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<sup>10</sup> 'The Extension of University Education Act, no.45 of 1959, formed part of the apartheid system of racial segregation in South Africa. This act made it a criminal offence for a non-White student to register at a formerly open university without the written permission of the Minister of Internal Affairs. New universities were established for the various non-White groups. In the Western Cape, a school in Bellville was established for Coloureds, ... The act was repealed by the Tertiary Education Act, 1988.' ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extension\\_of\\_University\\_Education\\_Act,\\_1959](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extension_of_University_Education_Act,_1959), accessed 10 March 2014.)

<sup>11</sup> Personal recollections of the author.

<sup>12</sup> The University (College) of the Western Cape had opened in 1960 with 161 students and grew progressively, so that by 1979 this had reached 3791 (South Africa 1982: official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa (Johannesburg: Van Rensburg, [1982?]), p.682).

<sup>13</sup> South African Library. Report, 1971-1972, p.5; 1973-1974, p.4; 1975-1976, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 1973-1974, pp.11-12.

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Reference Room was at a premium was in line with the two principal functions allocated to the South African Library and funded by the Department of National Education, namely publicizing the Library's 'bibliographic treasures' and preservation. Reference facilities which the Department funded (jointly with the City) envisaged a limited number of advanced-level authors and academics doing specialized research based on the Library's comprehensive collections. The Library, administered under the (White) Department of National Education, was neither intended nor funded to compensate for the inadequate facilities provided for students at segregated, under-funded Coloured institutions of higher education. Students who legitimately needed to obtain their textbooks and prescribed reading material somewhere could not be persuaded that a public research institution such as the South African Library, which had the books, could exclude them. The Library was reluctant to take decisive action. School children had never been permitted to use this room, and since the general Reading Room had closed in 1971 were altogether barred from using the Library except by special arrangement or to view exhibitions.

The Reference Department staff were committed to assisting users in every way. The librarians were adept at advising users with their historical or genealogical researches; indeed the Department's staff were famed in South Africa and abroad for their familiarity with the library's resources and wide general knowledge, an awesome ability to find Statutes, regulations and other complicated things, and their conscientious answering of correspondence.<sup>15</sup> Yet some of the most competent staff also had the reputation for being acerbic and intimidating, if not 'odd'. Many well-known authors and researchers who might have used the Africana Reading Room after it opened in 1959 preferred to use the Reference Room for several reasons, not least that it was open for longer hours,<sup>16</sup> and the use of the Africana Room steadily declined.

This flagship Africana Reading Room had opened in the new Lloyd Africana Wing in April 1959<sup>17</sup> fulfilling Douglas Varley's dream. Stringent rules were prescribed regarding admission: application had to be made on a special form, countersigned by a sponsor known to the Library, and submitted to the director personally for his approval; a numbered ticket was issued which the privileged recipient had to sign. The endorsed application form was filed for monitoring at the Africana reception desk.<sup>18</sup> Most approved applicants were academics from South African universities or overseas-based researchers. The general tone of correspondence on admission policy was distinctly haughty, imitating the British Museum Library model. Outstan-

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<sup>15</sup> Hundreds of written queries were answered each year. Copies filed at NLCT-MC MSL D1/1-102.

<sup>16</sup> Opening hours were reduced in 1969. Reading Rooms opened at 9 am Mondays to Saturdays, the General Reading Room closed daily at 6 pm, the Reference Room closed at 7.30 pm on weekdays and 1 pm. on Saturdays.

<sup>17</sup> South African Library. Report, 1958-1959, pp.1, 3, 4-8.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 21(g), 'Issue of readers tickets for Africana Department, etc.' 8 April 1959.

## CONTROL, 1962-1976

ding work undoubtedly resulted from researches done in this room. Usage increased slowly at first,<sup>19</sup> never exceeding an average of seven users a day, after which there was a steady decline.<sup>20</sup>

Direct access to the shelves of the Africana Reading Room benefited few if any. Firstly, the use of the Dewey Decimal Classification combined with Universal Decimal Classification facet analysis<sup>21</sup> was so confusing and the depth of classification so deep, that books containing desired information could simply not be found by a layperson, and only with difficulty (via the catalogue) by experienced staff. Secondly, the most valuable old Africana publications including the early travellers' journals, the South African Bound Pamphlets, the Almanacs and early Cape printing, were kept in a secure store, yet these were what many of the room's potential users wished to consult. Thirdly, owing to poor planning, the shelves in the Africana Room were near full at the time of opening, and as new books poured in, one Dewey class after the other had to be relocated to closed stacks, eventually leaving only biography and history on the ground floor, and social sciences in the gallery. Fourthly, classifying the Africana books was abandoned in 1979 as futile, so that new accessions on all subjects, shelved in the order in which they arrived, needed to be requested via the catalogue, as in the Reference Room. It closed to readers at the end of 1981.<sup>22</sup>

The Library persevered with very large exhibitions in line with its mandate, deciding that the solution to the overcrowding problem lay in restricting Library admissions to only third year and post-graduate students, unless the prospective reader made a declaration that he or she was not a student at all.<sup>23</sup> Such was the new scheme of issuing readers tickets endorsed by the Board on 5 February 1976.<sup>24</sup> There was fierce opposition as large numbers who did not qualify (White and Coloured alike) were turned away. The security staff applying this ruling (usually retired policemen, railway workers or military veterans) had to bear the brunt of the resultant anger and were seriously unsuitable for this delicate task.<sup>25</sup> Yet the Director informed the Board at the May

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<sup>19</sup> Statistics on the use of the Africana Room are provided in the annual reports: 1959: 631, 1960: 1078, 1961: 1354, (1962: ?), 1963: 1904, 1964: 1808, 1965: 1770, 1966: 1764, 1967: 1770, 1968: 1708, 1969: 1635, 1970: 1316, 1971: 1420, 1972: 1208, 1973: 946, 1974: 947, 1975: 875, 1976: 807, 1977: 672, 1978: 748, 1979: 685, 1980: 598, 1981: 552.

<sup>20</sup> Average daily usage: 1959-60: about 5, 1963-68: 7, 1969: 6, 1970-72: 5, 1973-74: 4, 1975-79: 3, 1980: 2.

<sup>21</sup> A system adopted by Ian Murray in 1938 following the example of the Africana Library, Johannesburg.

<sup>22</sup> South African Library. Report, 1981-82, p.9.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 19 (1975-1980), Staff memo 'Admission to General Reading Room', 28 January 1976.

<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 February 1976; on the Board at the time were Dr J.G. Meiring, first Principal of the University of the Western Cape, Professor W.E.G. Louw of Stellenbosch University, and Professor J. du P. Scholtz and Sir Richard Luyt of the University of Cape Town.

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 19 (1975-1980), Director to 'Argus Action', 6 July 1977, responding to a complaint. Security staff (commissionaires) often harboured racial prejudices.

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meeting that the new system was working well.<sup>26</sup> Students of the University of the Western Cape were understandably indignant. Letters of protest may also be found on file from UNISA and Hewat Training College students. Students purporting falsely to be in their third year were sent written reprimands in April and May 1976, informing them they had been blacklisted and would never be admitted in future.<sup>27</sup> Two Black undergraduate students from the University of Fort Hare who came to Cape Town with their professor's letter of introduction to work on a project were sent to a City Library branch.<sup>28</sup> (Annexure 17, 'Memories of Saturdays' illustrates the predicament.)

Exclusion of the public from the South African Library on this scale was unprecedented, and seems to have been implemented by the Board without due consideration. It was a public relations disaster, coming close on the heels of the destruction of District Six (where the Library was promised a new building on the Harold Cressy High School site<sup>29</sup>) and anticipated by a month or two the June 1976 Soweto uprising and associated student revolt in the Western Cape, which was ruthlessly suppressed by the State. The situation steadily worsened into the 1980s when Coloureds and Blacks (who were chiefly affected) were challenging bureaucratic restrictions, and the Library's decision bore an unintended racial aspect. The South African Library had adhered to its official mandate but deviated far from its liberal ethos.

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<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 6 May 1976.

<sup>27</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 19 (1975-1980), letters dated April and May 1976.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, Prof. H.J. Rousseau, University of Fort Hare to Director, 7 April 1976; reply 12 April 1976.

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/2 (1975), Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries. Minutes, 22-23 April 1975; MSM G4, J. van der Spuy, Minister of National Education (23/3) to Director, 12 September 1975; Robinson to Minister, 24 June 1975. The site was objected to not on principle but because it was too far from the centre of the City. At this stage it was not known that the Cape Town Archives would be built across the street. (See Chapter 4, first section.)

## Chapter 4. HIGH MODERNISM, 1962-1979

The Afrikaners' dream of regaining their Republic had been fulfilled in 1961. The time had now arrived to create the apartheid Utopia in South Africa. Leaders of the National Party Government whose formative years had been spent studying in pre-war Germany, the Netherlands and the United States of America were now in the prime of life. Similarly, those Afrikaans-speaking members of the library profession who, in their most impressionable years, had studied or travelled in the same countries at about the same time, usually with the financial support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, now found themselves in the highest positions in the South African Library Association. It is understandable that Afrikaners who had struggled against things British should favour alternative models within their leaders' experience to exert power and create the national symbols of this Utopia. The trend was foreshadowed by Gerard Moerdijk's design for the Voortrekker Monument with its eerie German Third Reich interior. After Sharpeville, it seemed that the State had eliminated dissent. Its politicians were possessed by a hubristic sense of power and capacity to implement changes. Comprehensive State-directed change in the years following the First World War is known as High Modernism. The Wikipedia\* defines this as follows:

1. A strong confidence in the potential for scientific and technological progress, including a reliance on the expertise of scientists, engineers, bureaucrats and other intellectuals;
2. Attempts to master nature to meet human needs (this also includes attempts to control and change human nature);
3. An emphasis on rendering complex environments or concepts...legible, most often through spatial ordering (for example, city planning on a grid);
4. Disregard for historical, geographical and social context in development.

Local examples devised by expert planners include the disastrous Cape Town Foreshore Plan and the destruction of District Six (renamed Zonnebloem) neither of which took account of human factors. In *Seeing like a State*,<sup>†</sup> James Scott cites Nazism and South African social engineering in consecutive sentences as defining examples of 'Authoritarian High Modernism'. The overconfident pride and arrogance of hubris which informs it is likened by the Wikipedia article to sexual violence.

The South African Library, as an agency of the State (with only token autonomy) and a significant role-player in the library profession, was caught up in this process, as is illustrated in the following four Episodes. Nemesis inevitably intervened.

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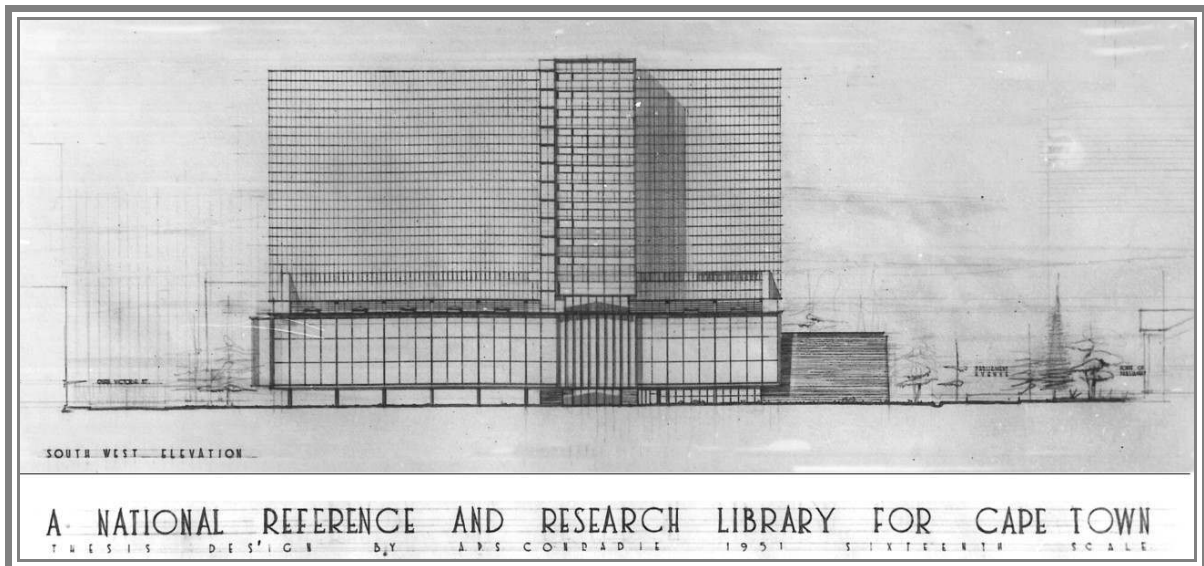
\* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High\\_modernism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_modernism) (accessed 20 May 2013).

† see text *infra* p.155 and note 3.

## CHAPTER FOUR



The South African Library, opened 1860  
(Viewed from the Public Gardens)



A National Reference and Research Library for Cape Town  
Student thesis design by A.P.S. Conradie, 1951  
(Viewed from the Public Gardens)

## Chapter 4, first section : Hubris

The Lloyd Africana Wing which was opened in 1959 did not completely solve the South African Library's accommodation problems. The space provided for the Africana book collection, the legal deposit periodicals accessions and recent bound newspapers rapidly filled up. Only the top floor (originally reserved for proposed art and map research rooms) remained partially used due to excessive heat under the flat roof, making it inappropriate as a place to store books.<sup>1</sup> Most of the bound newspaper collection was stored in dire conditions in the basements of the old West Wing (see photograph on page 98) and the Octagon, and current unbound newspapers were stored in somewhat better circumstances in the basement of the East Wing; at least these areas were cool. But as Varley had repeatedly stressed, the old wing, internally of wooden construction, was a 'tinder box' (see Chapter 2, third section), and its design was hardly suited to a library.

Purchased and legal deposit material poured in at an increasing tempo.<sup>2</sup> But in addition to these basic acquisitions, other libraries at this time were in the process of rationalizing their collections and discarded quantities of heritage material which the South African Library, in terms of its preservation mandate, took in for safekeeping and gradual redistribution, such as parliamentary papers from Parliament's Clerk of the Papers, Colonial and Provincial official papers from the Cape Town Archives, collections of bound newspaper from the Archives and both Houses of Parliament, from the City of Cape Town, the United Party headquarters, the Cape Argus library (later also the Cape Times library), and the Christian Science Church. A large part of the Africana Collection of the late Kathleen Jeffreys was accepted, while the working stock of the deceased antiquarian dealer, Miss D.A. Kitch, was hurriedly removed from her already-roofless house while it was being demolished. Free redistribution by means of disposal lists could in no way keep up with intake. Storage space was at a premium to say the least. While future plans were being considered, hired premises were obtained, chiefly for the newspaper collection. Even the perimeter of the Octagon was eventually screened off to store the South African school books, the official Africana reserve stock, and the United Nations deposit collection.

The 1962 report of the Booyesen Committee noted that the existing premises of the South African Library would be full within five years, recommending the retention of the old 1860

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<sup>1</sup> The architects (Lightfoot, Twentyman Jones & Kent) must take the blame for the poor storage environment in the Africana wing. Initial planning anticipated two or more floors above, which, if built, might have ameliorated the heat problem, but no correction was made when these floors were omitted. Air-chilling was not provided. The basement was, however, pressurized to keep out dust. The same consortium (then titled Kent, Miszewski, Hockley & Partners) was later appointed by the Department of Public Works to modernize the old building, and again there were shortcomings, due, the author believes, to that arrogant absence of consultation characteristic of High Modernism.

<sup>2</sup> Figures for representative years 1962, 1967 and 1972: books 7,684, 11,483 and 12,909; periodicals 20,961, 19,125 and 27,206; newspapers ca. 20,000, 36,000 and 28,000 (source South African Library. Reports).

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building but renovated to provide reading rooms and fire-proof storage, and the provision of additional cheaper accommodation out of the central city for newspapers and less-used material.<sup>3</sup> Shortage of funds<sup>4</sup> prevented the Public Works Department undertaking the reconstruction work at once. In 1968 the De Villiers Committee report also noted the Library's severe lack of space, recommending that the matter receive urgent attention, either to expand the Library on its existing site or to obtain a new building out of the city centre.<sup>5</sup> The report reached the Minister in November, but before that, in August, the Public Works Department notified the Library that it had authority to reconstruct the old building (plans had already been drawn, seemingly without consulting the Library), but that a completely new building elsewhere was preferable.<sup>6</sup>

The reconstruction of the old wing took place between early 1971 and late 1972. The wooden floors (except the 'Alfred Room' gallery) were replaced with concrete. Attractive Victorian features like cast iron fire-places in the offices,<sup>7</sup> a cast iron spiral stair, curved wooden staircases with intricately-turned balusters, generously-proportioned panel doors with china door-knobs and finger-plates, and indeed all which was, at that time, considered 'old fashioned' was ruthlessly stripped out. Twelve electrically-driven mobile shelving units were installed in the basements to store thousands of volumes of periodicals. In the West Wing a three-deck steel book-storage tower was constructed capable of holding 30,000 volumes (see illustration p.148). Tall Victorian mahogany shelving in the Reference Room, bearing the coats-of-arms of the donors, was replaced by modern low-level pine shelving which permitted better supervision. Although providing a vast amount of urgently-needed additional book storage, the interior now had a bare, barrack-room feel about it, the furthest the High Modernist planners dared to go.

Meanwhile, five promising sites for a new building were offered to the Library by the

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<sup>3</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings. Voorsitter C.M. Booyesen, hereafter Booyesen Committee. (Pretoria, Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962) I, p.48.

<sup>4</sup> The unavailability of capital funding for the Library's buildings was putatively due to the cost of razing District Six, which was at this time (11 February 1966) re-zoned for White ownership and occupation under Group Areas legislation. State funds were drawn upon heavily to provide alternative housing on the Cape Flats for the displaced Coloured and Indian residents, and to compensate the 4,373 White owners, 1,094 Coloured owners and 655 Indian owners for their existing properties, albeit at prices below the free market price (D.M. Hart, 'Master Plans: the South African Government's razing of Sophiatown, Cato Manor and District Six' (PhD thesis, Syracuse University, USA, 1990), p.226-227).

<sup>5</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings. Voorsitter F.J. de Villiers (De Villiers Committee), ([Pretoria: Ministerie van Onderwys], 1968), p.232.

<sup>6</sup> South African Library. Report, 1966-1968, pp.1-2.

<sup>7</sup> The suite of rooms at the east and west extremities of the old wing were designed as the apartments respectively of the Museum Curator and the Librarian. While the Museum Curator did reside on the premises until about 1897, the arrival of the Grey Collection in 1864 obliged the Librarian to live elsewhere.

## HIGH MODERNISM, 1962-1979

Public Works Department in May 1969.<sup>8</sup> In Bellville, near Durban Road and the railway station, a large block of land called 'Welgemeend' which may have been the Bellville Market site indicated on street plans of the 1940s was available (117,746 ft<sup>2</sup> or 10,960 m<sup>2</sup>). A very promising site was the Rosebank Vaccine Institute (118,085 ft<sup>2</sup> or 10,970 m<sup>2</sup> of State land, with further land owned by the South African Railways and the City available on either side) directly alongside the Rosebank railway station and close to the University of Cape Town. A larger alternative site was a portion of 'Woolsack' in Rosebank, probably the former show grounds (172,800 ft<sup>2</sup> or 16,054 m<sup>2</sup>) virtually on the campus of the University (since 1974 occupied by several student residences). All these sites offered excellent long-term development possibilities. But the Director (or perhaps the Board) opposed moving out of central Cape Town.

In the city bowl there were originally two available sites. Owing to the imminent transfer of the State Archives Repository to Stellenbosch<sup>9</sup> (to the site of a Coloured school in that town expropriated under the Group Areas legislation), its Queen Victoria Street site (43,916 ft<sup>2</sup> or 4,080 m<sup>2</sup>) was available subject to the demolition of the existing building and making provision for a satellite reading room for the Archives within the envisaged South African Library building to be erected in its place. The other site offered was in District Six where land would be available once the area had been completely cleared and Professor Strauss Brink's plan for the modern White suburb of Zonnebloem had crystalized (about 4½ morgen or 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> would be reserved for the national library).

The various sites were inspected by a sub-committee of the Board which favoured as its first preference the Queen Victoria Street (Archives) site, on the understanding that the impractical existing building could be demolished and that its old site lower down the street would be retained (with the old building internally remodelled as promised), failing that, the second option was the Rosebank Vaccine Institute site.<sup>10</sup> After a lot of vacillation on the part of the Library, both options fell through: the Archives, after intense public pressure, remained for the present in their unsuitable building in the city, while the Public Works officials became uneasy about a library in close proximity to the Liesbeek and the danger of flooding, so the Rosebank site was many years later assigned to the Fishing Industry Research Institute.

That seemingly left only the District Six option. New Board member Mrs E.D. Stott was

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<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G4(a)(ii) (1967-1968), Secretary for Public Works (CT 8079/2) to Director, 23 May 1969.

<sup>9</sup> Archives Amendment Act, no.63 of 1969, Sec. 2(1) amended Sec. 5 of the Archives Act, no.6 of 1962 by omitting the requirement that Archive Repositories be located in provincial capitals, specifically to open the way for the Cape Archives to be moved to Stellenbosch (Department of Cultural Affairs. Report, 1969 [RP.49-1970], p.3).

<sup>10</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 19 June, 11 August 1969; NLCT-MC MSM G4(a)(ii), Director to Secretary for Public Works, Pretoria, 1 July 1969.

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particularly vocal about the Library securing a site in the former slum,<sup>11</sup> having devoted much of her energies as a City Councillor to have the residents moved from decaying, squalid and overcrowded nineteenth century tenements to healthier housing elsewhere. It appears that the whole Board supported this move. This was exactly the thinking of the High Modernist town planners who failed to grasp that there were human issues - poverty and under-employment indeed, but also a sense of community and a support network - involved. It was exactly this sense of community which the Government's Department of Community Development destroyed by razing District Six. As street after street was cleared and their former residents scattered across bleak, distant townships of look-alike utility dwellings, so the South African Library began to experience a shortage of suitable Coloured staff able to accept the low wages the State prescribed.

Lewin Robinson's wavering between a new building on a new site or a compromise which would permit at least the public services to remain in the central city demonstrated his lack of strategic sense. There is no suggestion that at this time he or the Board had any principled opposition to a site in Zonnebloem. That would change in 1976. He did not seem to grasp that a new, custom-built national library was being offered to lend prestige to Government's plans for the White-zoned Zonnebloem, an ornament among widely-spaced high-rise blocks of flats along Prof. Brink's projected grand pedestrian boulevard (similar to the central axis of that totally-planned High Modernist city of Brasilia<sup>12</sup>). The diversity of options initially offered by Government, and its forbearance, demonstrated a sympathetic disposition towards the Library by Minister de Klerk and senior officials in the Department of Cultural Affairs with the De Villiers Committee's report before them. But with Jan de Klerk's promotion to President of the Senate in 1969, the appointment of a brusque new Minister J.P. van der Spuy, and the sudden retirement of a raft of senior bureaucrats in 1970 (J.J.P. Op't Hof, S.J. Kritzinger, and Dr Anna Boëseken among them<sup>13</sup>), correspondence from the Department took on a new uncompromising tone. It would be Zonnebloem or nothing. What is more, the new policy on Black secon-

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<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 20 November 1969. Robinson wrote to Mrs Stott to give her the glad tidings that the Committee for the Redevelopment of Distressed Areas had agreed in principle to assign a site to the Library. It would be necessary for the Board to meet with Prof. Strauss Brink to discuss planning details (NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1970-1975), Director to Mrs Stott, 9 January 1970). Strauss Brink had been encouraged to accept the position as head of the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town by Prof. J.P. Duminy, then serving on the Board of the South African Library, and evidently there was good rapport between them.

<sup>12</sup> J.C. Scott, *Seeing like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), Chapter 4 'The High-Modernist City', particularly pp.117-127. Brink was at this time also designing the cylindrical university residences Leo Marquard Hall and Tugwell Hall at Rosebank, indifferent to the visual impact they would have on the suburb, or their disorientating effect on students residing in them (<http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/Strauss%20Brink%20Architect%20and%20Town%20Planner%201920-1992%20June%202012.doc.txt?sequence=3>, accessed 17 March 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Department of National Education. Annual Report of the Former Department of Cultural Affairs, 1 January to 31 October 1970 [RP.44-1971], pp.1, 2.

## HIGH MODERNISM, 1962-1979

dary education would rapidly absorb all available funds.<sup>14</sup>

Robinson's dithering was aggravated by the news that the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town planned to sell the disused Grammar School buildings abutting the Library's property.<sup>15</sup> The site had been granted in colonial times with a servitude that it be used only for educational purposes and if unused, reverted to the State. It seemed a heaven-sent opportunity for the Library to expand on its existing site. The Public Works Department warned the Board that it was unsuitable,<sup>16</sup> and repeated the offer of a new site in Zonnebloem. The Board, now determined to keep the Library where it was and still disregarding professional advice, continued to agitate to incorporate the adjoining school property,<sup>17</sup> rejecting the Zonnebloem option.<sup>18</sup> The Library objected to the rezoning of the land,<sup>19</sup> also protesting to the Department of Public Works when it became known that the University of South Africa planned to buy the property.<sup>20</sup> Gradually it accepted that the State would not acquire the Grammar School site,<sup>21</sup> while the opportunity to get a completely new building (provided it was in Zonnebloem) had been missed.

On interviewing Minister van der Spuy to obtain another site, the Board was offered the Harold Cressy High School (formerly the Hewat Training College) in Roeland Street.<sup>22</sup> The Library considered this (assuming that the school would soon be relocated, unaware that its parents' committee was waging a desperate battle to keep the school where it was<sup>23</sup>), but eventu-

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<sup>14</sup> Early in 1972, the Department of National Education, facing a financial crisis, imposed stringent financial control measures on all the cultural institutions, suspending the subsidy formula only recently been introduced (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 February 1972). This has been discussed in Chapter 3, second section, pp.102-107.

<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 February 1971.

<sup>16</sup> The arguments against the Grammar School site should have been persuasive. Zoning restrictions designed to preserve the Cathedral precinct meant only a portion of the land could be built on and there was a height limit on any structure erected on that relatively small portion. The Public Works architectural staff calculated that the additional space the Library specified for a new building could not be provided within these zoning limits. The high ground water-table, meant that a basement was out of the question. (NLCT-MC MSM G4(a)(ii).) It is unlikely that the historic Grammar School building designed by Herbert Baker in 1904 (D.E. Greig, Herbert Baker in South Africa (Cape Town: Purnell, 1970), p.248) could be demolished. In 1986 it was declared a National Monument.

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 1 June 1972.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 24 October 1972.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 10 May 1973.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 9 May 1974.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 14 November 1974.

<sup>23</sup> Western Cape Archives Repository, KUS 4/145 (folder 7/16/3/E5, 3 files, 1970-1989). The school was one of only two English medium schools for Coloureds and, due to its high standards, drew its pupils from a wide area.

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ally rejected the site because of its distance 'from the cultural centre of Cape Town.'<sup>24</sup>

Upon P.G.J. Koornhof's appointment as Minister, the Board reopened the matter of a supplementary store for the Library and proposed a number of central city sites which were available for sale,<sup>25</sup> but learned with dismay that the Department's bulky correspondence file on the topic had been lost, and negotiations would need to begin anew.<sup>26</sup> The Government had serious and costly problems on its hands following the 16 June 1976 Soweto and related uprisings at just this moment.<sup>27</sup>

Such discretion the Library had in the matter of a new building on a new site was squandered by indecisiveness. That prospect of funding held out by Government for a completely new building on a site which suited its political programme was forever lost. Discussion of permanent additional accommodation, let alone a completely new building, was now out of the question and the Library would have to be content with hired premises in various parts of the city.

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<sup>24</sup> South African Library. Report, 1975-1976, p.1. During the April-July 1980 school boycotts, the Harold Cressy High School site was again offered. The new State Archives Repository would be built on the gaol site across the street. Board chairman Diemont warned of political repercussions if any site in the former District Six area were accepted (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes: extraordinary meeting, 10 July 1980). In 1982 the site was offered yet again. An internal Library memorandum, stressing the Rosebank Vaccine Institute site as the best option, found the Harold Cressy High School site's proximity to the proposed Archives building attractive, downplaying the danger of civil commotion should the school be displaced (NLCT-MC MSM G4, Coates to Westra, 9 August 1982).

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 February 1976.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 6 May 1976.

<sup>27</sup> Little cracks appearing in the Verwoerdian Bantu policies, like the 1972 education reforms, gave the Black majority of the population hope of more general changes, but the provision of Black secondary education had more to do with a chronic shortage of skilled workers than a move away from Grand Apartheid itself. Chaskalson asserts that Punt Janson's reforms in the Department of Bantu Administration and Education (based on a foundation laid by Piet Koornhof) were indeed the beginning of real political reform in South Africa (M. Chaskalson, 'Apartheid with a Human Face: Punt Janson and the origins of reform in township administration, 1972-1976' (University of the Witwatersrand, African Studies Institute. African Studies Seminar Paper 225, February 1988), pp.2, 4, 18). Deputy Minister Janson was ousted and replaced by reactionary Dr Andries Treurnicht. Verwoerd's 50-50 language policy in Black high schools lay dormant during the period in which no funding was provided for Black secondary schools before 1972. Reactivating the policy set off the Soweto uprising in June 1976 ('Down with Afrikaans' in: South African History Online, [www.sahistory.org.za/articles/down-aftikaans#content-top](http://www.sahistory.org.za/articles/down-aftikaans#content-top), accessed 14 March 2013). Treurnicht had been a member of the South African Library Board between 1963 and 1967, though rarely attending its meetings.

## Chapter 4, second section : Everything in its Place

While the South African Library Director was fretting about future accommodation options (preceding section), two vexing and related issues were playing themselves out, affecting the very existence of both national libraries.<sup>1</sup> One was the mania for central planning and a distinct institutional hierarchy through which control over officially-funded libraries might be exercised, driven by authoritarian thinking and committees of academics and experts typical of High Modernism - the topic of the present section. The other was in part a reaction to this, an appeal for legislation to provide certainty about the national libraries' aims and functions, to ensure adequate funding, and to provide these libraries with long-term stability - this is the subject of the next section.

The South African Library Association's 1959 Action Committee on Library Co-operation prepared an agenda for structuring and regulating the whole field of librarianship, superseding the resolutions of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee of the Libraries of the Union of South Africa.<sup>2</sup> The Association could not implement this itself (it did not have the necessary statutory authority) and needed the backing of Government. The Association held a special conference in June 1962 which endorsed a library development programme drafted under the direction of the Potchefstroom University,<sup>3</sup> and referred it to a National Conference of Library Authorities held in Pretoria the following November. The November conference largely accepted the draft, but toned down certain of the more prescriptive aspects affecting the autonomy of individual libraries.<sup>4</sup> The Conference endorsed the existing 'two national library' situation, asking that Government ratify the national status of these two libraries, the Afrikaans text adding 'in wetgewing' ('in legislation') which is absent from the English text, and specifying seventeen functions which the national libraries should perform. Of these, two were the exclusive domain of the South African Library, four were shared, while eleven were existing functions (or extensions of

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<sup>1</sup> In this and subsequent sections, reference to 'national libraries' implies the South African Library and the State Library, but not, unless specifically stated, the South African Library for the Blind (SALB), the latter, declared a State-aided institution on 1 March 1968, having the character of a national public library service for a defined category of users. The three libraries were included in the National Libraries Act of 1985 (promulgated 1987), but not in the National Library of South Africa Act, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2, fourth section, pp.71-72 and Chapter 3, first section, pp.96-97.

<sup>3</sup> Programme for Future Development: introduction and proposals [to be] submitted to the Conference [of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5th and 6th November 1962] by the South African Library Association (Pretoria: South African Library Association, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> Programme for Future Library Development in the Republic of South Africa, as adopted by the National Conference of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5th and 6th November, 1962 (Potchefstroom: South African Library Association, 1963).

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existing functions) of the State Library.<sup>5</sup> It requested the Minister of Education, Arts and Science (Jan de Klerk, who sponsored the conference and gave the opening address) to establish an Advisory Library Council to advise the Minister on implementing the conference's resolutions and promoting consultation,<sup>6</sup> as described in the Chapter 3, first section.

A delegation from the Association delivered the resolutions to the Minister in 1963. De Klerk appointed an interim committee which endorsed the need for such an advisory library council, to be supported by a secretariat, with subcommittees on the national book stock and a national bibliographic council, and recommended further that funds be provided for the purchase of books not available in any library. Due to cost implications the Minister did not immediately give effect to the recommendations.<sup>7</sup>

In 1967<sup>8</sup> the Minister created the National Library Advisory Council (the NBAR,<sup>9</sup> that is, the Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad), which met for the first time on 23 April 1968.<sup>10</sup> Minister de Klerk appointed his wife's nephew Professor H.C. van Rooy<sup>11</sup> of the Potchefstroom University Library to be the Council's permanent chairman, and the secretariat was hosted by the Potchefstroom University. The aim of the NBAR was to advise the Minister of Education, Arts and Science 'on any library matter that the Minister referred to the Council and on matters which the Council deemed desirable or necessary'.<sup>12</sup>

Van Rooy announced at the inaugural meeting that the implementation of the 1962 Conference's 'Programme for Future Library Development' (which originated as far back as

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<sup>5</sup> Programme for Future Library Development (1963), pp.26-27.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, pp.40-41.

<sup>7</sup> P.J.W. Louw, 'Die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad: sy totstandkoming en werksaamhede' in: Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Biblioteek- en Inligtingskunde 52(1), 1984, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> In 1967 the new Department of Cultural Affairs was being planned to promote White culture of a particular kind (see Chapter 3, fourth section). In September that year the South African Library Association conference in Bloemfontein rejected a motion from the Western Cape to rescind the exclusion of non-Whites from SALA membership (NLCT-MC MSM 36 (1950-1970), South African Library Association Western Cape branch. Minutes, 4 October 1967). No non-White person ever served on the Advisory Committee.

<sup>9</sup> The initialism NBAR is used in this study to avoid confusion, because the English initialism NLAC was also used for the National Libraries Advisory Committee.

<sup>10</sup> P.J.W. Louw, 'Die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad' (1984), p.2.

<sup>11</sup> Professor H.C. van Rooy, Potchefstroom University Librarian, academic and leading figure of the South African Library Association was a kinsman of Professor J.C. van Rooy, Rector of the Potchefstroom University for Christian National Education and chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond prior to the Second World War (Die Familie van Rooy in Suid-Afrika, <http://www.vanrooy.org.za/b1.html#b1c3>, accessed 26 February 2013).

<sup>12</sup> P.J.W. Louw, 'Die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad' (1984), p.1 [abstract in English].

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1959) would be the Council's top priority.<sup>13</sup> This increasingly outdated policy, characterized by that infatuation with centralization and enforced co-operation characteristic of librarianship in the 1960s) would act as a straitjacket on the counsels of the NBAR up to its dissolution in 1979.<sup>14</sup> South African Library Board members R.F.M. Immelman and J. du P. Scholtz, and Director Lewin Robinson did serve on the NBAR at various times. Its field of interest was more aligned to the functions of the State Library, whose Board members D.G. Kingwill and G. van N. Viljoen, and later Director H.J. Aschenborn also served on the general council, contributing eventually to its only notable achievements, the introduction of MARC (machine-readable cataloguing) and SABINET (national electronic bibliographical network), on which library services now depend. Another measure of general utility to the national libraries arising from the NBAR was the Legal Deposit of Publications Act, no 17 of 1982 on which Council member R.B. Zaaiman devoted many years of work in the 1970s.

Investigations by the NBAR soon began to affect the activities of the two national libraries (their necessity being questioned by certain NBAR members) and put a brake on all new development both at the State Library and the South African Library. In April 1970 the NBAR formed three steering committees, one of which was tasked with investigating national library services (the functions and the place in the library system of the State Library and South African Library to receive particular attention).<sup>15</sup>

The State Library compiled a bulky promotional memorandum on its functions and services for the information of the NBAR,<sup>16</sup> submitted to its fifth meeting (11 May 1971). During the preceding twelve months the steering committee had got no further than to draw up a preliminary list of functions<sup>17</sup> which needed to be performed on a national basis, and up to that point no attempt had been made to assign these functions to particular institutions, although H.M. Robinson, on the NBAR general committee, considered it problematic for institutions

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> The NBAR was effectively terminated in 1979, but allowed a further three years to complete some of its investigations.

<sup>15</sup> Department of National Education. Annual Report of the Former Department of Cultural Affairs, 1 January - 31 October 1970 [RP.44-1971], pp.17-18. The members of this steering committee were Professors H.C. van Rooy (chairman), S.I. Malan and R.B. Zaaiman. They were tasked to investigate national library functions, planning of national library policy, the union catalogue, making available and gathering of information sources, and providing information about libraries, library services and information services.

<sup>16</sup> P.C. Coetzee, 'Memorandum oor die Toekoms van die Staatsbiblioteek: die rol van die Staatsbiblioteek in die land se biblioteekstruktuur', 17 November 1970, 10pp. Copy in NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/1 (1971-1972).

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/0 (1972-1975). 'Library and Information Services which should be Rendered on a National Level' (Department (O5/5) to Lewin Robinson, 1 April 1975, Annex A).

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servicing their primary constituents also to carry out national responsibilities.<sup>18</sup>

Although the functions of the national libraries, indeed their very necessity, were being investigated, these libraries had no presence on the subcommittee, which, reluctant to involve interested parties in their debate,<sup>19</sup> declined to make any recommendation on the matter of representation.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Minister van der Spuy (who succeeded Jan de Klerk in August 1969) decided early in 1972 to appoint Lewin Robinson (in his personal capacity) to the general committee of the NBAR<sup>21</sup> to which Hans Aschenborn reacted, 'One can only say: At last! It took us a long time to be represented on the National Libraries Advisory Council. ... I hope this will be the turning point in [their] attitude to the National Libraries.'<sup>22</sup>

The steering committee on national library functions did not meet in 1973. Urgent matters addressed by the two national libraries to the Department for decision were referred to the NBAR which met only once a year, and repeatedly demonstrated its incapacity to reach conclusions on practical issues, placing on hold matters such as the establishment of a restoration laboratory at the South African Library<sup>23</sup> (in line with its preservation function endorsed by the 1962 conference) and a request from the National Libraries Co-ordinating Committee<sup>24</sup> for its relation to the Department and the Minister to be clearly defined.

A deputation from the national libraries met Minister van der Spuy on 31 January 1974 as the absence of decisions was stifling the libraries' operations. Van der Spuy recommended that

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<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/1 (1971-1972). National Library Advisory Council. Minutes, 11 May 1971, pp.9-10.

<sup>19</sup> One may speculate about the reason why the NBAR subcommittee found the existence of the national libraries such an intractable problem. Other libraries in South Africa were subordinate services of a higher authority (a university, research institute, or local or provincial authority). The national libraries' autonomy disturbed the 'ideal' structure. Supporting this view were proposals to place them under respective Provincial Library Services, or to include the State Library as a directorate within the Department of Education, Arts and Science while the South African Library could merge with the Library of Parliament. The South African Library's successful Reference Department, which was seen to be carrying out a function which was properly the responsibility of the City of Cape Town, was a further distortion of their beautifully balanced structure. This attitude is made apparent in the recommendations of the 1981 Meijer committee of investigation which wound-up the NBAR (see Chapter 4, fourth section).

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/1 (1971-1972). National Library Advisory Council. Minutes, 11 May 1971, p.16.

<sup>21</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/0 (1972-1975). Secretary for National Education (O5/3/2) to Lewin Robinson, 1 March 1972.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, Aschenborn (K1/12) to Lewin Robinson, 9 March 1972.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1970-1975), Lewin Robinson, 'Memorandum on the need for a book restoration centre at the South African Library, Cape Town', 7 March 1973; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 May 1973; NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1970-1975), Secretary for National Education (O5/0) to Robinson, 29 June 1973.

<sup>24</sup> Committee established in 1962 at the Department's request on the recommendation of the Booysen Committee (Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtinge, Voorsitter C.M. Booysen (Pretoria: Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962), sec.3.7, pp.41-42).

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application be made to the Department to create a post of book restorer,<sup>25</sup> which Robinson did,<sup>26</sup> but the underlying problem of obfuscation remained. It was only after the NBAR meeting eleven months later, that the Department answered the letter about the restoration laboratory in an informal handwritten, undated memorandum stating that a (low-level) Technical Assistant post had been approved as of 1 March 1975, but that the Department would not increase its subsidy to cover the extra salary cost.<sup>27</sup>

After discussing the lack of decision-making with some members of the NBAR, Minister van der Spuy appointed a 'Dagbestuur' (executive committee, which had no national library representative) to deal with matters requiring priority, and added Aschenborn (in his personal capacity) to the general committee of the NBAR.<sup>28</sup> The 'Dagbestuur' of the NBAR consisted of the same three academics who had been unable to conclude their investigations of national library functions, with the addition of D.G. Kingwill.<sup>29</sup> The 'Dagbestuur' would meet three times a year to bring to finality all matters referred to the NBAR. The Minister conceded that matters pertaining to existing functions of the national libraries should be referred directly to the Secretary for National Education, only new proposals needing to go before the NBAR.<sup>30</sup>

During 1975, the terms of reference for the steering committee on national library services were widened and amalgamated with a committee on the development of bibliographic services.<sup>31</sup> The years passed, and the NBAR was no nearer than ever to completing its investigations. It had additionally been tasked with considering matters of perceived urgency such as

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<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/2 (1974). State Library (A1/3/4/3) to Minister, 8 January 1974; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 7 February 1974.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1974-1975). Robinson to Department, 1 March 1974; Robinson to Department, 5 July 1974, enclosing correspondence with Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, London on the cost of training a conservator, a memorandum by Miss Ruth Geuricke (contract conservator) on the duties of a book restorer, and a revised version of the 1973 memorandum.

<sup>27</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1974). [Memorandum: Department to Director, undated]. It was out of the question to place a paper conservator with tertiary qualifications in a lower-graded post than the bookbinders.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/2/1/2 (1974). Minister (Z3/3) to Board Chairman, 29 April 1974.

<sup>29</sup> D.G. Kingwill was Director of Information and Research Services at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and a member of the State Library Board, 1964-1977.

<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/3 (1974). NBAR. Minutes, 5 November 1974, with Minister's approvals. The procedure followed by the NBAR in advising the Minister was to minute the resolutions of their annual meeting concisely and submit them to the Minister who, when he had an opportunity to meet with a NBAR delegation, would pronounce upon them: whether he agreed (in which case the matter was handed over to the Department to put into effect), or disagreed, or referred back for further consideration, or merely 'kennis geneem' (took note). This process contributed to the long delays.

<sup>31</sup> Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1975 [RP.117-1975], p.58.

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public lending rights, legal deposit legislation, machine-readable cataloguing (MARC), and an automated bibliographic network. In ten years it had delivered nothing tangible beyond lists of expensive journals which the Department was asked to subsidize, two highly theoretical papers (one a methodology for assessing book stock in the mathematical sciences, the other a proposed framework for a national programme in librarianship education), and a more practical study on the acceptability of MARC produced for them by Dr M.L. van As.<sup>32</sup>

The 'Dagbestuur',<sup>33</sup> acting like a cabal, kept certain matters from other NBAR members, perhaps to avoid involving the national libraries' Directors in the Council, in their discussions.

On 29 February 1979, W.A. Cruywagen (who took over as Minister the previous November), on the advice of Dr A.P. Burger (head of the Prime Minister's Scientific Advisory Council), declared that the NBAR should wind-up its current programme of investigations as it would be superseded by a new National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information<sup>34</sup> (NACLI or NABI, that is, Nasionale Adviesraad vir Biblioteke en Inligting), because developments in information provision had overtaken the old Council and required a broader outlook. This spurred-on the Steering Committee on National Libraries, which presented their confidential report on national library services direct to the Minister, pre-empting a general meeting of the NBAR set for 28 May 1979.<sup>35</sup> But Minister Cruywagen was shuffled out of the Cabinet shortly afterwards and replaced on 20 June 1979 by T.N.H. (Punt) Janson who had to field the consequences of the report which was essentially about hosting of the proposed co-operative electronic bibliographic network which the State Library had expected to operate. The report (portion of which had come into Aschenborn's possession<sup>36</sup>) was thought have to recommended the administration of this bibliographic network by the 'Dagbestuur' acting as yet another control board.<sup>37</sup> A singularly acerbic exchange of correspondence ensued.<sup>38</sup> This matter was finally

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<sup>32</sup> M.L. van As, 'The Acceptability of MARC to South African Libraries and the Development of a Framework for Computerised Library Services in South Africa' (P.J.W. Louw, 'Die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad' (1984), pp.8-9). Dr van As was a Chief Librarian of the State Library, seconded in 1977 for a year to undertake this investigation (State Library. Annual Report, 1977-78, p.8).

<sup>33</sup> The steering committee was made up of three Professors of Librarianship (Malan, Van Rooy and Zaaiman), none of whom had practical experience of national library work.

<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1979). P.C. Coetzee (State Library, A1/2) to Minister Janson, 28 August 1979.

<sup>35</sup> Both national libraries' Directors were now members of the NBAR but unaware of the report or its contents.

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1979), Aschenborn (A1/3/4/3) to Grobler, secretary to NBAR, 9 August 1979.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, Extract from South African Library for the Blind. 'Director's Report', 1 August-20 November 1979, item 5.

<sup>38</sup> Aschenborn maintained that without the endorsement of the NBAR, the report was the personal opinion of the three professors involved (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1979). Co-ordinating Committee, letters June-August 1979). Van Rooy was absent from the special NBAR 'Dagbestuur' meeting 23 March 1979 specially called to discuss the

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thrashed out at the 16th meeting of the NBAR in 1980,<sup>39</sup> by which time the national libraries had resorted to protecting their interests by getting statutory endorsement of their aims and functions.

This section has been deliberately described at some length to explain the extreme frustration experienced by the State Library and the South African Library in their dealings with the Department which stifled all requests by referring them to the NBAR, which might or might not consider them at its annual meeting. The interminable investigation by the NBAR of the provision of national library services blocked all innovation and development at both national libraries for ten years. State Library Board Chairman P.C. Coetzee wrote to Minister Janson about the tensions which had been building up:

Dit het egter daartoe gelei dat belangrike aangeleenthede betreffende die Nasionale Biblioteke wat na die NBAR verwys is, nie onmiddelik behandel is nie. Die vertraging en die onsekerheid waartoe dit aanleiding gegee het, het die biblioteke in die verrigting van hulle funksies belemmer en hulle ontwikkeling gestrem.<sup>40</sup>

The years of delay proved fatal to the South African Library's hopes of establishing a national book restoration laboratory. At issue was whether South Africa actually needed a national library.

Aschenborn was worried that the autonomy of the national libraries, the State Library in particular, was in jeopardy, especially since it was rumoured that the NBAR steering committee favoured implementing general legislation to control all the nation's library services in line with the spirit of the 1959 Action Committee of the South African Library Association.<sup>41</sup> Aschenborn was convinced, and increasingly persuaded Robinson, that the best way to secure the long-term interests of the national libraries was to obtain specific legislation designating them as statutory organizations with approved functions. This issue is taken up in the Chapter 4, third section and Chapter 5, first section. The manner in which the NBAR investigations were finally concluded and subsequently rejected is the subject of the fourth section (pp.157-166).

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State Library's request for more funding for the South African National Bibliography (SANB). Present by invitation was J. Willemsse of the MARC Study Group (University of South Africa (UNISA), SALA Archives. NBAR Exco, Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting, 23 March, 1979). The MARC-project was leading to the creation of SABINET, and until it was determined whether this should be independent or attached to an existing organization, resolution of the broader national library issues had to be deferred. Aschenborn was determined to incorporate this new service as an extension of State Library's SANB. SABINET, announced in September 1982, would in fact be an independent, not-for-profit company.

<sup>39</sup> UNISA. SALA Archives, NBAR. Minutes, 26 May 1980, pp.9-10, Annex D, 2pp; NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1980). Co-ordinating Committee. Agenda, 29 July 1980, item 3.8; Minutes, 29 July 1980, item 4.8, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> 'It has led to important matters affecting the National Libraries which were referred to the NBAR not being dealt with immediately. The delay and uncertainty which this caused has disrupted the carrying out of their functions and stifled development.' (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1979). P.C. Coetzee (A1/2) to Minister Janson, 28 August 1979.)

<sup>41</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/2 (1972-1973), Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 14 September 1972, item 6. At this time the national libraries functioned under the 1969 Cultural Institutions Act which was under review.

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One might ask: how would a proper place be found for the South African Library in the grand scheme? Apart from its historical primacy, its role officially and in the public mind was that of preserver and exhibitor of national bibliographical treasures, a fusty warehouse of useless baubles. Preservation was a valuable function of any national library, yet its practical value was as a reference and research library, with knowledgeable and dedicated professional staff acting as intermediaries between researchers and the mass of published and other material it had collected over many years. Preservation of stock can only be legitimized by its availability for use. The South African Library had used its autonomy in the early days as a State-aided institution to set up the general Reference Department without this function being specifically endorsed by the State (although condoned by the Booyesen committee in 1962), and was, despite being heavily used, inadequately funded. Its existence and its excellence was a stumbling block in the way of rationalization. It only received official recognition in 1987 (see the following section). The National English Language Museum (a then relatively new State-aided institution) was reprimanded in 1982 for establishing an additional Department without the State's approval.<sup>42</sup> This once again illustrates that a State-aided institution's autonomy was not a blank cheque.



The enquiry desks and catalogues in the West Wing after reconstruction in 1972.

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<sup>42</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/4 (1982). Departement van Nasionale Opvoeding: [B.] le Grange, [Werkstudie by Sekere Museums], (file reference S2/2/1/3) [undated, about December 1982].

## Chapter 4, third section : Laws and Legitimacy

The ethos of the South African Library and the State Library respectively differed in so many ways that it is hard to realize that they were both national libraries performing similar tasks.

The library in the south had no strategic plan before 1990, muddling along like a nineteenth century English gentleman's library,<sup>1</sup> with little direction from the top, professional staff being trusted to use their initiative and adapt to changing circumstances. Formal management structures only developed in the 1980s, the first job descriptions were drawn up in the 1990s, while personnel performance was never scientifically evaluated. The Library was noted for providing an exceptional quality of service to the public by its small staff establishment which never totalled one hundred and only briefly exceeded eighty. Job satisfaction at the South African Library was high and the professional staff turnover rate was low. Up to the mid-1980s, staff esprit de corps was declared to be higher than at other comparable libraries.<sup>2</sup>

The library in the north was just the opposite. From the time Hans Aschenborn joined the staff of the State Library at the end of 1958, it was run on rigid bureaucratic lines, deference to authority (second nature to its mainly Afrikaans-speaking White staff) was demanded and initiative was frowned upon. Attention was paid to ongoing strategic planning and specifying aims and functions. Its technocratic functions centred around rule-based tasks like cataloguing and the South African National Bibliography, all amenable to computerization. Development of bibliographic standards was an important part of its role. Consultants were engaged several times to advise on work-flow and management structures. The State Library's large staff establishment, by 1980, was almost double that of its counterpart and turnover rates were high.

The attitude of the two national libraries towards empowering legislation was just as diverse. The South African Library and the State Library were legitimized as South Africa's two national libraries by the resolution of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee,<sup>3</sup> performing certain broadly-described State-funded national functions, in addition to serving at that time as the public libraries of their respective cities.

The legal foundation for the South African Library had been its colonial Act of 1893<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karel Schoeman observed this when he joined the staff in 1982 (*Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek: autobiografiese aantekeninge* (Kaapstad: Human en Rousseau, 2002), p.524.

<sup>2</sup> Numerous letters and extracts in the staff journal *Sapling* (1961-1973, Mrs Joan Lessing (Letter to Varley, 8 January 1948), Miss Deanne Lewald (Letter to Robinson, 22 May 1963) both filed NLCT-MC MSM 21(d); interviews with Margaret Cartwright, 27 July 2012, and Piet Westra, 10 October 2012, all by way of example.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa (Cape Town: Cape Times [for Government Printer], 1937), pp.18-20.

<sup>4</sup> Cape of Good Hope. South African Public Library Act, no.33 of 1893.

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which was repealed by the State-aided Institutions Amendment Act no.48 of 1954, bringing the South African Library under the general provisions of the 1931 State-aided Institutions Act; at the same time the uniform code of regulations for all the Institutions was gazetted.<sup>5</sup>

The State Library never had specific legislation but relied since 1933 on two legislative instruments, firstly the original State-aided Institutions Act of 1931<sup>6</sup> (together with the new 1954 regulations) which defined the administrative and financial relationship between these institutions and the Government, and secondly, its role as the Central Library of South Africa prescribed by the Carnegie Corporation and as the public library of Pretoria, both of which were regulated by Government Notice 67 of 13 January 1933.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after Hans Aschenborn was appointed the de facto head of the State Library, the financial mainstay of the Library (the generous grant from the City of Pretoria for operating the public library service<sup>8</sup>) was knocked out on the recommendation of the Booyesen Committee<sup>9</sup> that the State Library had to give up its public library service as the South African Library had done a decade earlier.<sup>10</sup> One can appreciate, therefore, this Library's anxiety to strengthen its national functions and thereby secure better funding from the State. In the preceding section it was noted that the 1962 Conference of Library Authorities listed numerous national functions which were carried out by the State Library, and recommending that the status of the national libraries be confirmed in legislation (according to the Afrikaans text of the resolution).<sup>11</sup> On 21 February 1964, Minister de Klerk officially specified the aims and functions of the State Library which encompassed all those adopted by the 1962 Conference, adding a reference service for

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<sup>5</sup> State-aided Institutions Amendment Act no.48 of 1954; 'Regulations - State-aided Institutions', Government Notice 2201, in: Government Gazette Extraordinary 5363, 29 October 1954, pp.2-30.

<sup>6</sup> State-aided Institutions Act, no.23 of 1931; 'State Library, Pretoria', Government Notice 66, in: Government Gazette 2085, 20 January 1933, p.79.

<sup>7</sup> 'Regulations of the State Library, Pretoria', Government Notice 67, in: Government Gazette 2085, 20 January 1933, p.79-80.

<sup>8</sup> Revenue in the 1963-64 financial year: City of Pretoria plus extra book fees: about R125,000; the State: R97,500; the Carnegie South African Trust: R3000, other sources: R6500 (State Library. Annual Report, 1963-64, p.7).

<sup>9</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings, (Booyesen Committee report), (Pretoria: Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962) I, pp.50-56, sec.3.28; State Library. Annual Report, 1963-64, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> The Pretoria City Library Service took over the State Library's public library functions on 1 July 1964 (State Library. Annual Report, 1963-64, p.5).

<sup>11</sup> Programme for Future Library Development in the Republic of South Africa, as adopted by the National Conference of Library Authorities, Pretoria, 5th and 6th November, 1962 (Potchefstroom: South African Library Association, 1963), pp.26-27.

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Whites (virtually excising the South African Library's two most viable functions).<sup>12</sup> The Department also tasked their O&M experts in November 1963 to assess the State Library's financial requirement in the light of these assigned functions.<sup>13</sup> But Aschenborn was not content with a mere administrative ruling by a Minister which could be reversed; he wanted these functions established by Act of Parliament as suggested in 1962 in the belief that this would secure the State Library's position vis à vis the South African Library and guarantee sufficient State funding.<sup>14</sup> No doubt Robinson recalled Varley's departing instructions to him: 'it would seem advantageous to scotch this particular snake early in any negotiations between our two national libraries.'<sup>15</sup> In matters of strategy Robinson would never be a match for Aschenborn:<sup>16</sup> to begin with, his hide was not thick enough.

The South African Library preferred an adaptable approach rather than have aims and functions set in stone by legislation. Nevertheless, Aschenborn forged ahead by drafting national library legislation based on the Canadian model, circulating a supporting memorandum for the Cape Town Board to consider before the next meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee. His draft Bill made provision for the South African Library to take over the Africana collections of the Library of Parliament, for the enlarged South African Library (functioning semi-autonomously) to be part of a National Library of South Africa which (he falsely asserted) had been recommended by the Booyesen Committee, and claimed further that the Committee had recommended that the two libraries be united by an over-arching committee (which was a misrepresentation). He correctly foresaw that administering a two-site library would be a problem. He urged, as the Meijer Inquiry would do two decades later, that the proposed National Library of South Africa should operate under a Council, widely representative of library-related interests, which would also control library matters nationally. At present, he continued, the State Library and South African Library carried out all national functions without the necessary legal status and competencies (in other words, they lacked legitimacy). The informal

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<sup>12</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1963-64, pp.5-6.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Adopting specific national library legislation was innovative, since internationally this was as yet quite rare. At this time the South African Library Association was trying to become a statutory professional council with complete control over library practitioners (L.E. Taylor, 'The South African Library Association' in: *Give the People Light: essays in honour of Matthew Miller Stirling, Contributions to Library Science 13* (Pretoria: State Library, 1972), p.77). As Annette Seegers writes of Afrikanerdom, there was an 'extraordinary love or rules' ('Towards an Understanding of the Afrikanerisation of the South African State' in: *Africa* [London], 63(4), 1993, p.491).

<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2. Notes by the Chief Librarian (D.H. Varley) on consultations with State Library, Pretoria, on respective functions and allocations of responsibilities, 10 August 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Ironically, Lewin Robinson had just published his book on nineteenth century official censorship entitled *None daring to Make us Afraid* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1962).

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relationship between the two libraries was established by Ministerial decree and was not determined by statute. The time was ripe for suitable legislation. Finally, it was impractical to run the national libraries under an Act which governed dissimilar institutions such as museums and art galleries. By the time Aschenborn wrote to Robinson in June 1964, all this had already been considered and approved by the State Library's Board.<sup>17</sup> The proposed merger with the State Library came as a great shock to the South African Library.

In September 1964 the Co-ordinating Committee met in Cape Town.<sup>18</sup> Discussion on the Bill was led by Chairman of the State Library Board, Professor Gerrit Viljoen, saying that such legislation had become essential for them since they gave up the public library, but he tried to minimize the damage done by Aschenborn's impetuosity. The meeting accepted that an Act (albeit much simpler than that proposed) was necessary and that there could be joint control of the two libraries (provided the head of the controlling council were not appointed by the State President as Aschenborn proposed, and that the two functional divisions should retain their respective identities). Incorporating the Library of Parliament could follow later.<sup>19</sup> The Co-ordinating Committee continued to look at the issues of amalgamation and legislation during the following two meetings.<sup>20</sup> The initiative was definitely in the State Library's hands, and Robinson confined himself to adding little editorial touches to Aschenborn's documents.

The minutes of the January 1966 Co-ordinating Committee meeting, taken (accurately) by Tyrrell-Glynn, were objected to by Professor Viljoen because they contained the statement that 'the State Library was much concerned about the possibility of its being taken over by the Department as a full government institution and felt that the latter did not properly understand the functions of a national library'.<sup>21</sup>

Something was definitely going on out of sight within the Department of Education, Arts and Science. Aschenborn and Robinson sent a joint letter to S.J. Kritzinger, Chief Government

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<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1964-1967). Aschenborn to Robinson, 11 June 1964, together with memorandum 'Nasionale Biblioteekwetgewing'.

<sup>18</sup> The Pretoria delegation included P.E. Westra who had recently joined the State Library staff, and would later become Director of the South African Library.

<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1964-1967). Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries. Minutes, 21 September 1964.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson missed the meeting in June 1965 as he had taken long leave to undertake a Carnegie study tour of the United States of America. Deputy Director W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn represented the South African Library.

<sup>21</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1. Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries. Minutes, 6 January 1966 (Cape Town version). All agreed to destroy the original minutes and substitute an expurgated version (Aschenborn (A4(a)) to Robinson, 31 January 1966; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 3 February 1966). A copy of the original minute is nevertheless on file.

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Librarian condemning both his purchase of two valuable collections of Africana<sup>22</sup> for the Departmental library and a proposal for a Committee of Inquiry into the feasibility of the State Library becoming a Government institution, while merging the South African Library with the Library of Parliament.<sup>23</sup> It should be remembered that the Minister's advisory council, the NBAR (see Chapter 2, second section), would be appointed in 1967, which over the following decade demonstrated their disapproval of autonomous libraries.

Although the 1968 De Villiers Committee drafted a Bill to further amend the State-aided Institutions Act of 1931,<sup>24</sup> the Department preferred a new Cultural Institutions Bill, circulated for comment in August 1968,<sup>25</sup> and pushed it through Parliament in great haste in 1969. A significant new provision gave the Minister the power to abolish a State-aided institution and re-assign its assets,<sup>26</sup> which could be read as a threat to both the South African Library and State Library. Aschenborn's renewed campaign for a national library Act was accepted in principle by the Co-ordinating Committee in November 1968,<sup>27</sup> but opposed by some South African Library Board members.<sup>28</sup> At this point the matter dropped.

The Department of Cultural Affairs was united with the Department of Higher Education to form the Department of National Education late in 1970. The changed circumstances presented the opportunity to revise the hastily passed Cultural Institutions Act and regulations of 1969. The result was the Cultural Institutions Amendment Act no.93 of 1974, with new regulations which came into effect in 1978.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile Aschenborn's fears of ongoing threats to the autonomy of the national

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<sup>22</sup> F.J. Wagener and E.G. Jansen collections. Wagener was a lexicographer and collector of Afrikaans Africana, whose books are now in the University of South Africa library; the Jansen Collection was, in 1986, in the library of the Department of National Education (R. Musiker, *Companion to South African Libraries* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1986), p.19, 21).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1966). Aschenborn (A5(a)(ii)) and Robinson to Kritzingler, 3 May 1966.

<sup>24</sup> Its purpose was to upgrade the informal Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions to the level of a Ministerial Advisory Council with a paid secretariat.

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1968-1969). Meeting of Trustees and Heads of South African Institutions in Cape Town (22 August 1968). Proceedings.

<sup>26</sup> Cultural Institutions Act, no.29 of 1969, sec.14.

<sup>27</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1968). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 23 November 1968; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 December 1968.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1968-1969). Robinson to Aschenborn, 6 December 1968.

<sup>29</sup> Cultural Institutions Amendment Act, no.93 of 1974, promulgated Government Notice 79 in: *Government Gazette* 4637, 27 March 1975, p.1; Regulations, promulgated Government Notice R1671 in: *Government Gazette* 6133, 18 August 1978, pp.51-64.

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libraries were revived when the NBAR committee were considering national library functions in 1972 and 1973 (despite assurances it would not disturb the existing work of the respective libraries<sup>30</sup> appeared to be doing just that).

At the Co-ordinating Committee meeting held in Cape Town in June 1976, the three directors (the South African Library for the Blind now represented on the Committee) agreed that each would draft legislation with the intention of declaring the libraries one statutory body.<sup>31</sup> Aschenborn (but seemingly not the other two Directors) prepared a motivating memorandum for legislation which would create a body known as the South African National Library with three component parts: the South African Library, the State Library and the South African Library for the Blind, with a representative Co-ordinating Council headed by a full-time Director-General of National Libraries.<sup>32</sup> This was submitted for comment at the February 1977 meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee.<sup>33</sup> Aschenborn's enthusiasm soon cooled off again with the promulgation in 1978 of the general Cultural Institutions Amendment Act, no.93 of 1974.<sup>34</sup>

Available facts suggest that the Department seriously considered taking over the State Library's functions and incorporating the South African Library's collections into the Library of Parliament – both rationalization proposals having considerable intrinsic merit although entailing the complete abrogation of their autonomy. The process seems to have been driven by both J.J.P. Op't Hof, Secretary of the Department, and S.J. Kritzinger, Director of Government Libraries (neither evidently on amicable terms with Aschenborn), for the matter of incorporation was not so actively pursued after their retirement on 31 October 1970. Nevertheless, as subsequent developments show, an assumption that the arrangement mentioned above was the most satisfactory way forward had been established, which would explain many otherwise inexplicable official decisions in the following decade.

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<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 October 1979, recalling undertakings of non-interference in the affairs of the national libraries had been given in [1967] when the National Advisory Library Council had been set up.

<sup>31</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1975-1977). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 14-15 June 1976.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, (photocopy, undated, probably late January 1977) 'Nasionale Biblioteekwet', 4pp.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 10 February 1977; revised version, H.J. Aschenborn, 'Nasionale Biblioteekwet', 28 February 1978, 4pp.

<sup>34</sup> This legislation as amended served the institutions, other than the libraries, until repealed by Act 119 of 1998.

Chapter 4, fourth section : Nemesis

In the mid-twentieth century the National Party Government of South Africa implemented successive measures which gave it unprecedented control over the population with the aim of achieving a White ruled, Afrikaans-speaking republican Utopia. Its authoritarian, centrally-planned approach to governance resulted in a preoccupation with, as Deborah Posel states, generating and storing vast amounts of statistical knowledge (particularly in respect of the Black population), co-ordinated bureaucratized modes of administration, and classifying and counting units of population in order to render society amenable to bureaucratic modes of control.<sup>1</sup> In her view, 'the apartheid version of a "modern" state was one which was sufficiently large, powerful and centrally co-ordinated to keep each "race" in the proper place, economically, politically and socially'. Alongside a strident ideological zeal went an equally assertive rationalism.<sup>2</sup>

James Scott contends (comparing the twentieth century manifestation of authoritarian High Modernism with statecraft of earlier times) that to give central planning full rein, 'they [governments] required a far greater hubris, a state machinery that was equal to the task, and a society they could master', requirements which were being met by the early twentieth century. Scott lists the particularly pernicious combination of elements which led to the State-sponsored calamities of the twentieth century. First, the aspiration to the administrative ordering of nature and society of a comprehensive and ambitious level which he finds 'High Modernism' to be an appropriate label. Second, the unrestrained use of the power of the modern state to achieve these designs. Third, a weakened or prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans. In this context Scott links the modernist utopias of Nazism in Europe, apartheid in South Africa, modernization in Iran, and other examples. Agreeing that utopian aspirations are not dangerous in themselves, the vision goes wrong when held 'by ruling elites with no commitment to democracy or civil rights and who are therefore likely to use unbridled state power for its achievement. Where it goes brutally wrong is when the society subjected to such utopian experiments lacks the capacity to mount a determined resistance'.<sup>3</sup> Hubris, in Classical thought, was inevitably punished by Nemesis, leading to the downfall of nations. In this section we see instances of hubris confounded.

A notorious example of political hubris was the destruction of Cape Town's cosmo-

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<sup>1</sup> D. Posel, 'Modernity and Measurement: further thoughts on the apartheid State', Seminar Paper, University of the Witwatersrand Institute for Advanced Social Research, 19 August 1996, pp.2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: how certain solutions to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp.88-89.

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politan District Six slum (to become Zonnestraat), with the displacement of its many thousands of non-White residents without overt resistance but significantly increasing the grievances of the Coloured community of the Cape Peninsula. A concurrent example of hubris was the idea that secondary education for Blacks (suppressed for more than a decade to protect under-educated 'Poor Whites') was now needed principally because better-skilled Black labour was required by White employers<sup>4</sup> and that a knowledge of Afrikaans and English was essential for that end.<sup>5</sup> This was not so meekly accepted. The Soweto uprising, which began on 16 June 1976, lit what was a very short fuse, with rioting breaking out in all parts of the Republic, put down by ruthless police and military force.

Nemesis had arrived: no longer could White utopian objectives be attained simply by notices in the Government Gazette. Merle Lipton<sup>6</sup> states that the reform in Black education leading to the Soweto uprising set back the attitudes of Whites and caused Afrikaners who were dividing politically along forward- and backward-looking lines<sup>7</sup> to close ranks, while the State fell back on the use of its power with increasing authoritarianism.

In this study of the South African Library, a number of other pertinent issues have been noted in preceding sections. These included the offer of a site in Zonnestraat for a new national library building, the exclusion of students (chiefly Coloured) from the Library's reading room, and the termination of the authoritarian library planning process being conducted by the National Library Advisory Council (NBAR, or Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad).

Concerning the first of these, the South African Library became alarmed at the threat to its 'treasures' posed from 1976 onwards by violence associated with political demonstrations in the neighbourhood of Parliament, the Anglican Cathedral and the Supreme Court.<sup>8</sup> All matters relating to security of the building and the collections were reviewed,<sup>9</sup> including constructing a security checkpoint in the foyer and monitoring access to the premises. Early in 1977 the

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<sup>4</sup> O. Crankshaw, *Race, Class and the Changing Division of Labour under Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.78-79.

<sup>5</sup> *Die Burger* (6 October 1975) claims that Deputy Minister Punt Janson wished to encourage Blacks to use Afrikaans, but not to force it down their throats (*Die Burger* cuttings file: Janson, T.N.H.) Janson is quoted to the effect that an African might find the big boss only spoke Afrikaans or only spoke English; it would be to his advantage to know both languages (<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheid/a/AfrikaansMediumDecree>, accessed 27 March 2014).

<sup>6</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid South Africa, 1910-1986* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.315-316.

<sup>7</sup> *The verligtes and the verkramptes*.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 November 1976.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, Administrative Officer's Report.

## HIGH MODERNISM, 1962-1979

Director was able to reassure the Board that a special unit of the South African Police had the Library under constant surveillance.<sup>10</sup> Since petrol bombs were a major concern, windows were coated with shatter-inhibiting film,<sup>11</sup> and as a further measure of protection, steel mesh screens were fitted to all the large ground floor windows.<sup>12</sup> The Department of National Education was asked to indemnify the Library for possible loss of its collections and fittings as it could no longer afford the insurance premiums.<sup>13</sup> Michael Morris, who had become a familiar figure about the Library while conducting his anti-terrorism researches, set up as 'Michael Morris Security (Pty) Ltd' and offered training in security and anti-fire measures specifically for the staff of those public institutions in the city centre, which the Library's security staff attended.<sup>14</sup> At the time of the 1980 schools boycott, one of the Library's security staff acted as night-watchman on the premises.<sup>15</sup> Threats of civil commotion in 1980 persuaded the Library Board to finally reject the Harold Cressy High School site for its new building,<sup>16</sup> despite the announcement of plans for the new State Archives building across the street.

The second matter (exclusion of students) awaited a change of Director to abandon restrictions on who might be admitted once the unrest had subsided and the inadequate facilities available at the students' colleges and university (which was an underlying cause of student 'swamping') had been ameliorated. Exclusion in the late 1970s was a public relations disaster, and it was noticeable that a generation of Coloured graduates afterwards shunned the South African Library, whereas Black students, who had arrived in the Western Cape later, used (and continue to use) the Library in large numbers.<sup>17</sup>

The third matter was the bringing to a conclusion the NBAR investigations into the place of the national libraries in the grand scheme of library central planning. This is the focus of the remainder of this section, illustrating the rejection of the High Modernist thinking underlying its activities. It belongs in Chapter 4 even though events over-run into the early 1980s. Chapter 5 takes the narrative forward, following the dismissal of the Meijer Committee's recommendations.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 3 February 1977.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 3 February, 5 May 1977.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 11 May 1978.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 27 July 1978.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G4(d). Morris to Deputy Director, 9 May 1979; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 19 July 1979.

<sup>15</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 7 August 1980, Administrative Officer's Report.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 8 May, 10 July (extraordinary meeting), 7 August, 30 October 1980.

<sup>17</sup> Author's personal observation.

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It will be recalled (section 2, pp.141-147) that in 1979, the Minister of National Education was advised that developments in computer applications in the field of information had rendered the library-aligned National Library Advisory Council (NBAR) obsolete and that he needed a more broadly-constituted advisory body. Of special importance was to bring to finality the matter of an automated bibliographic network, including the question of how such a network should be managed. A steering committee of the NBAR on national library functions (consisting of Professors S.I. Malan, H.C. van Rooy and R.B. Zaaiman) had grappled indecisively with this issue over a period of ten years, well aware that the State Library (understandably) considered that the management of the proposed network fell within the range of its existing national library functions, including compiling the South African National Bibliography and the union catalogue. Unless this issue could be finalized, none of the other questions affecting the future of national libraries (such as the South African Library's proposed restoration laboratory) could be resolved. Under pressure to wind up their deliberations, the steering committee submitted its report on national library services directly to Minister W.A. Cruywagen, bypassing the general committee of the NBAR which was scheduled to meet on 28 May 1979.<sup>18</sup> But Cruywagen was removed from the Cabinet a month later<sup>19</sup> and T.N.H. Janson took over briefly,<sup>20</sup> followed on 7 October 1980 in the National Education portfolio by Professor G. van N. Viljoen, generally regarded as forward-looking ('verligte') in political matters.

Gerrit Viljoen's appointment as Minister made all the difference to the situation in which the South African Library and State Library had found themselves. The State Library in particular stood to benefit from the appointment of their former Board Chairman.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Aschenborn maintained that without the endorsement of the general committee of NBAR, the report was the personal opinion of the three professors involved (see Chapter 4, section 1, p.146, footnote 38).

<sup>19</sup> W.A. Cruywagen (Deputy Minister of the Interior from April 1974 and of Bantu Affairs from February 1975, then Minister of National Education between November 1978 and June 1979) was a conservative, closely aligned to C.P. Mulder. When P.W. Botha purged the Cabinet of his conservative opponents, Cruywagen was appointed Administrator of the Transvaal province.

<sup>20</sup> T.N.H. (Punt) Janson (a former Hervormde Kerk clergyman who entered Parliament as Member for Witbank in 1966 becoming Deputy Minister for Bantu Administration and Education where he was known for his sympathy towards Blacks) was replaced in that position by Dr A.P. Treurnicht as a gesture to conservative National Party supporters in January 1976. He then became Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions, Planning and the Environment, and of Statistics. In June 1979, he replaced Cruywagen as Minister of National Education. On 6 October 1980 Janson was transferred to the President's Council after sanctioning of mixed-race school sport which outraged National Party supporters just ahead of a general election scheduled for the following April.

<sup>21</sup> G. van N. Viljoen served as a member of the State Library Board 1958-1968, and its Chairman from 1963. In 1965 he addressed the SALA conference, his topic being 'Die Nasionale Biblioteke van Suid-Africa' subsequently published in *South African Libraries*, 33(2), October 1965, pp.46-54. In it, he makes occasional reference to the South African Library, but devoted himself principally to the role of the State Library. He was a member of the Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasseaangeleenthede in the 1960s and relinquished the chairmanship of the State Library Board in 1968 after his appointment as first Vice-Chancellor of the Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit in 1967. He was

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It has been observed that each time the future of the State Library was threatened, Director Aschenborn revived his efforts to obtain legislation which would provide legal status to the national libraries, their State-funded functions and their autonomy. Portions of the 1979 NBAR report to Minister Cruywagen relating to national library functions having come into Aschenborn's possession,<sup>22</sup> his anxiety about the future of his Library was reawakened. There was no immediate prospect of obtaining national library legislation, so the next best option was to have a full list of functions approved by the Minister and published in the Gazette. What the NBAR steering committee had drafted at the start of their investigations was a framework of functions which implied a single largely bureaucratic national office, which made no provision whatever for reference, reading rooms, or any direct services to individuals, research being limited to aspects of library science, and no provision for restoration: 'preservation' mentioned in the draft being simply a synonym for 'storage'.<sup>23</sup>

Minister Janson (or the Department) agreed, in order to move forward and wind-up the NBAR's activities, that the national libraries submit their own lists of envisaged functions to the NBAR. In March 1980 a brain-storming session was held with Cape Town staff on the matter. 'Points for Discussion' included items such as the formation of a single national library including the Library for the Blind, and the desirability of further subject specialization and employing non-librarian subject specialists.<sup>24</sup> A parallel visioning exercise was taking place in Pretoria, which resulted in their list of functions seriously impinging upon those of the South African Library.<sup>25</sup> At a meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee in Cape Town on 29 July, the two sets of 'aims and functions' were harmonized, and Lewin Robinson was charged with reducing them to a single document in which the particular functions of each national library would be itemized under general headings.<sup>26</sup> This document (in which the South African Library's reference and research service is barely mentioned, while maintaining a national restoration laboratory is given promi-

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chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond between 1974 and 1980. His academic direction was classical literature. (Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrit\\_Viljoen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrit_Viljoen); B. Louw 'Dr Gerrit Viljoen, 'n Huldeblyk', <http://www.argief.litnet.co.za/...>, both accessed 25 April 2012.)

<sup>22</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1979). Aschenborn (A1/3/4/3) to Grobler, secretary to NBAR, 9 August 1979.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/0 (1972-1975). 'Library and Information Services which should be Rendered on a National Level' [undated], 2pp, attached to a letter from the Department (O5/5) to Robinson, 1 April 1975. This is a narrower interpretation of the findings of the 1962 National Conference of Library Authorities (Programme for Future Library Development (1963), pp.26-27) which the NBAR saw as their duty to implement. These functions also served as the basis for the Meijer Committee's 1981 investigations.

<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 1(a) (1976-1980). 'The Future of the South African Library: points for discussion', March 1980.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, Tyrrell-Glynn to Aschenborn, 9 May 1980.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (file 1980). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 29 July 1980.

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nence) was discussed, slightly amended, and accepted at a meeting with the Director of Cultural Affairs and other Departmental officials in Pretoria on 18 August 1980.<sup>27</sup> These aims and functions were submitted to the NBAR for comment, and for their part, members of the 'Dagbestuur' at their meeting of 13 and 15 November 1980 rearranged everything in a philosophically more pleasing manner, and included on the one hand (section 4) 'To supply information and advice to individuals and other institutions', by making books available for reference, to provide information verbally or by correspondence, and the provision of photocopies (inadequate, perhaps, but an improvement on what Robinson himself had drafted about his celebrated reference service), while on the other hand, the exhibition of 'treasures' continued to feature prominently.<sup>28</sup> The document was laid before the full NBAR (of which both Aschenborn and Robinson were members) on 25 November where Robinson submitted a three page memorandum in which he roundly accuses the 'Dagbestuur' of failure to understand his concept both of a 'national library' and a 'reference library'. Attempting to counter the perception that the South African Library was a purely local library, he wrote:

The question which the Executive [of NBAR] asks ... as to whether this collection is for local use, i.e. for Cape Town and district, again suggests an extraordinary ignorance of the function of a reference library. Readers come - as it must be known - to use the Library's facilities, not only from all parts of this country, but from other parts of the world as well, and, as has already been remarked upon, a large correspondence is conducted by the Reference Department, very considerable use being made of photographic services. ... Surely it must be appreciated that any civilized country needs a central general library where not only the nation's literary treasures may be housed, but where the most important of the world's literature will always be available for study. There seems slight necessity to detail all the numerous categories of persons who benefit from the Library's services here.<sup>29</sup>

Reference and promoting research were the South African Library's most active and acclaimed – but officially unacknowledged (and consequently under-resourced) – activities from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s. The Ministerial advisory council, packed with information specialists from State research institutes like the CSIR and HSRC, and ageing library science academics could not, firstly, accept the concept of a reference library which was not part of a public library

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<sup>27</sup> J.G. Meijer, M.L. van As en J.F. Burger, *Nasionale Biblioteke in die RSA: 'n ontwikkelingsplan* (Pretoria: Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1981), Annex 2, pp.1-4 (South African Library), Annex 3, pp.1-5 (State Library).

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/0 (1976-1980). 'Funksies van die Nasionale Biblioteke in die R.S.A. Kommentaar en aanbevelings van die Dagbestuur ...' under cover of letter P.J.W. Louw (L5/5/3/A/2) to Robinson, 5 November 1980.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, Response by Robinson: 'Comments on Comments ...', 20 November 1980, p.2. The abstract of reference queries by telephone in Annexure 6 (1982) gives a somewhat different impression.

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service,<sup>30</sup> nor secondly, grasp the idea that lay persons not linked to formal research institutions or universities had a legitimate need for advanced reference facilities which public libraries could not provide, nor thirdly, rid their minds of the shibboleth fashionable in the 1950s and 1960s that every library needed a place in a tiered national structure to give it legitimacy.

The aims and functions drafted by the national libraries, modified by the NBAR, and approved by the Minister, were subsequently abridged by the State Law Advisor who in the process introduced several factual and typographical errors.<sup>31</sup> In this form they were eventually published in the Government Gazette.<sup>32</sup> Again, the specialized public reference and research function which formed a core activity of the South African Library was played-down, resulting in it not being considered for subsidy purposes.<sup>33</sup> Apart from Robinson's abortive special subject research departments, and the Department's reluctance to approve funding and appropriately-graded posts for the proposed conservation laboratory, the South African Library acquiesced in a situation which would soon act to its great disadvantage (see Chapter 5, first section).

An emergency meeting was held between managers of the State Library and Departmental officials on 30 July 1981,<sup>34</sup> which led, on 4 August, to Minister Viljoen commissioning J.G. Meijer of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to conduct an urgent review of the position of the national libraries (excluding the Library for the Blind) and the proposed co-operative computerized South African Bibliographic Network (SABINET), to be completed by 26 November.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/0 (1976-1980). Lewin Robinson to S.I. Malan (Vice-Chairman of NBAR, and Professor of Library Science at UNISA) 13 December 1980. 'I am, however, still worried with regard to the apparent difficulty that senior librarians in this country have in understanding fully the purpose and functions of a national reference library and I would earnestly extend a cordial invitation to fellow members of the National Libraries Advisory Council - particularly of the Executive - to visit us and observe how we operate, the kind of books we collect, and the types of readers and enquiries we assist.'

<sup>31</sup> H.O.K. Zastrau, 'The South African National Library Concept: a South African Institute for Literature and Information Management?' in: *National Libraries: some South African and international perspectives on challenges and opportunities, a tribute to H.J. Aschenborn at sixty-five*, ed. J.A. Boon (et al.) (Pretoria: State Library, 1986), pp.59-60.

<sup>32</sup> Government Notice R1971 in: *Government Gazette* 8879, 9 September 1983, pp.16-20.

<sup>33</sup> This oversight was not noticed at the time by the new director, P.E. Westra. The defect was later pointed out by H.O.K. Zastrau ('The South African National Library Concept' (1986), pp.62-63). This omission was corrected (P.E. Westra, personal communication 14 February 2013) when more detailed schedules of functions were approved in October 1985 by the new National Libraries Advisory Committee, but not amended in the Act itself.

<sup>34</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1981-82, p.9.

<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/5/1 (1981-1983). Meijer (BIN-5-I/5/3) to Robinson, 4 August 1981, requesting information, followed by official confirmation on 6 August (J.G. Meijer, *Nasionale Biblioteke* (1981), p.1). The significance of the 26 November return date has not been determined. A special meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee was convened on 3 December 1981 to discuss the Meijer report (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/4 (1981-1983). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 3 December 1981). A casual remark by a State Library representative in June 1983 indicates that the request for the Meijer investigation originated with the NBAR itself.

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It is the author's assessment that the purpose of the HSRC study was to crystalize the long-protracted investigations of the NBAR steering committee to enable the Minister make a final determination on the future of the national libraries. A working committee included Aschenborn and Tyrrell-Glynn. As with the preceding Booysen (1961) and De Villiers (1968) inquiries, this investigation came at a most inopportune moment for the South African Library: Robinson was two months from retirement, and Tyrrell-Glynn (already rejected as future Director of the Library) was committed to a study and conference tour of Europe.<sup>36</sup> The study was conducted by staff investigator Dr J.G. Meijer,<sup>37</sup> assisted by Drs M.L. van As and J.F. Burger at the HSRC in Pretoria, using published material and data gathered from interested bodies, including the aims and functions which had recently been compiled by the State Library and the South African Library. Although not overtly stated in Meijer's report, one may confidently assume that Meijer based his investigations on the working documents and reports of the NBAR steering committee on national libraries, for his conclusions were consonant with its thinking, and R.B. Zaaiman was a member of both committees, as was the NBAR consultant John Willemse.<sup>38</sup> South African Library representative Tyrrell-Glynn returned from Europe just in time to attend the last working meeting, and was handed a copy of the 382-page draft report on his arrival in Pretoria before the meeting commenced.<sup>39</sup>

Meijer's report was exceedingly theoretical (hardly to be understood by a layperson, the very epitome of High Modernism) and the structures it proposed were highly bureaucratic. Its main recommendation for a powerful National Library at the pinnacle of, and controlling, library provision in South Africa, incorporating components of the existing national libraries and SABINET, envisaged a top-heavy Directorate (from which all other structures devolved), closely tied-in to State structures (including the Department of Defence). It tried to strike a more equitable balance between the functions carried out in Pretoria and Cape Town by assigning the State Library's SANB function and its staff posts to Cape Town, while allocating other State Library

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<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/5/1 (1981). Robinson to Meijer, HSRC, 7 August 1981.

<sup>37</sup> Dr J.G. Meijer was Senior Chief Researcher in the HSRC Unit for Library and Information Research. He had obtained his Doctor of Bibliography through the University of South Africa with a study 'Librarianship: a definition' in 1979.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/5/1 (1981). Meijer to Tyrrell-Glynn [undated, received 14 September 1981], announced fourteen names of the full working group, including Professors Willemse and Zaaiman, and P.E. Westra (H.J. Aschenborn added later). Though not explicitly stated, it is clear that the purpose of the HSRC inquiry was to wind-up the NBAR investigations. In so doing, it brought to a close an era of authoritarian thinking about library services.

<sup>39</sup> W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn, 'Memorandum oor Verslag van die RGN se Ondersoek na Nasionale Biblioteke in die RSA (1981)', 16 November 1981, p.1. (This photocopied memorandum was not found in the Library's filing system. Copies were evidently distributed to members of the Library's board. The author is in possession of one of these.)

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staffing posts to the proposed SABINET in Pretoria.<sup>40</sup> Meijer endorsed the principle (established by the 1962 National Conference of Library Authorities<sup>41</sup>) of separate Pretoria and Cape Town functional units retaining their existing names, but offered no better explanation than 'historiese piëteit'.<sup>42</sup>

While Meijer's principle of a large, over-arching National Library Council would be rejected, his proposal that the South African Defence Force should have a stake in the proposed Library<sup>43</sup> seemed to reflect official thinking at that date, because Lieut.-Gen. H. de V. du Toit, former Head of Military Intelligence, was appointed to the State Library Board during 1981 and in October 1982 was designated its Chairman.<sup>44</sup>

Meijer proposed to eliminate feuding, such as that which had bedevilled relations between the Boards of the national libraries and the NBAR, by means of a National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information (NACLI or NABI - Nasionale Biblioteek- en Inligting-adviesraad, a behemoth of a representative body) which would also serve as the Board of his proposed South African National Library, combining both advisory and oversight functions. (This was the first objection when the Directors met in December 1981.<sup>45</sup>) Below that Council would be what Meijer called the 'Direkteurraad' or Council of Directors.<sup>46</sup>

What would be adopted by the Minister was a much leaner NACLI (NABI) as a purely advisory council, on which one representative of the three national libraries (South African Library for the Blind included) could serve,<sup>47</sup> and upgrading the existing Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries (CCNL or KKNB - Koördinerende Komitee van Nasionale Biblioteke) into an official National Libraries Advisory Committee (NLAC or ANB - Advieskomitee vir Nasionale Biblioteke) composed of Board representatives, Directors and Deputy Directors, chaired by a person chosen by the Minister of National Education, with direct access to the

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<sup>40</sup> J.G. Meijer, *Nasionale Biblioteke* (1981), pp.131, 133.

<sup>41</sup> National Conference of Library Authorities, 1962. *Programme* (1963), p.26.

<sup>42</sup> J.G. Meijer, *Nasionale Biblioteke* (1981), p.190.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, pp.141, 206; also, its database should be compatible with that of the Defence Force, pp.211, 212, 216.

<sup>44</sup> State Library. *Annual Report, 1981-82*, p.8; *1982-83*, p.12.

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1980). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, special meeting, 3 December 1981.

<sup>46</sup> J.G. Meijer, *Nasionale Biblioteke* (1981), pp.172-175 (summary and organogram).

<sup>47</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 3 February 1983. Aschenborn was appointed. The Minister declined to appoint a representative from the South African Library as well (letter Minister to Lt-Gen. du Toit, 6 December 1982).

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Minister.<sup>48</sup> To compensate for the upgrading of the Co-ordinating Committee, another new liaison body was formed called the National Library Professional Committee, made up of management and senior professional staff to meet when necessary.<sup>49</sup> The Professional Committee met twice in 1985 and seemingly not again until the late 1990s.

Meijer went into considerable detail on the form of the proposed South African National Library and the associated National Council.<sup>50</sup> He was, of course, thinking of a large and powerful, unitary body (comparable to the Human Sciences Research Council) wielding considerable authority over the Republic's library services. His recommendation that legislation was essential to define its areas of authority and responsibility for the application of national funding for libraries and information systems should be read in this light. Remaining under the Cultural Institutions Act of 1969 had the disadvantage (in his view) of coupling the libraries with institutions with very diverse functions which hindered goal-orientated service delivery, and the Department of National Education could easily view such institutions as unessential appendages and possibly at some time be required to determine funding priorities, such as giving preference to feeding animals in a zoo rather than funding the purchase of library books.<sup>51</sup> Nor was it desirable in his view to make the National Library a directorate of the Department of National Education, for although it would have to take full financial responsibility for the National Library and could integrate the Department's existing library services with it, this was outweighed by the numerous advantages of autonomy, including freeing library professionals from prescribed Departmental standards, avoiding possible ostracization of SABINET by non-governmental libraries which could occur if it were a Government-controlled institution, that it would thus be able to adapt to information needs which might arise rather than first having to obtain the approval of several Departments and their Ministers. Importantly, if the National Library were autonomous, any income it generated would be available for its own development, and not paid over to the Treasury.<sup>52</sup> He rejected the idea of running the National Library as a non-profit company.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 22 (1981-1983). Director-General (KUL 20/5/1) to Westra, 8 October 1982.

<sup>49</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/4 (1984). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes (final meeting), 4 June 1984. Since the State Library had its own Professional Advisory Committee of prominent librarians, which the South African Library had declined to join in 1965 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 August 1965), the proposed Committee could thus be seen as an extension of the State Library's own advisory committee.

<sup>50</sup> J.G. Meijer, *Nasionale Biblioteke* (1981), Hoofstuk 4: Vestiging van die Nasionale Biblioteek en 'n Adviesraad vir die Biblioteek- en Inligtingswese in die RSA, pp.148-175.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p.154.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, pp.155-156.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, pp.157-158.

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Meijer stated that the preferred option was to become a statutory body with its own legislation, to which the only objection, in his view, was the need to put legislation through Parliament at a time when the Government was striving to reduce, not increase, legislation.<sup>54</sup> While the report did recommend better funding and increased staff, the overall cost of the South African National Library as proposed would have been a major financial burden on the State.

The findings were predictably rejected by the national libraries<sup>55</sup> and also by the Minister.<sup>56</sup> By so doing, they sacrificed a unique opportunity to create a statutory 'South African National Library' which the broad recommendations in the Meijer report could, if substantially simplified, have established almost two decades before the present National Library of South Africa came into being in 1999. Professor H.O.K. Zastrau's opinion is worth quoting:

In August 1982 the minister of National Education made a policy statement regarding the national libraries of the RSA. Since the minister had commissioned the investigation carried out at the HSRC by Dr Meijer, one could have expected the policy statement to reflect some of the principles set out in the HSRC recommendations. In fact, the statement dealt with very few issues which had not already been implemented, and it largely maintained the status quo. This is indeed a policy statement which reflects both the disagreement among librarians on the national library issue, and the weight of traditional bonds even in a totally changed environment.<sup>57</sup>

Clearly the High Modernist age had passed and no alternative political philosophy had yet emerged to take its place. Pressure was building up for change which seemed about to happen in 1979 with a prospect of an escape from authoritarian rule.

The South African Library, which had muddled along without a strategic plan, completed the monumental four-volume South African Bibliography to the Year 1925, begun by Varley, edited by Lewin Robinson, and published in 1979.<sup>58</sup> Apart from byproducts of the Bibliography, it remained unclear what major national activity the Library could undertake in its place. Perhaps

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp.158-159. To save on legislation, he suggested that the provisions of the draft Legal Deposit of Publications Bill be merged into the provisions of a National Library Bill. It needs to be borne in mind that the Legal Deposit Bill had been drafted for NBAR by R.B. Zaaiman who served on Meijer's working committee.

<sup>55</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/5/1 (1982-1983), Joint South African Library and State Library memorandum 'RGN-Verslag: Die Nasionale Biblioteke in die R.S.A.: 'n Ontwikkelingsplan', 11 January 1981, 10pp.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, Department (Kul 20/5/1) to Westra, 23 June 1982. The Minister was reported to have decided to retain the status quo, to amend the Cultural Institutions Act to make special provision for libraries, and have the aims and functions which were approved by him on 26 May 1981 gazetted as soon as possible.

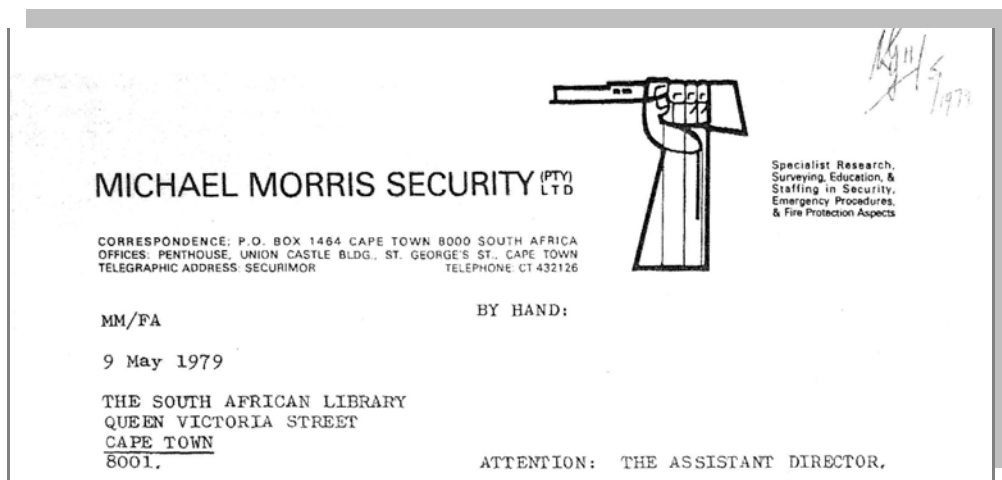
<sup>57</sup> H.O.K. Zastrau, 'The South African National Library Concept' (1986), p.58.

<sup>58</sup> A South African Bibliography to the Year 1925 : being a revision and continuation of Sidney Mendelssohn's South African Bibliography (1910), edited at the South African Library, Cape Town with the financial assistance of the Human Sciences Research Council, 4v. (London: Mansell, 1979).

## CHAPTER FOUR

more exhibitions of 'treasures' and setting up the proposed national book restoration centre which in the event failed to attract official financial support.

There was, of course, the Library's world-class reference service which was almost unacknowledged in official quarters. But this reference service, for all its excellence, and the appreciation of its satisfied users, and despite the extensive correspondence it conducted with enquirers in all parts of South Africa and the world, can now, in retrospect, be seen as the obstacle to the South African Library escaping from a general service to the local public and becoming a more specialized centre for historical research. But the Africana Reading Room, created for just such a purpose, was closed at this very time due to under-use. The hubbub of activity in the Reference Room made it very difficult for serious researchers to concentrate, or to provide adequate supervision over the use of some of the priceless items in the Library's collections (see Chapter 5, particularly the latter part of the third section). The South African Library was perceived to be an insular, inward-looking institution,<sup>59</sup> greatly in need of revitalization.



<sup>59</sup> Karel Schoeman, recalling his employment at the Library from this date, observes that 'In 'n samelewing wat gedurende die loop van die twintigste eeu al hoe vinniger verander het, het die Biblioteek wesenlik gebly wat dit was, selfgenoegsaam terend op die reputasie wat dit reeds geniet het ...' ('In a rapidly changing twentieth century society, the Library remained essentially what it was, content to the end with the reputation which it already enjoyed ...') (Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek: autobiografiese aantekeninge (Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 2002), p.524).

## Chapter 5. BREAKING FREE, 1979-1988

A gradual ideological shift away from the persuasive dogmatism of H.F. Verwoerd had taken place under Prime Minister B.J. Vorster. Belief in apartheid as a constructive policy faded among the National Party's White supporters as the State became increasingly authoritarian. The tide of South African history seemed to turn in September 1978 when P.W. Botha replaced Vorster as Prime Minister, inaugurating a complex attempt to adapt Government policies to changing circumstances.

The year 1979 would be a significant one for South Africa. Newly in office, the Prime Minister hinted at political reforms to include Coloureds and Indians in the South African parliamentary system. In July Minister Heunis began to investigate constitutional possibilities, leading to a mixed-race President's Council (excluding Blacks) and the abolition of the Senate. Businessmen were mobilized in support of Government at the 1979 Carlton Conference in Johannesburg. Restrictive labour legislation was eased on the recommendation of the Wiehahn commission of inquiry. Literary censorship was modified by establishing an advisory Committee of Literary Experts and appointing J.C.W. 'Kobus' van Rooyen to head the Publication Appeal Board. The political thaw of 1979 fostered expectations of an approaching Spring of constructive political development. Instead, the prospect of change acted like oxygen on a smoldering fire: the South African polity burst into flame. The Black majority, continuing to be excluded from national politics, demonstrated its total rejection of the apartheid system.

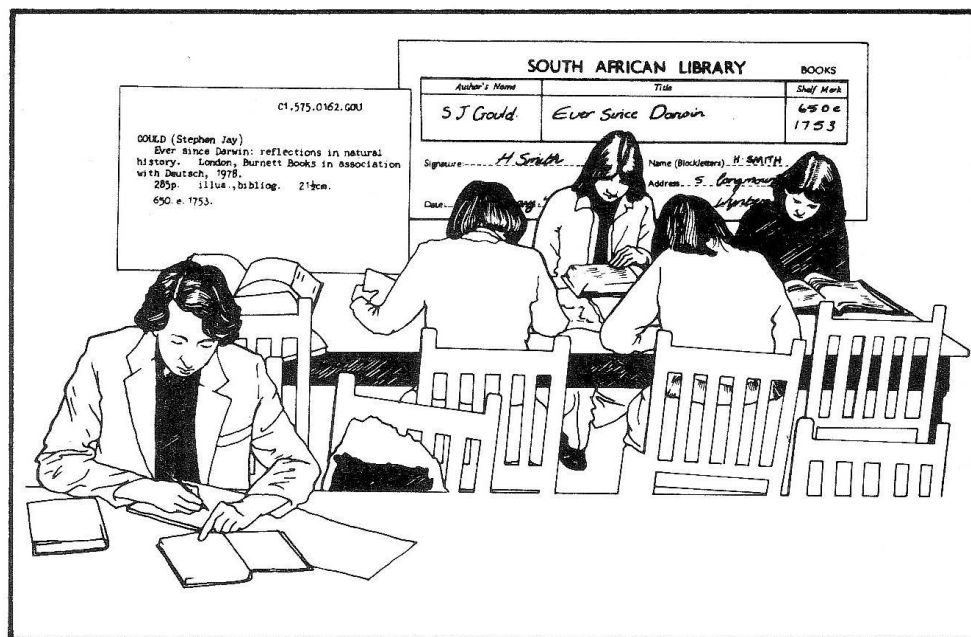
This remarkable year 1979 marked the birth of commercial on-line information retrieval, Prestel. A year earlier the revolutionary Apple II stand-alone mini-computer was introduced, followed by the ubiquitous IBM personal computer in 1980. A national computerized South African co-operative library cataloguing network (including a rudimentary e-mail facility) was being considered, but so slowly that in February 1979 the Minister terminated the ineffective National Library Advisory Council, to be replaced by the National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information. There was a twilight zone of other endings around that critical year. Between 1972 and 1982 many hard-line Afrikaner leaders of the library profession disappeared from public life. At the South African Library, 1979 was the end of the Varley era with the completion of the Mendelssohn Revision Project, the little-used Africana Research Room was closed, while classification of Africana books by the Dewey Decimal Classification, a prerequisite for open access, was abandoned. In 1979, funding for the Library's book restoration centre was diverted to the Library of Parliament.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

A.M. Lewin Robinson retired as Director in October 1981, followed soon afterwards by a Chief Librarian and the Chief Administrative Officer, while Deputy Director W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn retired at the end of April 1983. Stalwart Board members died or retired from service so that by the end of 1985, the last who had held office for any length of time during Robinson's directorate was Mrs E.D. Stott. The Directorate of P.E. Westra (1981-1998) would prove to be exceptionally challenging.

One highlight of this Chapter is the National Libraries Act no.56 of 1985 (operative from 1 August 1987) which gave the two national libraries official status in law for the first time, yet hope that such status would result in better funding was soon disappointed. The tricameral administrations under the new constitution of 1983 coupled with a collapsing public service led to a reduction in bureaucratic capacity. At the same time, this system of tricameral Government which excluded Blacks led to violent clashes throughout the rest of the decade, bringing the country to the brink of civil war. In 1986 the Government announced that it had relinquished control of information policy, which in turn led to the other highlight, the implementation in 1988 of a system of framework autonomy for institutions. This was welcomed by the national libraries, but it ultimately precipitated the Library's demise.



## Chapter 5, first section : What it Is and What it Does

The Meijer report<sup>1</sup> of 1981 (see Chapter 4, fourth section) was undoubtedly a classic manifestation of bureaucratic thinking couched in densely technocratic language. It envisaged a National Library and Information Service of five component parts (the South African Library and State Library being two of them) with policies delegated to it by the Minister of National Education.<sup>2</sup> Meijer asserted (whether naïvely or not cannot be determined) that in a freedom-loving country like the RSA [Republic of South Africa] there would never be pressure by the State (through a Government-controlled national library, closely tied-in to the military establishment<sup>3</sup>) to impair the freedom or autonomy of any library or information service in South Africa, provided, of course, that national security was not threatened; furthermore, although the central authority [the proposed National Library and Information Service] should have the right to compel local and regional libraries to give effect to national objectives, in exercising that right, it would fully guard against infringing their interests.<sup>4</sup> With this benign view of good and honourable intentions of the apartheid Government, Meijer believed that in structuring a national library and information service, local and regional services should exercise self-determination while the national library service should support them by providing optimal information services at national level.<sup>5</sup> He proceeded to outline criteria determined by committees of experts which the over-arching National Library and Information Service would implement, including the post levels of staff<sup>6</sup> (in the process negating self-determination). In these and other recommendations, Meijer reveals the persisting influence of the National Conference of Library Authorities two decades earlier, endorsing the necessity for a Board of Control with a full-time Chairman, operating within the Public Service, but allowing 'uit historiese piëteit'<sup>7</sup> for the State Library and the South African Library to retain their existing names.

Since the 1962 National Conference, however, the library environment had changed significantly through the introduction of computers in information work, notably the SABINET

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<sup>1</sup> J.G. Meijer, M.L. van As en J.F Burger, *Nasionale Biblioteke in die RSA: 'n ontwikkelingsplan* (Pretoria: Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, Organogram, p.101c.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp.141, 206, 211, 212, 216 and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp.62-63 (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp.64-65.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, pp.65-71.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp.102-103.

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service. In that twenty-year period, libraries had matured, providing better service from their own resources.<sup>8</sup> Meijer's report represented obsolete authoritarian High Modernist thinking. The decision by Minister Viljoen to ignore the report<sup>9</sup> without comment<sup>10</sup> may have been influenced to a certain extent by the protests of the South African Library and State Library<sup>11</sup> and his own background as the State Library's former Board Chairman, but it is more likely due to Cabinet-level discussions of a new constitutional dispensation under which less, rather than greater, centralization of functions would be promoted, and also to the daunting financial commitment which a very large unitary South African National Library and Information Service, closely linked to the Department of National Education, would entail. This was a missed opportunity to create a unified South African National Library, but along more modest lines.

The national libraries again responded by clamouring for legislation to entrench their existing positions as loosely-linked autonomous institutions. At this time (November 1981), Piet Westra, formerly Deputy Director of the State Library, succeeded Lewin Robinson as Director of the South African Library, so there was an expectation of greater common cause in this matter between the two national libraries than had previously been evident.

At the penultimate meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries in June 1983, the Chairman, Lt.-General H. de V. du Toit, informed the meeting about the State Library Board's fruitful discussions with Minister Gerrit Viljoen. The Minister had accepted that the national libraries could not be classed with the other declared cultural institutions, and requested that a draft Bill be presented for his consideration. Advocate I.W.B. de Villiers was commissioned by the State Library to undertake the work, using elements of the existing Cultural Institutions Act, the Human Sciences Research Council Act and the Universities Act. A copy of the draft Bill was handed to South African Library representatives for approval by its Board.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> By way of example, Annexure 14 shows that the number of requests for books on inter-library loan through the State Library had, after peaking in 1971, more than halved by 1981, declining very rapidly thereafter once SABINET had been commissioned. Administering inter-library loans was the primary national function of the State Library.

<sup>9</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/5/1 (1982-1983) [formerly MSM 72]. Director-General (Kul 20/5/1) to Westra, 23 June 1982. In this letter the D.G. states that the Minister decided to maintain the status quo, the national libraries to remain under the Cultural Institutions Act which would be further amended to make specific provision for the libraries (one of Meijer's options), and their aims and functions approved by the Minister on 26 May 1981 would be gazetted (Government Notice R1971 in: Government Gazette 8879, 9 September 1983, pp.16-20).

<sup>10</sup> See Professor Zastrau's comments quoted in Chapter 4, fourth section p.165.

<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/5/1 (1982-1983) [formerly MSM 72]. Joint South African Library and State Library memorandum 'RGN-Verslag: Die Nasionale Biblioteke in die R.S.A.: 'n ontwikkelingsplan', 11 January 1981, 10pp.

<sup>12</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/4 (1981-1983). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 29 June 1983; *ibid.* (folder 'Wetsontwerp 1983'), Westra to members of the board, 6 July 1983; copy of the draft Bill 'Wetsontwerp op Nasionale Biblioteke, no.- van 1984' dated 20 June 1983 will be found in the same folder.

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From the perspective of the national libraries, the appointment of Viljoen as Minister had certainly revitalized matters. Viljoen was simultaneously attending to the problems of the other declared cultural institutions. While Meijer was conducting his national library investigation, a draft Bill entitled the National Museums and Associated Institutions Bill (intended to revise the existing Cultural Institutions Act of 1969) was supplied to the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions. At his first meeting of this Committee as representative of the South African Library, Westra protested, as his predecessor Robinson had also done, that the libraries had been relegated to a secondary status of 'associated institutions' in this Bill.<sup>13</sup> On the positive side, not being named could be seen as an omen that the libraries' request for separate legislation might soon be granted. Separating the libraries from the museums and galleries was timely. With the introduction of the new constitutional dispensation (approved by referendum in November 1983), many institutions would be assigned to 'Own Affairs' administrations,<sup>14</sup> while a few, including the national libraries, remained under the central government as 'General Affairs'.<sup>15</sup> In the event, the Cultural Institutions Act of 1969 (as amended) remained in force until repealed in 1998,<sup>16</sup> while the national libraries (excluding the Library for the Blind) received their own Act (passed in 1985, promulgated in 1987).

While section 4(1) of this National Libraries Act, no.56 of 1985 contained a general list of the functions of the national libraries, considerable sparring subsequently took place between the Directors at, and between, meetings of the new National Libraries Advisory Committee (NLAC), focussed mainly on expanding the aims and functions in greater detail. The position of the South African Library was that all the functions should be listed seriatim and the Minister be empowered to assign them to the respective national library by Proclamation<sup>17</sup> which was exactly what the State Library wished to avoid (perhaps fearing further attempts to balance the functions assigned to Cape Town and Pretoria). At a meeting of the NLAC held on 15 October 1985, the functions and regulations were given considerable attention, and amongst others, the

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<sup>13</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (1981). Robinson to Secretary, Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions, 1 October 1981; *ibid.* Committee of Heads. Minutes, 9 February 1982.

<sup>14</sup> In practice all affected ('Own Affairs') institutions came under the Administration: House of Assembly.

<sup>15</sup> The Department of National Education staff establishment was considerably reduced after the creation of 'Own Affairs' administrations, with the result that its Library Service could no longer support the nominally-independent Homelands. This responsibility devolved upon the State Library and written into the aims and functions then under discussion. It also contributed largely to the abandonment of strict central control of staff appointments, devolving authority to the institutions (inter alia opening the way for the permanent appointment of non-Whites, discussed later in this Chapter), and ultimately to 'framework autonomy' discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>16</sup> Repealed by the Cultural Institutions Act, no.119 of 1998.

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/4 (folder 'Wetsontwerp 1983'). Westra to Aschenborn (State Library), 5 August 1983.

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South African Library was for the first time distinctly designated as the central reference library with associated publicity and exhibition functions.<sup>18</sup> Owing to the deficiencies of the list in the 1985 Act,<sup>19</sup> an expanded list (slightly amended by the State Law Advisor in 1986<sup>20</sup> and published in July 1987 as a Government Notice<sup>21</sup>) specified which library was assigned to give effect to each. The regulations associated with the 1985 Act were published in the same Gazette.<sup>22</sup> Thus the roles of the national libraries were officially entrenched, albeit with the South African Library in a distinctly subsidiary position to the State Library. The principal functions of the South African Library were collection, access and preservation.

The exceptionally long delay in promulgating the 1985 Act can be ascribed to the workload of a depleted Department of National Education (with officers split up between three 'tricameral' administrations), to the appointment of a new Minister of National Education (F.W. de Klerk) in September 1985, and, during his term of office, to rapidly evolving government policies of non-interference in the internal operations of the 'General Affairs' institutions, leading to framework autonomy. De Klerk, in his autobiography, has little to say about the Department of National Education.

Of all the portfolios which I held during my ministerial career, national education was certainly the most challenging. During the four years - from 1985 to 1989 - that I held the portfolio it brought me into the midst of the reform stream in one of the most sensitive areas. Education had become a national priority.<sup>23</sup>

The priority De Klerk gave to education could explain the low priority he and successive Ministers of National Education would henceforth give to library matters, offering a partial explanation for the serious financial difficulties in which the two national libraries (especially the South African Library) found themselves. Contrary to expectations raised by possessing statutory functions, the funding necessary to carry them out did not follow. The matter of funding is the subject of the section which follows. However, the functions of the South African Library are

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<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/2 (1985-1986). National Library Advisory Committee. Agenda, 15 October 1985, Annex E, E1: 'Kommentaar op die Wet op Nasionale Biblioteke, nr.56 van 1985 ... 1985.10.15'

<sup>19</sup> National Libraries Act, no.56 of 1985, section 4.

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/2 (1985-1986). Department (5/3/2/1/2) to Chairman of the Advisory Committee, 27 February 1986, and other exchanges of correspondence in the same file.

<sup>21</sup> Government Notice R1619 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.53-55; Government Notice R1971 of 1983 with the previous list of functions being repealed by Government Notice R1618 in the same Gazette.

<sup>22</sup> Government Notice R1620 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.56-63.

<sup>23</sup> F.W. de Klerk, *The Last Trek: a new beginning, the autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p.75.

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more conveniently dealt with here.

The 'collection' function prescribed building up a comprehensive collection of material from and about southern Africa by legal deposit, purchase and donation, supplementing this with selected collections including rare or unique material, all of which the South African Library was required to preserve.<sup>24</sup>

Already there was a vast amount of material in the collections which did not comply with these criteria. The 1987 regulations brought to an end the large-scale acquisition of non-South African general works in the humanities (such as anthropology, archaeology, biography, education, and general literature), fields recommended by the 1961 Booysen Committee,<sup>25</sup> accepted by the two national libraries in February 1962,<sup>26</sup> and included in the Library's official 'Acquisitions Policy' of 1964.<sup>27</sup> The 'Dagbestuur' ('Executive Committee') of the NBAR (National Library Advisory Council), had long held that such acquisitions served no national purpose,<sup>28</sup> and by 1987 they no longer served a local purpose either, since the collections of the City Library Service and tertiary educational institutions had greatly improved. In reality, such expenditure was considered reckless<sup>29</sup> and beyond the Library's means.<sup>30</sup>

While the State Library had at last secured primacy in the field of 'compiling current bibliographies', the South African Library was permitted to compile retrospective bibliographies and indexes.<sup>31</sup> It stood to reason that the scope for such retrospective bibliographies and indexes would eventually end. The meaning of 'retrospective' was not defined. Since the Mendelssohn Revision Project ended at 1925 (the South African Library continued compiling derivative publications), while the State Library had commenced a Retrospective South African National

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<sup>24</sup> Government Notice R1619 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.54.

<sup>25</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings (Booyesen committee), (Pretoria: Departement van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, 1962) I, section 3.6, p.41.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2. [mimeographed] 'Consultations with the State Library in Pretoria', 9 February 1962, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1964-1967). Mimeographed document distributed at meeting of Co-ordinating Committee, 21 September 1964. The State Library acquisitions policy will be found in the same file.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/3/0 (1976-1980). 'Funksies van die Nasionale Biblioteke in die R.S.A. Kommentaar en aanbevelings van die Dagbestuur van die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad (NBAR) oor die voorgestelde doelstellings en funksies van die Staatsbiblioteek en die Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek...', October 1980, under cover of letter P.J.W. Louw of the Department (L/5/5/3/A/2) to Lewin Robinson, 5 November 1980.

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). K. Schoeman, in an untitled memorandum, incipit 'Na aanleiding van 'n paar opmerkings oor boekekeuring...'; 6 May 1987, describes continuing such expenditure as irresponsible.

<sup>30</sup> South African Library. Report, 1982-83, p.6.

<sup>31</sup> Government Notice R1619 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.55.

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Bibliography from 1926, this served as the dividing line.<sup>32</sup>

For the first time, the 1987 regulations distinctly declared the South African Library to be South Africa's 'central reference library', with special responsibility to make its collections available for reference within the Library.<sup>33</sup> The Reference Department had been set up in 1954 as a general reference room on the suggestion of Lewin Robinson while he was still Deputy Director. This was reluctantly approved by Director Douglas Varley<sup>34</sup> who's objective was to develop the whole Library into a centre for Africana research, with an active Africana Research Room. But while the Africana Room (opened in 1959) failed to attract researchers and was finally closed in 1981, the Reference Department flourished to the point where admission had to be restricted (see Chapter 3, fifth section). It served as the central reference facility for Cape Town for which it received a subsidy from the City.<sup>35</sup> It also served the wider public, both nationally and internationally, by correspondence and telephone, fielding queries often totally unrelated to South Africa, borne out by a contribution to the South African Library Staff Newsletter in January 1983 which provides a sample of the kind of telephone queries received the previous December (Annexure 6), most of which would today have been answered on the Internet using Google or similar search engines. Pressure on the available space in the room with the noise of consultations at the enquiry desk, a heavy through traffic of users and staff, and general distractions made it difficult for a serious researcher to work there, and it began to be questioned whether the Africana Room should have been closed after all.<sup>36</sup> Swamping of the facilities by students on Saturdays reached unendurable proportions - this was a serious problem at all established libraries in South Africa.<sup>37</sup> The problem was largely caused by the new tertiary education institutions, especially the University of the Western Cape, which did not open their libraries on Saturdays, but also due to the South African Library having built up an excellent general collection of books on exactly the topics most studied, namely literature, sociology and

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<sup>32</sup> Within a very short time, computerization and the Internet would render traditional bibliographies obsolete.

<sup>33</sup> Government Notice R1619 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.55.

<sup>34</sup> A.M.L. Robinson, 'Some Library Reminiscences' pt.1, in: Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, 36(1), September 1981, pp.9-10.

<sup>35</sup> The City's grant was R12,000 in the 1986-87 financial year (South African Library. Report, 1987, p.[20]).

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). K. Schoeman, 'Na aanleiding van 'n paar opmerkings oor boekekeuring...', 6 May 1987, p.2.

<sup>37</sup> A senior staff member of Johannesburg Public Library was asked to write a report for the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS) on the subject of 'swamping' to submit to the President's Council (NLCT-MC MSN B7/1 (Jan-June 1986)). SAILIS Council, Executive Committee. Minutes, 12 March 1986, Appendix 4: Memorandum by B. Brooke-Norris, 'The Current Crisis in Black Education' [undated]), see Annexure 7.

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education, and also having in stock through legal deposit the textbooks which the students were supposed to buy for themselves. Eventually the Library shift-workers could tolerate it no more<sup>38</sup> and management was forced to close on Saturday afternoons from June 1987.<sup>39</sup> All this happening while the large Octagonal hall housed exhibitions visited by few.

'Exhibiting the stock', now one of the subsidiary components of the 1987 central reference library function, had, under earlier regulations, together with preservation, been one of the Library's two principal functions. The centrality of exhibitions and their role in White enculturation was dealt with in Chapter 3, fourth section. In the present period, for the first time, exhibitions would include some of wider interest, such as the exhibition on Islam at the Cape, and the Destruction of District Six in 1978 and 1980 respectively. A very significant amount of time was required to select suitable material on a theme, mount the display and prepare captions in English and Afrikaans. An exhibition guide booklet would be written and printed. Most exhibitions were opened by an eminent person or an authority on the topic, at a function (usually a cheese-and-wine event), attended by crowds of people never seen before in the Library nor afterwards either.<sup>40</sup> One of the disadvantages of exhibitions was that they occasionally stimulated a visitor's interest sufficiently to wish to page through an item on display, which meant it had to be extracted from the exhibition case and returned again, open at the same place as before. Another disadvantage was the exposure of cellulose-based material to daylight and fluorescent light for continuous periods of two or three months, posing a great risk of damage from ultraviolet radiation. Then the exhibition had to be taken down, and only too often, rare items would never be seen again, stolen before the material was returned to secure storage. In a notable case, brass signal cannon on loan from the Cultural History Museum for an exhibition on shipwrecks were purloined by a charming gentleman with a plausible story. It is uncertain whether exhibitions promoted research sufficiently to justify the staff time, the expense, the risk of damage, or the allocation of a such large hall (which could have been put to better use as a reading room). It was only in 1989, when the major reconstruction of the old Archives complex was being planned, that the Chairman of the Board had the insight to say, 'Die statuter-opgelegde hoof-funksie van die S.A. Biblioteek is die versamel, bewaring en beskikbaarstelling van die landse literêre erfinis en skatte. As die primêre naslaan-biblioteek van die RSA, is uitstallings en

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<sup>38</sup> Stack Attendants laid an official grievance against the Section Head [present author]: could not work 9½ hrs on Saturdays, and the overtime payment was insufficient (NLCT-MC MSN S3 (1986-1990). Memorandum, 18 March 1986).

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*; NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (box 1, volume 1984-1988). Management Team. Minutes, 29 April 1987; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14 May 1987; Cape Times, 30 May 1987: 'Dr Gerrit Viljoen, Please Read This'; *ibid.*, 6 June 1987 'Sorry, Doc' - it is F.W. de Klerk who is to blame. The official reason was shortage of funds to pay staff overtime.

<sup>40</sup> A cultural version of 'Rent-a-Mob'

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symposia dalk belangrike bysa[ke], maar nietemin bysa[ke].<sup>41</sup> The Centre for the Book (created to justify the use of the prestigious old Archives Building) would, as originally envisaged, have had a major exhibition component (see Chapter 6, second section).

'Symposiums' were part of the 'liaison function' of the Library<sup>42</sup> and at least one major symposium was arranged each year, having the advantage of generating income for the Library. Usually the proceedings were published for sale, generating additional income. 'Publishing' was also a stated function of both national libraries, one which had been undertaken since Varley's time, through Robinson's directorate, but reaching a new standard of production and larger numbers of titles under Director P.E. Westra who had a special interest in the matter. The sale of publications did generate some cash income for the Library but entailed a disproportionate amount of staff time (including in-house printing) which was not all costed in. Unfortunately, like preservation microfilming as well, other libraries were the chief purchasers of these products, and with the hard times of the 1980s, sales were at best sluggish. The flagship publication was the Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, edited by the respective Directors between 1946 and 1998. It was intended to provide a medium for the publication of research undertaken at the Library. It was supplemented from September 1986 by News from the South African Library which ceased in December 1997.

'Preservation' (be it merely custodianship, or active conservation) had always been a principal function (on paper) of the South African Library,<sup>43</sup> even accepted as such by the NBAR, whose endless debating of the role (if any) of the national libraries was touched upon in Chapter 4, second section. After much deliberation,<sup>44</sup> the function as published in the Gazette<sup>45</sup> was, in section 2, 'to preserve and display literary treasures of both South African and other origin' and specifically states 'to maintain a restoration laboratory on a national level for the treatment of books ...[etc.]' The National Libraries Act no.56 of 1985 in section 4(f) specifies 'to act as a national preservation library and to render a restoration service on a country-wide basis'. The

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<sup>41</sup> 'The statutorily-imposed chief function of the S.A. Library is the collection, preservation and making available of the country's literary heritage and treasures. As the principal reference library of the RSA, exhibitions and symposia are no doubt important side-issues, but side-issues nevertheless.' (NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (box 1, 1984-1988). Management Team. Minutes, 3 May 1989), tipped in note 'points for discussion by Justice Leonora van den Heever with Minister F.W. de Klerk regarding the future of the Old Archives Building'.

<sup>42</sup> Government Notice R1619 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.55.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/4/0 (1976-1980). 'Funksies van die Nasionale Biblioteke in R.S.A. Kommentaar en aanbevelings van die Dasgbestuur van die Nasionale Biblioteekadviesraad ...', 13, 15 November 1980, Bylae 1, Afgeleide Funksies, 1.2., 'Functions of the South African Library', of which section 2, pp.1-2, deals with preservation and the laboratory.

<sup>45</sup> Government Notice R1971: Objects and Functions ..., in: Government Gazette 8879, 9 September 1983, p.19.

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functions of the South African Library gazetted in 1987 included in section 7 'to act as a national preservation library and to render a restoration service on a country-wide basis: Provided that the South African Library, as the national preservation library, has the primary responsibility to preserve legal deposit material and rare and unique material and to render a restoration service at national level'.<sup>46</sup> Alas for faith in parliamentary legislation, for it never came about.

Lewin Robinson had begun to press the Department of National Education to fund a restoration laboratory in 1973.<sup>47</sup> The motivating memorandum was referred to the NBAR for its recommendation<sup>48</sup> but (as later became evident) the NBAR, doubting the necessity for national libraries, was in no hurry to take a decision. The years passed and despite constant reminders, the NBAR (still unsure whether there would be autonomous national libraries in future) did nothing, presumably because, as noted at the end of Chapter 4, second section, this Council had come to the conclusion that the South African Library and the Library of Parliament should be merged.

In 1980 there was the opportunity to employ either one or both young South African women who had trained in Europe and were about to return home,<sup>49</sup> so the matter of setting up the restoration laboratory became a matter of some urgency. The Department regretted it was too late to alter the budget for the current financial year, but promised funding for 1981-82 to which the Library could add its restoration reserve fund.<sup>50</sup> In the event, both women rejected the offer of employment.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, across Government Avenue, a fine Africana collection of books, prints and art works had been bequeathed to the people of South Africa by Sydney Mendelssohn in 1917 and duly arrived from London in 1922. A Senate committee proposed that this Collection and the Cape Archives (then housed in the basement of Parliament) be accommodated in a building to be erected in the grounds of the South African Library, but eventually decided to use rooms

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<sup>46</sup> Government Notice R1619: National Libraries Act, 1985. Functions ..., in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, p.55.

<sup>47</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1973). [mimeographed] A.M.L. Robinson, 'Memorandum on the Need for a Book Restoration Centre at the South African Library, Cape Town', 7 March 1973; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 10 May 1973; NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1973). Robinson to Secretary for National Education, 30 May 1973.

<sup>48</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1973). Department (O5/3) to Robinson, 29 June 1973.

<sup>49</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1979-1980). Robinson to Secretary for National Education, 19 February 1980.

<sup>50</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 8 May 1980.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 7 August 1980.

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under the Library of Parliament,<sup>52</sup> the collection becoming an integral part of this library. Ever since then, the anomaly of having the country's two finest Africana collections within hailing distance of each other understandably led to calls for the two libraries to be merged. There were several obstacles in the way, not least the terms of its bequest to Parliament prescribing limited public access, and the constitutional separation of the powers of the State.

Parliament had a binding department which served its library, while the library also engaged a contract book restorer to restore the more valuable items. In 1978 the Secretary of Parliament began investigating the appointment of a paper conservator of their own, followed in 1979 by engaging a consultant and asking the Public Works Department to find them suitable premises.<sup>53</sup> The South African Library was also searching for a suitable conservator in Europe,<sup>54</sup> but had as little success as Parliament. In 1981 Parliament sent their consultant to Germany, who identified a suitably qualified person who was willing to emigrate to South Africa, and he arrived on 24 September 1981.<sup>55</sup> The Treasury, at very short notice, found the funding required to set up the Library of Parliament's laboratory, with construction work due to begin in June 1982.<sup>56</sup> It was afterwards discovered that Parliament had been given the funds for which the South African Library had for years been lobbying, and for which the Department of National Education had budgeted.<sup>57</sup> In his letter of protest to the Department, newly-appointed Director Westra pointed out that, while Parliament's laboratory was for purely internal use, the restoration laboratory of his Library was intended to serve the whole nation as prescribed in the functions newly approved by the Department.<sup>58</sup> The Director-General admitted it was a sensitive matter and that unfortunately Government would not provide more capital for a second laboratory in Cape Town.<sup>59</sup> Legislation was evidently no guarantor of the Library's functions or their funding.

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<sup>52</sup> Senate. Sessional Committee on the Library of Parliament. Second Report [S.C.1A-1921], 15 June 1921, pp.2-3.

<sup>53</sup> Library of Parliament. Annual Report, 1979, p.4.

<sup>54</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1976-1980). Robinson to A. Marais, 19 March 1980; Robinson to G. Kaspar, 25 March 1980; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 7 August 1980.

<sup>55</sup> Library of Parliament. Annual Report, 1980, pp.3-4; *ibid.*, 1981, pp.2-3.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>57</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 March 1982.

<sup>58</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1981-1983). Westra to Director-General, Department of National Education, 4 March 1982.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, P.S. Meyer, Director-General (no file reference, possibly 'off-the-record') to General du Toit, Chairman of the Advisory Committee for National Libraries, 1 December 1982. The reassignment of funds had reputedly been on the orders of Vice-President Schlebusch who had special responsibility for internal arrangements of Parliament (see for example NLCT-MC MSN A3/1 (1985-1986). Director to Board Chairman, 24 September 1986).

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All was not lost, however. Owing to mis-communication between the Department of National Education and the Department of Public Works, the latter went ahead and constructed a previously-approved upper floor on the South African Library's bindery for the conservation laboratory, completed in September 1982,<sup>60</sup> and by August 1985 the Library had found sufficient money in its normal budget to purchase basic equipment.<sup>61</sup> The Technical Assistant post had by now been upgraded to Technician-Senior Technician<sup>62</sup> and Westra managed to have it upgraded further to Control Restorer.<sup>63</sup> The post was sufficiently attractive for the Library to secure the services of a British paper conservator (personally recruited by the Director during a visit to Europe) who took up his duties in October 1984.

Reflecting on the Meijer Committee's recommendations must have brought home to Government the cost implications, even the impossibility, of exercising the total control it recommended. In this instance it would involve the national libraries, but once the precedent had been set for the libraries, it would inevitably set the pattern for the museums, botanical gardens, art galleries and zoo. The Meijer report may well have been the tipping-point which led to that reaction against centralization, 'framework autonomy', which was announced shortly afterwards. Indeed, the investigation may have been set up for exactly that purpose, considering the speed with which its recommendations were rejected by Minister Viljoen.

The determination of national library functions and deciding which library should take responsibility for them which followed, and the concomitant moves to have the situation sanctioned by statute (which has been noted in this section), was yet another manifestation of the State Library's reaction to threats to its autonomy by seeking the protection of law, successful this time. Rejecting Meijer's recommendations (which would have drawn both libraries into the vortex of a centralizing bureaucracy and abject dependency), now threw them against the rocks of an autonomy rigidly defined by statute. This bore very heavily on the South African Library which sought maximum autonomy of professional practice, perhaps less so on the State Library whose typical functions were more easily defined. As will become apparent in the next section, attempts to scientifically determine the limits of financial dependence on the State through a variety of subsidy formulas failed repeatedly. Statutory functions were no guarantor of adequate funding.

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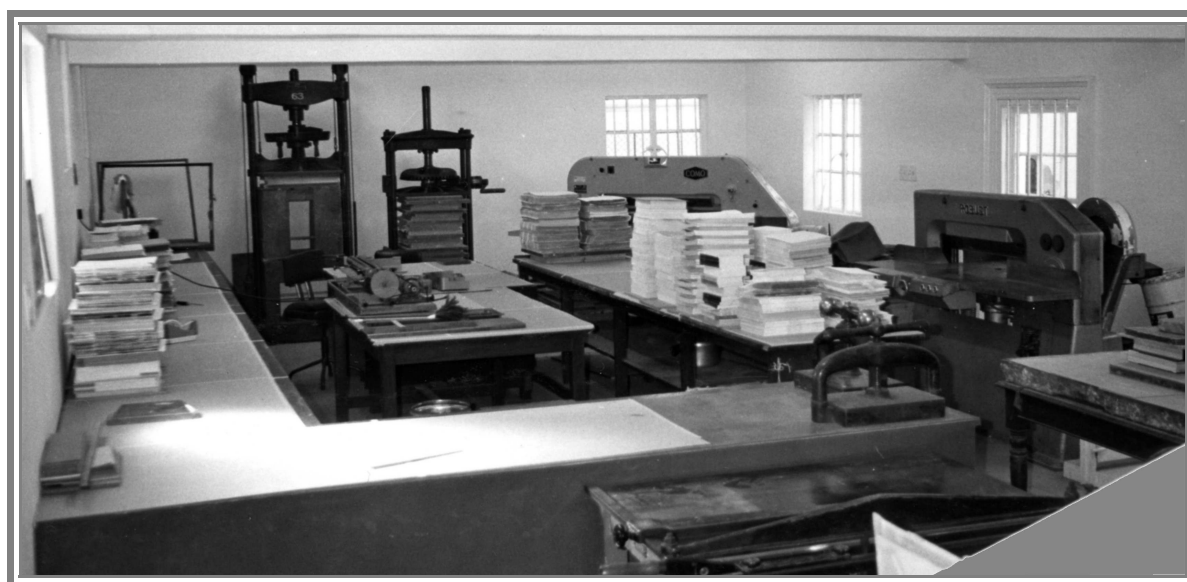
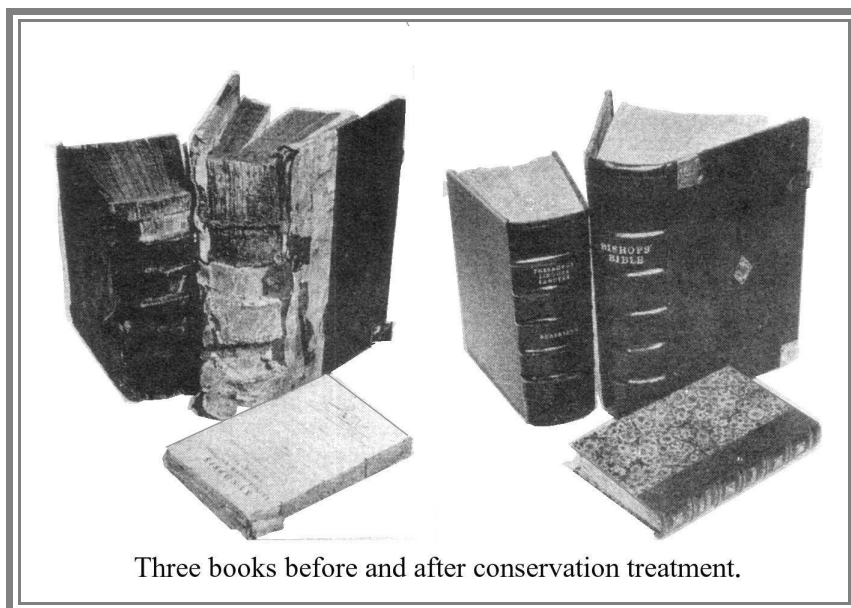
<sup>60</sup> South African Library Staff Newsletter 49, August 1982, p.12; 54, January 1983. p.1.

<sup>61</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 1 August 1985.

<sup>62</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 23 (1981-1983). Robinson to Dr van Niekerk, South African National Gallery, 28 October 1981.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to Department, 28 June 1982, confirming discussions 22 June 1982; South African Library Staff Newsletter 54, January 1983, p.1.

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Part of the Binding Department, 1983.

## Chapter 5, second section : Staffing and Funding

Libraries, especially research libraries, have a notorious capacity for absorbing unlimited amounts of funding. The history of the South African Library is the record of an unremitting struggle to secure sufficient and predictable funding, against what the State believed it was justified in providing. Revenue came almost exclusively from the State with a small grant from the City.<sup>1</sup> The Library could charge for services like photocopying, photography and contract research, but attempts to raise income by publishing South African material produced insignificant returns.<sup>2</sup> Despite the De Villiers Committee of 1968 favouring admission fees for State-aided institutions, it accepted that this would not be possible for the two national libraries.<sup>3</sup> Charging an admission fee had always been repugnant to the South African Library.

It is necessary to review the way in which the South African Library was funded before 1979. Originally, the size of the State grant administered by the Department of National Education was proportional to the size and grading of the approved staff establishment and calculated according to various salary scales<sup>4</sup> set by the Public Service Commission (later Commission for Administration); any increase depended on the ability of the director to convince the visiting work-study investigators that more staff and better grades were needed. There was considerable jostling between the institutions to increase their share.<sup>5</sup> Each year the determined amount would be increased by a percentage to compensate for inflation. This system was arbitrary, and a scientifically-devised funding formula seemed to promise a solution, but this presupposed that the State would be in a position to fund the formula in all circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> The proportion of the City's grant was: 1955 4.9%; 1960 3.7%; 1965 2.6%; 1970 1.3%; 1975 0.9%; 1980 0.5%; 1985 0.6%; 1990 0.6%; 1995 0.5% (source: South African Library. Reports). The grant was discontinued from April 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Publishing by the South African Library was developed by Varley and included as one of the Library's functions in Varley's presentation to the Booyesen Committee in 1961, but neither this Committee's report nor the De Villiers Committee report of 1968 mentions publications or reprographic services as a source of revenue. The first statement that publishing was a function of the Library was in section 4.6 of the 1983 'Objects and Functions' (Government Notice R1971, in: Government Gazette 8879, 9 September 1983, p.16). The contribution of publishing and reprography to total South African Library income was minuscule: 1955 2%; 1960 3%; 1965 1.5%; 1970 0.4%; 1975 2.7%; 1980 3%; 1985 ca. 2%; 1990 2.7%; 1995 4%. Most of this income came from photocopying. (Source: South African Library. Reports.) Publishing devoured a significant amount of staff time which masked real input costs.

<sup>3</sup> Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die Behoeftes van Staatsondersteunde Inrigtings, (F.J. de Villiers committee), ([Pretoria: Departement van Kultuursake], 1968), pp.264-265.

<sup>4</sup> Salary scales were funded at the rate of 85% of the maximum notch on the scale. This may have been realistic in the Public Service and at the State Library where staff turnover was high and few remained long enough to reach the upper notches, but at the South African Library with its low staff turnover, many of the staff were at the top of their scales, the difference having to be made up from elsewhere in the budget. This practice was already in effect in 1980 and still applied in 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Former Director P.E. Westra said: 'Institutions that screamed hardest got more money' (interview, 10 October 2012).

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In anticipation of the 1968 De Villiers Committee investigations, the Committee of Heads of State-aided Institutions proposed the allocation of subsidies according to a simple formula 'Government Grant =  $(S_s+S_r+S_d+S_e+S_a+S_p-S_c)$ '<sup>6</sup> which favoured the functions of museums, namely exhibition, research and education, and clearly inappropriate to libraries. However, the De Villiers Committee devised the following formula  $(S+A+B-C+D)$ <sup>7</sup> based on allocations already determined for the 1970-71 financial year. Component c (the deduction of a percentage of generated income) naturally caused considerable dismay to the two libraries whose deductions set at 50% were the highest proportion of any of the institutions.<sup>8</sup> The Committee recommended that this formula be implemented and not revised for at least five years.<sup>9</sup> Maryna Fraser considered that in many respects the De Villiers Committee report 'marked the beginning of a new era of funding for the national libraries in South Africa',<sup>10</sup> but it resulted in a reduction of the Library's grant at the time salary scales were increased in January 1971. In December 1971 the formula was suspended by the State which urged the institutions to leave vacant posts unfilled (the South African Library already had a number of unfilled posts),<sup>11</sup> and by June 1972, the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions was told that the Treasury did not even have funds to pay out the outstanding balance of the 1970-71 grant and that institutions should fund essential expenditure by means of bank overdrafts.<sup>12</sup> The subsidy for the 1972-73 financial year was cut further by resolution of Cabinet, and funds were distributed on a priority basis to prevent the closure of less-viable institutions. The prospect was held out for a maximum 5% increase in

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<sup>6</sup> Subscript s represented the cost of the staff establishment determined by the Department, and subscript r, d, e, a, and p represented varying percentages of the staff component s to cover research, display, education, administration, and purchases (differentiated according to type of material purchased) respectively, deducting the c factor or locally-generated revenue (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1968-1969). Lewin Robinson, South African Library to Aschenborn, State Library, 24 June 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Factor s represented existing salaries and grants, A represented administration costs as a proportion of the staff establishment cost on a varying scale (the South African Library and State Library received 30% of s), B represented the acquisitions component also as a proportion of the staff establishment cost (the largest amount being assigned to the two libraries), from which were deducted c (a percentage of institutionally-generated income and grants) and D representing any special ad hoc grants from the State.

<sup>8</sup> De Villiers Committee report (1968), pp.270-274. Income derived for functions which were not funded by the State were exempted. This may account for omitting Reference from the South African Library's official functions.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p.274.

<sup>10</sup> H.M. Fraser, 'The National Library, with Special Reference to its Bibliographical Function', (MA thesis, Potchefstroom University, 1973), p.92.

<sup>11</sup> South African Library. Report, 1971-1972, p.3; the Department of Public Works also cut their maintenance budget.

<sup>12</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/2 (1971). Committee of Heads. Report by Secretary K.J. Pienaar (undated, ca. July 1971); *ibid.* (1972). Committee of Heads. Minutes of executive meeting, 7 September 1972.

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grants for 1973-74 should State funding permit.<sup>13</sup> But in 1977 the Treasury was again so short of funds that its already arbitrary grants were paid out in monthly tranches instead of quarterly to avoid having to borrow money.<sup>14</sup> This shortage of funds in the Treasury is thought to be related to the introduction of secondary education for Black children at this time.

An indication that the State was beginning to redefine its responsibility towards the institutions (which will be taken further in Chapter 6, 'Adrift after 1988') may be found in section 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum to the Cultural Institutions Act Amendment Bill, 1973, where the State's financial support is referred to as a grant rather than a subsidy.

Despite assurances from the Department that a new subsidy formula would soon be implemented, the institutions continued to be funded by an arbitrary system of hand-outs.<sup>15</sup> Unpredictable funding aggravated the problems the national libraries were already experiencing through the dilatory behaviour of the National Library Advisory Council (NBAR). As we have seen, the NBAR was wound down in 1979 in the wider political context of the time which was becoming less-supportive of State-aided institutions under P.W. Botha, and saw the State withdrawing from many areas of life in favour of free enterprise.<sup>16</sup> However, the State grant improved rapidly from 1976-77 and in 1980-81 the total amount of the South African Library's grant, which exceeded half a million Rand, was more than double that of 1975-76. Hope was expressed that the reintroduction of a formula 'will not upset our calm passage and plunge us into the same financial turbulence experienced when previously a subsidy formula was in force.'<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately it did.

The appointment of Prof. Gerrit Viljoen as Minister of National Education in October 1980 was, in several respects, a turning-point for the declared institutions and the national libraries in particular. A working meeting was held between Minister Viljoen and the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions on 22 May 1981, and among many points of discussion were the related ideas of the Department assigning to boards the right to appoint and grade their own staff, and the likelihood of a new subsidy formula.<sup>18</sup> The two topics were inter-connected, since the size of the grant was based upon the staff establishment, while the size, grading and racial profile of which

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* (1972). Department to T.H. Barry (CHDI), 1 March 1972.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (1976-1978). Department (R2/5/6) to Declared Institutions, [January 1977]. The institutions were conversely deprived of the interest they earned on the quarterly deposits.

<sup>15</sup> Being 85% of the maximum scales of approved staff establishment posts reflecting the previous years' grant plus 7%.

<sup>16</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid South Africa, 1910-1986* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.51.

<sup>17</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 30 October 1980: Administrative Officer's Report.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (1981). Minutes of Meeting between Minister of National Education and Heads of Declared Institutions, 22 May 1981. Covering letter from Department (Kul 20/4) is dated 14 August 1981.

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was at that time still firmly controlled in every detail by the Department. Despite the subsidy formula providing the 'framework' within which the boards would in future exercise their 'autonomy', the two aspects have necessarily been discussed separately in this study. Under Gerrit Viljoen, the Department had gradually devolved decision-making to the Black universities, as well as control of the admission of non-Whites to traditionally White universities,<sup>19</sup> and once the new constitutional dispensation had been implemented, this would be extended to 'General Affairs' institutions as well.

Early in 1981 the State Library put in a memorandum to newly-appointed Minister Viljoen (the former chairman of its board) stating that its work had fallen seriously in arrears owing to a shortage of staff. It alleged that 100 new posts were urgently required beyond the 129 White posts already on the establishment, of which eighteen were then vacant, requesting a Departmental work-study.<sup>20</sup> However, in August 1981, Minister Viljoen commissioned an urgent Human Sciences Research Council investigation (the Meijer Committee referred to in Chapter 4, fourth section and Chapter 5, first section) to effectively wind up the lengthy deliberations of the NBAR. Meijer made recommendations regarding the number of posts required for his South African National Library and Information Service proposal, but a funding formula was not part of his instructions. Meijer's report recommended an optimal post structure for the South African Library, State Library, SABINET, and (proposed) National Librarian's Office components. His proposal involved transferring fourteen State Library posts to SABINET, but recommended for the State Library 55 additional posts (30 at professional and senior professional grades), and twelve new posts at the South African Library (all of them at senior professional grades).<sup>21</sup>

At the handing-over of Meijer's report on 26 November 1981, the Minister declared his proposals far too drastic<sup>22</sup> and declined to implement them. Application was consequently made to the Department by both national libraries for official work-studies to determine the additional posts and upgrades needed.<sup>23</sup> The Department replied in July 1982 that the State Library would have a work-study done as soon as possible, but that it was not possible to fit in a similar study at

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<sup>19</sup> G.C. Moodie, 'The State and the Liberal Universities in South Africa: 1948-1990' in: *Higher Education (Netherlands)*, 27, 1994, p.32.

<sup>20</sup> P.E. Westra, 'Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek. Memorandum oor "Die Nasionale Biblioteke in die R.S.A.: 'n Ontwikkelingsplan" deur Dr J.G. Meijer e.a.', 30 November 1981, p.1 [mimeographed, evidently circulated to the board]; *State Library. Annual Report, 1981-82*, p.9. The Department still funded vacant as well as filled posts; an increase in the number of approved posts increased the whole funding structure. The argument was that this paid for outsourced work. The State Library's additional posts did indeed mostly go unfilled.

<sup>21</sup> J.G. Meijer, M.L. van As and J.F Burger, *Nasionale Biblioteke in die RSA: 'n ontwikkelingsplan* (Pretoria: Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1981), p.203.

<sup>22</sup> P.E. Westra, 'Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek. Memorandum ...' (30 November 1981), p.5.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 February 1982.

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the South African Library at that time.<sup>24</sup> Having one's former Board Chairman as Minister was beginning to bear fruit. The work-study was conducted at the State Library during 1983<sup>25</sup> where 109 posts (50 of them professional) had been requested;<sup>26</sup> by the financial year 1984-85 the number of posts at the State Library had increased by 45 over the position in 1982-83.<sup>27</sup>

Although a similar study at the South African Library was promised for late 1983 or early 1984, and although comprehensive documentation was prepared for this visit, motivating 44 additional posts, it was called-off at the last moment.<sup>28</sup> The Department instead made an ad hoc grant of three senior posts<sup>29</sup> without providing increased funding for them. Reminders about the work study were ignored year after year until the Library was finally informed in 1987 that, since the system of 'framework autonomy' was being implemented, no further work-studies would be carried out.<sup>30</sup> The preferential bloating of the State Library's staff establishment by awarding it many additional posts (many of which were funded but never filled) was remarkable, and in line with Standish's remarks about inflating the number of posts to increase an entity's relative power (see p.52). Government's parsimony towards the South African Library had a crippling effect on the latter Library, from which it never recovered.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 1(a) (1981-1983). Department (Kul 20/5/1) to South African Library, 26 July 1982.

<sup>25</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1983-84, p.9.

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/4 (1984). Co-ordinating Committee of National Libraries. Agenda, 4 June 1984. The author has not found clear documentary evidence how many of the requested posts were granted.

<sup>27</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1982-83, p.9; 1984-85, p.10. In 1985 its establishment included three Deputy Directors and ten Chief Librarians. This enormously increased establishment may have been due, among other things, to the State Library agreeing to supervise the Black 'Homelands' on behalf of the Department of National Education (see Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1984 [RP.37-1985], p.169, and State Library. Annual Report, 1984-85, p.5 and following years). The South African Library at this time had one Deputy Director and two Chief Librarians.

<sup>28</sup> The Department, which had been reorganized after the introduction of the tricameral constitutional dispensation, lost a considerable number of posts (Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1985 [RP.24-1986], p.2). There can be no doubt that Minister Viljoen would have foreseen this outcome.

<sup>29</sup> South African Library. Report, 1983-84, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/6 (Work study, 1983-84). Department (5/1/2/7) to South African Library, 6 February 1987.

<sup>31</sup> H.O.K. Zastrau, referring to the South African Library, wrote that 'traditional national library functions place too much emphasis on activities of an archival nature, and on activities which cannot be readily linked to national development objectives. Hence they do not appeal to the imagination of funding authorities. It is difficult to provide a motivation sufficiently convincing to ensure the steady flow of financial assistance which is necessary to keep the national library operating' ('The South African National Library Concept: a South African Institute for Literature and Information Management?' in: National Libraries: some South African and international perspectives on challenges and opportunities, a tribute to H.J. Aschenborn at sixty-five, ed. J.A. Boon (et al.) (Pretoria: State Library, 1986), pp.62-63). The State Library, with a range of functions which promoted the Grand Apartheid 'Homelands' policies, and provided segregated services specifically for Blacks, could readily portray itself as contributing to national objectives.

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Meanwhile a draft of a new subsidy formula ( $A+B+C+D+E+F = G+H=I$ )<sup>32</sup> for Declared Institutions accompanied the agenda for the first meeting of the National Libraries Advisory Committee (5 June 1984) when it was discussed critically. The formula would be phased-in over three years,<sup>33</sup> but the ink was hardly dry before the Department withdrew it (presumably because of tight economic conditions following the proclamation of the states of emergency<sup>34</sup>) and announced that available funding would be divided as effectively as possible.<sup>35</sup>

The National Libraries Act, no.56 of 1985 was passed by Parliament,<sup>36</sup> but could not be implemented, not least because the means of subsidizing the libraries was far from being settled. On 14 March 1985 the Department wrote urgently to the Heads of Declared Institutions and the Human Sciences Research Council, advising that the anticipated subsidy (which, for the South African Library, was already 8% lower than the previous year<sup>37</sup>) had been drastically cut (in the case of the South African Library by a substantial R40,000), that annual bonuses and merit awards had both been cut by 60%, all vacancies current and future were frozen, and that, of these vacant posts, half would be summarily abolished; essential services should be maintained by the reassignment of staff, and even top managerial posts were to be frozen if vacated.<sup>38</sup> During the following financial year (1986-87) it came to light that the Department, despite the cuts, had accidentally

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<sup>32</sup> The new formula, based on the size of the approved staff establishment, could be summarized thus: A is the salary component funded to 85% of the maximum of each approved scale plus actual fringe benefits (non-Whites who could not be appointed to the permanent staff would be paid out of component E); B provided for obligatory expenditure such as Unemployment Insurance and leave gratuities; C covered insurance; D funded conservation of collections (a sum double that of C); E was administration costs fixed at 30% of A; F covered the cost of research, education, exhibitions and the library (an anomaly when the institution was itself a library) at 20% of the cost of A; G is the sum of A to F, to which is added H, a sum calculated at 7½% of G to cover acquisitions. Thus the total subsidy I was the total of G plus H. Providing for possible shortage of funds, a secondary formula was added which grouped all the institutions into four classes by type of institution and weighted the share of available funds they would receive, and, within each group, what percentage of that group's funding would be apportioned to the specific institution (thus in the fourth group - libraries - of its 22% share 44% would be apportioned to the State Library, 38% to the South African Library and 18% to the South African Library for the Blind.

<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/2 (1984-1986). National Libraries Advisory Committee. Agenda for 5 June 1984, Annex G. It is reproduced in: P.J. Lor, 'Gedagtes oor 'n Nuwe Subsidieformule vir die Staatsbiblioteek', 31 January 1985, Annex B (NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1984-1989)).

<sup>34</sup> Urban unrest had reached serious proportions in 1984 and foreign capitalists fearing for the security of their investments and under pressure to disinvest, withdrew, while foreign banks declined to further roll-over the loans on which the State depended. In July 1985 a state of emergency was declared (renewed in 1986 and maintained until 1990), and in September 1985 the government defaulted on payment of interest on its foreign loans.

<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1984-1989). Department (5/1/1(B)) to South African Library, 22 February 1985.

<sup>36</sup> Published in the Gazette on 30 May 1985.

<sup>37</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda, 7 February 1985.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1984-1989). Department (1/4/1/2/1(B)) to Heads of Institutions, 14 March 1985.

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made a substantial overpayment to the institutions, and consequently this would be taken off the remaining eight monthly subsidy payments in equal parts,<sup>39</sup> which further reduced the South African Library's grant. In a personal letter to the Chairman of the Board, the Minister (now F.W. de Klerk) stated emphatically there was no money available to bail out the Library.<sup>40</sup>

On the expenditure side, the devalued Rand had greatly increased the cost of imported books, bringing purchases to a halt, while journal subscriptions had to be cancelled. Paper conservation equipment ordered before the currency collapsed had not only to be paid for in the devalued currency,<sup>41</sup> but was also hit by steep import surcharges on arrival. Two of the Library's Chief Librarians of retireable age were dispensed with, but there was no scope for retrenching the already over-extended staff, nor were there vacant posts which could be cut as the State Library had done with its surfeit of unfilled posts.<sup>42</sup> Just at this very time, the Library was swamped by Coloured and Black students who were unable to get adequate service from the under-stocked and poorly-managed University of the Western Cape Library, and attempts to impose admission criteria only served to place the Library in a bad light (discussed Chapter 5, first section).

The financial situation of the Library had become so bad that the entire Board proposed to resign, believing they could no longer be held accountable in the circumstances.<sup>43</sup>

In the light of these serious financial difficulties the Council raised the question as to whether the S A Library could still carry on as a true national library. The observation that ours is a 'dying library' is being heard more and more often these days.<sup>44</sup>

The South African Library expected a deficit of a quarter of a million Rand which the Department refused to allow to be included in the budget. The Chairman of the Board confronted Minister de Klerk in person over the financial crisis, for which he was severely reprimanded by the Department's Director-General,<sup>45</sup> but it did yield results in the form of an investigation by the Department's financial experts, Drs L.C.A. Stoop and A.G.W. Steyn who were evidently non-plussed by the Library's financial plight and could only suggest that either the already small staff

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, Department (5/1/2/3) to South African Library, 23 July 1986.

<sup>40</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/6 (1986), F.W. de Klerk (5/1/2/3) to Chairman S.P. Meyer, 28 January 1986.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, P.S. Meyer to F.W. de Klerk with Director's comments, 29 November 1986.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 9 May 1986.

<sup>44</sup> South African Library. Report, 1985-86, p.4.

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, extraordinary meeting, 3 June 1986; NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1985-1986). Director-General (5/1/2/3) to Chairman P.S. Meyer (home address), 21 July 1986.

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establishment be decimated, or that some means be found to obtain non-government income (but could offer no suggestion where this might come from). These experts visited on 20 June 1986, yet a copy of their extensive and detailed report to the Minister<sup>46</sup> only reached the Library in November when it was too late to take corrective action.<sup>47</sup> In a personal letter to Minister de Klerk, Chairman Meyer asks whether the time had not come to close the Library.<sup>48</sup> In reply, the Minister stated that for the present financial year, the Library must arrange an overdraft, and he promised a budget allocation of 94% of the formula in the 1986-87 financial year.<sup>49</sup> In the event, the allocated funds came to only 83% of the formula.

It was impossible to purchase any books that year out of the State grant.<sup>50</sup> A venture which illustrates the futility of trying to secure non-State funding was the Memorial Trust, instigated by the Friends of the South African Library by which a specified donation could be made in memory of a deceased person, from the interest on which, books would be purchased bearing a memorial book-plate.<sup>51</sup> This entailed considerable staff input by already over-extended staff and ultimately yielded very little income.<sup>52</sup> The Friends arranged a 'rare book auction' which also raised far less than anticipated,<sup>53</sup> but the proceeds did contribute towards reducing the Library's overdraft. A street market bookstall was commenced in March 1987 selling surplus and unwanted library stock,<sup>54</sup> which raised little money at first but in time became a significant source of funding for the Friends. Owing to swamping by students, the Library closed at 1 pm on Saturdays from 6 June 1987, instead of 6 pm,<sup>55</sup> causing a public outcry,<sup>56</sup> but this did reduce expenditure on staff

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<sup>46</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/6 (1986). Stoop (pp. Director-General, 5/1/2/3) to P.S. Meyer, 24 November 1986.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, P.S. Meyer to F.W. de Klerk with Director's comments, 29 November 1986.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, Meyer to De Klerk, 1 December 1986.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, De Klerk to Meyer, 4 December 1986.

<sup>50</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 February 1987.

<sup>51</sup> News from the South African Library, 1(2), December 1986, p.1.

<sup>52</sup> Recollections of the author who was responsible for managing the scheme. In about 1998 the capital, which was yielding virtually no return, was liquidated by buying urgently-needed reference works.

<sup>53</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14 May 1987. A donated caravan, and duplicates from the Library's own surplus stocks (rather than books donated for sale) raised most of the R23,780.

<sup>54</sup> News from the South African Library, 1(3), March 1987, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 1(4), June 1987, p.3; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14 May 1987.

<sup>56</sup> 'Just about the saddest notice I have seen in a long time is the new one outside the main entrance to the South African Library which informs users that in future this fine institution will be closed on Saturday afternoons...' (Willem Steenkamp, in: Cape Times, 30 May 1987).

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overtime payments. The financial crisis gave both the Department and the Library a severe jolt.

One development which was seen as promising was the offer to the Library of the old University Building<sup>57</sup> nearby in Queen Victoria Street (then about to be vacated by the State Archives) as well as the associated six-floor lease-back 'Slotsboo' warehouse (which was, correctly, seen as an ideal solution to the Library's storage problems). To make effective use of the heritage building within the declared functions of the South African Library the director proposed creating a 'Centre for the Book'<sup>58</sup> which would (as originally conceived) promote the collections of the Library through a special collections reading room, conservation laboratory, conferences and exhibitions, all with a pronounced 'First World' bias. A certain amount of the set-up cost was promised by government, but it was over-optimistically expected to become self-funding.<sup>59</sup>

During his visit to the Transvaal in March 1987, the Director was informed about several other developments which would have lasting consequences for the Library. Firstly, the 'General Affairs' institutions would be granted full managerial autonomy subject to the framework of relevant legislation and the global allocation of annual funding. In the Library's case, it was announced that the 1985 National Libraries Act would come into force by June 1987 or as soon as the Treasury had confirmed the related Regulations. However, in view of 'framework autonomy', the Department would no longer adjust the size of the South African Library's establishment by means of work studies. It was admitted by the Department that a general subsidy formula was unsuited to the needs of the national libraries, and a special one would be prepared.<sup>60</sup> The further consideration of the subsidy formula and the work of Drs Stoop and Steyn will be the subject of Chapter 6, first section, 'Coming of Age'.

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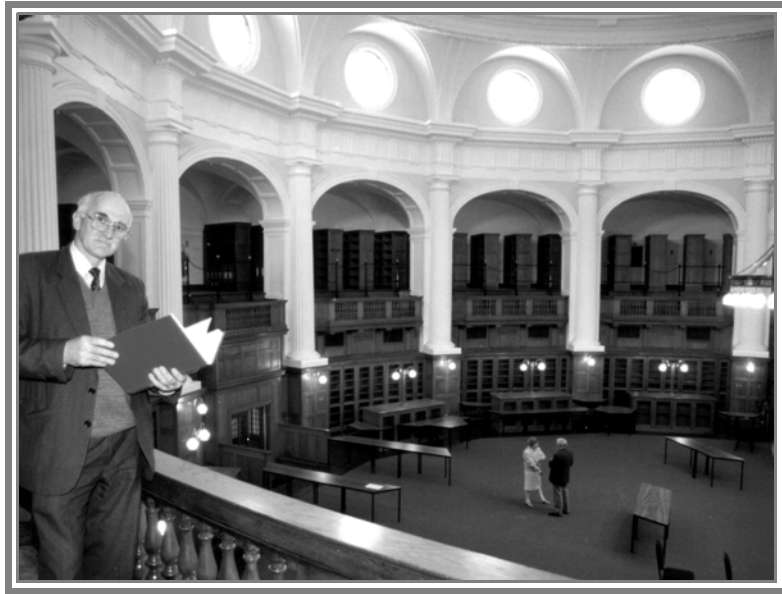
<sup>57</sup> The offer was made to the Library by Minister Viljoen during his visit to the Library on 28 July 1982 (South African Library. Report, 1982-83, p.7). This impressive but impractical heritage building built between 1911 and 1913 had been allowed to fall into a serious state of disrepair. It required very costly restoration work.

<sup>58</sup> The idea of a Centre for the Book originated during the Director's visit to Johannesburg and Pretoria, 9-13 March 1987 (NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (1984-1988). Management Exco. Minutes, 18 March 1987, 'Verslag van Direkteur oor Besoek en Onderhoude in Pretoria en Johannesburg, 9-13/3/1987').

<sup>59</sup> It is the author's opinion that the Centre for the Book was (and remains) problematic, both in funding (which is inadequate) and its objectives (which intrude into the field of education).

<sup>60</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (1984-1988). Management Exco. Minutes, 18 March 1987, 'Verslag van Direkteur oor Besoek en Onderhoude in Pretoria en Johannesburg, 9-13/3/1987'. The Act came into force on 31 July 1987 (Government Notices 1618-1620, in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987).

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**The Main Hall of the Centre for the Book**  
(As handed-over after renovation in March 1996. Photo by The Argus.)

## Chapter 5, third section : Library Users and the State of the Nation

The Afrikaner hubris which drove the apartheid system was severely shaken by the 1976 Soweto uprising and the subsequent violent resistance throughout the country. This was put down ruthlessly by the security branches of the State. In 1979, tentative developments gave promise of change. These included reformist pronouncements by the new President, P.W. Botha, his commission to Minister Heunis to explore new constitutional options, the ejection of conservatives from the Cabinet, and the appointment of the reformist T.N.H. (Punt) Janson as Minister of National Education. Watershed findings of the Wiehahn Commission (abolishing restrictive labour legislation) and the Riekert Commission (allowing Blacks residential and other rights outside the Homelands) struck at the very base of classic apartheid orthodoxy. Yet the suggested reforms were careful to preserve National Party power and for this, if not other reasons, they were rejected by non-Whites. 'Verwoerd was right', wrote Allister Sparks,

Concessions don't ease pressure or buy time, and the introduction of piecemeal reforms do introduce illogicalities that make it harder to hold one's ground. The very act of political reform that Botha thought was going to enable him to co-opt the emergent black middle class and win new credibility in the world in fact triggered the most serious black revolt in South Africa's history and plunged its government's credibility to a new low.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1980s, in the streets around the South African Library, frequent provocative demonstrations were broken up by force. On one occasion (to which a date cannot now be attached), dozens of Black youths in school uniform were cornered by the police in the grounds of St George's Cathedral and tear-gassed. They fled in panic over the low wall surrounding the Cathedral, only to find themselves trapped in the back courtyard of the Library, where many tried to scale drain-pipes to reach the reading room windows before Library staff restored calm and led them quietly through the building.<sup>2</sup> But it was most exceptional for the Library to become so directly involved in these disturbances.<sup>3</sup> Several commentators remarked that the South African Library was a still fulcrum between the turbulence of Parliament on one side and the Supreme Court on the other, each representing one of the separate constitutional divisions

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<sup>1</sup> A. Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1990/2012), p.333.

<sup>2</sup> Author's personal recollections.

<sup>3</sup> The Library's standing arrangement to evacuate children from the St George's Pre-primary School was never needed.

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of authority: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. During the decade of violence, the Library was never directly targeted by any malicious or violent act or threat, and only once indirectly on 11 February 1989 when the Library's shutters and windowpanes were shattered as the result of an explosion outside the Supreme Court across the street.<sup>4</sup>

Inside the Library, a person could have been in a different world. Staff members with views covering the whole spectrum of opinion never, yet, debated political issues among themselves. Before the regulations were relaxed in 1969,<sup>5</sup> public participation by employees in politics was an act of misconduct,<sup>6</sup> a tradition which continued to be observed and eventually reinstated in the 1987 regulations.<sup>7</sup> Users were all catered for without determining their point-of-view, and special efforts were made by staff to gather 'underground' material distributed in South Africa, diverse political material published abroad,<sup>8</sup> in addition to locally-produced publications obtained by legal deposit, and political campaigning material obtained from all political parties. Discussion between readers was strictly discouraged, with the result that potential disruption was avoided.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 11 May 1989, Annex 68. This bomb, suspected to have been set by agents provocateurs, was found in the street early on 11 February in a spot which could not seriously affect the Supreme Court. The device was detonated on the spot by the police. Responsibility was never announced.

<sup>5</sup> Cultural Institutions Act, 1969: Regulations. Government Notice 1168 in: Government Gazette 2483, 11 July 1969: Misconduct, pp.26-27.

<sup>6</sup> Regulations for ... State-aided Institutions, Government Notice 2201 in: Government Gazette 5363, 29 October 1954, pp.14-15. Part 5, Discipline, 1(f) 'takes any public part in political matters or publicly comments on the administration of an institution ... shall be deemed to be guilty of misconduct.' Subsequently an extensive set of regulations on 'Participation in Political Activities' appeared in the 1987 conditions of service under the 1985 National Libraries Act, prohibiting promoting or prejudicing the interests of any political party in the public press or at a public meeting (including any gathering or procession in or through any public place), but permitting employees to serve on a public body in a non-party political capacity ('Conditions of Service of National Libraries' in: National Libraries Act, 1985, Regulations 1987 (...) (Cape Town: South African Library, 1987), pp.56-57). On two occasions in 1989, South African Library staff had to be instructed not to wear red ribbons, 'or indicate in any other way that they support causes or organizations which may cause offense to some of our users. Please remember that we are a neutral organization serving all sectors of the population' (South African Library Staff Bulletin, 7 April 1989, p.1, and 15 September 1989, p.1).

<sup>7</sup> 'The librarian has no politics, no religion and no morals' - a common maxim in librarianship, but challenged by D.J. Foskett in *The Creed of a Librarian: no politics, no religion, no morals* (London: Library Association, 1970). As noted in Chapter 3, fourth section, leaders of the library profession in South Africa believed the role at least of the public library was enculturation, which supposed distinct points of view on politics, religion and, particularly, morals.

<sup>8</sup> By way of example, the author recalls his misgivings adding to stock William Powell's *The Anarchist Cookbook* (New York: Stuart, 1971), a volume outlining methods of bomb-making, and use of firearms and drugs for subversion.

<sup>9</sup> The admonition to be silent in libraries definitely has merit. Occasional breaches of the peace were caused by emotionally-disturbed users who persisted in defying the reading room regulations. During the author's long career, he can recall only a few instances where unruly patrons were permanently banished from the Library. A.L. Dick, however, takes the opposite position about discussion taking place in public libraries in the Cape Town Coloured

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One of the Library's regular users was the journalist Brian Barrow, who wrote about a pending revolution, just before the state of emergency was imposed in 1985. For him the safest place would be the South African Library:

I have always thought that if the classic revolution ever came I wouldn't seek refuge in the nearest church but in the nearest library. If I happened to be at work at the time it would almost certainly be the South African Library with its atmosphere of immutable refinement and calm. Could there be any place more sane, sedate and respectable. Its air-conditioned silence wraps one in an atmosphere of knowledge, wisdom and tradition. People move like shadows and speak in hushed voices. It is utterly neutral, a place of safety from everything, even sex. This goes for the South African Library more so than most others, for in many ways it is one of the world's most traditional and interesting libraries. Apart from the church, it is the oldest institution in South Africa. (...) Above all, it has served all people of all races and everyone has a special love and respect for it. So what could shake its foundations? So what safer place could there be, come the revolution?<sup>10</sup>

Non-politicization of libraries extended to Parliament where it was and remains a tradition that debates on library matters (including legal deposit) invariably receive hearty support from all parts of the House. Libraries are considered to be outside of politics. The directors of the national libraries for their part needed to be careful not to engage directly with members of Parliament about the difficulties they experienced with funding, buildings, censorship or other sensitive matters. The consequence, though, was that national libraries were not taken seriously by the politicians.

The 'atmosphere of immutable refinement and calm' of which Barrow wrote was even then under threat by the sheer numbers of students using the Library after restrictions on who might use the Library were eased by Westra.<sup>11</sup> For a decade means were sought to filter out persons seeking to use the Library who might better use other libraries. Meanwhile, discrete security precautions were being taken in case the Library buildings were attacked.

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areas in the mid-1980s: such libraries were centres of political discussion (The Hidden History of South Africa's Book and Reading Cultures (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp.100-111).

<sup>10</sup> B. Barrow, 'A Word in Edgewise' in: Cape Times, 16 April 1984, p.9. Barrow would remember how police had dragged student demonstrators out of the cathedral next door, something which even the despots of the Middle Ages had not dared to do. But the purpose of his article was to draw attention to the 'computer revolution' taking place in the Library.

<sup>11</sup> At first Westra agreed not to apply the exclusion rule on first and second years students as rigorously as in the past, provided admission was required to use the Library's material, not just use their own books (NLCT-MC MSM 28 (1981-1983). Westra to Hooper, University of Cape Town Libraries, 8 June 1983). A decade later, when the Octagon was being converted into a large reading room at last, all restrictive criteria for admission would be removed ('Rules of the South African Library' in: NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 6 February 1992) and the number of users and material used doubled (see user charts, Annexure 8), over-stretching the staff to breaking point.

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In October 1983 inspectors of the Department of National Intelligence made a thorough survey of the Library from a security point of view and submitted a secret report to the Committee for State Security: their main requirements were to raise the boundary wall on the cathedral side and instal floodlighting, fitting steel security gates over the east exit to The Avenue, and inner doors between sections of the building to be kept locked. Of greatest concern was the informal manner in which users were admitted, requiring all visitors to sign in and be issued with and wear identity tickets.<sup>12</sup> The financial plight of the country and the Library prevented building alterations being carried out,<sup>13</sup> although implementing them would have reduced the Library's insurance premium by some 25%.<sup>14</sup> A further security survey which was conducted in February 1985 required security clearance for key staff, police checks of credentials of all applicants for employment, while 'secret documents' had to be kept secure. Library management did not consider any of this to be necessary, and the Library did not possess documents it considered secret.<sup>15</sup> A policy statement was drafted to deal with bomb threats, although it seemingly (for the document itself is not on file) overlooked the situation on a Saturday,<sup>16</sup> with crowds of users and a minimal number of staff, and was not implemented.<sup>17</sup>

With the passing of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles Act no.53 of 1985, the Library foyer ranked as an official security check-point. In terms of the Act, stringent controls had to be applied to all persons entering the Library. These included producing an identity document, stating one's name and address in full, submitting to a full body search, and any bags to be searched and retained in safe custody until that person left the building. Everyone allowed in was required to display an identity tag. Anyone resisting such measures could be forcibly removed from the premises by Library officials, failing which by the police. Police officers (who were increasingly using the Library to obtain copies of gazettes and Acts) and members of the Defence Force were exempted, and entered the Library with their firearms con-

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<sup>12</sup> NLCT-MC MSN G1/3 (1976-1985). Departement van Nasionale Intelligensie. Verslag oor Sekuriteitsondersoek, 6-7 Oktober 1983; NLCT-MC MSN G1/3 (1986). Geheim. Sekerheidswaardering: S.A. Biblioteek, Kaapstad (NI/071/13/ 8/15/20) ca. 14 October 1983, this copy with added comments - many of them facetious - by the staff.

<sup>13</sup> NLCT-MC MSN G1/3 (1976-1985). Director-General of National Education (Kul 20/5/5) to Westra, [ca. December 1984].

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to Department, 3 December 1984.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, (1986). Administrative Officer to Director and Assistant Director, 4 June 1985.

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (box 1, book 1984-1988). Management Exco. Minutes, 22 August 1984.

<sup>17</sup> After the Supreme Court bomb blast in February 1989 a bomb-suppressant blanket was purchased and kept in the Library's foyer in a bright yellow steel container (NLCT-MC MSN G1/3 (1989). Copy of order, 'The Barrett Bag, a world first in bomb-blast suppression.' 10 May 1989).

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spicuously displayed. The following May (1986) discussions between senior officers of the South African Police and Library top brass resulted in instructions being issued to surround the reception desk with bullet-proof glass, keep a record of persons requesting information on the manufacture of bombs, and supply the police with a full list of staff together with their identity numbers. Cleaners were not permitted to work unsupervised in offices.<sup>18</sup> These measures were completely contrary to the ethos of the South African Library, and in the event a few were implemented, but in a half-hearted manner. Meanwhile the Department advised the Library to engage private security operatives, which the Library declined on grounds of questionable loyalty, constantly changing personnel and expense, preferring to use staff on its establishment.<sup>19</sup> The Library was able to respond to a Treasury enquiry, that it had not supplied firearms for the use of its staff.<sup>20</sup> Despite the provisions of the Act, ordinary readers were admitted to the Reference Room with revolvers clearly visible, the problem being that the Library had no secure facility to keep them nor would their bearers be prepared to give them up;<sup>21</sup> furthermore, if such persons were refused admission altogether, there would be yet another of a growing number of abusive altercations in the foyer between prospective Library users and the Library's security staff. Women objected to having their handbags searched. The turmoil taking place outside the Library had now reached the foyer.

It would be the Library's Coloured staff who bore the brunt of the violence 'out there'. Staff were frequently assaulted or robbed travelling between their distant townships and the city. A binders' assistant, while queueing for a bus in Darling Street, was randomly shot at by police and blinded in one eye.<sup>22</sup> Respecting calls for 'work stay-aways', the instructions from the Department of National Education were uncompromising: absence of staff should be regarded as leave without pay; the same should apply if any member of staff should be detained but later released; but if a staff member were genuinely prevented from getting to work, such incident had to be confirmed by the South African Police and the instigators identified before this could be regarded as paid vacation leave; alternatively, staff should be allowed to apply for leave in

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, (1986). Report of Security Meeting, 1 May 1986.

<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/3 (1983-1986). Department (circular 5/0/1/4/1/4) to Institutions, 11 September 1986; Library to Director-General, 22 September 1986.

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A3/1 (1984-1985). Secretary of the Treasury (TS 1/10/1(J)) to all Departments, [undated?]; South African Library to Director-General, Department of Finance, 27 November 1985.

<sup>21</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). Exchange of memoranda between Chief Librarian (Reference), the Administrative Officer and the Director, 24 June, 2, 3 July 1986.

<sup>22</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 30 July 1986.

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advance (if they were in credit) and withdraw it should they manage to get to work.<sup>23</sup> Often affected staff resorted to submitting sick leave applications which were difficult to reject since the regulations permitted up to three consecutive days' absence without a medical certificate (and even then, the Library informed staff that certificates from homoeopaths, herbalists and similar practitioners were not acceptable<sup>24</sup>). The township unrest caused great anxiety to the leaders of the Evangelise Moraviese Broederkerk in Heideveld who asked the South African Library to take their large church archive dating back to the eighteenth century into safekeeping.<sup>25</sup>

While these matters directly affected the Coloured staff, the White staff were anxious about their own safety at work.<sup>26</sup> All staff were advised to remain within the Library buildings when incidents were taking place in the streets outside.<sup>27</sup> From time to time the airconditioning had to be turned off to prevent teargas being drawn into the building. And naturally, patronage of the Library late in the day soon declined to the extent that the Library brought forward its weekday closing time to 7pm.<sup>28</sup>

The value of the Rand slumped in 1985, and in the same year imported books were subjected to a 10% surcharge on top of the 15% import duty imposed in 1977.<sup>29</sup> The suggestion that books could be classed as raw materials for education and research, and thus be admitted duty-free was dismissed. As the Departmental grant was systematically slashed, there was obviously no money to purchase books from abroad, and a large number of periodical subscriptions (some originating in the nineteenth century) were cancelled. The Department suggested that foreign books be obtained by exchange between libraries,<sup>30</sup> but even this could not be done, in part due to increasing anti-apartheid boycotts, especially from the Scandinavian countries and north America. At this crucial moment the private research library of the late Eric

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* Agenda for 7 November 1985, Annexes 91-92: Department of National Education circular 22/85: Afwesigheid van diens as gevolg van onluste/boikotte, 1 September 1985.

<sup>24</sup> Staff Memo 18/85 (NLCT-MC S10), 13 December 1985. (Diarrhoea and 'flue' were common excuses.)

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 9 May 1986. Agreement could not be reached on the terms of deposit.

<sup>26</sup> South African Library. Staff Association. Minutes, 15 November 1985.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 21 February 1985.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 February 1982; NLCT-MC MSM 19 (1981-1983). Press Release, 8 February 1982.

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 August 1977. Provincial Library Services were exempt from the tax, but not the South African Library. The explanation was that the provincial libraries' book selection was under State control.

<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 13 November 1986, Annex 36: Departmental Circular (no.54/86), 21 August 1986.

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Rosenthal was offered to the Library, but the asking price of R400,000 could not be found,<sup>31</sup> and it was eventually shipped away to Cambridge University and lost to South Africa. The Library's annual report observes in this context that it is increasingly being called a 'dying library'.<sup>32</sup> Staff, already over-stretched, and under threat of retrenchment, became aware in 1986 that the Chairman of the Board had gone so far as to suggest that the Library be closed,<sup>33</sup> only retaining basic staff to maintain the collections.

What of the user-staff interface? It should be kept in mind that the South African Library was supposed to be the guardian of the nation's literary treasures, and the role of the reading room was to allow for these treasures to be consulted by a limited number of researchers, as confirmed by the Meijer report of 1981, which assumed the national libraries only served the 'third level of information provision'.<sup>34</sup> The South African Library had hitherto never imposed any but an age limit for admission. The restrictions placed on students (especially of the University of the Western Cape) at the beginning of 1976 and believed to be unavoidable within the confines of officially-approved functions, have been outlined in Chapter 3, fifth section. The consequent bad public image aside,<sup>35</sup> the restrictions on access had the desired effect, and reference to the charts in Annexure 8 reveals that the number of clients using the South African Library in the period 1975-1985 stabilized at 20,000 user-visits per year, and items consulted only exceeded 80,000 a year once in the same decade.

The 'quick reference' service mentioned earlier in this work, which was based on reference works on all subjects subsidized by the City of Cape Town, had long been an acclaimed feature of the South African Library's work although not mentioned in its original aims or func-

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<sup>31</sup> NLCT-MC MSN H3/5 (1984-1990). Director to H.M.Crossey, Yale University Library African Collection, 14, 28 May 1986.

<sup>32</sup> South African Library. Report, 1985-86, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> Financial experts Drs Stoop and Steyn sent from Pretoria 20 June 1986 instructed the Library to retrench its already small over-extended staff, blaming Management for not cutting the staff early in 1985 regardless of the effect this might have on its ability to function, while praising the State Library for reducing its establishment by 26%, posts which in fact had never been filled (NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1985-1986). Report by Drs L.C.A. Stoop and A.G.W. Steyn on their visit to the South African Library [covering letter dated 24 November 1986]). The Chairman of the Board replied by asking whether this was not the time to close the Library (NLCT-MC MSL A3/6 (1986). Chairman to Dr Stoop, 1 December 1986).

<sup>34</sup> The facilities of the national libraries, according to Meijer, should only be resorted to when the facilities at local and regional level had been exhausted, and should only serve the requirements of national research, Government services, senior lecturers, and those in cultural leadership roles (J.G. Meijer, M.L. van As and J.F Burger, *Nasionale Biblioteke in die RSA: 'n ontwikkelingsplan* (Pretoria: Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1981), pp15-16), yet both national libraries were committed to serving the general public in their different ways, '... a national university which all may attend and none need ever leave'; as the State Library expressed it as their motto (State Library. Annual Report, 1950, inside cover, and subsequent editions).

<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). A. Fanarof, Head of Reference, to A Kerkham, Deputy Director, 27 April 1987.

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tions, principally because this was in other cities considered to be the function of the public library. Increasingly the enquiries were made by telephone and usually answered immediately (for example, see Annexure 6). To facilitate this service staff spent any slack moment indexing journals and books, creating the extensive biographical and subject reference card database (still available to the user) by means of which an adept librarian could trace information very rapidly. An increasing number of telephone enquiries were from booksellers wanting details of books their clients wished to order, the Library's free service saving the bookseller the cost of subscribing to their own copy of the Cumulative Book Index, or Books in Print. Another rapidly growing component of the Reference Department's workload involved looking up and photocopying Acts, Regulations and Government Notices.<sup>36</sup> The profit from photocopying was very welcome, but again, this was not a function which the State envisaged for the national library and the sheer quantity of requests threatened to overwhelm the staff. A similar situation developed with the South African Standard Specifications of the Bureau of Standards, where considerable reference skill was needed to locate the specifications an enquirer required. The same was true of United Nations publications<sup>37</sup> where printed bibliographies had to be used to locate material. Past UNISA examination papers were in heavy demand, as were the papers set by the Department of National Education, which were very difficult to retrieve. In the background, other staff were dealing with written queries, some of which entailed substantial amounts of research, or searching for an article in one of the tens of thousands of back files of newspapers. All this was done in addition to dealing with users who presented themselves at the enquiry desk in person. Users needed to be taught how to use the author and subject catalogues, because the Library worked largely on a 'closed access' system, with stack attendants bringing material from over 400 different distinct sequences of books, periodicals and other classes of material spread (in the 1980s) across the main library complex and two external warehouses.

After Piet Westra became Director in 1981, the admission restrictions which had caused so much unpleasantness and ill-will were gradually relaxed (and done away with entirely in 1987<sup>38</sup>). By 1986, the volume of Library users was creeping inexorably upwards again, resulting in closing on Saturday afternoons, and the number of items requested (including Gazettes for

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<sup>36</sup> The Government Printer's office in Cape Town moved from the Good Hope Hall in Stal Plein (where they had been based since about 1916) to new premises in Plein Street in 1983. Like all Government entities including the Library, they had to cut costs, and one of the costs was storing back numbers of the Government Gazette and Acts of Parliament. Instead they referred customers to the South African Library to order photocopies.

<sup>37</sup> The South African Library was an original depository library of the United Nations in 1945 as it had been for the League of Nations before that. Tracing a League of Nations document was exceedingly difficult, but it was usually only the Trusteeship Council publications which were required, and staff became familiar with that sub-group.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). Report on Discussions re Library Access and Times, by A. Kerkham, 24 April 1987.

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photocopying) reached hitherto unimaginable levels. All of this added to the work-load of the staff, with a very real possibility that retrenchment would be insisted upon by the Department of National Education, while disparaging remarks were being made about the staff by a recently-appointed Senior Librarian.<sup>39</sup> The latter was correct, however, in assessing that many (one might add 'most') of the Library's user-staff (and, one may also add, 'other') problems arose from unclear policies, and uncertainty who the real target user-group was.

[Ek dink] dat dit dringend noodsaaklik is dat 'n beleid duidelik neergelê word oor hoe ons ons doelstellings in hierdie veranderde en veranderende omstandighede gaan nastreef, dat álmal hieroor ingelig word, en dat alle beslissings konsekwent en sonder uitsonderings binne die kader van hierdie beleid uitgevoer word.

He proceeded to ask whether it was this Library's task to provide a quick reference service, or serve students at training institutions supported by State funds, such as the University of the Western Cape.

Op al twee hierdie vrae is die antwoord na my mening néé, en die tyd, aandag en energie van die personeel behoort nie versnipper te word hiermee nie.

General queries, he continued, ought to be referred to the City Library Service, and students to their own libraries. Reference personnel should not be kept busy with ridiculous requests for photocopies from gazettes and statute-books. He concluded by expressing his regret that the Africana Reading Room had been closed.<sup>40</sup>

These are issues which surface repeatedly in the course of this study, arising from the South African Library's failure to grasp that it was no longer required to assist the widest range of users. A more focussed objective was the sub-text of the Booysen and De Villiers reports, the NBAR cogitations on the future of the national libraries, and the conclusions of the J.G. Meijer investigation. The logic appears irrefutable, yet, it may be asked, how could it be achieved without taking the drastic step of closing the Library, severing all its traditional ties in the local information sector, and creating a

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<sup>39</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). 'Kommentaar' KS [K. Schoeman] to [M. Syphus?], 11 March 1986. His contempt for the staff appears in his *Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek* (Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 2002), p.524. The Deputy Director appointed at the same time was, conversely, full of admiration for the staff and their loyalty to the Library (J.H. Frylinck, 'Impressionist Sketch of Well-known Local Institution' in: S.A. Library Newsletter 62, October 1983, p.2).

<sup>40</sup> [I think] that it is an urgent necessity to set down a clear policy on our aims and how we are going to strive towards them in changed and changing circumstances, that everyone be informed about this, and that all decisions be carried out consistently without exception within the framework of such policy.' He proceeded to ask whether it was this Library's task to provide a quick reference service, or serve students at training institutions supported by State funds, such as the University of the Western Cape. 'The answer to both these questions, in my opinion, is no, and the time, attention and energy of the staff ought not to be frittered away like this.' (NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). KS [Schoeman] to Director, incipit: 'Na aanleiding van 'n paar opmerkings oor boekekeuring...', 6 March 1987.)

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new and well defined heritage research library, possibly by a merger with the non-legislative components of the Library of Parliament?

Combining with the Library of Parliament had been a desideratum ever since the Mendelssohn Collection arrived in 1922. Year after year, Senators and Members of the House of Assembly had urged a merger of the two libraries, and so did the Department of Education, Arts and Science and the professional associations. What blocked the way? Was it the iconic status of the South African Library? Was it the prestige which the Mendelssohn Collection imparted to the Parliamentary library? Was it a clash of institutional cultures, the South African Library being committed to open and universal access (at the root of its crisis), or the Library of Parliament, narrowly restricting its constituency to Members and such few categories of privileged researchers allowed for in Sydney Mendelssohn's will?

This would have been the ideal moment for such a merger. The closure of the South African Library on account of economic austerity was being considered (see above). Deputy President Schlebusch was conducting an inquiry into the information needs of Parliament.<sup>41</sup> Both libraries received the same South African material by legal deposit. Both libraries were planning costly book restoration facilities, and the National Libraries Bill, gazetted in June 1984, went before Parliament in 1985 (both discussed in Chapter 5, first section). The archetypical researcher of the South African Library also used the Africana collections of the Library of Parliament. There had always been a close, if informal, working relationship between the two libraries.

That an amalgamation was likely is reflected in Director Westra's address to the South African Library staff on 19 June 1984, when he announced a new statutory national library answerable directly to Parliament; existing staff would be transferred but would be given 90 days to opt out if preferred.<sup>42</sup> Westra proposed that the South African Library might provide a research service to Parliament, and offered storage for up to 200,000 books (warned not to mention the Mendelssohn Collection specifically).<sup>43</sup> Minister Schlebusch held discussions with

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<sup>41</sup> Report of the Committee of Enquiry into a Research Service for Parliamentarians [RP.35-1986], chairman A.L. Schlebusch, appointed 24 April 1984. Among the members of the committee were A.J. Vlok (Minister of Law and Order and of Defence), the party whips Van Breda, Bamford and Hoorn, Dr E.N. van Deventer (Chairman of the newly created National Advisory Council on Libraries and Information), and Professor J.H. Boon (of the University of Pretoria, member of the State Library Board and representing it on the Advisory Committee of National Libraries), who, with G. Swanepoel, Parliamentary Librarian, did most of the research work the enquiry entailed. Surprisingly, there was no representative of the South African Library or its Board, although a written submission was received (p.337).

<sup>42</sup> South African Library. Staff association. Minutes, 19 June 1984.

<sup>43</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A3/1 (1985-1986). Director to Board Chairman Meyer, 24 September 1986, explaining his action. The submission will be found at NLCT-MC MSN A3/1 (1985-1986). Director to Schlebusch, 14 January 1985.

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the Director at the Library in November.<sup>44</sup> Nothing came of this last opportunity to re-think the purpose of South African Library. The opportunity to make a meaningful change passed with the adoption by Parliament of the National Libraries Act no.56 of 1985, which defined its functions and its relationship with the State Library (rather than with the Library of Parliament).

In an attempt to quieten the Reference Room and relieve the reference librarians of some of the pressure, three changes were introduced. The library assistant in charge of the foyer security checkpoint<sup>45</sup> took on responsibility for the gazette work (which soon became a separate section of the Reference Department with its own counter and photocopying facilities in the Octagon), the reference librarians transferred to the West Wing (where the card catalogues stood), and junior staff ran the Reading Room in the East Wing.<sup>46</sup> At this time a 'Special Collections Department' was crystalizing in that haphazard manner typical of the South African Library, to which the more interesting enquiries were directed, becoming in effect a competing public service. These developments resulted in the reference librarians losing touch with researchers. There were repeated complaints of un-motivated librarians behaving in a slack and un-professional manner. This was reported on in great detail, seemingly at the Director's request, by Dr Jena Raubenheimer, a Stellenbosch University academic and researcher, who painted a dismal picture of staff behaviour in the public rooms.<sup>47</sup> The Chief Librarian, Administrative Officer and Director respectively had already warned the staff members concerned about these tendencies but to no avail.<sup>48</sup> A mood of indifference hung over the Library on account of its worsening financial difficulties which affected all the staff, not only those serving the public directly. Vacancies were not filled, no books were bought, periodical subscriptions were cancelled, while both Chief Librarians and the senior librarian who had just finished cataloguing the Grey Collection (all of retireable age) were retrenched. The subsidy was based on the number

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<sup>44</sup> S.A. Library Newsletter 76, November 1984, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> There had been growing friction between prospective users and the security staff. This library assistant took over the reception desk about 22 April 1985 ('Decisions Taken at a Meeting ... 16/4/1985 to Discuss Changes in the Reference Division', copy with S.A. Library Newsletter 79, March 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Undertaking gazette work in the foyer began about April 1987, and at the same time the reference librarians were stationed in the West Wing with the telephones and card catalogues, while retrieval staff would manage the issue desk in the East Wing (Alfred Room) and performed general supervision duties (NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). Report on Discussions re Library Access and Times, by A. Kerkham, 24 April 1987).

<sup>47</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). J. Raubenheimer to Westra, 'Verslag Naslaanafdeling (Junie 1989)', 6 July 1989. Amongst numerous complaints about the Library in general she noticed unprofessional conduct of staff in the catalogue room, loud talking and laughing, reading newspapers and ignoring readers, private telephone calls, time wasted chatting, a staff member doing her UNISA studies, and the unsatisfactory use of the Afrikaans language.

<sup>48</sup> 'Some PR for the New PR-Newsletter' in: S.A. Library Newsletter 98, October 1986, p.8; Staff Memo 26/86, 5 December 1986, 'Reading of Newspapers'; S.A. Library Newsletter 100, January 1987, p.4. The situation is confirmed by reference to the message 'Memories of Saturdays...', Annexure 17'.

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of approved posts. The number of approved posts depended on the recommendations of a departmental work study team. The work study team which generously recommended a large number of additional posts for the State Library in 1983, deferred its visit to the South African Library year after year, until in 1987 the Department stated that on account of the new system of 'framework autonomy' announced in 1986,<sup>49</sup> no further work studies would be undertaken.<sup>50</sup>

During the course of 1987 there appeared to be a sea-change in financial prospects with promises by the Minister, now F.W. de Klerk. The Library had spent its accumulated reserve funds and (with permission) was operating on a costly bank overdraft again. Other developments that year included in-house computer applications, the idea of a Centre for the Book (to justify the use of the old Archives Building), and as part of it, the formalization of the Special Collections Research Department. These plans were in line with the 1985 National Libraries Act which came into force in July 1987 together with the long-awaited Regulations.<sup>51</sup> Never would funding be sufficient to properly carry out the assigned functions.

While it was not stated so baldly, the South African Library's public services were about to split into two unco-ordinated parts. Quick reference, general reference work, use of government publications, legal deposit material and especially newspapers, representing the bulk of the Library's public activities, remained the domain of the Reference Department. The new public service would be Special Collections Department (concentrating on maps, manuscripts, pictorial material, rare books and the Library's 'treasures', creating bibliographies and indexes, and tasked with the Library's publications programme) to form part of the Centre for the Book. The back-room departments like Acquisitions, Administration, Bindery and Restoration, Cataloguing, Printing, Photographic and Stack Management attempted to serve both sides of this growing cleavage. The resulting difficulties and developments are discussed in Chapter Six.

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<sup>49</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 13 November 1986. For framework autonomy and consequences, see Chapter 6.

<sup>50</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 14 May 1987, Annex 20: Administrative Officer to Department, 30 January 1987; Department (5/1/2/7) to Library, 6 February 1987; *ibid.*, Minutes, 14 May 1987.

<sup>51</sup> National Libraries Act, no.56 of 1985: Functions of the State Library, Pretoria, and the South African Library, Cape Town. Government Notice R1619, in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.53-55.

## Chapter 5, fourth section : Bureaucracy Bows-out

The complexity of the Public Service is like a labyrinth, and the hazards within it are anonymous officials<sup>1</sup> (bureaucrats of varying importance) and co-ordinating, consultative and advisory bodies. This section describes how the South African Library made its escape in 1988.

Four organograms will be found in Annexure 9, showing the structure of the Department of National Education as it was up to 1980 (Chart 1), followed by Charts 2 and 3 showing the big picture in 1981 and a Sub-structure of Declared Institutions, finally Chart 4 showing the situation under 'General Affairs'. These charts show clearly the plethora of boards, co-ordinating committees and advisory councils through which the South African Library (and other institutions) had to work, in addition to departmental Directors, Deputy Director-General and the Director-General himself, to get a hearing from the Minister of National Education. The 1983 'new constitution' of the Republic duly came into effect, creating in turn three more 'Own Affairs' bureaucracies in each Ministerial portfolio (and, in theory, three additional networks of co-ordinating committees and advisory councils for the declared cultural (State-aided) institutions assigned to the Own Affairs Ministries of Education and Culture). The national libraries and certain national museums remained under the 'General Affairs' ministerial portfolio of the Department.

These organograms make it clear why interaction with the Department become bogged down in bureaucracy. Letters might take a year or more to be answered.<sup>2</sup> When the South African Library first became a State-aided institution in 1954, every detail relating to staff appointments, resignations, conditions of service, grievance proceedings for White officers, and all financial matters had to pass through the office of the Secretary of the Department for authorization or adjustment.<sup>3</sup> According to figures provided by J.B. Standish, the Education Department grew rapidly, from 1,280 approved posts in 1945, to 3,039 (1955), 16,234 (1965), and 22,646 (1975), more than doubling to 48,823 in 1984<sup>4</sup> (the last figure before the new consti-

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<sup>1</sup> The aim in structuring the bureaucracy, in Merton's view, is the complete elimination of a personalized relationship and non-rational considerations, and administration which almost completely avoids public discussion of its techniques (R.K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), pp.250-251).

<sup>2</sup> In October 1987 (just before the implementation of framework autonomy in April the following year) there were 34 letters to the Department from the Library's Board (apart from others) still awaiting replies extending as far back as January 1982 (NLCT-MC MSN S6/3 (1985-1989). Summary of requests directed to DNE and the results thereof).

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Posel points out, 'The combination of a bloated state increasingly ambitious in its efforts in social engineering and deteriorating staff shortages, had devastating effects on labour productivity and efficiency within the public service...' ('Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: paradoxes of the apartheid state' in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25(1), March 1999, p.107).

<sup>4</sup> These figures represent the Education Department's central authorized establishment; in addition, the statutory bodies which were controlled by the Department in 1981 (the last figures provided by this author) adds a further 25,843 posts (J.B. Standish, 'State Employment in South Africa' (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), pp.72, 95).

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tutional dispensation decimated the Department). To compound the difficulty, the approved posts in the central clerical and administrative sections of the Department were, as a matter of policy, reserved as much as possible for White, mainly Afrikaans-speaking<sup>5</sup> males (the Government service acting as the employer of last resort for Whites<sup>6</sup>). As the supply of applicants diminished and the numbers of resignations increased, a large number of these posts simply remained vacant,<sup>7</sup> others were filled by White females, even married White females<sup>8</sup> and non-Whites on a temporary basis.<sup>9</sup> By 1981 the civil service was near collapse due to staff shortages.<sup>10</sup>

Inefficiencies and delays were compounded by the referral of national library matters requiring ministerial decisions to the NBAR (National Library Advisory Council) as described in Chapter 4, third section. Absolute control over appointments was exercised by the Department up to the term of J.J.P. Op't Hof as Secretary for Education and Jan de Klerk as the Minister during the late 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Under a new Secretary for Education and Minister, a considerable relaxation of this practice occurred, reflected in the Cultural Institutions Amendment Act no.93 of 1974, new section 5A, which, allowing the Minister to set the conditions of appointment and salary scales, empowered the Boards to make the appointments (up to a level of seniority which the Minister determined) and set the starting salary notch.

One of the rights which boards of declared institutions sought was to appoint suitable staff regardless of their population group, bearing in mind that for artisan-level posts, Whites were unobtainable, and for the professional grades, non-White graduates were now becoming

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<sup>5</sup> D. Posel, 'Whiteness and Power' (1999), pp.104-105.

<sup>6</sup> J.B. Standish, 'State Employment' (1984), for example, pp.i, 166, 207, 208, 222, 231.

<sup>7</sup> In the public service there was a 20.28% overall vacancy rate in 1980-81 and in entry-level grades it was as high as 85%, while 83% of Whites resigned below the age of 40 (Commission for Administration, Annual Report, 1980-81 [RP.36-1982], pp.12-13).

<sup>8</sup> Described as 'a disturbing trend' - disturbing, because it was unthinkable at the time that females might occupy managerial positions (ibid., 1979-80 [RP.59-1981], p.7).

<sup>9</sup> J.B. Standish, 'State Employment' (1984), refers, pp.161-162, to the rapid growth in the number of Blacks employed in the public service, and, pp.165-166, to 'The Residual' of Black non-permanent workers which made up the difference when no more Whites could be obtained. In 1980, Blacks for the first time exceeded the number of Whites.

<sup>10</sup> D. Posel, 'Whiteness and Power' (1999), p.111, cites The Star, 25 February 1981, 'The Civil Service Crisis'

<sup>11</sup> Replying to requests for greater autonomy for Boards to appoint staff, Op't Hof stated that the Minister would not consider the request (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/1 (1968-1969). Committee of Heads of Cultural Institutions. Minutes of interview between Executive Committee and Dr Op't Hof, 30 May 1969); Lewin Robinson reporting back on the last meeting of the Committee of Heads attended by Op't Hof, reported that 'so long as the State funded the institutions, the autonomy of their Councils would necessarily be limited' (ibid. (1970-1972). Minutes, 27 April 1970).

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available in numbers. But this fundamental deviation from classic apartheid policy was resisted by conservative elements within the Department who (like their public service colleagues in general) retained their power because the shortage of White staff increased their value to the system.<sup>12</sup> In 1979, a year after the long-delayed regulations under the 1974 Cultural Institutions Amendment Act came into force,<sup>13</sup> an incident at the annual meeting of the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions illustrates this issue.<sup>14</sup>

As part of Prime Minister Botha's strategy to encourage free enterprise, he announced that the State would withdraw its control over many areas of life.<sup>15</sup> This manifested in several ways of importance to the declared cultural institutions, and in this respect, the meeting with the new Minister of National Education, Gerrit Viljoen, and senior officials on 22 May 1981 was a watershed moment.<sup>16</sup> Under discussion was a broad spectrum of intractable issues awaiting resolution.<sup>17</sup> The rejection by Minister Gerrit Viljoen a few months later of the recommendations of the 1981 Meijer report on national libraries<sup>18</sup> with its significant bureaucratic implications (see Chapter 4, fourth section) was a practical indication of Government's retreat from total control

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<sup>12</sup> 'The thousands of people who administer apartheid day to day' (...) 'are intensely aware of the changes, which affect their work and their relationships with those whom they administer. They are a vulnerable class with limited skills who were accommodated in these jobs during the underdog days of Afrikaner backwardness, and they realize that if the system is dismantled they will go with it. (A. Sparks, [cover title] *The Mind of South Africa: the story of the rise and fall of apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2012), p.325.)

<sup>13</sup> Government Notice R1671, in: *Government Gazette* 6133, 18 August 1978, pp.51-64.

<sup>14</sup> On 24 October 1979, the Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions discussed the appointment of Coloured and Black persons to fixed establishment positions. The following day a large group of senior Department of National Education officials joined the meeting and, in the most threatening manner, warned that the appointment of non-Whites in permanent positions would not be contemplated, as this was contrary to policy. After warning the Committee to let the matter drop, they peremptorily left the meeting. (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (1978-1980). Committee of Heads. Minutes, 24 -25 October 1979.) It is interesting to note that D.M. de Wet, Under-Secretary of National Education, who acted as spokesman for the officials on that occasion, no longer held any position in the Department a year later. In 1981, T.H. Barry, Director of the South African Museum, established that it was the officials administering departmental policies, and not the law, which prevented the appointment of non-Whites to permanent posts (ibid. (1981). Agenda for discussions with officials of the Department of National Education, 22 May 1981: Memorandum 'Oopstelling van Poste vir Alle Rasse', 13 May 1981).

<sup>15</sup> M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1986), p.51. See also Chapter 5, second section, p.183.

<sup>16</sup> The meeting was announced well ahead of time which gave ample opportunity to prepare memoranda to present to the Minister (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (1981). Circular to Committee of Heads, 26 February 1981). This was the first time any Minister had personally met with the Committee of Heads.

<sup>17</sup> Issues included appointment of all population groups, and the 'local wage' problem. (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/3 (1981). Proposed meeting between Minister Viljoen and officials. Agenda, 22 May 1981, with Annexes; ibid., *Notule van Vergadering tussen die Minister van Nasionale Opvoeding en Hoofde van Kulturele Inrigtings*, 22 Mei 1981 (Kul 20/4).)

<sup>18</sup> J.G. Meijer, M.L. van As and J.F Burger, *Nasionale Biblioteke in die RSA: 'n ontwikkelingsplan* (Pretoria: Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, 1981).

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of the institutions.

There were several 'straws in the wind' presaging changes in the relations between the Department and the institutions, not least the national libraries. Of primary importance was the outcome of the November 1983 referendum sanctioning the tricameral constitutional arrangement, which would require radical revisions of administrative relationships. During 1983 the Department had prioritized a work study at the State Library which recommended a substantial number of new posts. Shortly afterwards the State Library began an indexing and microfilming programme of Homelands official publications.<sup>19</sup> Then there was a gradual transfer of responsibility for the Black Homelands library services from the Department of National Education to the State Library.<sup>20</sup> Also in 1983 its Director H.J. Aschenborn and Deputy Director P.J. Lor drafted a National Library and Information Service Policy on behalf of the Bophuthatswana Homeland Cabinet,<sup>21</sup> while in 1985 it took responsibility for monitoring the Homelands library services, facilitating the annual Conference of National Librarians of Southern Africa and hosting its secretariat.<sup>22</sup> The inference one may draw is that the State Library's extra posts were granted in part to relieve the Department of responsibility for the Homelands libraries. This is mentioned at length to illustrate how the Department was divesting itself of control.

A first small step had thus been taken towards framework autonomy for the Boards of the national libraries, but its implementation would await the appointment of the next Minister of National Education, F.W. de Klerk, in 1985. An air of expectancy was developing about impending changes in the style of administration of Government departments and associated institutions, partly because the bureaucracy which had mushroomed in size since the National Party Government came to power could no longer be sustained either financially or from a manpower point of view, and also because of changes resulting in the creation in late 1984 or early 1985 of three new 'Own Affairs' administrations, each requiring a dedicated bureaucracy. In 1984 Government departments were themselves granted management self-sufficiency and

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<sup>19</sup> Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1984 [RP.37-1985], pp.93, 95, 97; State Library. Annual Report, 1984-85, p.5.

<sup>20</sup> The Department of National Education had a Library Services Branch, sub-section 'Independent and National States' (the apartheid Homelands). For a review of its activities, see Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1982 [RP.30-1983], p.75. The Department's participation in the Homelands' national library services ceased in 1984 (*ibid.*, 1984 [RP.37-1985], p.169, 171). The Department's vacant posts were abolished in line with the Commission for Administration instructions, August 1984 (*quod vide* NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1984). Circular Kul 20/1, 9 August 1984).

<sup>21</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1982-83, p.10.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 1985-86, pp.4, 11. Annual conferences were held between 1986 and 1990. The organization was dissolved in 1995. (NLCT-MC MSN B21 contains records of the conferences.)

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ceased to be answerable to the Commission for Administration.<sup>23</sup>

Minister de Klerk summoned the chairmen and directors of the declared cultural institutions to Pretoria on 29 October 1986. All that they knew in advance was that it had a bearing upon the powers of the Boards.<sup>24</sup> What De Klerk was about to do was to eject them from the labyrinth.

The Cabinet had adopted, in principle, a system of framework autonomy applicable to the whole Public Service, whereby entities would be granted larger measures of managerial independence while the State would, through a scientifically determined framework, exercise control over the orderly and efficient expenditure of public funds. De Klerk assured those present that, in consultation with the Treasury, the formula would be funded to 92% during the approaching financial year<sup>25</sup> (a promise which was not kept). It was accepted in principle that appointments should be solely on merit, regardless of race (although only if no suitable White, Coloured or Indian persons were available should Blacks be considered).<sup>26</sup>

Government had neither the capacity<sup>27</sup> nor the will to control the declared institutions, just as it had proved impossible to achieve centralized control of the nation's library services in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1987, the National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information was dissolved because Government should not, as the Department stated, interfere with the utilization of information.<sup>28</sup>

Coincidentally, the National Libraries Act of 1985 came into effect on 1 August 1987. Framework autonomy was inaugurated eight months later at the start of the 1988-89 financial year.

The Board now has a far greater say in the spending of State funds allocated to the Library, although the State naturally still exercises certain forms of control. The advantages of having greater autonomy have already become evident. The Library is no longer bound to an

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<sup>23</sup> Commission for Administration. Annual Report, 1984 [RP.17 - 1985], p.36.

<sup>24</sup> S A Library Newsletter, 98, October 1986, p.1. It is unclear whether all 22 Declared Cultural Institutions were invited, or only the fourteen 'Own Affairs' institutions (including the three national libraries).

<sup>25</sup> [Press release] 'Address by Mr F.W. de Klerk, ... at a Gathering of Chairmen and Chief Executive Officers of Associated Institutions on 29 October 1986', 12pp. Text may be found in NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1985-1986).

<sup>26</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1985-1986). Department of National Education. Circular 11/86: 'Vertroulik. Indiens-neming en Benutting van die Onderskeie Bevolkingsgroepe onder die Nuwe Staatskundige Bedeling', 13 February 1986.

<sup>27</sup> The Department's remaining staff establishment was cut from 743 to 684 (Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1985 [RP.24-1986], p.2). The number of employees in 1984 (48,823) quoted by Standish included non-administrative officials and, though interesting, is not comparable (J.B. Standish, 'State Employment' (1984), p.72).

<sup>28</sup> Department of National Education. Annual Report, 1987 [RP.45-1988], pp.38, 40.

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inflexible establishment, post and salary structure. Various organizational improvements have been introduced which have resulted in a better flow of work, more efficient services and improved staff morale.<sup>29</sup>

An immediate benefit was that the amount of correspondence with the Department dramatically decreased to the extent that one of the Library's two secretaries could be redeployed to computer data input.<sup>30</sup> It also enabled the Library to introduce more rational post designations grouped under 'management', 'professional and para-professional', 'administration' and 'technical'. In each group designations were graded according to required qualifications.<sup>31</sup> A serious drawback was that the State would no longer pay out the value of unused leave upon retirement or death of a staff member. Liquidating the leave credits could seriously deplete the South African Library's budget,<sup>32</sup> especially as many of its 'old guard' with long service approached retirement. Another threat was that the Library, rather than the State, had to take responsibility for labour relations<sup>33</sup> which (for the first time in the Library's long history) had become a cause for concern (see Chapter 6, fourth section).

Framework autonomy might have allowed the South African Library to develop a distinctive role for itself, but for the hopelessly inadequate State grant. This was calculated on a long out-of-date official staff establishment, which, now that framework autonomy had been granted, was entrenched.<sup>34</sup>

The National Libraries Act of 1985 needed revision to come into line with recent developments, and after obtaining input from all the institutions, the short National Libraries Amendment Act, no.23 of 1991 was passed, opening the way for the South African Library to draw up its own Conditions of Service eliminating all racial and gender discrimination, receiving the approval of the Board on 6 August 1992.

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<sup>29</sup> South African Library. Report, 1988, p.5.

<sup>30</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin 3/1990, 2 February 1990, p.1. She immediately resigned.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 12/1989, 31 March 1989, pp.1-2.

<sup>32</sup> The Director himself had 355 days leave credit, and nine staff each had between 100 and 250 days' credit (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/6 (1989-1990). Committee of Heads of Cultural Institutions. Report of Discussion between the Director-General and a Deputation of the Committee, 6 June 1989).

<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/2/1 (1988-1995). Circular 17/91. Department (5/0/1/4/1/5) to Institutions, 3 July 1991: Amendment to Public Service Staff Code.

<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/7 (1987 ii). Department (5/1/2/7) to South African Library, 6 February 1987.

## Chapter 6. ADRIFT AFTER 1988

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

W.B. Yeats, from 'The Second Coming' (1919)

**A**narchy in the early 1980s was effectively suppressed by the states of emergency beginning in July 1985, but at a terrible human cost and by the abrogation of the rule of law and such civil liberty which still remained. Media censorship kept the population in ignorance of events.

The Government lacked the bureaucratic resources needed to control the cultural institutions. Minister F.W. de Klerk declared that the State no longer wished to be involved in the provision of information. And with the drain on its resources putting down the insurgency in and beyond the Republic's borders, mobilizing awesome armed forces, and the constraints of international embargoes, there was no way its promised funding for the Library would be honoured. The South African State itself was falling apart, just as the Soviet Union unexpectedly fell apart in 1989.

The liberty awarded to the South African Library in 1988 under the system of framework autonomy had been eagerly anticipated. The Library pressed ahead with new developments, to be paid for with promises. Library Director Westra's work against censorship won for him in his retirement the first Albie Sachs Freedom Award in 2010. Publishing was prioritized. The Centre for the Book was conceived (initially) to promote fine book production and awareness of the Library's treasures. A Bibliographic Department was formed to centralize cataloguing, bibliographical and indexing work; a Special Collections Department was created to organize valuable accessions such as manuscripts, maps and

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photographs, as well as assist researchers in their use. The resources of the Library were marshalled under a new Preservation Department.

To accommodate the new generation of Coloured and Black students, limitations on the use of the Library were lifted. And underlying it all, comprehensive computerization was introduced. But staff discontent boiled up, inter-personal animosities developed, the centre could not hold, and the Library became ungovernable.

President de Klerk's 2 February 1990 declaration unbanning political opposition and releasing many political prisoners and detainees was followed by a period of unprecedented violence and bloodshed as extremists on the left and right attempted to derail the constitution negotiating process. These developments exercised their influence on the South African Library. Many of its White staff, as with their counterparts in other libraries too, aware the way the wind was blowing, became sudden converts to 'progressive' causes. The Director of the State Library was, behind the scenes, gaining exposure with the future majority party to the advantage of his library and the great disadvantage of the South African Library.

Unseemly behaviour disrupted South African Library staff meetings. The Director was the target of personal abuse, abetted by a few senior librarians with agendas of their own. The Deputy Director emigrated, his post being left vacant at this critical time owing to lack of funds. Strategic forward planning was thwarted by the imperative of crisis management during a time when the very survival of the Library was at stake. Users all too often abused and insulted the staff during the admission registration process and defied the Library's rules. Nerves were raw and old decencies disappeared as the 1994 elections approached.

The South African Library was so engrossed with inexplicable and unwarranted internal conflicts, that a vital point was missed. The State Library was at the time in a very vulnerable strategic position having lost its principal reasons for existence (inter-library loans reduced to next-to-nothing (see Annexure 14), and the central bibliographic database run by SABINET), while there was still no prospect of the urgently needed new building it had for decades been lobbying for. The South African Library on the other hand was responsible for functions of increasing importance and was in the process of getting major additions to its old building, and about to take delivery of the renovated old Archives Building. The Library was dramatically increasing in relevance: the number of users and the quantity of stock used doubled in ten years from 1986 to 1995 (see Annexure 8), and the proposed Centre for the Book was now directed towards the promotion of literacy and a culture of reading. No-one realized that it held all the aces. Its advantages were squandered through small-minded bickering between those who considered themselves intelligent. Greek tragedy indeed.

## Chapter 6, first section : Coming of Age

Administering the South African Library changed, both for better and for worse, with the implementation of framework autonomy in 1988. The framework consisted of three parts. One was the approved functions, gazetted in 1987 when the National Libraries Act no.56 of 1985 was brought into operation.<sup>1</sup> The second was the Act itself, which included provisions for the appointment of all the Board members by the Minister of National Education to look after the Department's interests.<sup>2</sup> This Act was later modified, transferring Ministerial decision-making to the Board.<sup>3</sup> The third part of the framework was the subsidy formula which funded the Library on the basis of the allocation of posts existing in 1984,<sup>4</sup> which even then was woefully inadequate to carry out the functions assigned to the South African Library. Making matters worse, the formula<sup>5</sup> devised by Drs Erens and Stoop<sup>6</sup> added an arbitrary 's' (scale) factor to the 'A' (adjustment factor determined by funding by Treasury). The statisticians claimed the formula was 'generally comprehensible and easily applicable, ... sophisticated enough to take into account

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<sup>1</sup> Proclamation 115 (National Libraries Act, no.56 of 1985) in: Government Gazette 10847, 31 July 1987, p.1; National Libraries Act, 1985: 'Functions of the State Library, Pretoria, and the South African Library, Cape Town', Government Notice R1619 in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, pp.53-55.

<sup>2</sup> Nomination to the Board of representatives by the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, the City of Cape Town and the Friends of the South African Library fell away under the 1985 Act, although these constituencies, as well as the University of the Western Cape, were taken into account in selecting Government nominees.

<sup>3</sup> National Libraries Amendment Act, no.23 of 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Herein lay one of the causes of the South African Library's ultimate insolvency.

<sup>5</sup> The formula had components for current expenditure (C1-3, including chiefly salaries) and for the maintenance of fixed assets (buildings, grounds and collections). Provision was made for funding the wages of 'Service Workers' classes 'General Assistant' (GA) I and II to the extent of 50% but made no provision for GA III (cleaners). The complexity lies in the manner in which these amounts are reached. The primary formula was expressed as  $F = S \times 100 \times K \times C$  where 'S' is the scale factor (discussed in the text), K is the cost coefficient of heads of current expenditure as determined by data analysis, and C4-C11 are the corresponding unit costs, calculated from historic costs of the preceding year from a basket of inputs, but because budgeting is done a year in advance, the C factor would be two years out of date by the time it was applied, so standard price indexes would be applied as a corrective. A separate formula ( $G = P \times C1 \div 5$ ) provided for rewarding the institution for research published by line function staff in approved journals (but did not include whole books or other publications which would have benefited the South African Library), C1 being the cost unit of the line function staff member. As in previous formulas, provision was made to scale down the result of the formula should insufficient funds be available for disbursement, the treacherous adjustment factor A, which under optimum conditions should be 1. The final formula was thus  $(A \times (S \times F + G))$ .

<sup>6</sup> G. Erens and L.C.A. Stoop, Non-profit Institutions. Information Survey Manual, NATED 02-080, 88/03 (Pretoria: Department of National Education, National Education Policy Branch, March 1988); G. Erens and L.C.A. Stoop, A Formula for the Subsidization of Non-profit Institutions: Libraries, NATED 02-593, 88/03 (Place, publisher and date as above). (Photocopies of an earlier version of each document dated November and August 1987 respectively with notes made after a consultative meeting in Pretoria, 20 January 1988, are on file at NLCT-MC MSN F7.)

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the diverse requirements of the various institutions'.<sup>7</sup>

The 's' factor was a percentage of a 'standard library' (rated 1) against which the national libraries' functions were measured.<sup>8</sup> Representatives of the national libraries at the information session on 20 January 1988<sup>9</sup> were told what their respective s-factor would be, but the fact that the South African Library was deemed to be only 0.95 of a standard library while the State Library was deemed to be 1.75 (the calculation was never explained, but it resembled the respective libraries' 1984 staff establishments) would prove disastrous for the South African Library which had numerous functions not encountered in a 'standard library' and whose acclaimed reference function was difficult to quantify<sup>10</sup> and had always been under-emphasized.

The formula was discussed by the Board in February, when Board member Prof. J.W. Brommert submitted a typed commentary. His first objection was to the 'standard library'.

The theoretical weakness in the manner of deriving the formula is the introduction of the concept of the Standard Library. This could make sense if one were dealing with a group of similar libraries such as, say, university libraries or municipal lending libraries. In the present case one deals with three libraries, each unique and with different functions prescribed by law.<sup>11</sup>

The Director criticized the formula, the small authorized staff establishment and the concept of the 'standard library' in particular.<sup>12</sup> But alas, Dr Stoop made few changes in the final version of March 1988, and no change at all to the 'standard library' concept which he conceded was arbitrary.<sup>13</sup> When the 1988-89 financial allocation was announced, instead of the R3,640,372 which the formula produced, the South African Library received R2,213,000,<sup>14</sup> although this was

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<sup>7</sup> G.Erens and L.C.A. Stoop, A Formula (NATED 02-593, 1988), pp.1-2 .

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, pp.3-4. Comparing each of the national libraries against the functions of this arbitrary 'standard library' with 100 posts, a figure would be determined showing, for each library, its percentage above or below the 'standard library' (S=1), the actual figure to be determined by the Minister of National Education.

<sup>9</sup> [NLCT-MC MSN F7] Department (5/1/1(B)) to Associated Institutions, 14 December 1987. The original of the consulted photocopy made by the Deputy Director was not seen in the filing system and may not be there.

<sup>10</sup> Although many authors publicly acknowledged the Library's services (see Annexure 1), this could not be insisted upon. Acknowledgements in university dissertations seldom came to the Library's attention.

<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1984-1989). 'Comments on the Library Subsidy Formula', 4 February 1988, p.1. The third national library was the South African Library for the Blind.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, Director to Department (attention Dr Stoop), 12 February 1988.

<sup>13</sup> G.Erens and L.C.A. Stoop, A Formula (NATED 02-593, 1988), p.3.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1984-1989). Department (5/3/2/2/3) to South African Library, 28 March 1988.

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a slight increase over the previous year's grant.<sup>15</sup>

Framework autonomy came into effect on 1 April 1988, the Department providing relevant manuals, withdrawing the Public Service Personnel Administration Standards (PAS) manual, and requesting that any legislation which conflicted with the principles of framework autonomy be brought to its attention.<sup>16</sup> Once the National Libraries Amendment Act no.23 of 1991 was promulgated,<sup>17</sup> it was possible for the South African Library to draft new staff conditions of service which once and for all eliminated racial and gender discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

Like a young man reaching his majority, Director Westra enthusiastically put this new liberty into practical effect, testing the Library's financial limits. He had the support of a much smaller Board (all but one of whom had been on the list of candidates he had proposed to the Department<sup>19</sup>). The Chairman, P.S. Meyer (formerly Director-General of the Department of National Education), resigned.<sup>20</sup> He was succeeded as Chairman by Justice Leo van den Heever, South Africa's first woman judge.<sup>21</sup> Correspondence between the Library and the Department diminished notably, saving one secretarial post,<sup>22</sup> and not even the Board's minutes needed to be submitted to the Department.<sup>23</sup> The national libraries' activities ceased to be included in the

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<sup>15</sup> South African Library. Report, 1988, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/3 (1989-1990). Department (5/2/1(B)) to Westra (South African Library) and to Zaaiman (State Library), 13 May 1988. The two libraries drew up lists of suggested amendments which were reviewed by the National Libraries Advisory Committee meeting at the end of 1988 (ibid., NLAC. Agenda for 22 November 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Proclamation 673 in: Government Gazette 13125, 5 April 1991, pp.1-6.

<sup>18</sup> 'Conditions of Service of the South African Library,' approved by the Board on 6 August 1992, removed the discriminatory provisions contained in the public service conditions of employment, including those masked by the terms 'officer' and 'employee' (which distinctions were only eliminated in the public service by the new Government in the Public Service Amendment Act no.13 of 1996). The State Library (under a new Director since January 1992) declined to co-operate with the South African Library in drawing up one uniform set of conditions of service and elected to retain the existing public service regulations (NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (1988-1992). South African Library Management Exco. Minutes, 8 April 1992). The existence of differing conditions of service would compound the subsequent difficulties in amalgamating the two libraries.

<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A4/1 (1984-1989). Department (5/1/2/1) to Director, 9 April 1985, requesting nominations; Director to Department, 27 November 1986, providing curricula vitae of fifteen suitable candidates.

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 4 February 1988: Annex 1, P.S. Meyer to Minister de Klerk, 23 October 1987. He was elected lay representative on the Moderature of the Dutch Reformed Church.

<sup>21</sup> ibid, (Agenda) p.1.

<sup>22</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin, 2 February 1990, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 4 February 1988: Annex 7, Memorandum: 'Comments on Regulations ... under National Libraries Act, 1985', paragraph 3.

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annual reports of the Department of National Education from 1988 onwards.

The Library's finances improved briefly. With a grant of R2½ million for 1988-89 (14% up on the previous year, during which a crippling deficit had been amortized<sup>24</sup>), several donations and legacies, profits from the sale of an internally-developed computerized library software package, and the profit from the annual symposium, the Library was once again able to purchase books and fill some senior posts.<sup>25</sup> The crisis was over for the moment, and major developments were planned.

Positive developments included consultations on the renovation and extension of the main library building after years of neglect, and the promised restoration of the dilapidated old Archives Building (to be internally refitted to the Library's requirements). But before the hired store on the Foreshore had been fully utilized, the lease came to an end which its new owner refused to extend. This was a double blow to the Library because the Archives had not yet vacated their six-storey Slotsboo storage building due to delays to their own building and relocation plans; thus another interim store had to be hired and shelved, and hundreds of thousands of volumes temporarily transferred.<sup>26</sup> This triple transfer of stock in eight years was a severe burden on the Library's financial and human resources.<sup>27</sup>

At this point the Library's management structure was rationalized. The attenuated management structure inherited by Westra had developed during the term of office of Robinson.<sup>28</sup> So-called Departments had grown up around senior staff and specific tasks. Soon after his appointment, Deputy Director Andrew Kerkham proposed a concept of 'Teams'.

The introduction of 'Framework Autonomy' provides us with the opportunity to create improved staff structures ... [W]e are no longer tied rigidly to fixed salary scales and personnel ranks which have governed our structure in the past. Salaries will be set on the basis of merit in terms of experience, ability and responsibility. ... The staff will be

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<sup>24</sup> In the previous year, an auction of donated books and a caravan raised about R24,000 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 14 May 1987), and together with the exercise of extreme economies on the staff establishment, the bank overdraft and the deficit on the current year were paid off (South African Library. Report, 1987, p.5).

<sup>25</sup> South African Library. Report, 1988, pp.5-7.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 1988, p.6; 1989, pp.8, 10; 1990, p.10.

<sup>27</sup> Owing to rebuilding and renovation work at the main library building and the old Archives building which extended from 1988 to 1994, there was incessant moving of stock, some collections being moved as many as five times. The diversion of human resources (including supervision) seriously affected routine duties, and the cost was significant.

<sup>28</sup> During Varley's directorship up to 1961 there was no formal managerial structure. It is unlikely that the Department had prescribed the structure which Westra inherited in 1981, yet it is significant that the Department's O&M officer Le Grange condemned the National English Language Museum for creating a new department without obtaining official approval (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/4 (1983). Le Grange-verslag (S2/2/1/3), undated).

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restructured to reduce the bureaucratic hierarchy. ... By mutual agreement, staff may be moved from one team to another ... on a day to day basis. ... Within a team, staff will be encouraged to work together on a collegiate basis. ...<sup>29</sup>

Several specialists were brought together to form the Special Collections Department, while computerization came under a dedicated team including the Director and his Deputy.<sup>30</sup>

Kerkham devised new designations of posts (introduced in the 1989-90 financial year), indicating the entry-level academic requirements for each, and no longer tied to the increasingly complex and prescriptive Commission for Administration PAS.<sup>31</sup> The salary structure often deviated from the PAS salary scales on which the State subsidy was calculated, so any difference needed to be made up from other parts of the Library's budget. Released from the PAS, the Library could address the iniquitous 'General Assistant' grading of the Coloured staff.<sup>32</sup> In practice many of the skilled duties performed by the Library's General Assistants (classified as casual employees) were done at the State Library by Whites (classified as permanent officers) in Stock Provision Clerk grades<sup>33</sup> with benefits and better remuneration. Although permanent establishment posts might, since 1986, be legally filled by persons of any population group,<sup>34</sup> the problem was that the Department would not provide better-subsidized Stock Provision Clerk, Library Assistant or Technical Assistant posts to replace General Assistant II and III posts (to which Coloured staff, whatever their skills and education, had been confined) as the Department

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<sup>29</sup> Office document of A.S. Kerkham, unsigned, about 30 March 1988, in the author's possession. It includes organograms of the existing 'tall' structure (where certain favoured individuals reported directly to the Director while others were structured into departments under two Chief Librarians and an Administrative Officer), and the proposed 'flat' scheme (where the Chief Librarians and their subordinate department heads, and the favoured individuals (who chafed at having to undertake supervisory responsibilities) became leaders of eight teams under the Directorate.

<sup>30</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin 11, 15 April 1988, p.1. The Minutes of the Exco will be found at NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1. This management structure persisted to 1995. Events after 1994 are not the direct concern of the present study. An outline of the history of management in the South African Library will be found in Annexure 10.

<sup>31</sup> The Personnel Administration Standards had to make provision for every category of work in the Public Service with salary scales attached to each. The following were the new ranks (each with a number of sub-grades with specified qualifications): Management; Professional and Paraprofessional; Administration, and Technical (full details in South African Library Staff Bulletin 12, 31 March 1989, pp.1-2).

<sup>32</sup> There were three classes of General Assistant which the Department had approved for the South African Library, GA III and II (semi-skilled, with secondary education but low pay, whose wages were funded by the Department to the extent of 50%), and GA I (unskilled, with little if any education, with very low wages not subsidized at all by the Department). GA I, II and III is reflected by categories C3, 2 and 1 - reverse order - with C3 being the lowest.

<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/6 (1986). Chairman of Board to Minister F.W. de Klerk, 1 December 1986, *infra*.

<sup>34</sup> Since 1986, persons of any population group might be appointed to any permanent post (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 9 May 1986: Annexes pp.17-21, Circular 11/86: *Vertroulik. Indiensneming en Benutting van die Onderskeie Bevolkingsgroepe onder die Nuwe Staatskundige Bedeling*, 9 January 1986.

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had done many years earlier for the State Library. Through the efforts of Director Robinson, certain of the General Assistants had been accepted as 'permanent' to enable them to join a subsidized provident fund. In 1988, Westra declared that they should be transferred to the same pension fund as the White staff,<sup>35</sup> adding to the Library's unsubsidized expenditure.

Pressure from Coloured General Assistant 'employees' to be granted subsidized housing loans and other fringe benefits available only to 'officers' could not equitably be ignored. In 1992 the Library created a new entry grade of Library Assistant I for former GA II 'employees' in possession of at least a Std.8 (Grade 10) schooling, and an Assistant Tradesman grade for those with practical trade training; former GA III 'employees' with Std.10 (Grade 12) schooling were permanently ranked as Library Assistants on the same footing as the White 'officers'<sup>36</sup> with access to all fringe benefits, but the cost of these improvements were not covered by the Department's staff component on which the subsidy was calculated.

The broader effect of this regrading, and the fact that more work was being carried out by non-graduate staff, changed the ratio of professionals to non-professionals (see Annexure 11 'Occupational Classification of Staff'), which to a certain extent balanced out the overall personnel costs. The professional component of the staff, which was exceptionally stable, had long service (see Annexure 12), offering few opportunities to employ younger staff (including young Black or Coloured graduates) at entry-grade salaries, while long service meant that most of the professionals had reached the tops of their grades, while the Department's framework only provided for funding 85% of the respective salary scales,<sup>37</sup> a proportion which did not affect the State Library as severely since it had a more rapid staff turnover rate.

General Assistant I staff (also known as C3, mostly cleaners) were not re-graded (within a few years their class of work was contracted out), but in 1991 demands were made for a minimum wage. The State had never funded this group, so no corresponding increase in the grant could be expected, and such increases also had to be funded out of the Library's general subsidy.

The housing subsidy for 'officers' was reclaimed from the Department separately from the State grant. When the subsidized amount was raised by 30% in 1990, the Library was instructed to pay the difference out of its general grant.<sup>38</sup> The Library had meanwhile decided to subsidize housing loans for even the GA I (C3) workers for which the State refunded nothing.

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<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 16 July 1990, Annex pp.16-17: Conditions of Service: General Assistants.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, Agenda for 30 April 1992, Annex p.31: Herindelung van C3 en C2 personeel.

<sup>37</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/7 (file February-November 1987). Director to Department, 20 January 1987: Notes on SAL budget.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, Committee of Heads of Cultural Institutions to South African Library, 21 June 1991.

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These two factors together meant the Library was paying out 16% more on housing subsidies than could be recovered from the State.<sup>39</sup>

Next came the issue of gender equity. Housing subsidies were initially available only to married males (or single males with dependents, or married females who were sole breadwinners) who were members of the pension fund.<sup>40</sup> From September 1991, all single men and women over 23 years of age qualified, but married women now only qualified if their husbands were medically unfit.<sup>41</sup>

By this time the Library's budget had become seriously encumbered by these subsidies.<sup>42</sup> There were pension subsidies, medical aid subsidies (even for retired staff) and study bursaries. The Administrative Officer warned Westra and the Board that the cost of staff fringe benefits, desirable though they were, had by August 1997 increased the staff component to 80% of the total Library budget (and 6% in excess of the State grant), placing the Library's finances in peril<sup>43</sup> (see charts in Annexure 13). Westra, on the other hand, was sanguine that what the Library earned from photocopying, photographic and microfilming services, publishing and other sources of revenue would compensate. Photocopying aside, all these revenue streams would diminish during South Africa's transition after 1990. Local sales dried up, and foreign libraries lost interest in South Africa, with serious financial consequences. Little-by-little the Library drifted towards insolvency.

In 1993 the Library commenced legal proceedings against the publisher of an 'art' book<sup>44</sup> for a copy under the Legal Deposit of Publications Act. This was a costly process even though the Library won its case in the Supreme Court and its verdict was upheld on appeal in 1994.

The last straw, financially, was the failure of the Library's computer system in 1995 and

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to Director-General, 2 July 1991. This letter states 'Die Raad van die Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek gee ook behuisingsubsidies aan C3-werknemers om hulle karige salarisse aan te vul, sodat hulle ook eiendom kan besit. Dit is onduidelik op watter grond DNO C3 werkers van behuisingsubsidies uitsluit.' ('The Board of the South African Library also gives housing subsidies to C3 employees to supplement their meagre salaries, so they can also own property. It is unclear on what ground DNE excludes C3 workers from housing subsidies.') A note in this file shows that in 1993, sixteen White staff (36%) and twelve Coloured staff (31%) were receiving housing subsidies.

<sup>40</sup> S.A. Library Newsletter 93, May 1986, p.9.

<sup>41</sup> Women married by traditional or Muslim rites were not eligible (NLCT-MC MSN S20 (1984-1999). Department of National Education. Circular 1/4/1/3/3(B), 11 September 1991). A 1995 Supreme Court ruling on the matter declared all married women, regardless of their husband's state of health, entitled to a subsidy.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to W.R. Jardine, Director-General, Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, 23 October 1995.

<sup>43</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 5 September 1997, Annex pp.49-52; I.J. Nieuwoudt, communication with author, 29 July 2013.

<sup>44</sup> P. Skotnes, *Sound from the Thinking Strings: a visual, literary, archaeological and historical interpretation of the final years of /Xam life* (Cape Town: Axeage Press, 1991), 162pp., see Chapter 6, second section, p.230.

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associated litigation which the Library lost (see Chapter 6, third section). To cover the cost of the software licences and the necessary new generation of computer hardware, the Library resorted to using the invested capital of several trust funds in the anticipation of assistance by the Department, given verbally to the Director, but not fulfilled. From 1994 the new Government had other priorities than supporting an old library (however much it might be used to good effect). If the South African Library lacked 'legitimacy' in 1990 (as asserted by the then-Director of the State Library<sup>45</sup>), it was a greater problem in 1994 when the new Director of the State Library was busily undermining its reputation in African National Congress circles while distancing himself from his, and his Library's, role in the former apartheid Homelands (see Chapter 6, fifth section).

The Directors of the State Library, Zaaiman and Lor, found their Library in danger of losing its relevance as SABINET<sup>46</sup> took over those core functions (transacting inter-library loans and providing the national central catalogue<sup>47</sup>) which legitimized their Library's national library status. The preservation and reference functions of the South African Library were of more durable importance than those of the State Library, claimed Maurice Line.<sup>48</sup> The well-timed launch by the South African Library of the Centre for the Book (now defined as a national outreach initiative) was potentially a further threat to the State Library.

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<sup>45</sup> R.B. Zaaiman, 'Die Stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Tydsgees van 1818, 1937 en 1990' in: *Mousaion*, 9(1), 1991, pp.3-23 (originally a seminar paper delivered at the University of South Africa, 14 August 1990).

<sup>46</sup> SABINET (South African [Electronic] Bibliographic and Information Network) was launched on 28 February 1983 as a separate entity (R. Musiker, *Companion to South African Libraries* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1986), pp.196-199).

<sup>47</sup> Managing the national inter-library loan system and building up a national catalogue of non-fiction were the primary reasons for giving the State Library national status in 1933 (see Prologue, first section). A chart showing declining inter-library loan transactions via the State Library may be found in Annexure 14.

<sup>48</sup> M. Line address to South African Library staff, 15 February 1995 (viva voce notes by P.R. Coates, personal diary). Line made a similar comment in his State Library consultancy report ('State Library of South Africa: notes on consultancy, May 1994, p.2 [copy supplied to the author by National Library of South Africa, Pretoria Campus]).

## Chapter 6, second section : The Means of Knowledge

Providing the 'means of knowledge' in the form of published material was the purpose of the South African Library,<sup>1</sup> since the publication of Lord Charles Somerset's founding proclamation,<sup>2</sup> for the benefit of 'the Youth of this remote corner of the Globe ...' Initially the youth of the colony showed little disposition to make use of its facilities. During most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Library also served (on site) as the library of the South African College. Increasingly other White and Coloured youths used the books free of charge in the public Reading Room, to the extent that by the late 1950s, those studying for Matriculation examinations had crowded-out serious researchers for whom the South African Library (now a national library) was principally intended. By the 1970s, Coloured tertiary-level students were flocking to the South African Library to consult books not available in their college or university libraries.<sup>3</sup> In February 1975, the Library (which had closed the large general Reading Room in 1971) excluded first- and second-year university students.<sup>4</sup> The Library was neither staffed nor funded by Government to be a 'means of knowledge' for undergraduate students. Subsequently, hundreds, perhaps thousands of students were denied access to the Reference Room before restrictions were done away with in 1987.<sup>5</sup> Although Blacks, Coloureds and Whites were excluded, it affected under-served Black and Coloured students most, taking on a racial aspect.

Censorship affected undergraduate students and the general public alike, being excluded from the use of banned political works. One can but estimate the number of books which might have been written, particularly by non-White authors, but were not, as the result of restrictive legislation. Diverse published opinion should have been an important 'means of knowledge'. In

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<sup>1</sup> Initially the library was known as The Public Library, and after the passing of Ordinance 71 of 1830 its official title was Public Library of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, becoming the South African Public Library by Act 33 of 1893 (Cape). It was commonly referred to as the South African Library, especially after it became a national library in 1954. In December 1967 the name was officially changed to 'South African Library / Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek' (Government Notice 1942, in: Government Gazette, 8 December 1967), which name it would retain to 1999 when it became part of the new National Library of South Africa. However it was already known as the South African Public Library as early as 24 May 1821, when its minute book records 'At a meeting of the Committee of the South African Public Library ...' It was to the 'South African Public Library' that Sir George Grey donated his collection (letter of donation 21 October 1861). The annual reports of the Library were not consistent, with one name on the cover and another used in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Proclamation dated 20 March 1818, in: The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 21 March 1818. p.1.

<sup>3</sup> While university and public libraries as a matter of policy refused to purchase prescribed books, this class of material was received under legal deposit legislation by the South African Library where it might be requested. Such items were mostly sought by students to avoid the expense of buying their own copies.

<sup>4</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 February 1976.

<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). 'Discussions re Library Access and Times', by A. Kerkham, 24 April 1987.

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this case it was the law which barred the way. The systematic imposition of censorship to choke off access to Marxist and other socialist sources, and the silencing of opposition authors has been described in Chapter 2, second section and Chapter 3, third section. With widespread violent resistance to apartheid during the 1970s and 1980s, and its even more violent suppression by Government, censorship was tightened. Letters of exemption formerly issued to the legal deposit libraries were withdrawn in 1977.<sup>6</sup> New regulations<sup>7</sup> for access to banned material in terms of sec. 56(4) of the Internal Security Act, no.74 of 1982 were so draconian that access to banned and especially 'possession prohibited' publications was virtually impossible,<sup>8</sup> and a special Government Notice was needed in 1983 to exempt the South African Library from having to destroy the material in its possession.<sup>9</sup> As of August 1983 works banned by the Department of Justice could be used only by post-graduate students and academic staff, while material banned by the Directorate of Publications could be issued to any serious researcher.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile the Library made special arrangements with the Directorate of Publications to borrow for copying any banned books in the Directorate's possession and not yet in the Library's stock.<sup>11</sup> Further controls were proclaimed with the states of emergency. In December 1986 the State President P.W. Botha issued emergency regulations under the 1953 Public Safety Act aimed at absolute stifling of information, publications, and the content of newspaper (including blank spaces where news of riots or other events had been suppressed).<sup>12</sup> Space does not permit even a partial listing

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<sup>6</sup> NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1976-1977). Circular (DP 3/3/1) from Directorate of Publications, 1 September 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Law and Order. Regulations ... publications referred to in section 56(4) of the Internal Security Act, 1982, Government Notice R1986 in: Government Gazette 8383, 17 September 1982, pp.14-15.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, Section 3: 'The head of the library ... shall enter the publications kept in the library in a separate catalogue indicating:- (a) the title of each publication [this was indeed done], (b) the name of the person in respect of whom every such publication contains or consists of any speech, utterance, writing or statement or any extract from or reproduction of any speech, utterance, writing or statement, to which the provisions of section 56(1)(p) of the Act are applicable; and (c) the number of copies of every such publication kept in the library.' Section 5: 'The head of the library ... shall keep a register in which the following particulars regarding the use of each publication shall be entered: (a) The date of use; (b) the title of the publication; (c) the name, address and identity number of the person who used the publication as well as the purpose for, and capacity in which, he used the publication, and (d) the name of the person under whose supervision the publication was used.' The catalogue and the register were at all times to be available for the inspection of a member of the South African Police.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 'Directions...' [exempting the four legal deposit libraries accessed by the general public], Government Notice R1645, in: Government Gazette 8820, 22 July 1983, p.14; NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1981-1983). Director of Security Legislation, Ministry of Law and Order (2/5/1/1(v)/Co), to South African Library, 25 July 1983.

<sup>10</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1981-1984). Management Exco. Minutes, 2 August 1983; NLCT-MC MSM G11 (1981-1983). Westra to State Library, 3 August 1983: Agenda item for Committee of Legal Deposit Libraries.

<sup>11</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1981-1984). Management Exco. Minutes, 16 March 1983.

<sup>12</sup> Proclamation by the State President, R224, in: Government Gazette, 10541, 11 December 1986.

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of what was declared unlawful, and infringements could result in imprisonment for up to ten years. Newspapers were allowed only to report matters disclosed by Cabinet Ministers, government spokesmen, and parliamentary and judicial proceedings.<sup>13</sup> The restrictions were only relaxed in 1990 after four blighted years, although a concession had been made in 1989 to allow undergraduate students to consult banned books at the Library Director's discretion.<sup>14</sup> In practice the quantity of banned material used up to 1990 was small despite all the Library's efforts in the face of indifference of the professional association SAILIS.<sup>15</sup>

There was another form of censorship which all libraries in South Africa resented, namely international sanctions and book trade embargoes. This developed from resolutions of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) refusing membership to the South African Institute for Library and Information Science which was seen to be collaborating with the apartheid policies of the South African Government<sup>16</sup> (including unequal and separate provision of libraries to different population groups, and the increasing implementation of censorship and control of the media).

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<sup>13</sup> Under these regulations, mail for the South African Library was routinely opened by the postal authorities or intercepted by customs officials in their search for (in their opinion) undesirable material, much of which simply disappeared. This loss of material was of serious concern to the Library as it nevertheless had to be paid for at a time when its finances were precarious, with a greatly-reduced acquisitions budget.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B7/1 (1989). Director of Security Legislation (2/5/1/1) to SAILIS, (date illegible) referred to in NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/3 (1988-1992). SA Library Management Exco. Minutes, 6 October 1989.

<sup>15</sup> The South African Library Association and its successor, the South African Institute for Library and Information Science, had been notably compliant in respect of progressively more drastic Government censorship measures. This is not surprising since the overwhelming majority of librarians were employed by organs of the State, and in the 1950s the profession had welcomed censorship as a means to combat pornography. The State Library had, since the early 1960s, maintained a manual on the management of banned publications (last editions *Verbode Publikasies: handleiding vir biblioteke* (Pretoria: SAIBI Noord-Transvaal, 1983) and *Banned Publications: a manual for libraries* (Potchefstroom: Ferdinand Postma Library, 1984)) on behalf of the SAILIS Ad Hoc Committee on Banned Publications. The manual needed revision to bring it in line with the Internal Security Act no.74 of 1982. South African Library Director Westra was invited to take over the task, but refused on principle, saying this manual promoted the aims of censorship (interview P.E. Westra, 10 October 2012). He did take charge of the SAILIS Committee on Banned Publications, which met for the first time at the South African Library on 22 January 1987 and drew up a Program of Action (NLCT-MC MSN B7/1 (1987). Westra to Secretary, SAILIS, 23 January 1987). The SAILIS Council and its President, Professor Anna Louw in particular, tried by every roundabout way to tone down Westra's anti-censorship rhetoric, only adopting the Program some two years later (NLCT-MC MSN B9/1 (1987-1990). SAILIS executive committee. Minutes, sec. 3.2, 31 March 1989). While awaiting accreditation of the Committee by SAILIS, Westra proceeded with his campaign against censorship in the name of the South African Library, which was submitting a continuous stream of banned books from the Library's collections for review by the Directorate of Publications. Progressive librarians at the Universities of Natal and Cape Town supported Westra.

<sup>16</sup> The South African Library Association had joined IFLA in 1970 but resigned in 1972 owing to a barrage of criticism of South Africa's racial policies and to pre-empt expulsion (J.C. Quinton, *The Library Profession in the Western Cape: the first half century, 1938-1988* (Cape Town: SAILIS Western Cape Branch, 1988), p.55; R.B. Z[aaiman], 'IFLA - a Point Missed' in: *South African Libraries*, 39(5), April 1972, p.305). South Africa was only readmitted in 1997 after SAILIS had been wound up and replaced by the new LIASA (C.M. Walker, 'Library Associations in South Africa, 1930-2005' in: *Library Management*, 27(1/2), 2006, p.31).

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The State Library and South African Library were associate members of IFLA.<sup>17</sup> Both Directors attended the annual IFLA congresses almost without exception and maintained contact with colleagues with similar ranges of interests, co-ordinating (with their counterparts from South African universities) their attendance at concurrent sessions of specialist committees.<sup>18</sup>

South African delegates were barred from the 1984 congress held in Kenya<sup>19</sup> and, at the following congress in Chicago (attended by both national librarians), the IFLA Executive Board adopted the general resolution B, 23 August 1985, 'that South African institutions that adhere to apartheid policies will continue to be denied the privileges of membership in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions'. Since it was accepted that South African universities now served all population groups without distinction, their institutional membership would be allowed, but the four State-funded libraries (South African Library, State Library, Library of Parliament, and the library of the Department of National Education) should withdraw from IFLA membership unless they could provide clear proof of distinctive anti-apartheid actions, failing which, their membership would be terminated.<sup>20</sup> Westra marked this paragraph with a large question mark. His comprehensive reply was dated 5 October 1987 (see Annexure 15), and its receipt was acknowledged by IFLA on 16 October. Letters and questionnaires on the topic continued to arrive from IFLA nevertheless, all duly answered with proof of the Library's non-racial policies and its opposition to censorship. Westra in frustration wrote to the Secretary General, Paul Nauta, in November 1988, 'I do not know what additional documentation I can supply', that the South African Library served all 'whether he/she is black, brown, white (or even green for that matter)', saying that only a personal inspection by IFLA delegates would be likely to convince them of the truth of what he wrote.<sup>21</sup> IFLA sent Dr Bob Wedgeworth, Dean of the Columbia School of Librarianship (a member of the American Library Association executive and a member of the Black Librarians' Caucus) to visit South Africa in May 1989, where his Cape Town visit was hosted by Westra (who provided him with copious documentation). His report back to IFLA must have been positive for the IFLA Working Group

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<sup>17</sup> The South African Library was invited to join late in 1969, approved by the Board (NLCT-MC MSM 13. Robinson to IFLA General Secretary, 21 November 1969). The South African Library was an institutional member of IFLA Sections for National Libraries, Rare and Precious Books, and Preservation. The State Library, similarly was an institutional member of IFLA Sections for Bibliographic Control and National Libraries, while Hans Aschenborn, like Lewin Robinson, was personally an associate member of IFLA.

<sup>18</sup> The practice was abandoned in 1983 (NLCT-MC MSN B25/1 (1986-1990). Committee of South African IFLA Members. Minutes, 21 September 1983).

<sup>19</sup> South African Library. Report, 1984-85, p.10. Unlike previous years, SAILIS Newsletter ignored this congress.

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B25/1 (1986-1990). Secretary-General of IFLA to the four named libraries, 28 August 1987.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* Westra to Nauta, 10 November 1988 (also other correspondence in the same file).

on South Africa, meeting in March 1990, attempted to save face with a flustered and equivocal report,<sup>22</sup> and no more was heard of the threatened suspension of the South African representatives. A large IFLA delegation to South Africa in June 1993 visited both the South African Library and State Library. Its positive report concluded with a plea to SAILIS and the other formations to broker unity in the profession,<sup>23</sup> which occurred in 1997.

However, while this spat was proceeding, trade sanctions in books and magazine subscriptions was developing, chiefly in the Scandinavian countries and later also in the United States of America which would seriously affect the South African Library's ability to provide the 'means of knowledge' published outside South Africa. During the early 1980s, anti-apartheid organizations in Europe and America refused to sell their publications to the Library. Stratagems were adopted to have the material sent to the Library's agents in Britain, Europe and North America, to be forwarded by them, but the publishers soon stopped that loophole as well. This problem was at its worst in 1985 and 1986, no doubt due to the declaration of the states of emergency, and after that the devalued Rand put foreign publications largely beyond the Library's purchasing power. In Denmark, it was illegal from 4 June 1986 for publishers to sell to South African libraries.<sup>24</sup> The other Scandinavian countries followed, not only with embargoes on sales but also with exchange agreements: the Göteborgs Universitetsbibliotek, for instance, wrote 'In accordance with this [Government] recommendation the Standing Conference of directors of Swedish Research Libraries ... agreed ... that existing exchanges of publications with South African institutions be discontinued ... . I therefore have to inform you that as of this date we shall regard our exchange relation with your institution as having come to an end ...'<sup>25</sup>

In respect of publications acquired from the United States of America, the situation differed from Europe. Lowenberg and Kaempfer highlight these differences: They assert in respect of the targeted polity, that while sanctions may have played a small part in the overthrow of the apartheid system, the system would inevitably have collapsed. Damaging economic or trade embargoes could actually entrench 'socially regressive policies'<sup>26</sup> (the 'total onslaught' and

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<sup>22</sup> Report of the Working Group on South Africa to the Executive Board of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (The Hague: IFLA, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Report of the IFLA Mission to South Africa, June 1993 (The Hague: IFLA, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> NLCT-MC MSN H3/4 (Blackwells). M. Blackwell to Westra, 12 November 1986.

<sup>25</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda, 6 February 1986, Annex 57. P. Hallberg to South African Library, 9 January 1986. Only three items published about this date by this publisher were added to the catalogue, and it is unlikely that books in Swedish would be missed by the Library's users. Exchanges worked on the principle that 'we send you what you do not want, and you send us what we do not want'.

<sup>26</sup> A.D. Lowenberg and W.H. Kaempfer, *The Origins and Demise of South African Apartheid: a public choice analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp.51-52, 222.

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'laager mentality' of the sanctions era). For the sanctioning polity, sanctions could be costly: commodities could simply be sourced elsewhere. Ideally, the goods sanctioned should have little elasticity of supply.<sup>27</sup> This is illustrated by an example from the South African Library. Kodak's withdrawal meant the Library's microfilming section changed over to Agfa and Fuji microfilm stock. Replacement parts for the Kodak microfilm cameras, on the other hand, were difficult to obtain except from Kodak or at an inflated price through middlemen.<sup>28</sup>

In the American democratic environment, there was pressure to be 'doing something' (owing more to the exigencies of interest-group politics within the sanctioning country than maximizing harm done to the target country<sup>29</sup>) without damaging domestic economic interests. Ideally, sanctions should be aimed at a defined group in the target country, but the effect was often spread over all groups and could influence the wrong group.<sup>30</sup> This was definitely the case with the Library's book orders, which were mostly of a political nature, largely hostile to the policies of the National Party government, and most likely to be used by patrons of the South African Library not well-disposed to the government. It was easier to find an amenable book dealer in the United States of America than in Britain or the Netherlands (the South African Library's major sources of books and subscriptions). The Library established an effective relationship with Ballen Booksellers, of Commack, New York State, at least as early as 1988.<sup>31</sup>

The refusal of major foreign banks to roll over South Africa's \$12bn debt in 1985 was, in Lowenberg and Kaempfer's view, the most effective of the sanctions.<sup>32</sup> During the consequent economic austerity, State President P.W. Botha advised the Minister of National Education that the institutions should adopt counter-trade to get around sanctions and increase exports.<sup>33</sup> One of the South African Library's traditional exchange partners in the United States of America was the Africana Librarian at Yale University, Moore Crossey. For many years he had benefited from the Library's monthly surplus publications disposal lists. He now offered to exchange American

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, pp.79, 81.

<sup>28</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda, 5 February 1987, Annex 25. Kodak (at this time a leading name in the photographic industry) inexplicably withdrew from the microfilm market altogether, causing a world-wide scarcity of spare parts.

<sup>29</sup> A.D. Lowenberg and W.H. Kaempfer, *Origins and Demise* (1998), p.122. American library sanctions against South Africa were considered a proxy for internal anti-discrimination discourse by the Black Library Caucus.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>31</sup> NLCT-MC MSN H5 (1991-1993). The file contains invoices dating back to July 1988, but no correspondence.

<sup>32</sup> A.D. Lowenberg and W.H. Kaempfer, *Origins and Demise* (1998), p.137-138.

<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1985-1986). DNE Circular 5/1/2B, 'Ruilverhandel en Kontra-aankope', 21 August 1986. The idea was to buy South African publications and trade them with libraries in exchange for foreign publications.

publications (mostly a category known as 'grey literature' - informally produced and distributed publications typical of political pressure groups) for similar material produced in South Africa.<sup>34</sup> At this time, the South African Library was receiving quantities of banned political material from the Directorate of Publications, and duplicate copies were sent to Yale University.

The visit by Wedgeworth in 1989 resulted in an agitation to lift sanctions on the American book trade. A press release by the Association of American Publishers Inc. entitled 'The Starvation of Young Black Minds: the effect of book boycotts in South Africa' (16 November 1989) highlighted Wedgeworth's report. '[I]t is surprising,' the report stated, 'to see the extent to which government-supported libraries and universities are continually and actively engaged in challenging the system.' The Association recommended that the boycott be discontinued.<sup>35</sup> A 1995 study by Lancaster and Haricombe<sup>36</sup> asserted that although sanctions were not responsible for starving young Black minds, the academic boycott was an irritant and inconvenience rather than a significant obstacle to scholarly research, more a symbolic gesture than an effective agent of change. This corresponds with the experience of the South African Library.<sup>37</sup> This pressure did produce a superficial disposition to change on the part of some White South African librarians, though this change did not necessarily run deep.

At the State Library in 1985, it was a matter for congratulation that, 'like all other facilities of the State Library', the separate 'Study Services Reading Room' in Paul Kruger Street was open to all races (not, as before, only for Blacks).<sup>38</sup> But while the facilities of the South African Library had always been open for all population groups, its crowd-control measures affected Coloureds more than Whites, damaging the Library's image.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The author, who was for several years responsible for managing disposals and exchanges, believes Yale University Library benefited considerably more (numerically at least) from these transactions than the South African Library.

<sup>35</sup> Association of American Publishers Inc., *The Starvation of Young Black Minds: the effect of book boycotts in South Africa*, 16 November 1989, pp.5, 10 (copy filed NLCT-MC MSN B7/1 (1990). SAILIS Executive Committee. Agenda, 16 March 1990, Annex 13; another is in the National Library's Cape Town collections at AQ.1991-53).

<sup>36</sup> F.W. Lancaster and H.J. Haricombe, 'Anatomy of a Book Boycott' in: *American Libraries*, July/August 1995, pp.687, 688.

<sup>37</sup> A significant part of the South African Library's book budget was spent on foreign material critical of National Party policies. Material not sent, or intercepted in transit, caused the Library considerable fruitless expenditure and wasted the time of the acquisitions staff, as the bulky correspondence files (NLCT-MC MSM 6 and MSN H2-3, H5 and H7-8) attest. There was little demand by Library users for this kind of material at the time, and currently even less (conversation with N. Hendrickse, Head of Reference, National Library Cape Town, 23 August 2013).

<sup>38</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1984-85, p.19. This was a cunning way of admitting that the colour-bar which had hitherto been in place throughout the Library had also been lifted. The Study Services Reading Room had been operated by the State Library as an agent of the Department of Bantu Education (later Education and Training).

<sup>39</sup> NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). Head of Reference to Deputy Director, 27 April 1987.

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Indicative of the thinning ranks of Afrikaner hardliners in the South African Institute for Library and Information Science, the Institute (following its 1986 conference) commissioned the University of South Africa (in the person of Professor R.B. Zaaïman, soon afterwards Director of the State Library) to investigate how libraries could play a meaningful role in economic and social development, especially services provided for Blacks. Such an investigation would, for the first time since the 1929-1932 Carnegie 'Poor White' survey, cast libraries in a developmental role.<sup>40</sup> His report<sup>41</sup> was issued in 1988. It was the first time that a SAILIS initiative spoke of librarians actively reaching out to and uplifting Black communities with proactive measures, encouraging communities to identify their own needs, and doing much more to meet the needs of Black youth.<sup>42</sup> Walker describes this as the first turning point in the thinking of SAILIS members towards a future South Africa:

The fact of its presentation to the organised profession for open discussion (and criticism) was almost as significant as the contents of the report itself - it is indicative of the state of South Africa during many decades that very little public discussion and input into policy documents in any field was invited or encouraged. When the final version of the report was published the following year, its authority was such that discussion forums were set up ... to debate its recommendations for the future shape that libraries should take in serving all the communities of South Africa.<sup>43</sup>

It was pointed out by Chantel Wyley, with clarity of hindsight, that Zaaïman's report was firmly based on bourgeoisie assumptions, first world standards, and implementation of development by bodies 'which are State-supportive/accepting, or, accepting of socio-economic viewpoints which do not challenge the status quo, or both.'<sup>44</sup> Indeed Zaaïman's greatest offence, in Wyley's opinion, was that he did not include an obligatory penitentiary chapter about the 'evils of apartheid and Bantu education', which should have come as no surprise, since the report was compiled without knowledge of the approaching demise of apartheid which would only be announced in 1990.

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<sup>40</sup> By coincidence, the Zaaïman investigation commenced shortly after the 1982-1984 Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa.

<sup>41</sup> R.B. Zaaïman, P.J.A. Roux and J.H. Rykheer, *The Use of Libraries for the Development of South Africa: final report on an investigation for the South African Institute for Library and Information Service* (Pretoria: Centre for Library and Information Service, UNISA, 1988). (The author of this study has not personally consulted this publication.)

<sup>42</sup> J.A. Kalley, *Apartheid in South African Libraries: the Transvaal experience* (Lanham, U.S.A., Scarecrow Press, 2000), pp.189-194.

<sup>43</sup> C.M. Walker, 'Library Associations in South Africa, 1930-2005' in: *Library Management*, 27(1/2), 2006, p.29.

<sup>44</sup> C. Wyley, 'Philosophies Informing and Defining Library and Information Work in South Africa: the transformation imperative' in: *Innovation* 6, June 1993, pp.14-15.

Despite Zaيمان's report soon being overtaken by political developments, it continues to be cited in journal articles.<sup>45</sup>

In Cape Town, another library outreach initiative to provide the 'means of knowledge' was being developed by Piet Westra, Director of the South African Library.

It will be recalled that the Library, after failing to obtain a completely new building, was offered the landmark building then about to be vacated by the State Archives higher up the street from the main library building.<sup>46</sup> Part of the complex was a privately-owned lease-back storage building called Slotsboo which was its primary attraction for the Library. The Archives building, described as the finest Edwardian building in Cape Town<sup>47</sup> and originally built for the University of the Cape of Good Hope during 1906-1911, is exceedingly ornate both externally and internally, but, being originally intended for academic purposes, was difficult to apply to practical purposes. It could not be demolished, as hoped, to make way for a purpose-designed library building. As the Library's staff sought ways in which this historic building might best be utilized, thoughts turned towards basing all the heritage collections there, with dedicated research facilities, developing a major paper conservation laboratory (at that time still hoping to incorporate the conservation facilities of the Library of Parliament), using the large central hall for exhibitions and conferences. An undated document in the author's own files<sup>48</sup> goes into considerable detail about the 'Dynamic additional functions for the SA Library' and 'A strategy for existing functions in the 1990s'. The proposed 'additional functions' included 'The Book Research Centre'. As announced in the Library's report for 1986-87, 'It is planned to develop a "Centre for the Book"<sup>49</sup> with an exhibition

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<sup>45</sup> Google Scholar search on 12 May 2014 identified eighteen citations up to 2007, including Walker and Wyley.

<sup>46</sup> Hopes to obtain a completely new building for the Library were ended during a meeting between the Director, the Minister and officials on 28 July 1982; instead, the Department of National Education offered the Archives building in Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town, which was due to become available in 1986 ('Uit die Direkteur se Kantoor' in: South African Library Staff Newsletter 52, November 1982, p.1). In fact the Archives only quit the building in March 1990.

<sup>47</sup> Weekend Argus, 27/28 July 1996, p.8; it was described as a 'significant Edwardian Cape Town building' by John Rennie, the architect who would be responsible for its restoration, in *The Buildings of Central Cape Town 2*, Catalogue (Cape Town: Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, 1978), p.252; NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 7 December 1998, Annex 12: Business Plan for Centre for the Book, p.5: 'the best example of architecture of its period in Cape Town.'

<sup>48</sup> SD-1987. 'Remarks on Present and Future Functions of the South African Library' (undated, but subsequent to the most-recent statistics it contains, covering the month of April 1987), to which is attached the author's own proposal for an expanded National Conservation Service (untitled, undated, ca.1986).

<sup>49</sup> The United States of America's Library of Congress launched a Center for the Book project in 1977 'to promote books, reading, literacy and libraries, as well as the scholarly study of books', which was expanded in 1984 by setting up affiliated centres in most of the states (<http://read.gov/cfb/about.html>) with commercial sponsorship, which, in 1989 when the author visited the headquarters (News from the South African Library 4(1) September 1989, p.1), was the Pizza Hut fast-food chain. The South African Library version adopted many similar objectives as the concept evolved.

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area, conference facilities and research facilities for the Library's special collections'.<sup>50</sup> This formed the basis of the brief to the architectural team appointed to repair and remodel the building which the Public Works Department had allowed to fall into serious disrepair.

In 1987 the 1985 National Libraries Act came into force, followed by 'framework autonomy' in 1988, with an alarming deterioration in the Library's financial position (see Chapter 6, first section). Since restoration work on the interior of the old Archives building only commenced in 1993, the immediate task was to draw up a business plan<sup>51</sup> and solicit commercial sponsorship. In 1989, R250,000 was donated by Nasionale Pers<sup>52</sup> to mark its seventy-fifth anniversary, and R10,000 by David Susman,<sup>53</sup> plus a large bequest by Norah Henshilwood,<sup>54</sup> which formed a capital fund. At this time, the head of Special Collections Department, who had anticipated relocating his Department up the road, discovered meanwhile that he and his staff would be expected, at least at the outset, to run the Centre for the Book (which was evolving away from the original plan). Despite the investment in special facilities in the old Archives building, he refused to move his Department out of its makeshift quarters in the old building.<sup>55</sup> In the brochure issued in 1994, the aims and functions of the Centre were taking a different direction: special collections were no longer central to the programme, the exhibition of printing machinery was no longer to be transferred from the South African Museum, and the promotion of literacy appeared as a function for the first time.<sup>56</sup>

The Department of National Education which had ultimate responsibility for the South African Library was dissolved on 3 June 1994, its responsibilities being distributed among a number of new Government Departments, the Library falling under the Department of Arts,

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<sup>50</sup> South African Library. Report, 1986-87, p.6.

<sup>51</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 7 December 1998, Annex 8-13: 'Business Plan for the Centre for the Book', 2nd draft, 25 July 1996.

<sup>52</sup> 'R250 000 for the Centre for the Book' in: News from the South African Library 5(1), September 1990; 'n Groot Skenking van Nasionale Pers' in: Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library 45(1), September 1990, p.2.

<sup>53</sup> See the [8th] testimonial (by Susman) in Annexure 18.

<sup>54</sup> 'A Major Bequest' in: News from the South African Library 9(3), April 1995, p.3; South African Library. Report, 1995, p.9. Norah Henshilwood (1901 - 1994) was Principal of Ellerslie High School and Mowbray Training College.

<sup>55</sup> The Department Head refused to get involved in the Centre's activities. The only contemporary documentary evidence of a serious change of plan (which rendered fruitless a significant expenditure of State funding on climate-controlled storerooms for manuscripts, maps and photographs in the old Archives building) is an entry in Management Exco's minutes (MSN A6/4/1 (1992-1995)) for 30 September 1994 where the Director emphasizes that this Department shall move. See also NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 7 December 1998, Annex 10(I): 'Memorandum. South African Library as Official Assignee of 62 Queen Victoria St', by P.R. Coates. This defiance of the Director's authority set a lamentable example to other staff.

<sup>56</sup> South African Library, Centre for the Book' [pamphlet], May 1994, 4pp; also in Afrikaans.

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Culture, Science and Technology (DACST).<sup>57</sup> In September 1994, the Deputy Director resigned,<sup>58</sup> and in the same month there were indications that the Library's computer system might collapse.<sup>59</sup>

The affairs of the South African Library were beginning to spiral out of control, not least the Centre for the Book. In October 1994 a public relations specialist took up a contract position to promote the Centre for the Book project. Planning by the Director was vociferously objected to by certain librarians on the staff<sup>60</sup> who demanded a democratically elected Centre for the Book Working Group nominally to tap the ideas of lower levels of the staff and monitor the direction the Centre was taking, but the sub-text was that certain of the staff were afraid they would have to undertake extra work, warning of 'tension, if not chaos and revolt'.<sup>61</sup> This enthusiasm by some middle-level staff for egalitarianism following the 1994 elections, for 'a representative, democratic and effective management body to replace the present management team and HODS'<sup>62</sup> seriously disrupted the effective management of the South African Library at a critical moment. In tandem with the Director's progressive loss of control over the Library staff, the Library's control of the Centre for the Book was diminished by a partnership with the Book Development Council, resulting in a Memorandum of Agreement between them and the establishment of an Interim Committee.<sup>63</sup> The business plan (footnote 51 above) was submitted to the new Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology which agreed to provide a substantial conditional grant for five years provided that the Centre should thereafter be self-supporting.<sup>64</sup> With the appointment of a Director for the Centre in January 1998, there was a concerted effort to break completely free of the South African Library, but legal opinion declared that the Centre was ultimately the responsibility of the Library Director<sup>65</sup> (who by this time was Carryl Allardice, succeeding Westra

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<sup>57</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 5 August 1994, Annexes 60-61: Chernis to South African Library, 15 July 1994.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 25 November 1994.

<sup>59</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1992-1995). Management Exco. Minutes, 30 September 1994.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 24, 31 August, 30 September 1994. The staff were suspicious both about the way the Centre would be funded and the secretive way it was being developed (Petrie le Roux, ex-staff, communication 10 June 2014).

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, Agenda for 11 January 1996: Annex 'Centre for the Book: proposal to form Working Committee (To be discussed at HODS [Heads of Departments and Sections] meeting of 11 January 1996)'.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, Annex: 'HODS Meeting 11.1.1996 - For agenda'. (HODS was the initialism for the committee of Heads of Departments and Sections.)

<sup>63</sup> South African Library. Report, 1997, p.19. The committee consisted of representatives of the Library Board and staff, the Book Development Council and fifteen community representatives.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, 1996, p.9, 1997, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 25 January 1999: Annexes 42-43 [Opinion J. Myburgh of Jan S. de Villiers, attorneys, 18 January 1999, 'Centre for the Book Expenditure: duties of SAL Accounting Officer']

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in March 1998). The status of the Centre as a functional arm of the national library was only firmly re-established with the creation of the National Library of South Africa the following year.

The Centre for the Book now focussed on contemporary popular publishing, basic reading and literacy activities. The iconic Dessinian Collection, for the display of which special glass cases had been provided in the central hall, was banished to the basement only weeks after the books had been placed in them. Of the biblio-cultural and specialist research objectives for the building nothing now remained. Without the special collections, the grandiose building had little relevance except as a money-raiser for hiring out as a venue for events such as conferences, film shoots, wedding receptions, and the leasing of parking bays.

One final matter relating to 'the means of knowledge' was South Africa's first and only law suit over a refusal to deposit a book in terms of legal deposit legislation. An artist had published a book of poetry illustrated with abstract drawings,<sup>66</sup> which she declined to deposit, averring that since the printing had been done on a hand press from moveable type and engraved plates, each copy represented a separate work of art, and therefore did not fall within the ambit of the law. A protracted series of court cases ensued, ending in the Library's favour in May 1995.<sup>67</sup> The 'Skotnes Case' was a highly divisive issue among the Library's staff, led by one of Skotnes' art students. Public disapprobation in the English language press and in certain artistic and cultural circles, seriously undermined Director Westra's confidence, despite having acted in the best interests of the Library and upheld the Legal Deposit of Publications Act. From now on an insubordinate clique among the staff would go out of their way to flout the Director's authority.

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<sup>66</sup> P. Skotnes, *Sound from the Thinking Strings: a visual, literary, archaeological and historical interpretation of the final years of /Xam life* (Cape Town: Axeage Private Press, 1991).

<sup>67</sup> 'Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek wen Pippa Skotnes-saak' in: *South African Library Staff Bulletin* 7/1995, 17 May 1995, p.1.

## Chapter 6, third section : A Digital Age

Information technology (IT) revolutionized librarianship in the late twentieth century, and still continues to do so, to the point where the future of librarianship itself is seriously questioned. Computerization is a significant aspect of the South African Library's history, including disastrous financial and human consequences. The financial and managerial aspects are discussed here. The human consequences (including frustration, unproductiveness, down-skilling and disempowerment) are included in the next section.

Computerization went through various stages: supporting routine chores, providing information about information, then substantial information, eventually digital substitutes for books. State Library Director, Hans Aschenborn, embraced the possibilities offered by this technology, even in its early state of development, when applied to those repetitive and largely clerical tasks in which the State Library specialized, such as acting as the clearing-house for inter-library loans and the associated joint catalogue, the listing of legal deposit books for the South African National Bibliography (computer-assisted since 1968<sup>1</sup>), and issuing International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) since January 1971.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the South African Library and its reference function got along well enough without computers, acknowledging that some day a use might be found for them. Deputy Director Tyrrell-Glynn did, however, attend a graduate summer school course on computerization at the College of Librarianship in Aberystwyth, Wales, in 1974, followed by a month studying library networks in the United States of America, with a similar study tour in the United Kingdom in 1976.<sup>3</sup> An exhibition of computer applications held in Sea Point, in connection with the Cape Town conference of the South African Institute for Library and Information Science (SAILIS) in September 1980, put on show (amongst other things) three integrated library systems managing such routines as orders, cataloguing and book circulation,<sup>4</sup> but the South African Library showed no interest.

The managerial aspects of information technology are very complex. Reliance was placed upon the advice of colleagues in other libraries, enthusiastic staff members with an interest in the field of computer systems, or upon vendors whose advice was hardly disinterested. All too often the capacity of purchased or leased equipment was under-estimated, while likely financial and human consequences were overlooked.

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<sup>1</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1967-68, p.20, 1975-76, p.19. Magnetic tape superseded perforated tape in February 1976 (*ibid.*, 1971-72, p.25).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 1969-70, p.21; 1970-71, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> NLCT-MC MSL F3/1/2 (W.H.P.A. Tyrrell-Glynn personal file). Curriculum Vitae, 28 January 1981.

<sup>4</sup> South African Library Staff Newsletter 28, September 1980, p.1.

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Library information technology promised to solve pressing problems pertaining particularly to cataloguing, but also in the areas of book orders and serials acquisition control. In each of these areas the problems of the South African Library and the State Library (as well as the three other legal deposit libraries) were complex. All were required to receive a copy of every published book, newspaper, journal and pamphlet published in South Africa, including many informally-produced items lacking the basic information required for cataloguing. The two national libraries were required to record (catalogue), preserve and make available all this material irrespective of its perceived value.<sup>5</sup>

The South African Library specialized in antiquarian books, often in languages other than modern English.<sup>6</sup> Since the large collections of publications of all kinds, as well as maps and manuscripts stocked by the South African Library had to be retrieved for users from a labyrinth of 'closed access' stack-rooms, users depended on thorough subject analysis and a card catalogue offering multiple author and subject access points.

The State Library had other problems. This Library was tasked only with supplying works on inter-library loan specified by requesting libraries by author or (later) by standard book number. Since it took no responsibility for subject searches, it maintained no subject catalogue, and only required an elementary (first) level record sufficient for the union catalogue and their annual South African National Bibliography (SANB).

It was obvious enough to outsiders that a book only needed to be catalogued once and that record be shared by others,<sup>7</sup> but the thoroughness of bibliographic description (let alone in-depth subject analysis) required by the two national libraries were poles apart.<sup>8</sup> In a shared cataloguing environment, material might have to be set aside for months, if not years, awaiting the record from the other library; perhaps an item purchased by one national library might never be acquired by the other.<sup>9</sup> A significant cost at both national libraries included duplicating and filing the cards and maintaining the catalogue. It should come as no surprise that library tech-

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<sup>5</sup> Government Notice R1619, 'Functions of the State Library, Pretoria, and the South African Library, Cape Town' in: Government Gazette 10848, 31 July 1987, sections 1 to 4, p.54.

<sup>6</sup> These commonly included European and African languages and Latin, and infrequently languages in non-Roman scripts such as Arabic, classical Greek, Hebrew and Russian.

<sup>7</sup> In 1911 the Library of Congress in the United States began to sell sets of printed catalogue cards of books added to its stock, used by libraries world-wide. The State Library offered a similar card service from the beginning of January 1967, but the rudimentary SANB cataloguing level did not meet the needs of the South African Library.

<sup>8</sup> Cataloguing done by the State Library was so basic that the South African Library found it faster to start from scratch. Most of the time and skill of a South African Library cataloguer was required to produce a full bibliographic description and determine optimal 'dictionary' subject headings, classification numbers and added entries.

<sup>9</sup> This problem affected traditional hard-copy cataloguing and computerized bibliographic description equally.

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nology was, early on, applied to the catalogue.<sup>10</sup>

With several libraries creating catalogue databases, uniform standards were needed, a project assigned to the National Library Advisory Council (NBAR<sup>11</sup>) which established the South African standard for machine-readable cataloguing (SA MARC) under the guidance of a Chief Librarian seconded by the State Library. Sharing bibliographic records was fundamental to the projected SABINET.<sup>12</sup> Expecting to host this service, the State Library purchased a licence to use elements of the DOBIS/LIBIS library management system,<sup>13</sup> and in the 1978-79 financial year, redirected much of its acquisitions budget to computerization based on this assumption.<sup>14</sup> During 1981 two senior South African Library cataloguers went to Pretoria for training.<sup>15</sup>

When Piet Westra, with his State Library background, succeeded Lewin Robinson as Director of the South African Library, it seemed logical to link up to the State Library's DOBIS system<sup>16</sup> to do on-line cataloguing and copy-cataloguing on their system, sharing their 'first level' bibliographic descriptions,<sup>17</sup> overlooking the additional time-consuming subject analysis needed by the South African Library. The disadvantages of using DOBIS outweighed its advantages and the decision was taken, as in so many other matters, to proceed independently.<sup>18</sup> By this time

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<sup>10</sup> In 1957 the Cape Provincial Library Service introduced punched catalogue cards to facilitate automated sorting and enable mechanical selection of catalogue entries by author, title, classification number or other fields, in which respect its director, Theo Friis, led the way in South Africa based on developments in the United States of America (Cape Provincial Administration. Library Service. Report, 1957, pp.4, 6, 24; T. Friis, *The Public Library in South Africa: an evaluative study* (Cape Town: Afrikaanse Pers, 1962), pp.187-192; B. Gertz, '50 Jaar: CPLS Early Days' in: *Cape Librarian*, March/April 2007, p.12). The system, proving to be ineffective, was abandoned in March 1964 (Cape Provincial Administration. Library Service. Report, 1963-1964, pp.11, 13).

<sup>11</sup> Nasionale Biblioteekadvieserenderaad.

<sup>12</sup> South African Bibliographic and Information Network.

<sup>13</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1976-77, p.9. Developed by IBM, DOBIS/LIBIS (Dortmund Bibliographic Information System/Leuven Integrated Bibliographic System) had previously been installed in the library of the University of Pretoria in 1976, and was also used by the University of Natal. The original development objective of DOBIS was to manage library lending activities. Online cataloguing was only developed in 1983. DOBIS/LIBIS was a reputable system widely used in larger libraries, including the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Liverpool University Library (where D.H. Varley was now Director). The State Library's system was hosted by the computers of the Department of Education, Arts and Science.

<sup>14</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/3 (1979-1980). Co-ordinating Committee. Minutes, 28 July 1980.

<sup>15</sup> M. Reid, 'Visit to State Library' in: *South African Library Staff Newsletter* 52, November 1982, p.3 [ie. 4]; *South African Library. Report, 1981-82*, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> However, sharing the State Library's DOBIS system would make the South African Library heavily reliant on long-distance telecommunications connections, and on the State Library for system maintenance and upgrading.

<sup>17</sup> *South African Library Staff Newsletter* 44, February 1982, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 2 February 1983, Annex 13, 'Computerisation at the South African Library'.

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SABINET was functioning<sup>19</sup> independently of the State Library. Accessing SABINET as well as DOBIS via GOVNET ('...gov.za') commenced in March 1984 when passive terminals were installed in the Cataloguing Department of the South African Library.<sup>20</sup>

At the South African Library the post of senior computer programmer<sup>21</sup> was filled from 1 May 1984 by a former staff member who had just obtained a qualification in computer programming. He possessed a librarianship qualification, technical skills and enthusiasm. In the years which followed, the South African Library began to edge ahead of the State Library both in its computer capacity and expertise. A central processor (minicomputer)<sup>22</sup> was hired from the local agents of CMC<sup>23</sup> to be used for in-house written software for administration, indexing (for the photograph collection and periodicals index), some minor databases, and a serials control programme, but not cataloguing. The administrative software included debtors accounts, salary records, and a mailing list facility.<sup>24</sup> A periodicals acquisitions control system which took months to create went into service in September 1986, initially to manage newspaper accessions.<sup>25</sup> Although this software was written in-house, there were many associated costs in addition to the programmer's salary,<sup>26</sup> and the constant need to purchase additional terminals, printers, and eventually microcomputers, all at the very moment when the Library's finances were in such dire straits that the Board considered closing down the library.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> SABINET was launched on 28 February 1983 (South African Library. Report, 1982-83, p.9).

<sup>20</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 3 May 1984; South African Library. Report, 1983-84, pp.9-10. These were 'dumb terminals'. Cataloguers were disappointed with SABINET owing to the small quantity of South African publications on the shared database (*ibid.*, 1985-86, p.12). The first 'computerized' items bought by the Library were two Phillips wordprocessor-typewriters in June 1983, replaced by microcomputers in November 1992.

<sup>21</sup> This was one of three posts approved on an ad hoc basis by the Department in 1984 (South African Library. Report, 1983-84, p.7).

<sup>22</sup> 'Reality 6420' computer (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 8 November 1984).

<sup>23</sup> A United States of America based company, originally Computer Machinery Company, founded in 1969.

<sup>24</sup> South African Library. Report, 1985-86, pp.15-16; *ibid.*, 1986-87, p.14. Cataloguing was intended to be done online on SABINET, but since there were as yet few records on the database to copy, the Library reverted to manual cataloguing in 1987.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 1986-87, p.14-15.

<sup>26</sup> The hire of the Reality computer, the maintenance fee and the proprietary ALL (Application Language Liberator) 4th generation programming language owned by McDonnell Information Systems, supplied with the Reality computer added up to R11,000 a month (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 3 November 1988, Annex 45, 'Report on Current Status of Library Automation...' July 1988); the proprietary accounting package AllFin cost R3375 with a R90 monthly licence fee (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 6 February 1986, Annex 58-61; Minutes, 6 February 1986.)

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 5, second section, p.188.

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It should be noted that the development of the Library's computerized system occurred in an ad hoc manner without clear objectives, driven by the enthusiastic programmer, endorsed by a confused and trusting Director and Board. No cost-benefit analysis was undertaken. It was assumed that computerization would resolve staff shortages and increase productivity.

The indifference of the Department of National Education to the financial plight of the South African Library forced the Library to generate income by selling products and services. Publication of reprints and bibliographical works produced a small cash inflow, while income from photocopies provided a steady and growing revenue. But sales of newspapers and other material on microfilm was disappointing.<sup>28</sup> When the computer programmer suggested developing and marketing a simple integrated computerized library system for sale cheaper than imported systems, the opportunity was seized enthusiastically by the Board.<sup>29</sup> The SLS (Small Library System, launched in 1987) and the enhanced SLS-Plus version proved successful revenue-earners.<sup>30</sup> In 1987 a 'Symposium on Computerisation in South African Libraries', was the opportunity to market the SLS system. Profits from the symposium, the published proceedings<sup>31</sup> and the SLS system were ploughed back into the Library's computerization programme. Various applications used by the South African Library ran well enough, but what it needed was an integrated system like the SLS, including cataloguing (with the facility to copy suitable records from other databases), acquisitions applications (orders, serials control and claims), public access control, and statistical reporting.

What options were available to the South African Library? DOBIS was in operation at the State Library but did not have all the modules and was out of date.<sup>32</sup> The South African

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<sup>28</sup> The South African Library's microfilm sales depended on orders from other libraries which were themselves short of funds. The American market failed to come up to expectation because of the CAMP (Co-operative Africana Microfilm Project) which bought a single print of selected microfilms for loan to consortia members. It further came to the Library's attention that some CAMP members were making themselves illegal second-generation prints from the CAMP films, depriving the South African Library of desperately needed income (author's personal recollection).

<sup>29</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 13 November, Annex 38, Report by N.J. Prinsloo; Minutes, 13 November 1986; SAL Minutes, Exco, 27 March 1987.

<sup>30</sup> Each system sold through an agent earned the South African Library R2,000 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda and Minutes, 5 March 1988). Profit on each system sold directly by the Library is not known although it was significant. No separate income figure appears in the Annual Report.

<sup>31</sup> Computers in South African Libraries: proceedings of the Symposium on Computerization in South African Libraries ... 18-20 November 1987 (Cape Town: South African Library, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> While the South African Library was permitted to consult the DOBIS database and was provided with the access code (NLCT-MC MSN A6/4, Management Exco. Minutes, 5 and 25 January 1990), programming changes would be necessary if the South African Library were to share the system for its operations. The State Library's ageing DOBIS system lacked certain basic modules such as an online public access interface (OPAC) and serials control module. A Windows environment was only adopted as late as 1995, at the same time upgrading to the modern DOBIS/LIBIS version 3 (State Library. Annual Report, 1995, p.21).

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Library had never shown much disposition to work together with the State Library. Unreliable communication via GOVNET was definitely a drawback. CMC, owner of the South African Library's hired mini-computer, was developing an integrated system and was pressuring the Library to buy it, although what it offered did not work very well.<sup>33</sup>

The well-tried international systems URICA and BOOK PLUS were perceived to be priced beyond the Library's means. The Library's programmer who developed the SLS had meanwhile resigned to start his own business, and offered to write a comprehensive system called STYLIS, tailored to the South African Library's needs, and at an unbeatable price. The Library quickly undertook to buy it.<sup>34</sup> But STYLIS could not run on the original mini-computer, which, three years into its five-year lease, could barely cope with even the modest demands made on it.<sup>35</sup> The Board agreed to buy out the remainder of the lease and in its place hire on a further five-year lease a refurbished 'Sequoia' mini-computer from the same company.<sup>36</sup> Within a year its memory, of a size recommended by the supplier, proved hopelessly inadequate<sup>37</sup> and this needed to be increased by 400% at a very considerable cost,<sup>38</sup> as well as purchasing XT microcomputers and printers, plus 20 additional non-intelligent terminals.

Before very long it was deemed necessary to cancel the lease agreement with CMC and buy the 'Sequoia' machine outright (the monthly maintenance fee remaining unaffected). This scheme, if everything went according to plan, could potentially make a large saving over persisting with the lease.<sup>39</sup> The Board trustingly accepted the scheme, as well as endorsing the purchase of the STYLIS software<sup>40</sup> which was not yet fully developed.<sup>41</sup> New desktop publishing and MACREX book-indexing software was purchased.<sup>42</sup> Financial prudence was thrown to the

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<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC MSNA6/4 Management Exco. Minutes, 18 September 1989.

<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 8 February 1990, Annex 10: report by A.S. Kerkham, 25 January 1990.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, Agenda for 3 November 1988, Annex 41-46: report by N.J. Prinsloo, 21 October 1988.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 2 February 1989; NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 SAL Management Exco. Minutes, 23 February 1989.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, Agenda for 7 February 1991, Annex 9: Report on Computerisation.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 15 November 1990.

<sup>39</sup> This amount (R200,000) would be financed by a complicated scheme devised by the Deputy Director (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 7 February 1991, Annex 9-18: Report on Computerisation, January 1991).

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 7 February 1991.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, Agenda for 2 May 1991, Annex 5: Report on Computerisation, 18 April 1991. At this time the Acquisitions and Cataloguing modules were running, while the Serials and Public Access modules were almost ready for testing.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 1 August 1989; Agenda for 7 February 1991, Annex 45; Minutes, 1 August 1991.

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winds in attempting to do things 'on the cheap'.<sup>43</sup>

In the financial year 1991-92,<sup>44</sup> however, the Library's finances began to go badly wrong. By the end of the financial year, two-thirds of the General Reserve Fund had been depleted and with it went the interest which it had earned.

While the original STYLIS cataloguing module seemed satisfactory and was liked by the staff,<sup>45</sup> and the OPAC (on-line public access catalogue) was tailored to the requirements of the Reference Department (and was the first in South Africa to provide Xhosa as an inquiry language option),<sup>46</sup> the serials module did not work and had to be re-written by the supplier,<sup>47</sup> and statistical records were repeatedly lost. GOVNET was causing so many communication problems that a different platform was required, and after threats of prosecution, the Library had to pay a large penalty for using various software applications which had over the years been illegally loaded by staff onto its system.<sup>48</sup>

Fresh concerns were raised in 1993 about the Sequoia mini-computer (now owned by the Library) and its constellation of dumb terminals, the Board being pressured to approve a complete change from a central computer to a LAN (Local Area Network) system with a TATUNG 486 file server and microcomputers (PCs) at each workstation. The maintenance contract with CMC was cancelled,<sup>49</sup> and since they now refused to repurchase the obsolete Sequoia machine for the agreed price, it was sold for scrap.<sup>50</sup> Transferring the 120,000 bibliographic records to the file server began at the end of May 1993 and took six-and-a-half weeks.<sup>51</sup> All the PCs were upgraded to operate on the local area network (LAN) system, offering email facilities, while the Library switched over to the UNINET ('...ac.za') communication

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<sup>43</sup> The licence fee for the ALL programming language proving to be a crippling R6,000 a month, all the programmes using it were re-written in BASIC as an urgent cost-cutting exercise (South African Library Staff Bulletin, 7 February 1992, p.2; personal communication, N.J. Prinsloo, 3 August 2013).

<sup>44</sup> 'Statement of Income and Expenditure', in: South African Library. Report, 1992, p.23-26 and similar reports.

<sup>45</sup> M.W. Reid, conversation, 5 August 2013.

<sup>46</sup> South African Library. Report, 1993, p.15.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p.12. This module never gave satisfaction.

<sup>48</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 December 1992.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 11 February 1993.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 11 February 1994.

<sup>51</sup> During this time the library could not use the system nor could books be looked up on the database, but the break allowed the cataloguing staff to finally merge the Africana and General card subject catalogues (South African Library. Report, 1993, p.13).

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platform via the University of Cape Town.<sup>52</sup> At first there seemed to be an improvement in the operation of STYLIS on the LAN, the Board was told,<sup>53</sup> but seemingly not informed that cataloguing was now beset with problems, the electronic subject heading authority file system had collapsed and had to be painstakingly reconstructed, records could not be updated, and electronic records received from the State Library proved to be unstable.<sup>54</sup>

Ownership of the troublesome STYLIS software system passed to Worthington Smith and Associates (WS&A), which employed its developer. Strongly-worded correspondence passed between the Library and the company demanding the system be put into order,<sup>55</sup> because the operations of the Library (now all done online) had been completely disrupted. Concurrently there were major physical disruptions resulting from the systematic reconstruction of the main library building, causing departments to be moved from place to place ahead of the builders and the computer system having to be re-cabled over and over. While the cataloguing module of STYLIS worked from time to time, and the OPAC gave satisfaction to the Reference Department, the serials module failed (the programme had to be reconstructed and all the titles written back into the database), and stored statistics were lost.<sup>56</sup> During 1994 statistical records were again lost, and serials and legal deposit records could not be added.<sup>57</sup> The Company explained that a new version, STYLIS 2, was being written which would eliminate all the problems, but it was behind schedule. When installed, it proved to be even more troublesome with some one hundred or more 'bugs' to be corrected, the owners of the software promising yet another version, STYLIS 3, which would be trouble-free.<sup>58</sup> The Library's Deputy Director Kerkham who had a fair knowledge of computer matters at this point resigned and emigrated.

The upgrade promised for March 1994, was put off to November, then to April 1995, so the Library withheld the licence fee subject to the problems being corrected.<sup>59</sup> WS&A sued for payment, having meanwhile sold the rights to Denel Informatics, a branch of the State

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<sup>52</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 6 May 1993; Agenda for 2 December 1993, Annex 56: Report on Computerisation, 21 July 1993.

<sup>53</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 2 December 1993.

<sup>54</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin 20/1993, 25 October 1993, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 2 December 1993.

<sup>56</sup> South African Library. Report, 1993, passim.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 1994, p.10.

<sup>58</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes 11 February 1994.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, 25 November 1994.

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armaments manufacturer,<sup>60</sup> which tried unsuccessfully to persuade the original developer to join their staff and again re-write the system,<sup>61</sup> failing in which, they induced the South African Library's current IT specialist to resign and join the company in July 1995.<sup>62</sup> STYLIS 3 was eventually loaded onto the South African Library's computer.<sup>63</sup> Problems continued, the authority files had again to be rebuilt, and an unknown number of bibliographic records were lost.<sup>64</sup> In January 1996 Denel withdrew support and the software was outsourced to a Johannesburg company named FailSafe Systems.<sup>65</sup> At this point the file server failed, and during repairs a large part of the data was wiped-out, the backup file proved to be corrupted, and a claim against the Library's insurance policy was fruitless. The computer's hard-drive was sent to Johannesburg in a vain attempt to correct the corrupted records, which, on being returned, was now found to have lost all the indexing data.<sup>66</sup> Reconstruction of the index files was attempted over a six-week period during which the computer system was out of use yet again, after which the reconstruction efforts were abandoned and the STYLIS software was finally purged.<sup>67</sup> The system failure over many months after so much precious money had been spent on it, left the Library with no means of accessing its bibliographical records and other computer-dependent programmes.

To add insult to injury, the owners of the failed STYLIS 3 software (Denel Informatics together with FailSafe) sued the Library for R30,000 for professional services for their unsuccessful attempts to render STYLIS functional, plus about R9,000 interest. Westra had offered to pay their fee once the system was working but not otherwise. FailSafe added a claim for R60,000 damages plus interest at 15½% for alleged copyright infringement, claiming that components of STYLIS software had not been deleted from the Library's computer when the

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<sup>60</sup> South African Library. Report, 1994, p.11.

<sup>61</sup> He had meanwhile become the local agent for a more modern Israel-based library system named Aleph, and wanted to wash his hands of the much-adapted STYLIS system (communication N. Prinsloo, 3, 4 August 2013).

<sup>62</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 May 1995.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* STYLIS 3 was a new program. None of the users of STYLIS 2 could migrate to the new system (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for Exco, 17 November 1997, Annex: Library to Findlay & Tait attorneys, 3 November 1997).

<sup>64</sup> South African Library. Report, 1995, pp.11, 13-14. Almost two decades later (2014), contract cataloguers are still at work identifying and reinstating lost bibliographic records.

<sup>65</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 29 March 1996, Annex 61: 'Computerisation - first quarter 1996'; Agenda for 31 May 1996, Annex 29-30: 'Report on Computerisation'.

<sup>66</sup> Index. (n.) In database design, a list of keys (or keywords), each of which identifies a unique record. Indices make it faster to find specific records and to sort records by the index field - that is, the field used to identify each record (<http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/I/index.html>, accessed 17 May 2014).

<sup>67</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 31 May 1996; Agenda for 6 September 1996, Annex 14-20: 'Computerisation report'.

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system was purged. (There was a further outstanding claim of R51,961 for withheld licence fees owing to WS&A which could potentially be claimed with interest.) The fact that the software did not function was immaterial as a defence, and a counter claim to recover damages through loss of earnings could hardly be set up by a non-profit organization such as the Library. The Library was advised that it had little prospect of success in court and legal fees would be heavy. The Library's lawyers recommended an out-of-court offer of R35,000 in full and final settlement which they believed FailSafe was likely to accept.<sup>68</sup>

The Library now had no online catalogue to identify and retrieve books added to stock since 1990, and administrative chores such as accessions and cataloguing had to fall back on manual methods. However, a way out of the Library's predicament presented itself. The original writer of STYLIS now served as the agent for ExLibris (an Israeli software company) and offered the Library the ALEPH integrated library system at a bargain price, although from the start it was suspected that there could be hidden costs<sup>69</sup> (which indeed there were). The Board approved the purchase of the ALEPH system for R280,000<sup>70</sup> and in no time it was discovered that the computer hardware the Library had purchased a few years earlier could not handle the new system, and a new file-server was needed immediately at a cost of R122,000,<sup>71</sup> followed by the purchase of new computer work-stations as well as licence fees for numerous sub-programmes payable in United States Dollars. The system was installed in record time in October 1996 and after innumerable adjustments, the loading of the salvaged records, and the appointment of an IT specialist on the Library's staff once more, the system proved satisfactory.

The human cost to staff and management had been extreme, contributing no doubt to the concurrent breakdown of morale, discussed in the following section, while finding the money to pay for all this technology, without increased assistance from the State, was the most significant factor which precipitated the Library's eventual downfall, as briefly noted in the Epilogue. This whole episode demonstrates again that an autonomous South African Library was not sustainable within the gross limitations of the State funding upon which it almost entirely depended. Only by pooling of the computer resources could a partial solution be found, yet when these troubles were at their worst, relations between the two national libraries were also at their worst, as discussed in Chapter 6, fifth section.

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<sup>68</sup> Findlay & Tait attorneys to South African Library, 21 November 1998 (photocopy, supplied to the management team, in the author's possession).

<sup>69</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 6 September 1996, Annex 14-20: 'Computerisation report'.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 6 September 1996.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, Agenda for 6 December 1996.

## Chapter 6, fourth section : The Old Order Changes

In Greek tragedy, the hero meets his end through his own shortcomings, betrayal by others, or both. The South African Library was likewise compromised by human and other failure, internal as well as external, as demonstrated in preceding sections. The dénouement is found in the fifth section and Epilogue which follow. External factors aggravated internal problems: a lamentable lack of State commitment towards the Library, persistent under-funding, damaging inter-institutional rivalry, and the sudden swing from State repression which stifled political opinion and communication of knowledge, to a Utopian prospect of unfettered freedom.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990s, favourable political and technological transformation could not be exploited for want of funding and human resources.

Political liberalization precipitated a restlessness among a small but very vocal segment of the Library's staff. Rapid developments in computerized information technology (through the shared resources of the Internet, digitization of existing texts, publication of new texts in digital form only, and the astonishing power of search-engines like AltaVista, Yahoo! and Google) cast a shadow over the future of librarianship. Like the ancient libraries of Alexandria, the South African Library faced obsolescence with changed political hegemony. In an era of superficiality, an old library might not, at first, be missed.

The Library could slowly adjust itself to these external changes so long as staff morale remained high and there was consensus about the Library's purpose. But diminishing financial and human resources in the face of rapidly growing collections and demand by users was a critical factor. Published material (which needed processing and curation) poured in, while overwhelming numbers of undergraduate students swamped its limited facilities to use prescribed works they were expected to purchase for themselves. Reconstruction work on two main buildings and two hired stores was a constant disruption for almost a decade. Adding the new Centre for the Book (aiming originally to promote a 'first world' book culture, but rapidly evolving to align with the spirit of the time) was an excellent strategic move. But for the staff who would be expected to carry it into effect, it appeared to be yet another burden for an already intolerably over-stretched institution. As the gyre widened, things fell apart.

Looking back to its 'golden age' between the 1950s and the 1970s, there had been a camaraderie between grades, and between present and past staff of the South African Library who considered themselves always to be 'Saplings',<sup>2</sup> a family feeling, a sense of belonging which was

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<sup>1</sup> Making the country ungovernable was an aim of the United Democratic Front, established in 1983, and the Defiance Campaign of 1989 (Encyclopedia of South Africa, ed. K. Johnson and S. Jacobs. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011, pp.305-306), and persisted after the UDF itself was dissolved in 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Sapling was an acronym adopted by Varley as the title of the South African Public Library's staff magazine established in 1951, but also the name adopted by staff past and present to demonstrate their affection for the 'SAPL'.

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absent in other libraries. Staff from professionals to artisans to cleaners had unusually long service (see Annexure 12, chart 1). Former staff regularly kept in touch, dropping in for a cup of tea, or writing to update everyone on their doings. There was a group of older staff who nurtured this camaraderie, which persisted through to the early 1980s and carried the Library through many difficult times. Director Varley, despite being considered aloof, managed to motivate his staff to an unsurpassed degree. Staff worked hard, with inconvenient shifts, in a draughty mid-Victorian building with rudimentary facilities, and opening hours daily from nine in the morning to nine at night,<sup>3</sup> Sundays, New Year's Day and three religious holidays only excepted, driven by a belief in the Library's mission.<sup>4</sup>

Cohesion between staff up to the 1970s was promoted by three practices. One was interchangeability of duties, so that all staff worked shifts in the Reference and Reading Rooms and shared duties in other functional areas when the need arose. The second was the famed Sapling tea clubs, each with two sessions to cover shifts: one club run by the White personnel where the greatest decorum prevailed, presided over during the first sitting by the Director seated at one end of the refectory table and the Chief Woman Assistant at the other (nearest to the scullery), while the other was run by the Coloured staff in a separate tearoom, presided over by the Head Messenger, where rowdy chequers and domino games were played and decorum was notable by its absence. The third was a newsletter put together by the staff, initially *The Sapling*, which was published more-or-less annually (1951, 1961-1973), but expired when no volunteer could be found to edit it. In May 1978 the staff established a monthly *South African Library Staff Newsletter*. Both served a valuable purpose in keeping everyone up to date with information about coming and past events, the latest news of past and present staff, and occasional literary contributions.<sup>5</sup> The Newsletter was taken over by management late in 1983, issued more frequently, becoming more formal to coincide with its circulation to the Board and other interested persons, and in 1987 more formal still under the editorship of the Deputy Director, when its pages were devoted largely to management notifications and corporate news.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shift work was inevitable. Evening closing hours were brought forward from 10 pm to 7.30 pm when the Library became a national library, and continued to be adjusted forward as patronage diminished due to safety concerns.

<sup>4</sup> That this vision even extended to the Library's cleaners is demonstrated by a letter reproduced in Annexure 16.

<sup>5</sup> *The Sapling* and the *Staff Newsletter* or ...*Bulletin* were invaluable sources of information for this study.

<sup>6</sup> The staff demanded to run the *Staff Bulletin* after the Director refused to include a contribution calling on staff to join the trade union NEHAWU at the time of a hospital strike by that union which had led to the burning of hospitals and the death of numerous patients (NLCT-MC MSN S6/3. Westra to M. Line, 23 February 1995 - this letter is also quoted on page 244, footnote 17). Under staff editorship between April and August 1996, 'humour' was added which quickly became offensive and personal. Management brought out a separate monthly version, which continued as *South African Library News Bulletin* between January 1997 and February 1998.

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Noticeably absent up to and including Varley's tenure as Director was a management structure. The Director held all the reins. He was responsible to the Board and ultimately to Parliament. During his directorship, a rare staff meeting might be called, typically to announce new rules or threaten disciplinary action over the breach of existing ones, but never to elicit discussion. Communication downward was erratic, and upward unheard of.<sup>7</sup> All sources agree that Varley never consulted his staff.<sup>8</sup>

In 1959 the practice of circulating a 'staff memo' commenced, the style being briskly authoritarian, as exemplified by Special Staff Memo 14/8/1959: 'Mr Varley wishes to speak to all the members of the non-European staff tomorrow morning at 8.30 am in the Grey Collection. ALL MUST ATTEND.' Staff memos were issued irregularly, either announcing new regulations, appointments, or threats to call in the police over acts of petty larceny.<sup>9</sup> Despite his personal style, he was evidently admired by all his staff.

Varley's paternalistic form of management, backed up by the authority of the Board, was continued by Director Lewin Robinson, although the staff memos became more frequent and informative. No record has been found of formal discussions between executive staff at this time. The first recorded instance of consultations with middle-level staff was a meeting held on 22 October 1963, convened by the Chief Woman Assistant (soon to be designated Chief Librarian), discussing housekeeping details like allocating evening shifts, ladies' overalls and the hygienic state of the toilets.<sup>10</sup> Heads of Departments meetings were only introduced at the very end of Robinson's tenure in 1981, when similar mundane matters were discussed.<sup>11</sup>

One of Piet Westra's first actions on becoming Director was to establish a Management

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<sup>7</sup> No evidence has been seen which suggests that either the White or Coloured staff were discontented with this style of management, although it may have influenced Ian Murray's early retirement in 1945. The Coloured staff appeared meekly to accept this management style and their second-rate position.

<sup>8</sup> Yet he always knew what was going on (communication from Dorothy Ivey, 23 March 2013).

<sup>9</sup> The lines of authority were made very clear to the 'non-European staff' by Varley (evidently irritated on one occasion) when he wished to 'clear up any misunderstandings' of the rules: they were required to obey the orders of the commissionaires without question; complaints were to be conveyed to him through the 'Head Boy, John' (John Williams, then 39 years of age); late arrivals would be reported to him personally and a fine for lost time (minimum of sixpence) would be deducted from the weekly wages and only excused in the case of serious illness or accident (NLCT-MC MSM 21 (1945-1955). 'Memorandum to Non-European Staff', 9 February 1946).

<sup>10</sup> Notes taken by a staff member at this particular meeting were found in the file 'General policies, job descriptions, merit awards' (NLCT-MC MSM 21(b) (1959-1966)).

<sup>11</sup> What was possibly the first Heads of Departments meeting on 10 February 1981 was referred to in the handwritten minutes of the next meeting on 2 June 1981, when it was resolved to keep a formal record in future (a photocopy distributed to staff is filed with the author's own set of South African Library Staff Newsletter). Minutes of the next meeting on 11 August have not been seen. The typed minutes of Robinson's last Heads of Departments meeting which was held on 13 and 14 October 1981 was likewise found only in the author's set of staff newsletters.

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Executive Committee which included the Deputy Director, Administrative Officer and two Chief Librarians, to meet weekly, starting on 2 December 1981.<sup>12</sup> With the appointment of Andrew Kerkham as Deputy Director in 1987 and the implementation of framework autonomy in 1988, a new 'flat' management structure was introduced with more, smaller, functional groupings or 'teams' with direct access to the Deputy Director. While the Management Exco now met once a fortnight, a new structure for Heads of Departments and Sections ('HODS', including the members of Exco) met in alternate weeks.<sup>13</sup>

At this time the South African Library Staff Association was formed,<sup>14</sup> which amongst other things took responsibility for the tea clubs and presentation fund.<sup>15</sup> The Association, which met once a month, devoted its energies to prosaic matters. Discussions and resolutions of the Association were noted by management, which, as a matter of principle, attended its meetings only by invitation.<sup>16</sup> In the dizzy days of 1990s reform, the Staff Association was dismissed as conservative by the radical minority, which set out to cause disruption at every opportunity.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Exco minutes were recorded in a series of manuscript books, concluding with the minutes for 6 September 1995 (filed NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1); the next book appears to have been lost after the minute-taker was summarily removed from her position. This book may yet reappear. The author has his own photocopies of some of the missing minutes as well as his private diary jottings. These minutes were a valuable source of information for this study.

<sup>13</sup> The author consulted the following pertinent computer prints retrieved by him from discarded office files of former Deputy Director Kerkham. These were probably drafts of formal memoranda distributed to the Board which the author has not seen: (1.) [untitled] 'Principles...The bureaucratic hierarchy is to be reduced to a minimum...'; (2.) 'Proposed Staff Structures' with two organograms; (3.) 'The Functions of the South African Library', July 1988; (4.) 'Revision of Ranks', March 1989 (SD-1988, 1989). The new structure and new grades outlined for staff in South African Library Staff Bulletin 10/1988, 31 March 1988, p.1, and 12/1989, 31 March 1989, pp.1-2: see exposition in Annexure 10.

<sup>14</sup> 'Staff Association' in: South African Library Staff Newsletter 52, November 1982, p.11. All staff were automatically members unless they specifically resigned.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 55, February 1983, p.11. The purpose of the presentation fund was to pay for get well cards, farewell gifts, and similar matters. Membership was optional. It was funded by deductions from salaries, and aimed to eliminate appeals for donations from staff on each separate occasion. It would prove to be a fruitful source of staff discontent.

<sup>16</sup> This as stated by the Administrative Officer ('Report Back from a Meeting Held by the Staff Association Committee with Mr Nieuwoudt on Thursday 7th June 1990' verso of Staff Association minutes 30 May 1990, appended to South African Library Staff Bulletin 17/1990, 15 June 1990). This principle was raised for confirmation at a Management Exco meeting 6 March 1996 (rough minutes in the author's personal diary this date), but original formulation has not been traced.

<sup>17</sup> Director Westra, writing to management consultant Maurice Line (seemingly to clarify a remark on the alleged 'undemocratic' nature of the Staff Bulletin), said of this very small but noisy group of White staff: 'I once refused to publish an 'advertisement' written by a staff member for a trade union which is known for its violent and disruptive action ... [see page 242 footnote 6 for details]. Since that time one or two of our more vocal lady staff-members have been telling everybody that the Staff Bulletin is not democratic, but I can assure you that the rest of the staff do not agree. These same staff members are always in the opposition, whatever the rest of the staff including myself may do or suggest. I think you heard some of them at the open forum [see later, page 251]. The atmosphere in SA has changed and some of the staff even want to be represented on the Board. It is impossible to keep these

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In addition to these forums at different levels within the organization, some Coloured staff joined the Public Service League (a public service workers' organization not recognized by the Department of National Education) in order to participate in its group life insurance scheme.<sup>18</sup> The predominantly White and conservative Public Service Association also tried to recruit members from the parastatal institutions, and canvassed the South African Library staff (both White and Coloured), but with relatively little success.<sup>19</sup> This description of managerial and staff forums is mentioned at some length to demonstrate that Library administration under Westra's directorship was (despite his overbearing manner), not dictatorial as would later be asserted by the radical minority. The staff showed general indifference towards the structures available to them.

Westra often stressed he was, after all, the Director, expected to make decisions and carry ultimate responsibility if things went wrong, unlike his critics. He maintained the practice of professional autonomy which developed under Varley and continued under Robinson. John Frylinck, on his appointment as Deputy Director in 1983, was impressed by the staff's loyalty and marvelled at the way the Library seemed to run itself.<sup>20</sup>

Being permitted to exercise one's personal professional standards to deliver quality service (see a selection of tributes in Annexure 18) and to be surrounded with its rich collections, the South African Library could be a most rewarding place to work. But professional autonomy was effective only so long as everyone worked towards the same ultimate goal, which it was the duty of the Director to implement, within the scope of the National Libraries Act. An exclusive, departmental attitude developed among the staff during Westra's directorate, partly due to professional autonomy, partly due to the development of function-specific computer applications, but also due

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staff members happy and they make trouble at the slightest pretext. ... A[n] additional reason for possible discontent is that most of our staff's work load is too heavy - officially we have 100 posts but due to a lack of funds keep about 20 vacant. The effect of 3 years of building operations with constant moving of offices and stock has also been disruptive.' He concludes by offering, as a significant contributory factor, a growing feeling of uncertainty among South African Whites, especially in the public service. (NLCT-MC MSN S6/3. Westra to M. Line, 23 February 1995.)

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 April 1979: Administrative Officer's Report, p.2; NLCT-MC MSM G17 (1981). Department of National Education. Circular S1/2/2, 10 December 1981 with extract of Circular 10/7/2/4, 18 November 1981, from Commission for Administration. From July 1985, under the tricameral dispensation, the Government agreed that the Public Service League might be recognized to represent Coloured public servants (Commission for Administration. Annual Report, 1985 [RP.30-1986]: 'Recognition of Staff Associations', pp.16-17).

<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSM 21(b) (1981-1983). Vereniging van Staatsamptenare van Suid-Afrika. Voordele, [Circular offers membership to staff of parastatals; its benefits were mostly available in places other than Cape Town, except subsidized dining rooms, which refused to admit members on the South African Library staff]; covering letter of the above (NLCT-MC MSN S22/2, 8 November 1983). A survey in May 1985 showed 16 White staff were interested in joining, and 22 were not (ibid., 28 May 1985); by 1991 only eight White staff had joined (ibid., 3 June 1991).

<sup>20</sup> South African Library Newsletter, October 1983, p.2. Frylinck's prior career had been in Government libraries: seven years in the Department of National Education (including a secondment to the Transkei National Library), and subsequently as Director of the Ciskei National Library.

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to the actions of two department heads with insecure personalities,<sup>21</sup> often guilty of insubordination (who Westra failed to discipline), virtual landmines ready to detonate.

One senior librarian in particular, arrogantly refused to accept managerial authority. Since the adoption of framework autonomy and the Library's increasing dependence on non-State income, the material of an acclaimed high quality which he wrote or edited for publication by the Library, rendered him seemingly untouchable. He joined forces with the radical White female minority. This group, in turn, exploited the Director's vulnerabilities, particularly from 1994 under the democratically elected Government, a new Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology with new officials, a time-expired Board<sup>22</sup> which would take no decisive action (eventually replaced in 1996 by an inexperienced 'democratically nominated' Board), and above all, the Pippa Skotnes legal deposit case (which had caused much undeserved criticism of the Director in the press and in cultural and literary circles). Subjected to psychological bullying, he feared threatened 'revelations' in public media at this moment, no matter how readily-refutable they might be.<sup>23</sup> After the coming into office of the new Government (but not as a result of it), matters swung beyond control.<sup>24</sup>

Staff morale at the end of the 1980s had reached a very low ebb. Building work, which demanded continuous moving of offices and reading rooms, and the repeated moving of all the library's stock between 1987 and 1997, left the staff jaded. The Library's finances were in a precarious state. Growing political activism among a minority of staff<sup>25</sup> unsettled the majority. Computerization contributed to functional compartmentalization and de-skilling, while repeated changes in the computerized systems, frequent hardware breakdowns and obliteration of

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<sup>21</sup> Wikipedia article Emotional security (excerpt): Insecurity may contribute to the development of shyness, paranoia and social withdrawal, or alternatively it may encourage compensatory behaviours such as arrogance, aggression, or bullying, in some cases. (...) [I]t can often be accompanied by a controlling personality type or avoidance, as psychological defence mechanisms. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional\\_security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_security), accessed 26 May 2014.)

<sup>22</sup> The term of office of the Board under Ms Justice van den Heever expired officially in mid-1994, but the new Department, having more pressing matters to attend to, repeatedly renewed its term of office, leaving the Board at any meeting, unsure whether it would meet again, and resolved not to take important decisions, including the appointment of a Deputy Director. A new Board took office in May 1996 (South African Library. Report, 1996, p.7).

<sup>23</sup> Demonstrating that firm action should have been taken at the outset, when the Director took disciplinary steps against this individual in October 1995, he instantly stepped into line (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 1 December 1995: Annexes 15-18).

<sup>24</sup> Events from 1994 to the establishment of the National Library of South Africa need to be explored in a study of their own (the Epilogue below, which covers the final period 1994 to 1999, provides the merest sketch of developments in this turbulent period).

<sup>25</sup> Staff were warned not to wear political insignia (South African Library Staff Bulletin 13/1989, 7 April 1989, p.1; 28/1989, 15 September 1989, p.1). Disciplinary action was threatened (NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1982-1992). Management Exco. Minutes, 18 September 1989).

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electronic records (see Chapter 6, third section) also negatively affected staff morale.

There were associated social changes. The subsidized South African Library tea clubs acted as a barometer of social change among the staff in many points of detail. The fondly-remembered tradition of the White tea club between the 1940s and early 1980s with its atmosphere of collegiality and unwritten codes of hierarchy and conduct gave way soon after Piet Westra was appointed Director, when many of the stalwarts of an earlier generation resigned in quick succession. Apart from the blurring of the former professional stratification of 'first tea' and 'second tea', other social stratifications developed. A table was provided near a window for smokers,<sup>26</sup> while younger Afrikaans-speaking administrative staff gathered apart at another side table (English was the common language of the professionals who sat at the main table). Over time, further splinter groups developed, including coffee and cake clubs to which staff might subscribe. Non-members would nevertheless help themselves to the coffee or cake for which they had not paid. Non-members who made tea or coffee for themselves used the tea club's milk and sugar, taking other staff members' cups, while a tendency by members and non-members alike to make tea and coffee at all hours<sup>27</sup> eventually bankrupted the club. Silver- and nickel-plated 'Apostle' teaspoons which had been used for generations disappeared, and plastic spoons were substituted. Staff were chided for emptying teapots out of the tea room window instead of in the scullery and some individuals left their food to rot in the fridge.<sup>28</sup> In 1991 there were insufficient funds for the Christmas party.<sup>29</sup> During ongoing building work, the tea club system broke down with most staff taking their refreshments at their desks.

Perhaps the factor causing the greatest anxiety to the staff in the 1980s was the secretive way the Library's finances were managed. A cloak of confidentiality even excluded Exco members. All that the staff saw were the results of diminishing funding: journal subscriptions were cancelled, fewer (in some years no) books purchased, staff posts remaining vacant, closure of the Library on Saturday afternoons to save on overtime pay. But, despite pleas for economies, the Director did not forego attending IFLA conferences overseas,<sup>30</sup> the benefits of which to the

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<sup>26</sup> This surprised the newly-appointed Assistant Director Frylinck (South African Library Newsletter, October 1983, p.2). How this began is not recorded. Smokers were frequently exhorted in the staff Newsletter to go to second tea if possible (for example, decision of Management Exco, NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (1988-1992). Minutes, 5 July 1989, and Staff Association resolutions, South African Library Staff Bulletin, 28 July 1989, p.1; 19 January 1990, p.1).

<sup>27</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin, 29 June 1990, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 19 October 1990, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 25 October 1991, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> IFLA conferences and tours: Canada and USA in 1982, West Germany and United Kingdom in 1983, United States and Europe in 1985, Austria and United Kingdom in 1986, United Kingdom in 1987 and Australia and New Zealand in 1988 (source: South African Library. Report).

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participants were not apparent to the staff.

In 1984 all vacant posts were frozen on instructions from the Department.<sup>31</sup> This was followed-up by a frantic circular from the Department for institutions to cut their personnel costs.<sup>32</sup> In 1985 the annual bonuses and merit awards were drastically cut, and half the frozen posts were permanently abolished throughout the public service.<sup>33</sup> In 1986 the Board threatened to resign if funding were not improved; that year's annual report referred to this being a dying library,<sup>34</sup> and the only way it scraped through was by raising a bank overdraft.<sup>35</sup> Financial experts from the Department who investigated the Library's ongoing financial crisis condemned management for not immediately retrenching staff.<sup>36</sup> In January 1987 the Chairman of the Board wrote to the Department asking whether the Library should close.<sup>37</sup>

In the middle of all this financial anxiety, Westra announced his Centre for the Book scheme<sup>38</sup> with an extensive programme of activities (see Chapter 6, second section). The reaction of the staff was understandably negative and this added to an endemic apprehension of doom.

On the conclusion of renovations to the main building in the mid-1990s, Westra ruled that since all racial distinctions were now officially eliminated, librarians, stack attendants, technical assistants and other grades (except cleaners), regardless of population group, must share the new spacious tea room. While some staff made use of these facilities, regrettably many, including the Director himself,<sup>39</sup> and some department heads and their departmental subordi-

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<sup>31</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/5 (1984). Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions. Minutes of joint meeting with Department of National Education, 6 August 1984; NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1984-1989). Department (Kul 20/1) to Heads of Cultural Institutions, 9 August 1985; Director to Department, 5 September 1984.

<sup>32</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/2 (1984). Circular. Commission for Administration to Declared Institutions, December 1984.

<sup>33</sup> Commission for Administration. Annual Report, 1985 [RP.30-1986], pp.23, 25. South Africa declared a moratorium on repayment of its foreign debt in September 1985.

<sup>34</sup> South African Library. Report, 1985-86, p.4.

<sup>35</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 7 November 1985.

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/6 (1986). Verslag oor die Finansiële Posisie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Biblioteek vir 1986/87, 14 November 1986, p.4; covering letter L. Stoop (5/1/2/3) to P.S. Meyer, Chairman of the Board, 24 November 1986.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, Meyer to Stoop, 1 December 1986. A rumour spread among the staff in 1986 to this effect and went beyond the Chairman's letter to the Department by averring that only a 'caretaker' staff would be retained; the additional information could only have come from the directorate and this rumour was never contradicted. Library rumours were usually reliable, as one would expect in an information-based profession.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1984-1988). Management Exco. Minutes, 18 March 1987. As would normally be the case, Exco members would have reported this back to their respective staff.

<sup>39</sup> He initially took his tea break there, but after being exposed to verbal abuse over the Skotnes case, stayed away.

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nates took their tea breaks at their workplace rather than mix with their colleagues.

Compartmentalization (or departmentalization) and the introduction of job descriptions focussed staff attention on their specific tasks, inter-departmental rivalries developed and broader institutional objectives were lost sight of. Related to this, inter-institutional interest groups increased solidarity between the Library's departmental staff and staff of other institutions performing similar work. Departmentalism was behind the Reference Department's decision in 1985 to run their two service points exclusively with their regular staff and not involve other professional staff except for the inconvenient evening, Saturday and public holiday shifts.<sup>40</sup> Staff from other parts of the Library who had happily done relief and 'dog watch' shifts now refused to help at any time. Although the purpose of this exclusivity seemed laudable, it did not, it seems, result in improved service, if some comments on file are believed.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, more rather than fewer staff were needed on duty<sup>42</sup> once the restrictions on students were relaxed (see Annexure 8, Charts 1 and 2).

There were other causes of unrest. Long-serving professional staff monopolized the senior positions, leaving little scope for advancement from within (see Annexure 12).<sup>43</sup> Non-librarian specialists were employed, particularly in the field of public relations and publications in a desperate attempt to raise supplementary revenue. Library assistants without professional qualifications formed an increasing proportion of the establishment, partly to implement affirmative action,<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> [Notice to staff] 'Decisions taken at a Meeting held on 16/4/1985 to Discuss Changes in the Reference Division' (copy in the author's files of SA Library Newsletter).

<sup>41</sup> Head of Special Collections wrote (in Afrikaans): SAL projects a generally bad image - trying to project an image we cannot live up to makes us ridiculous - the SAL's image of service delivery is very poor in many respects - there is uncertainty [of purpose?] which is reflected in the service delivery - the team spirit of the staff is very poor and Divisional heads can make a positive or negative impression (NLCT-MC MSN K1 (1984-1989). K. Schoeman, 'Komentaar', 11 March 1986). A reference librarian, who resigned after only four weeks' service, wrote (also in Afrikaans): Has a very negative impression of Reference - objects to repeated provision of personal details [on request forms] - unprofessional conduct of staff in catalogue room: loud talking and laughing, reading newspapers and ignoring readers, private telephone calls, time wasted chatting - a staff member does her private UNISA studies - use of Afrikaans is unsatisfactory (ibid., Jena Raubenheimer to Director, 6 July 1989, 4pp).

<sup>42</sup> Stack attendants laid a grievance against their department head (the author) about having to work 9½ hour shifts on Saturdays under extreme pressure (NLCT-MC MSN S3 (1986-1990). 'Memo of Grievances', 18 March 1986).

<sup>43</sup> A practice developed of transferring Reference and Special Collections Departments staff, found to be unsuitable for the positions for which they had been appointed, into specially-created niches in other departments (notably Acquisitions, Cataloguing and Preservation) where they continued to be ineffective or disruptive, but as they were usually qualified professionals, they often stood higher in rank than the assistants already in these departments, blocking the natural advancement of ordinary staff. This was brought to the attention of the Board (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 7 February 1991, Annex p.27: 'Comments on the Development Plan'; also Minutes, 7 February 1991; also Minutes, 4 June 1998: [tableted document] C. Lyall-Watson, 'Executive Summary: Human Resources Audit 29 May 1998 to 4 June 1998', pp.4, 5).

<sup>44</sup> Coloured General Assistants with Std.8 or 9 (Grades 10 or 11) qualifications were promoted under framework autonomy to a new grade of Library Assistant I and those with Std.10 (Grade 12) to full Library Assistant status (see Chapter 6, first section, p.216). The first Black librarianship graduate was appointed in March 1992.

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partly as an economy measure, and partly the result of de-professionalization through computerization<sup>45</sup> (see Annexure 11). Juniors looked to their Departments heads for leadership which was often absent, negative, or manipulative.<sup>46</sup> The outbreak of staff discontent at the South African Library was bred by departmentalization and fed by insecurity.

As described earlier, staff were being agitated against the Director and management. Radical proposals made in the run-up to the 1994 elections circulated.<sup>47</sup> Wild accusations were made against Library management and vague grievances were raised, which, not being based on real issues,<sup>48</sup> were difficult to deal with. Tensions were wound up to snapping point.

The Director had the beginnings of a staff revolution on his hands.<sup>49</sup> He had been reassured by the Director-General of the Department of National Education (just days before its was dissolved under the new ANC-led Government), that there was no immediate threat to the status of the national libraries, whatever the NEPI and other such discussion groups declared. The new Government had many far more pressing matters to deal with.<sup>50</sup>

Westra remained unsure how to deal with the staff situation. Maurice Line<sup>51</sup> had been com-

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<sup>45</sup> After computerization, the Periodicals Section was staffed, from July 1987, solely by library assistants (SA Library Newsletter 106, July 1987, p.1). There is surprisingly little literature on the effect of library computerization on either job satisfaction or the degree to which libraries replaced qualified librarians with library assistants. It is claimed that remaining professional librarians experienced improved job satisfaction while that of library assistants declined. The following were pertinent: G. Dakshinamurti, 'Automation's Effect on Library Personnel' in: Canadian Library Journal 42(6), December 1985, pp.343-351; K. Horsfall, 'The Human Impact of Library Automation', ca. 1992, 17pp. (<http://web.simmons.edu/~chen/rut/NIT'92/195-hor.htm>); M.K. Mason, 'Automation: Has it Deprofessionalized the Work of Cataloguing Literature?' ca. 1996, 7pp. (<http://www.moyak.com/papers/automating-cataloguing.html>); A. Morris and H. Dyer, *Human Aspects of Library Automation*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Gower, 1998). Web-pages accessed 5 August 2013.

<sup>46</sup> A former staff member believes that the absence for lengthy periods on medical grounds of both the Director and the Head of Reference in 1990 permitted staff unrest to develop unchecked (Petrie le Roux, communication 10 June 2014). At this time the author was engrossed with his responsibilities connected with the rebuilding programme.

<sup>47</sup> One example of many was the recommendation by University of Natal librarianship academic Jennifer Verbeek to the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) to break away from colonially-based elitism, open the doors of learning to all, disband the present national libraries and place all their resources in a large warehouse for circulation to all, rather than consultation on their premises (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/4 (1992-1993). National Library Advisory Committee. Agenda for 4 May 1992: Annex: 'Planned Library and Information Infrastructure for South Africa, by J. Verbeek, Submission to NEPI, [undated]). It needs to be noted that one of the South African Library's radical librarians participated in the NEPI process, and resolutions of this kind would inevitably be relayed to staff.

<sup>48</sup> The service conditions and benefits of the Library's staff had been improved to such an extent that the resulting cost was a major cause of the Library's eventual insolvency.

<sup>49</sup> Piet Westra's self-confidence, badly shaken after a serious motor accident in April 1990, had not fully recovered, and he was at this time involved in the Pippa Skotnes legal deposit trials, which initially went against the Library.

<sup>50</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B29. J.B.Z. Louw, Department of National Education (3/1) to Westra, 15 April 1994.

<sup>51</sup> Dr Maurice Line was former head of the British Library Lending Division, His obituary in *The Guardian*, 29 November 2010 mentions his propensity to challenge orthodoxy.

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missioned by the State Library in 1994 to undertake a review of their internal management and communication structures, whose report was considered flattering to that Library,<sup>52</sup> Westra, backed by the Board, invited him to undertake a similar exercise at the South African Library.<sup>53</sup>

Line spent two days at the Library (14-15 February 1995) speaking to the Director, management members and staff individually. An afternoon was spent workshopping his concept of 'Total Quality Management' with the non-managerial staff, while a separate meeting with the management team followed. As agreed, his report was distributed to the staff without managerial comment.<sup>54</sup> Radical staff read into this quite mild report all the bad news they were expecting.<sup>55</sup>

Maurice Line's visit at this time had been particularly inopportune,<sup>56</sup> as it coincided with frantic efforts to move departments back into the renovated old wing after several years of disruptive rebuilding works, preparations for the grand inauguration festivities to be addressed by the Speaker of the National Assembly on 16 March 1995,<sup>57</sup> and a host of other worrying matters.

Staff tensions were still high when a series of three staff meetings were eventually held in April to consider the issues raised by Line. Instead of these meetings being constructive (as Line imagined they would be), all the pent-up tensions and emotions between staff and management, between factions of the staff, and even between members of the management team itself were let loose in a destructive outburst, the first two meetings being barely kept under control, while the third was so acrimonious that it had to be abandoned. The knives were out, figuratively speaking, as staff continued to attack and insult each other at every opportunity.

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<sup>52</sup> M.B. Line, 'State Library of South Africa: notes on consultancy, May 1994' (copy provided to the author by National Library of South Africa, Pretoria head office, seemingly an annex to a State Library Board Agenda; afterwards reported in: State Library. Annual Report, 1994, pp.12-13).

<sup>53</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 24 February 1995: Annex p.45, letter Westra to Maurice Line, 12 January 1995. Westra announced that the purpose of Line's visit would be to 'advise management on inter alia [the Library's] management structures, development plan, functions, fundraising and co-operation with other libraries and specifically the State Library' (South African Library Staff Bulletin 1/1995, 23 January 1995, p.1). It did not turn out like that.

<sup>54</sup> NLCT-MC MSN S9 (1983-1999). Maurice B. Line, 'South African Library: Report on a visit, February 14-15, 1995' (27 February 1995); a copy was circulated with South African Library Staff Bulletin, 28 February 1995.

<sup>55</sup> The author wrote a transcript of Line's verbal report to staff (author's personal diary entry, 15 February 1995 and following five pages; a typed resumé may be found in NLCT-MC MSNS6/3, Westra to Line, 23 February 1995, and in NLCT-MC MSN S9). The transcript shows that more was said than subsequently appeared in Line's written report. It was some of those verbal remarks which were taken up in the series of tumultuous staff meetings which followed.

<sup>56</sup> Each library investigation, the Booysen inquiry (1961), the De Villiers inquiry (1968), and the Meijer inquiry (1981), took place at difficult moments, namely the resignation of Varley, the Library's 150th anniversary celebrations, and the retirement of Lewin Robinson respectively.

<sup>57</sup> 'The Big Party' in: News from the South African Library 9(3), April 1995, pp.1-3.

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The majority Staff Association being considered too conservative and supportive of the status quo, the small radical group formed a new staff organization called SALEO (South African Library Employees' Organization), committed, as it publicly stated, to getting rid of management.<sup>58</sup> The head of Special Collections Department went so far as to write directly to the new State President, Nelson Mandela, and to buttonhole Wally Serote, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Culture, alleging that the Director was guilty of mismanagement and racism.<sup>59</sup>

On being informed of the unintended consequences of his intervention, Maurice Line issued a follow-up report for information of the staff, in which he expressed his distress at the turn of events and tried to bolster the authority and reputation of Director Westra. He assured staff that he saw no sign of racism (unlike another South African library where he had conducted a consultancy<sup>60</sup>), and regretted that internal problems had not been dealt with internally. The damage, however unintentional, had been done, and the services of a local consultant were now needed.<sup>61</sup>

On the suggestion of one of the militant group, Mr Gordon Hodgetts<sup>62</sup> was commissioned to work with both the staff and with management. With the staff generally, his efforts succeeded in reconciling the opposing groups and moving forward,<sup>63</sup> but less so with management where the troublesome department heads could not be persuaded to modify their behaviour.

The centre failed to hold at the very moment when firm direction was essential to manage the now-inevitable amalgamation with the State Library. In 1995, the South African Library for once seemed to hold all the aces in the national library power struggle. The State Library's traditional functions had withered away, while the South African Library's current and proposed functions seemed more relevant than ever, and its building programme neared completion. The staff revolt sabotaged the South African Library's last opportunity to press a brief advantage.

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<sup>58</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1992-1995). Management Exco. Minutes, 12 July 1995.

<sup>59</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 26 May 1995; NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1992-1995). Management Exco. Minutes, 21 June 1995. The Line report was adduced as evidence of mismanagement, and the racism accusation seemed to be based (as the author recalls) on a casual remark by the Director in 1994 when he urged the staff to transfer from the State pension fund to a provident fund before the new Government laid its hands on its assets. This action by the senior librarian concerned can only be interpreted as having been timed to play upon the Director's increasing sense of insecurity at the moment of his and the Library's greatest vulnerability.

<sup>60</sup> This appears to have been the library of either Technikon Pretoria or UNISA (16-17 February 1994).

<sup>61</sup> Maurice Line, 'South African Library', 29 May 1995, distributed with South African Library Staff Bulletin 8/1995, 29 May 1995.

<sup>62</sup> Gordon Hodgetts was a management consultant with recent experience of working with several non-governmental organizations.

<sup>63</sup> A brief synopsis appears in South African Library. Report, 1995, p.9. Hodgetts' program will be found in South African Library Staff Bulletin 17/1995, 12 September 1995, pp.1-2, and his overview in *ibid.* 6/1996, 18 April 1996, pp.10-12.

## Chapter 6, fifth section : Fall of Apartheid

By 1988, the South African Library was acquitting itself quite well in an environment which was breaking away from apartheid thought and practices, mainly because it had tried to remain true to its nineteenth century liberal ethos. It had maintained a traditional attitude of neutrality towards morals, religion and politics, and was as 'colour blind' as it could practicably be. In legislative matters, its political neutrality placed it and its sister institutions firmly outside of the political arena, assuring it of all-party support in Parliament. Parliamentarians admired the South African Library's European legacy which affirmed the idea that South Africa was part of Western civilization. Although the Library's collections contained nearer than any other the whole body of published material by or relating to all South African population groups, the 'non-European' material, significant though some of it may have been, was not actively promoted.<sup>1</sup> Professional staff at the public service points were invariably White right up to 1994 when the first fully-representative Government took office.<sup>2</sup> Political developments and economic circumstances now demanded going beyond its liberal past and political neutrality.

A 1988 report by Professor R.B. Zaaiman on the role of libraries in development has already been alluded to (see Chapter 6, second section). It was commissioned by the South African Institute for Library and Information Science (SAILIS) in 1986 when the ethos of the library profession had changed from one committed to supporting apartheid policies to one of studious neutrality for which the report would be criticized.<sup>3</sup> By the time Zaaiman's report was published he was Director of the State Library. He tried to elicit the support of Westra and the South African Library for a united programme of action to achieve developmental goals set out

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<sup>1</sup> There was little public demand for material in indigenous languages, although no record was kept which would validate this assertion. Certainly it would have been impossible to log usage of material by the user's ethnic preferences. Nor was a record kept of the language of the material used. In a reply to a 1974 inquiry from the College of Library and Information Services, University of Maryland, USA, about the Library's use of non-Roman scripts, the reply (in the negative) included an estimate that South African publishing by language at that time was 60% English, 40% Afrikaans and 0.02% Bantu [indigenous] languages (NLCT-MC MSM 61. B.V. Churms to H. Wellisch, 27 March 1974). Items with an ethnic appeal which were regularly requested, such as *The APO*, *Bona!*, *Cape Standard*, *Drum*, *Golden City Post*, and *True Love*, to name a few, were published in English (often supported by White capital), as were most publications of political movements and trade unions, mainly consulted by White researchers. The bulk of material published for consumption by Blacks in indigenous languages from earliest times was produced by missionary institutions and Government agencies. These are the author's impressions.

<sup>2</sup> The first qualified Black librarian was appointed in March 1992, with Black and Coloured librarians being appointed as vacancies occurred thereafter in the Cataloguing and Acquisitions Departments. The first non-White librarian was assigned to the Reference Department in November 1994. Such appointees in the 1990s typically had very short service with the South African Library before being 'head-hunted' by other libraries offering higher salaries.

<sup>3</sup> In particular by P.J. Lor, 'A Distant Mirror: the story of libraries in South Africa' in: *Daedalus* 125(4), Fall (northern) 1996, pp.245-246.

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in his report.<sup>4</sup> Showing no interest in change, Westra informed the Board: 'Our most important contribution to development is the provision of information on Southern Africa. This includes serving people undertaking research into development.'<sup>5</sup> At the Board meeting held on 8 February 1990 he noted that the National Libraries Advisory Committee, which met the previous day, had agreed to consider a joint ten-year strategic plan.<sup>6</sup> There were several other initiatives by Zaaiman to encourage closer co-operation between the two national libraries, such as giving the South African Library the access codes to the State Library's DOBIS database.<sup>7</sup> But Westra was determined not to compromise the autonomy of the two Libraries.

Warding off threats to the South African Library's autonomy had been a major preoccupation of directors Varley, Robinson and Westra, and the rebuffing of Zaaiman's well-intentioned overtures was in keeping with that pattern. Thus a promising opportunity was missed for, if not amalgamation, then a much closer relationship between the two national libraries on a relatively equal footing, with a Director at State Library who, on his retirement at the end of May 1991, revealed his affection for the South African Library, his alma mater, where he began his career in May 1947.<sup>8</sup>

The aloofness of the South African Library despite his every effort may well have caused Zaaiman to take the measure of the South African Library, which had increasingly come to rely for its position on its iconic status rather than its active contribution to the nation. Since the unbanning of the Black opposition by President de Klerk on 2 February 1990, it was clear that the political environment would change fundamentally, not only in relation to censorship which was Westra's special concern.

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<sup>4</sup> A long time had elapsed since the Meijer investigation of 1981, including the new 1985 Act which came into effect in 1987. Zaaiman believed that the time was right to set out a clear plan of action, with which the Department of National Education agreed. This plan, Zaaiman thought, should indicate the place of the national libraries in relation to other libraries (the perennial problem) and how they should adapt to Third World conditions. Each library had drafted a five-year plan for a meeting of the Advisory Committee in December 1989 (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/3 (1991-1994). NLAC. Minutes, 7 December 1989). Zaaiman sent Westra 'uitgangspunte' ('guidelines') in the form of a nine-point program of action with a friendly covering message (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 8 February 1990, Annex pp.57-58: Zaaiman to Westra, memo 19 January 1990 with attachment).

<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 8 February 1990. (Agenda, section 7.4.2) Westra advises the Board of a forthcoming meeting with State Library staff on 7 February 1990.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Minutes, 8 February 1990. At the meeting of the Advisory Committee the previous day, Zaaiman argued that such a plan should have 'a theoretical basis ... to give it credibility' and various planning methodologies were put forward (NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/3 (1986-1994). Minutes, 7 February 1990). Theoretical matters never interested Westra. The idea that a day or two after De Klerk's watershed speech in Parliament anyone could propose to draw up a ten (or even five) year strategic plan was exceedingly naive.

<sup>7</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1988-1992). Management Exco. Minutes, 5 and 25 January 1990.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/3 (1991-1994). Zaaiman (K1/15) to Westra, 3 June 1991.

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It was abundantly clear from a seminar paper Zaaïman delivered on 14 August 1990 that he did not believe the South African Library would accommodate change. Entitled 'Die Stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Tydsgees van 1818, 1937 en 1990',<sup>9</sup> it was delivered at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, in the presence of local leaders of the library profession, was subsequently published,<sup>10</sup> and since then cited a few times to the disadvantage of the South African Library.

In essence, the reference to 1818 is that the Library failed to achieve the educational objectives envisaged in its founding Proclamation.<sup>11</sup> The reference to 1937 is not amplified, but one may assume he had Ian Murray's pamphlet in mind, in which Murray claimed the South African Library was failing as a public library.<sup>12</sup> (Zaaïman does refer to the pamphlet, but in the context of the failure of libraries generally to address the Poor White question, citing E.G. Malherbe, 1932.<sup>13</sup>) However, he could also have had the findings of the 1937 Interdepartmental Committee<sup>14</sup> in mind. Finally he arrives at 1990, the locus of his irritation with the South African Library. His criticism was that, on becoming a national library after more than a century as a subscription library, it continued to serve an educated elite<sup>15</sup> instead of promoting literacy; thus, in his opinion, it possessed neither authenticity (because its concepts and practices were brought in from abroad) or legitimacy (because it did not mobilize the masses).<sup>16</sup>

This address seems to have had a triple purpose: to display his familiarity with Classical literature (the first two-thirds of the address), to deflect the criticism of his own 1988 report for SAILIS (in which precisely such shortcomings had been criticized), and to confound Westra's reasons (see preceding page) for not supporting his proposals for the joint participation of their

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<sup>9</sup> ('The Founding of the South African Public Library and the Zeitgeist of 1818, 1937 and 1990.')

<sup>10</sup> R.B. Zaaïman, 'Die Stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Tydsgees van 1818, 1937 en 1990' in: Mousaion, 3rd ser. no.9, 1991, pp.3-23 (slightly edited from the original notes in the present author's possession).

<sup>11</sup> He does, however, identify 'the most eloquent of ancient Writers' mentioned in the Proclamation as Plato (cites R.G. Bury translation of Laws (London: Heinemann, 1952), p.804).

<sup>12</sup> I.M. Murray, The Scope and Functions of the Public Library in Modern Democratic Communities (Cape Town: the Author, 1937), pp.37-40.

<sup>13</sup> He cites E.G. Malherbe, Education and the Poor White (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), p.348.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa (Cape Town: Cape Times [for Government Printer], 1937).

<sup>15</sup> The Library was still excluding school pupils and discouraging first and second year tertiary-level students.

<sup>16</sup> The objective reader might make the same observations about the State Library or most other formal libraries.

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libraries in development.<sup>17</sup> Zaaiman could not have been unaware of Westra's plans for the Centre for the Book, although they did not yet contain an 'outreach' element (which was only added later, possibly in response to Zaaiman's critique; the same shortcoming was a factor in the staff's deep suspicion of the real purpose of the Centre for the Book.)

The South African Library proceeded to compile an independent 'Development Plan for 1991-1995'<sup>18</sup> piloted by Deputy Director Kerkham. Despite Zaaiman's criticism, the plan stated (section 1.1.2) that the Library would continue to serve the developed sector in terms of the National Libraries Act as the national preservation and reference library. Provision was made in the Plan (section 7.5.2 under 'Publicity') for the Centre for the Book, the proposed functions of which were in a continuous state of evolution.<sup>19</sup> It was acknowledged that, although these functions were in line with the Act, additional funding could not be expected and the Centre would need to be self-funding. The projected 1995 date of inauguration was optimistic, considering the extent and complexity of the renovations to the old university buildings, so that the Library only took occupation in March 1996,<sup>20</sup> when operations of the Centre for the Book could commence. But by that time, the environment had changed to such an extent that this five-year plan was irrelevant.

One point of this Development Plan (10.3 'Rationalization') which was played down at the time but became perhaps the most relevant, was the idea that the South African Library might be amalgamated with the State Library or alternatively be linked to the Library of Parliament. Both these logical proposals had been discussed innumerable times since the Carnegie investigation of 1928. Indeed, the placement of the Mendelssohn Collection in the care of the South African Library was recommended as far back as 1922.

An outside observer could not fail to see the advantages of a merger of one kind or another. Advanced financial management had become essential; the staff unrest (see the preceding fourth section) demanded the services of a Human Relations specialist; the ongoing problems with the stand-alone computer systems (see the preceding third section) required technicians on the staff; conservation, microfilming, publicity and publishing all required experts. A

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<sup>17</sup> While researching this study, the author contacted Professor Zaaiman to establish the circumstances of choosing the topic for his address, but by then he had no recollection of the address or its subsequent publication (telephone conversations with the author, June and July 2012); Piet Westra also claimed to have no recollection of the address.

<sup>18</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/3 (1991-1994); copies also at MSN A5/3/4 (box 3) and MSN A6/1. It was endorsed by the Board on 7 February 1991 (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 7 February 1991).

<sup>19</sup> At this date the functions included promoting the study of the book, providing a point of contact between those engaged in writing and producing books, offering a preservation information service, staging a permanent and topical printing exhibitions, promoting literacy and reading, and stimulating publishing in areas of need.

<sup>20</sup> 'Ours at Last!' in: News from the South African Library 10(4), April 1996, p.3.

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merger between two or three kindred institutions could provide an economy of scale making such appointments feasible. No longer could all the top management be undertaken solely by the Director, the Deputy Director and the Chief Administrative Officer.<sup>21</sup> In any event the Library's Deputy Director Kerkham emigrated when the new Government came into office in 1994, and his post was left vacant as a necessary economy measure. Overloading top management contributed largely to the South African Library's downfall before the decade ended.

With the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other 'liberation movements' in 1990, frenetic planning began for a 'democratic South Africa'. Hopes for the future centred on the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), established in December 1991, with five specialist subcommittees. All sectors of society were sucked into a vortex of social and political discussion groups preparing submissions, not least the cultural, educational and information sectors. Study and discussion forums proliferated (often funded by foreign donors) remembered today only by their initialisms.<sup>22</sup> Typical of such forums, a great number of radical proposals were floated (amongst which closing the national libraries and distributing their stock to disadvantaged communities, or making the State Library the only national library with the Cape Province taking over the South African Library if it wanted it).

One of these forums was the NECC<sup>23</sup> which in 1991 established the NEPI<sup>24</sup> with twelve working groups. These groups did not at first include a study group for library and information services (LIS), so, at the insistence of LIWO,<sup>25</sup> a thirteenth task group was set up hurriedly at the end of 1991, which in 1992 issued a report on library services.<sup>26</sup> The NEPI-LIS provided a platform for earnest discussion between members of several professional formations, but largely

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<sup>21</sup> This structure had remained unchanged since 1964.

<sup>22</sup> The following information is largely derived from C.M. Walker, 'Library Associations in South Africa, 1930-2005' in: *Library Management* 27(1/2), 2006, pp.26-37.

<sup>23</sup> NECC: originally the ANC-aligned National Education Crisis Committee which became the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (administered by the Education Development Trust, 1990-1992).

<sup>24</sup> NEPI: National Education Policy Investigation (1990-1992). This group laid down the 'Five NEPI Principles': equality, democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism, and a unitary education system (Policy Options for a Library and Information System for a Post-Apartheid South Africa, compiled by C. Stadler et al. ([sine loco]: National Education Policy Investigation: Library and Information Services Research Group, 1992, p.33).

<sup>25</sup> LIWO: Library and Information Workers' Organization (1990-1997), based at the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg, was aligned with the ANC and included members of the South African Library staff.

<sup>26</sup> When the NEPI dissolved in 1992, the thirteenth (LIS) task group became a separate body called TRANSLIS (Transforming our Library and Information Services Coalition, 1993-January 1994), continued as TRANSLIS Forum.

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LIWO's Natal members. Their report, issued in May 1992<sup>27</sup> – devoted largely to bewailing the legacies of apartheid, censorship and the states of emergency – never reached CODESA which broke down that month. The NEPI-LIS clearly wished, as the Afrikaner radicals had done some thirty years earlier, to implement authoritarian, centralized control of libraries. The report ended with a statement of 'The five principles of NEPI' which should apply in LIS, namely equality, democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism, and a unitary education system.<sup>28</sup>

While those discussions were taking place, the Association of Directors of National Collections (ADNC) held a week's 'bosberaad' (bush congress) at the De Nyala nature reserve and missile range from 24 to 28 February. Piet Westra represented the South African Library, and the newly-appointed Director of State Library, Peter Lor, also attended, perhaps his first official gathering. Cameras, delegates were told, were prohibited for security reasons, but battle-axes, bathing costumes, sun-tan oil and a sense of humour would be prerequisites; delegates would drink real Transvaal yellow peach brandy round the camp fire and 'Kaaopenaars sal nie verplig word om mieliepap te eet nie.'<sup>29</sup> This was evidently a very different kind of meeting to the NEPI discussions over a cup of tea in Pietermaritzburg. Here in the bush, painful issues of change and transformation were discussed.<sup>30</sup>

The relationship between the Directors of the national libraries would also become painful. It began satisfactorily enough after the 'bosberaad' when they compiled a joint submission to CODESA, divided into parts for four of the five working groups, outlining the strengths of both national libraries and offering such assistance as the delegates might require.<sup>31</sup> In the month that CODESA broke down (May 1992), the National Library Advisory Committee (NLAC) met in Pretoria, chaired by the Minister's appointee, J.J. (Koos) Human.<sup>32</sup> This was its

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<sup>27</sup> Policy options, compiled by C. Stadler (1992), 41pp.

<sup>28</sup> A. Shah and L. Dreyer, 'Library Governance in South Africa: options for consideration' in: *Innovation* 6, June 1993, pp.24-26.

<sup>29</sup> A stock Transvaal jest at the expense of persons from the Cape who found the idea of eating maize porridge with coarse grilled sausage rather repulsive.

<sup>30</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 6 February 1992, Annex 54-57: I.L. Raubenheimer (Transvaal Museum) to Committee of Heads of Declared Institutions, 23 December 1991: *Uitnodiging vir 'n Boskamp*; report in *South African Library Staff Bulletin* 5/1992, 6 March 1992.

<sup>31</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda 30 April 1992, Annex 45-51, covering letter on State Library stationery (K1/48) to Chairman, CODESA, 2 March 1992. The working groups were 'Creating a climate for free political participation', 'General Constitutional Principles', 'Constitution-making process' and 'Future of the TBVC states'.

<sup>32</sup> J.J. (Koos) Human was a director of the Cape Town publishing house Human & Rousseau, established in 1959, and notable for publishing the work of prominent Afrikaans authors such as D.J. Opperman, Etienne Leroux, Karel Schoeman, Breyten Breytenbach, André P. Brink, and others (<http://joanhambidge.blogspot.com/2013/02/koos-human-n-lewe-met-boeke-2006.html>, accessed 16 June 2014).

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first meeting in over two years and the first attended by Professor Elize Botha<sup>33</sup> (the new Chairman of the State Library Board) and Director Peter Lor. Nothing of any significance was discussed.<sup>34</sup> This meeting was a waste of everyone's time. Two years elapsed before they met again. In the political vacuum of the time, the two national libraries drifted rudderless, unable to make future plans. Political opinion was divided between a strong federal distribution of powers (with libraries a provincial responsibility) and a strongly centrist State favoured by the ANC.<sup>35</sup> On the surface, the Directors of the South African Library and State Library seemed to be of one mind on issues relating to the national libraries, but this was an illusion.

Westra, just back from a three week Taiwanese-sponsored visit to the Far East,<sup>36</sup> was reluctant to set out immediately for a meeting in Pretoria on 13 May 1993 at the offices of the Department of National Education, but was urgently prevailed upon to do so by a trusted library colleague in the Department, though further details could not be divulged. On that occasion Westra and Lor met Dr J.C. Pauw (Deputy Director of Cultural Affairs) 'for exploratory talks' (set up by Lor while Westra was absent in Taiwan).<sup>37</sup> Pauw informed the two Directors that in future, the national libraries would be the responsibility of a new Directorate for Meta-Information.<sup>38</sup> On the face of it, this seemed to be hardly worth the trip to Pretoria, but it was what might have been discussed had Westra been absent which was significant. Lor, in a letter to Pauw thanking him for the meeting, confirming that both national libraries were content with the new Departmental arrangement, added that, in a future federal dispensation, only one of the national libraries needed to be associated with the central Government, while the other could become a regional library, a matter, which Lor emphasized, should not be overlooked.<sup>39</sup> There could be

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<sup>33</sup> Elize (Elizabeth) Botha was Professor of Afrikaans at UNISA up to 1995 and active in conservative literary circles including Die Afrikaanse Skrywerskring and the first female President (1989-1991) of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. She was a literary advisor to the Publications Control Board, Director of Nasionale Pers, and the recipient of numerous awards for her services to Afrikaans literature. She was the only female chairman of the State Library board (1992-1999), and first female Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch (1998-2007).

<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/4 (1992-1993). National Library Advisory Committee. Minutes, 4 May 1992.

<sup>35</sup> The author has not found good documentary sources in the South African Library administrative archives on this period of uncertainty. This is not to say that no such documentation exists. What follows is derived from 'between the lines' comments from a small number of key letters and the procès verbale of the last NLAC meeting.

<sup>36</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin, 11 and 28 May 1993, pp.1-2 and 3; South African Library. Report, 1993, pp.7, 9.

<sup>37</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A4/3 (1992-1999). Westra to Lor, 13 July 1993, *infra*.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1992-1995). Management Exco. Minutes, 26 May 1993.

<sup>39</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A4/3 (1992-1999). Lor (A1/2/1/2) to Pauw, 1 June 1993. Lor went on to state in this letter that the Department should consider reinstating the National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information, the abolition of which by F.W. de Klerk had dismayed Lor in 1988 (NLCT-MC MSN B7/1 (1988)). SAILIS Executive

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no doubt that the State Library should, by inference, be the only national library. This coming to his attention, Westra telephoned Lor to demand an explanation of his underhand behaviour,<sup>40</sup> and in a hand-written note, Lor apologised for forgetting to let Westra know, attaching a copy of the offending letter, adding that if all libraries became regional responsibilities, 'dit sal ons as nasionale biblioteke in die wiede ry'.<sup>41</sup> Westra replied that if the new constitution made special provision for one national library, he saw no reason why it could not make provision for both.<sup>42</sup>

On 18 November 1993, after arduous negotiation, the South African Multi-party Negotiating Forum adopted an interim constitution for the immediate future, a special sitting of Parliament four days later giving the necessary endorsement. As the 1994 elections approached, the ANC was confident that it would gain a clear majority and would form the future government of South Africa, yet the expertise in administering the country lay with the existing bureaucracy which, considering its largely White composition and conservative Afrikaner domination, was not trusted to give necessary support to the reconstructive goals of the incoming government, even though many officials would leave the Public Service or retire early.<sup>43</sup> The ANC had its own Education Department, but needed expert advice on implementing its 'Policy Framework for Education and Training'. One of the mushrooming consortia of consultants, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), established in 1993<sup>44</sup> with foreign funding,<sup>45</sup> was commissioned to undertake a study to guide the ANC. It had a very short deadline (May 1994) and proposed to focus on strictly educational issues. TRANSLIS (successor to the NEPI-LIS) demanded the inclusion of libraries in its brief, so an additional Task Team for LIS was set up in January 1994 with four hand-picked members<sup>46</sup> which CEPD Director Coombe believed represented 'significant stake

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Committee. Minutes, 29 January 1988, Annex 6, and Agenda 18 March 1988, Annex 4).

<sup>40</sup> There is no record of the substance of the conversation on file, which is probably just as well.

<sup>41</sup> ('... it would put a spanner in the national libraries' works.') NLCT-MC MSN A4/3 (1992-1999). Memo, Lor to 'Beste Piet' Westra, 2 July 1993.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to Lor, 13 July 1993.

<sup>43</sup> N. Bellos, 'South Africa's Democratic Experiment: is the incumbent senior civil service apartheid's rear guard?' (PhD thesis, University of Colorado-Denver, 1994), especially chapter 5: From Apartheid Administration to Democratic Administration, the Problem of Legitimacy, pp.117-120, 183-185.

<sup>44</sup> The CEPD described itself as 'the pre-eminent non-governmental education policy organisation in South Africa since 1993' ([www.cepd.org.za/](http://www.cepd.org.za/) : History/CEPD, accessed 26 August 2013). Dr Trevor Coombe claimed CEPD was established in 1994 (NLCT-MC MSN B6/2. CEPD Press Statement, 5 May 1994).

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B29 (March-November 1994). Westra to Van den Heever and Warner, 15 March 1994.

<sup>46</sup> A.S. Khutsoane, former national librarian of Bophuthatswana (co-ordinator), P.J. Lor of the State Library, who compiled the CEPD-LIS report, S. Manaka of the University of the North and State Library Board member, and J. Karlsson, CEPD worker and representative of TRANSLIS Forum which succeeded NEPI (*ibid.*, Explanatory

holders<sup>47</sup> which included Lor. The late appointment of the CEPD-LIS task team meant its deadline was even shorter than the other study groups and its work was rushed.

Westra at this time attended a Seminar in Pretoria, arranged by the State Library and addressed by Maurice Line.<sup>48</sup> Nothing was said to him about Lor's involvement in the CEPD-LIS task team or its confidential report.<sup>49</sup> Maurice Line, who advised the task team on the formation of Lor's proposed National Library, likewise gave Westra no hint of this.

But Westra had heard on 'the grapevine'<sup>50</sup> that there was talk of amalgamation, and following a telephone conversation with Lor (who said defensively that there was considerable pressure to have a single national library) wrote to formally ask him from whom such pressure came.<sup>51</sup> Lor subsequently admitted in a telephone conversation (according to Westra's later recollection) that it was he who saw a single national library as the only way forward, '...en dit nonsense is om ter wille van 'n paar bevoorregte blankes twee nasionale biblioteke in Suid-Afrika aan te hou.'<sup>52</sup> His Board supported him in this matter, he claimed. Westra warned him against making any proposals of this nature without mutual discussion or at a meeting of the NLAC.<sup>53</sup> But it was already too late.

Characteristic of this secretive process, the first official notification received from the CEPD was a fax dated 11 May 1994 signed by task-team leader Khutsoane (addressed to SABINET but copied to the South African Library and others) stating that it had been decided to merge the South African Library, the South African Library for the Blind, the National Film Archive and the Central Archives, Pretoria, with the State Library to which SABINET would be added (the great objective of the State Library, which was rapidly losing its relevance, see

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note from the LIS Task Team, 26 July 1994). Maurice Line was called in to advise on the formation of the proposed National Library of South Africa.

<sup>47</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B6/2. Trevor Coombe, CEPD Press Statement, 5 May 1994.

<sup>48</sup> Expert Seminar on Bibliographical Control in South Africa, held at HSRC Conference Centre, Pretoria, 19-20 May 1994.

<sup>49</sup> The report was written on 16 March, and by the time of the Seminar was already in its second draft.

<sup>50</sup> The recommendations of this confidential report (especially the formation of a single National Library of South Africa) were already common knowledge in the corridors of the State Library.

<sup>51</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A4/3 (1992-1999). Westra to Lor, 2 March 1994. Westra subsequently wrote on the file copy of this letter 'Soos ek kan onthou het ek toe nog niks v.d. CEPD-verslag geweet nie.' ('As far as I can remember, I knew nothing yet of the CEPD report.')

<sup>52</sup> '...and that it was nonsense to maintain two national libraries for the sake of a couple of privileged whites.' This (if properly-reported) was an absurd generalization on Lor's part, considering that the majority of the users of the South African Library were non-White.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to Lor, 9 March 1994.

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Annexure 14) to create a National Library of South Africa. SABINET (a not-for-profit company with shareholders) was encouraged to join voluntarily or face nationalization, and its joint database would become State property. The arrogant tone, conveying the impression that because the task team had come to this conclusion, therefore it would be so, is obvious.

The Library and Information Services Task Team at the Centre for Education Policy Development has, in pursuance of a united, streamlined library and information services structure for the whole country, decided to merge all the above institutions into one 'National Library of South Africa' headed by a Chief Director headquartered in Pretoria.<sup>54</sup>

The only affected institution represented on the task team which took this momentous decision was the State Library in the persons of Lor and Manaka, while Khutsoane had a special relationship with the State Library through the Conference of Southern African National Librarians and the University of Bophuthatswana library. A National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information would be resurrected to place all library and information services firmly under central control. This authoritarian tendency shocked progressive library 'talk-shoppers' and 'bosberaders' alike.

The LIS report, dated 16 March 1994<sup>55</sup> and put together in haste by Lor,<sup>56</sup> makes no mention of public, special or university libraries. That sixteen of the interim report's eighteen pages were devoted to reviving NACLI, the future National Library, nationalizing SABINET and reducing the number of legal deposit libraries (all matters in which Lor had a special interest) was explained by asserting that to meet their deadline they had to incorporate available documents, however incomplete, and only Lor's input had been worked out in detail.<sup>57</sup>

There were outcries from various quarters including the 'progressive' TRANSLIS Forum.<sup>58</sup> The State Library Board itself, alarmed by the uproar, instructed Lor to write to Khutsoane conveying their reservations about the report.<sup>59</sup> Letters from the South African Library to

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<sup>54</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda, 27 April 1994, Annex pp.10-14: Khutsoane to SABINET, 11 March 1994.

<sup>55</sup> Centre for Educational Policy Development. 'Interim Report of the Library and Information Services Task Team, 1994-03-16.' 18pp. (Other versions dated 29 March, 17 May (no longer 'Interim') have been seen. A further updated version was in preparation in mid-June 1994, the SAILIS Executive Council meeting, 17 June 1994, was told.)

<sup>56</sup> The 'Interim Report' had no indication of authorship, but was in the characteristic State Library style.

<sup>57</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B29 (March-November 1994). Explanatory Note from the CEPD-LIS Task Team, 26 July 1994.

<sup>58</sup> TRANSLIS questioned whether CEPD staffer, Karlsson, had authority to represent them and what sort of consultation had taken place, suggesting, as the South African Library did, that the process was neither transparent nor inclusive (NLCT-MC MSN B29 (March-November 1994). TRANSLIS Forum Western Cape. Minutes, 20 July 1994).

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, Lor (81324) to Khutsoane, 28 March 1994. The Chairman of NLAC, J.J. Human, had a personal interview with Prof Elize Botha, Chairman of the State Library Board, on or about 27 March, regarding the participation of Lor (a public official) in a political party's task team's work, and to emphasize that NLAC was the proper forum for

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Khutsoane asking for more information how such a resolution could have been arrived at were seemingly unanswered.<sup>60</sup> A detailed riposte signed by Westra was presented to the South African Library Board on 22 April 1994,<sup>61</sup> which was endorsed and forwarded to the State Library to be included on the agenda of the meeting of the National Libraries Advisory Committee (NLAC) to be held on 6 June 1994.

This meeting was held in Cape Town in the middle of the South African Library staff 'revolt' (see the preceding section) when Westra's patience was already severely tested. That meeting was a stormy one. Lor could not evade Westra's wrath. He explained lamely that the report was only an interim one and (despite its seeming finality) was only a discussion paper, to be reduced, with the other task teams reports, to ten pages which would be circulated to ANC Ministers. Lor said he had moderated enormously radical and impractical proposals arising from the NEPI, from Jenni Karlsson of the TRANSLIS Coalition, and the conference of the NECC of the ANC. Lor agreed the way the affected parties had been communicated with was completely unacceptable, as were the threats made against SABINET (CEPD director Coombe had already reprimanded Khutsoane about that). The new NACLIS would be the first step. He hoped that the National Library he envisaged would be strong enough to retain a measure of autonomy. Westra then took the floor and demanded answers, until the meeting's chairman intervened, warning that the meeting was descending into chaos.

Among valid points raised by Lor was a specially important one of critical mass, for instance the separate institutions could not afford to hire competent public relations and human resources experts. Critical mass would put the larger organization into a stronger position to secure adequate funding and to retain its autonomy. At least there should be a single Board to co-ordinate all the functions. 'I know,' he said, 'that we must not mend what is not broken, but I am assured that things are not as whole as we think.'<sup>62</sup> (At this point the tape on the recording machine ran out.) This, the State Library Board's Chairman wrote soothingly to Westra, had been a most constructive meeting; he replied that he was thankful that the discussions had led

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the discussion of such matters (NLCT-MC MSN A6/4 (1992-1995). SAL Management Exco. Minutes, 23 March 1994). The repeated emphasis on the views of 'The Board' in Lor's letter critical of aspects of his own report, and the subsequent detached attitude of State Library's Elize Botha at the NLAC meeting (6 June) when Lor came under attack, could indicate that a rift had opened between the State Library Board and its Director.

<sup>60</sup> [NLCT-MC MSN A3/1] Letters dated 25 March, 8 April (with 6 page memorandum) and 2 May 1994 (consulted copies in: NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 22 April, and 5 August 1994).

<sup>61</sup> 'Comment on the CEPD Interim Report on LIS: South African Library, 7 April 1994.' 6pp (consulted copy in: NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 22 April 1994, Annex 20-25).

<sup>62</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/2/4 (1994). NLAC. Tape transcript of proceedings, 6 June 1994. A regular minute of this meeting appears in the same file.

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to a common position on the CEPD-LIS proposals.<sup>63</sup> But despite these pleasantries, the matter still bothered Westra. He suspected Lor was, at best, trying to gain visibility with the new authorities in order to get a new building for the State Library,<sup>64</sup> something which was, indeed, years overdue. But Lor's adroitness, ever since his appointment as State Library Director, rankled with Westra, who had an open and much more straightforward personal style. 'He never explained anything, and I knew I could not trust him.'<sup>65</sup>

The question of reducing the number of legal deposit libraries having outraged the existing beneficiaries, Lor issued 'Revised Proposals Regarding Legal Deposit and Related Matters' which admitted the possibility of more than two such beneficiaries, but recommended that the legal deposit collections in Pietermaritzburg and Bloemfontein should be controlled by the future National Library and not the respective local public libraries.<sup>66</sup> The Committee of Legal Deposit Libraries met at the Library of Parliament on 7 June, and the CEPD-LIS report came under renewed fire. Again Lor claimed that the document was compiled for the purposes of discussion, and was not the accomplished fact its wording might lead the reader to believe.<sup>67</sup> With Lor and Westra again coming face to face, a shouting match ensued about which the minutes are silent. A few days later Westra wrote to Line (unaware he had advised the CEPD task team on amalgamation),

After what we have been through with Peter Lor and the CEPD report (plus two meetings in Cape Town with him, one of the Advisory Committee on National Libraries and the second of the Committee on Legal Deposit Libraries), I have at this moment little enthusiasm for further talks on closer co-operation between our two libraries.<sup>68</sup>

Although in the end the CEPD-LIS episode proved to be the proverbial 'storm in a teacup', the question remained what might have been, had the CEPD report not been challenged. Lasting damage had been done to the relationship between the two national libraries, and the Advisory Committee never met again. Dr J.B.Z. Louw, Director-General of the Department of Education and Training, reassured Westra in April 1994 that he need not take the CEPD initiative too seriously.<sup>69</sup> In 1995, Lor himself admitted to the Legal Deposit Committee that nothing had

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, Elize Botha to 'Beste Piet', 19 June 1994; Westra to 'Beste Elize', 26 June 1994.

<sup>64</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B29 (March-November 1994). Westra to L. van den Heever and B. Warner, 15 March 1994.

<sup>65</sup> P.E. Westra, personal communication, 21 June 2011.

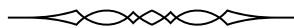
<sup>66</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B6/2. CEPD. Revised Proposals Regarding Legal Deposit and Related Matters, 6 May 1994.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, Committee of Legal Deposit Libraries. Extract from Minutes, 7 June 1994 (section 5).

<sup>68</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B24 (1994). Westra to Line, 10 June 1994.

<sup>69</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B29 (March-November 1994). J.B.Z. Louw (3/1) to Westra, 15 April 1994.

come of it.<sup>70</sup> The founding director of the CEPD, Dr Trevor Coombe, moved on to a succession of senior appointments in the reconstituted Department of Education, leaving the CEPD dysfunctional. Work on the library investigation was abandoned.<sup>71</sup> But that would not be the last of the working groups in the 'new South Africa' which would affect the national libraries.



The national elections were held on 27 April 1994 and the members of the first 'democratic' Parliament were sworn-in on 10 May. The Mandela administration changed the scope of many Ministerial portfolios and added new ones,<sup>72</sup> with a general shake-up of public servants as their Departments were split or amalgamated, incorporating the officials of the former homelands. The Directorate of Meta-Information under which the national libraries operated transferred bodily to the new Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST).

The point in this study has been reached when the national libraries no longer operated under the influence of apartheid. The new fully-democratic Parliament had been elected, and President Nelson Mandela's Ministry had taken up their duties. In terms of the scope of this study (Introduction, pp.vii-viii), this task has been completed. It remains to make sense of the events (chosen to demonstrate the problematic relationship between professional and administrative autonomy on one side, and financial dependence on the other), which are recorded in the foregoing thirty-one Sections. These 'Conclusions' follow (pp.267-280).

The South African Library had existed for 135 years before its association with the apartheid Government, and, since the introduction of framework autonomy in 1988, was latterly only loosely linked to the State apparatus. The change in Government had no immediate effect (for better or worse) on its status. A miracle of the 'New South Africa' was its smooth administrative transition from a National Party Government to a Government of National Unity led by the African National Congress. The preceding record, especially Chapter 6, will leave the reader in no doubt that the South African Library was heading for a fall. For the sake of completeness (and not presented for examination), an Epilogue follows (pp.281-289), sketching, in outline, the Library's last years from 1994 to the formation of the National Library of South Africa in 1999.

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<sup>70</sup> NLCT-MC MSN B6/2. Committee of Legal Deposit Libraries. Minutes, 13 June 1995 (matters arising).

<sup>71</sup> Whatever influence the CEPD investigations may have had on the in-coming ANC Government, these would have been directly educational in nature, with application to the new Department of Education. The library aspects were irrelevant to that Department since libraries, museums and related matters falling under the late Department of National Education were now assigned to the new Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

<sup>72</sup> The new portfolios were established on or before 31 May 1994 (South Africa Yearbook, 1995, p.59.); the creation of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and the dissolution of the Department of National Education was gazetted 3 June 1994 (NLCT-MC MSN A2/2/1 (1988-1995). Departmental circular 8 August 1994).

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Piet Westra and his staff, 1996



Cape Town Campus staff, 2003

## Chapter 7. CONCLUSIONS

The preceding study provides an overview of more important aspects of the administrative history of the South African Library, particularly as a national library of South Africa, from a managerial perspective. In undertaking this study of the South African Library during the apartheid era, evidence was sought of conflict arising from the opposition by the Library (assumed to hold a broadly liberal professional ethos) on the one side, to inflexible cultural, nationalist and racial policies of the National Party Government on the other. This proved to be unfounded. There was a further expectation that there would be a change in attitude toward the South African Library, one way or another, by the in-coming Government of National Unity under the African National Congress. This also proved to be unfounded. One is left to draw the conclusion that the South African Library, which believed it was outside of politics, was only so because of its limited significance to either governing party. Only once did the apartheid Government intervene in the Library's internal administration, namely the segregation of seating in the reading rooms implemented in 1963<sup>1</sup> (which was subsequently quietly abandoned). An attempt to assert its policy of bilingualism to prevent the appointment of A.M.L. Robinson as Director in 1961 was finally left to the discretion of the Library's Board.<sup>2</sup> Both of these instances during the term of office of Minister Jan de Klerk were instigated by Board member, Dr Theo Friis, using National Party policies as a blind for an ambitious personal agenda.<sup>3</sup>

The facts presented in this study suggest two observations about the South African Library and its supposedly autonomous, yet dependent administrative status.

The first observation is the surprising degree of administrative and professional autonomy it was allowed, with minimal National Party Government intervention in the internal affairs of the Library. This seems to arise from a balancing of respective needs, the Library depending entirely on State funding to maintain its iconic status as the preserver of the cultural heritage of the White population of South Africa on one side,<sup>4</sup> and the Government's need (at least in its first two or three decades of rule) for just such an iconic institution to legitimize South Africa's claim to be part of Western civilization on the other.<sup>5</sup> This explains the extraordinary prominence, among the Library's official functions, given to preserving and exhibiting its 'treasures' at the expense of exploiting significant but less-iconic resources and improving facilities for

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2, fifth and sixth sections.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 2, sixth section. Bilingualism was a front for Government's policy to Afrikanerize all public entities.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 2, fourth section.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 1, third section (concluding paragraph).

<sup>5</sup> Chapter 3, first section.

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potential users.<sup>6</sup>

The second observation relates to the fact that the national libraries<sup>7</sup> maintained distinct corporate identities, unique in an environment where libraries were typically subordinate units of larger entities, and unexpected because both the governing National Party and later African National Congress were rooted in philosophies of centralized authority<sup>8</sup> which conceptualized all entities of State having a distinct place in a tidy structure facilitating control.

The question whether a national library should be independent of the State bureaucracy was not unique to South Africa; nor was it even a settled matter that a nation required a national library.<sup>9</sup> While the South African national libraries never received a satisfactory degree of financial support from the State, each was determined to remain autonomous (perhaps for different reasons). It is worth noting that the last of several attempts within the time-frame of this study to abrogate the autonomy of the South African Library and State Library and place them within an official structure (that is, the proposals of the Meijer investigation of 1981 which concluded the deliberations of the NBAR task group on national libraries) was so extravagantly bureaucratic and costly that one suspects it purposely invited rejection of this bureaucratic kind of thinking.<sup>10</sup> With the development of alternative means of delivering information services which were formerly the preserve of a national (or central) library, Government stepped aside and left the national libraries<sup>6</sup> to manage as well as they could under a policy of framework autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the amalgamation of the South African Library and State Library in 1999 seeming to resolve the 'two national libraries' conundrum, and defining its role as an agency of the Department of Arts and Culture, the National Library of South Africa at the present time (2014) remains a compromise, with a vague national role. Its autonomy might well be questioned once more. Should an attempt be made to resolve this anomaly in future, it would be profitable to revisit previously discarded options, referred to later in this Chapter.

The recurring theme of this study has been to investigate that balance between professional and administrative autonomy enjoyed by the South African Library and State Library on the one hand, and these libraries' almost complete dependence on the State for their funding on the other. It should be emphasized that for most of the period under review, their autonomy

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter 3, fourth and fifth sections; Chapter 4, fourth section; Chapter 5, first section.

<sup>7</sup> In this respect they were the South African Library, the State Library and the South African Library for the Blind.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 2, first section (National Party); Chapter 6, fifth section (African National Congress).

<sup>9</sup> Introduction, pp.ix-xi.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 4, second and fourth sections; Chapter 5, first section.

<sup>11</sup> Chapter 5, fourth section.

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did not extend to staff and financial matters. Government (as represented by the Department of Education, Arts and Science and its successors) controlled these inter-related matters very closely until the granting of framework autonomy in 1988.<sup>12</sup> In all other matters, legislation, regulations, published aims and functions, and, in the last resort, their respective Government-appointed Boards,<sup>13</sup> defined the scope of their operations, and set limits to their autonomy. The character of each Library was formed by their respective Directors acting as chief executive officers on behalf of the Boards. Chairmen of the South African Library's Boards during the period under review were almost invariably judges of the Supreme Court,<sup>14</sup> committed to preserving the values of the Library. The Library was very fortunate in the calibre of its Board members, many of whom are now known to have been leaders of the secret Afrikaner Broederbond,<sup>15</sup> which, an open-minded observer might admit, served the Library's best interests at the time. One serious error was the appointment of Dr Theo Friis, Director of the Cape Provincial Library Service, to the South African Library Board (possibly at his own request), causing immense disruption over a five year period (1958-1963).<sup>16</sup> Once the Booyesen Committee (1961) had, for the first time, defined and assigned the functions which the national libraries had to perform, the opportunity for ministerial intervention was limited.<sup>17</sup> But these functions and how they should be shared out, remained a matter of much dispute between the two Libraries. A protracted quarrel ensued on the topic (referred in 1972 to a working committee of the ministerial advisory council NBAR,<sup>18</sup> and finalized by the Meijer investigation), which was only resolved after legislation was passed in 1985.<sup>19</sup> There was a measure of interference from the Department's Director-General, principally pertaining to matters of economy, but normally the Department's officials were characteristically content to apply existing regulations and policies without applying

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<sup>12</sup> Chapter 2, first section; Chapter 3, second section; Chapter 5, second and fourth sections; Chapter 6, first section.

<sup>13</sup> Between 1954 and 1987 Government was represented by a majority of Board members, while a minority of members represented other constituencies; from 1987 all Board members were appointed by Government.

<sup>14</sup> Justices L. de V. van Winsen (1952-1962), M.A. Diemont (1962-1985), L. van den Heever (1988-1996), and (outside the period under review) I.G. Farlam (1996-1999). The only exception was S.P. Meyer (1985-1987), retired Director-General of the Department of National Education.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 2, first section.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 2, fourth and fifth sections, Chapter 3, first section. Appointing the Director of one State institution to the Board of another inevitably created a conflict of interests.

<sup>17</sup> Chapter 3, first section.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 4, second and fourth sections.(NBAR: Nasionale Advieserendebiblioteekraad or National Library Advisory Council.)

<sup>19</sup> Chapter 5, first section.

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much thought. Considerable liberty was therefore available to Directors, which Douglas Varley (1938-1961) exploited but his successor Lewin Robinson (1961-1981) did not. After years of lost ground, it would be up to the new Director, Piet Westra (1981-1998), to again take the initiative and test the limits of his authority.<sup>20</sup> He and his predecessors had always taken a stand against State censorship, for example.<sup>21</sup> Demonstrating how strange this functional autonomy of the national libraries appeared to be, it was difficult, by way of example, for Westra to convince the IFLA secretariat in The Hague (Netherlands) that the South African Library, though dependent almost entirely on the State for its funding, did not promote the Government's apartheid policies.<sup>22</sup>

There was also internal professional autonomy which was a characteristic of the South African Library. This gave scope for professional excellence, but also individualism. The practice developed strongly during (and possibly as a consequence of) Robinson's *laissez faire* term as Director but at the same time made it difficult to set and achieve common institutional goals,<sup>23</sup> while tighter management in the late 1980s, limiting individualism, seems to have also diminished personal commitment.<sup>24</sup> But increased management control was evaded by certain maverick professional staff, which contributed notably to the downfall of the South African Library (beyond the central scope of this study, but discernable in the concluding Epilogue<sup>25</sup>).

Associated with institutional autonomy was the South African Library's ambiguous position (anticipated earlier in this Chapter). South Africa's oldest, iconic Library did not fit into an idealized structure, perplexing the broader profession and authorities. Perhaps this was due to this Library having its roots in a completely different era and being essentially an Athenaeum in character rather than simply a library.<sup>26</sup> This was never properly resolved.

There were several alternative library models available to Varley when setting up the South African Library as a research library. Others were brought forward over the years by thoughtful senior librarians, all of which had a degree of merit. Some of the models which are outlined below might profitably be revisited in future should the need arise.

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<sup>20</sup> Chapter 3, third section (Robinson); Chapter 6, second section (Westra).

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 2, second section, Chapter 3, third section, and Chapter 6, second section (earlier paragraphs).

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 6, second section.

<sup>23</sup> Chapter 4, third section.

<sup>24</sup> Chapter 6, third section.

<sup>25</sup> Epilogue, pages 281-289.

<sup>26</sup> Introduction, p.vii.

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In the formative days of national libraries in South Africa, Varley chose as his model the Department of Printed Books of the British Museum, London<sup>27</sup> (which was not yet the separate British Library which developed after 1967). This was a completely autonomous preservation and research facility with State funding. At the other extreme was the extended public library model represented by the State Library in Pretoria at the time,<sup>28</sup> and better still, the Johannesburg City Library model. However, in choosing a model, no survey of user needs was undertaken<sup>29</sup> (there was not the least public agitation in Cape Town for better library services<sup>30</sup>), nor did he consult with the State Library<sup>31</sup> or any other stakeholder when setting up his new research library. The Johannesburg City Library model, with a central research library and satellite branch libraries, had merit, but neither Varley nor the South African Library Board wished to continue their involvement in public library work. This model could not have worked in Cape Town in the 1940s and 1950s because the parsimonious City of Cape Town could hardly be persuaded to fund a modest City Library Service, let alone matching Johannesburg's munificent scale of funding, while national and provincial government spokesmen made it clear in 1949 they would have no part in such an arrangement.<sup>32</sup> In 2014, in a greatly enlarged metropolis with a smart library service, such a scenario could succeed.

Amalgamation with the Library of Parliament has been the most frequently suggested 'solution' for the South African Library, starting with the discussion in the Senate in 1921 when its Sessional Committee on the Library of Parliament considered what to do with the Mendelssohn Africana collection bequeathed to the people of South Africa and shortly expected from England. The Senate Committee favoured housing it in a special wing added to the South African Library, failing which, it might be added to the State Archives then housed in the basement of Parliament.<sup>33</sup> The Carnegie commissioners who visited Cape Town in 1928 stated the obvious when they recommended that the Africana collections of the Library of Parliament and

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<sup>27</sup> Prologue, second section.

<sup>28</sup> Chapter 1, first section.

<sup>29</sup> Since researchers were already using the South African Library, it was presumed their requirements were known.

<sup>30</sup> Prologue, third section.

<sup>31</sup> Chapter 2, fourth section.

<sup>32</sup> Prologue, fourth section, Chapter 1, first section.

<sup>33</sup> The Senate. Second Report from the Sessional Committee on the Library of Parliament, 15 June 1921 [Senate S.C. 1A-'21], pp.2-3. The Archives moved to Queen Victoria Street and the collection became part of the Library of Parliament.

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the South African Library should be combined.<sup>34</sup> This was, likewise, the opinion of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa in 1937, as well as Senator J.D.R. Jones (speaking during a debate on libraries in April 1941),<sup>35</sup> and again in 1949, when a conference was held on the future of the South African Library (on which occasion Parliamentary Librarian Paul Ribbink was present but refused to be drawn into the discussion).<sup>36</sup> In 1964, proposing a single, two-site, national library, the State Library's Director, Hans Aschenborn, drafted legislation which would merge the South African Library with the Library of Parliament.<sup>37</sup> Again during the NBAR discussions in the early 1970s, the consensus was that in order to abolish national libraries completely, the functions of the State Library would be taken over by the Department of National Education, while the collections of the South African Library would be absorbed by Parliament.<sup>38</sup> When the Library of Parliament was assigned the restoration laboratory in 1982 which the Department of National Education had budgeted for the South African Library, the presumption evidently existed that the two libraries would shortly be merged.<sup>39</sup> In June 1984 Director Westra confidently announced to his staff that the South African Library would shortly become part of the Library of Parliament and that existing staff would be transferred; discussions were held with Deputy-State President Schlebusch the following November, but the idea was scotched.<sup>40</sup>

Despite this, the possibility of a merger appeared in the South African Library's abortive 1991-1995 strategic plan,<sup>41</sup> and provision was made in planning the Centre for the Book building to receive the collection.<sup>42</sup> Taking over the Mendelssohn Collection (even on the basis of a permanent loan) has been discussed many times since then. The logic of a merger is clear, but there were (and remain) obstacles which have hitherto proved insurmountable, some of them legal, like the restrictive terms of Mendelssohn's will (but its terms could be abrogated by a superior court), some practical, including the fact that the Library of Parliament has integrated

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<sup>34</sup> Prologue, second section.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Chapter 1, first section.

<sup>37</sup> Chapter 4, third section.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Chapter 5, first section.

<sup>40</sup> Chapter 5, third section.

<sup>41</sup> Chapter 6, fifth section.

<sup>42</sup> P.R. Coates, 'Memorandum: the Mendelssohn Collection', 5 August 1999 (author's copy filed SN-Mendelssohn).

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its legal deposit and some purchased material into the collection; it is even suspected that the personal egos of respective Librarians of Parliament may have been at the heart of the problem. The idea that a parliamentary library service might be provided by the National Library or the National Library be run by Parliament was declared objectionable on grounds of the constitutional separation of powers.<sup>43</sup> As matters stand, neither alternative can be implemented. But matters may change if both the 'non-legislative' holdings of the Library of Parliament and the Cape Town division of the National Library of South Africa (the former South African Library) were to come under review in future to create a new research library combining both.

A promising option which was strongly promoted in the years 1959 to 1962 in the context of the South African Library Association's Action Committee on Library Co-operation was to place the South African Library within the framework of the Cape Provincial Library Service,<sup>44</sup> where it would serve as the Central Reference Library for the Western Cape. Similar Central Reference Libraries were envisaged for the Northern Cape (incorporating the Kimberley Africana Library) and Eastern Cape (based on the Port Elizabeth Public Library). Provision was made for this in section 5 of Cape Ordinance no.11 of 1960. By the same thinking, the State Library would serve a similar purpose in the Transvaal Province (and by extension, the plan could have accommodated the Natal and Orange Free State legal deposit libraries as well). This was a very neat way to settle the national library conundrum. It was unacceptable to the South African Library at that time, not only because the scheme was driven by the thirst for position and power of Theo Friis, whose anti-liberal attitude to library provision was clearly demonstrated in the matter of State censorship,<sup>45</sup> while his lack of integrity was formally exposed before the Steyn Commission of Inquiry in 1963 (already clearly manifested in his prior dealings with South African Library Director Varley),<sup>46</sup> but because both Varley and the Board had more exalted plans for the Library in view. However, at the time of writing (2014), circumstances have changed considerably; most of the foundation functions of national libraries, other than preservation, are obsolete. The South African Library's special area of collection-building was focussed exclusively on the Western Cape Province (its astonishing resources include local press clipping files, directories, pamphlets, programmes, map, photographs and manuscript collections and large information files created to answer local enquiries, with even the Dessinian, Fairbridge, Grey, Leipoldt and Nourse collections possessing their iconic stature in a specifically local context). It

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<sup>43</sup> Informal discussion between K. Hahndiek (Senior Under-Secretary of Parliament) and the author, 17 June 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Chapter 2, fourth section.

<sup>45</sup> Chapter 2, second section.

<sup>46</sup> Chapter 2, sixth section, note 17 in particular.

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was just such a regional library which Friis had in mind and the Carnegie commissioner M.J. Ferguson had characterized as long ago as 1928.<sup>47</sup> Though its users might come from afar, it was to exploit regional resources in the Library's collections (this was not proof of a national function as Robinson asserted<sup>48</sup>). Such an arrangement has since been adopted for the State Archives, where provincial repositories fall under the jurisdiction of the current nine Provinces.

At various times, but particularly while S.J. Kritzinger was Director of Libraries in the public service, the idea was put forward to incorporate the national libraries into a Directorate within the Department of Education, Arts and Science, but this plan usually envisaged performance of those bureaucratic functions performed by the State Library at the time, while it was, as always, considered preferable to associate the South African Library with the Library of Parliament.<sup>49</sup> A variant on this model was put forward by Meijer (1981) where, although the controlling authority of the national libraries would be under direct ministerial control, the operational entities would retain their existing names and preserve a semblance of independence.<sup>50</sup>

Then there was the idea of simply merging the two libraries, either in one functional unit on one site or divided between their two existing cities. The South African Library always fought such a proposal because it was usually made by the State Library at times when it was in its ascendancy. There was a brief moment in the early 1990s when the balance tipped in favour of the South African Library and against the State Library. The State Library had two basic functions, managing inter-library loans and maintaining the union catalogue;<sup>51</sup> subsequently Director Aschenborn had made the compilation of bibliographies (including the South African National Bibliography) an important part of his Library's activities.<sup>52</sup> All three of these functions were all but eliminated by the establishment of SABINET as a not-for-profit company.<sup>53</sup> The printed South African National Bibliography would soon be discontinued. With the dramatic turn of political events in February 1990, it was clear that the Black 'Homelands' would go, and with them the State Library's role as co-ordinator of their national library services. And at that time,

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<sup>47</sup> M.J. Ferguson, Memorandum. Libraries in the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia and Kenya Colony (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1929), p.14.

<sup>48</sup> Chapter 4, fourth section, in particular in proximity to notes 29 and 30. Robinson's second claim, that each nation should have a central library of reference where the literature of other nations could be consulted was a valid one.

<sup>49</sup> Chapter 2, fourth section, Chapter 3, first section, Chapter 4, concluding paragraph of third section.

<sup>50</sup> Chapter 4, the latter paragraphs of the fourth section.

<sup>51</sup> Prologue, first section.

<sup>52</sup> Chapter 3, first section.

<sup>53</sup> Chapter 4, second and fourth sections passim, Chapter 6, first section (last two paragraphs).

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there was no progress on obtaining a new building which the State Library very badly needed, nor, with the about-turn in South African politics, was there much prospect of funding being found in the near future.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, the South African Library obtained approval for major extensions to the main library building, and the old Archives building had just been transferred for its use together with major funding ear-marked for its renovation.<sup>55</sup> As to the functions of the South African Library, its preservation function appeared to be stronger than ever, with the services of a trained conservator assisted by a craft bookbinder working on book restoration and a large and efficient book bindery, and an active microfilming section. The Centre for the Book proposal was developing into just the kind of outreach initiative of which the new Government would approve. To cap it all, it appeared, superficially at least, that the South African Library was leading the way in library computerization,<sup>56</sup> which, at that time, was well in advance of the State Library which did not have a computer system of its own, and whose DOBIS software which ran on the computers of the Department of National Education, was out-of-date.<sup>57</sup> What was not evident to either Library at the time, was that matters relating to computerization in Cape Town were poised on the brink of disaster.

In retrospect, the South African Library at that moment held all the aces, and it is no surprise that the Director Lor of State Library should have made the efforts he did to promote the interests of the State Library with the incoming African National Congress authorities through the CEPD process<sup>58</sup> and other contacts. Typical of Greek tragedy, however, at the moment when the wind stood fairest for the South African Library, the Deputy Director resigned, staff were jaded (indeed exhausted) by incessant moves ahead of builders and swamping by users. Radicalization of the Cape Town staff began, abetted by some senior staff, throwing top management into crisis containment mode.<sup>59</sup> From the mid-1990s, the opportunity was missed, and the State Library regained the upper hand.

The scenario adopted for the future of the national libraries as the millennium drew to an end was a compromise, single-authority, dual-campus model which Hans Aschenborn had

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<sup>54</sup> In 1993 a custom-designed building was promised in Parliament (State Library. Annual Report, 1993, p.12). The new building would only be opened fifteen years later (National Library of South Africa. Annual Report, 2008-09, p.8).

<sup>55</sup> Chapter 6, second section

<sup>56</sup> Chapter 6, third section.

<sup>57</sup> The State Library introduced modern computer systems in 1996 (State Library. Annual Report, 1996, p.23).

<sup>58</sup> Chapter 6, fifth section.

<sup>59</sup> Chapter 6, fourth section.

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predicted would be more difficult to administer than if the South African Library were merged with the Library of Parliament.<sup>60</sup> Over the years, whenever the national libraries were discussed, the iconic status of the South African Library in particular (but also the State Library) made the pundits hesitate to eliminate either or both of them, but rather retain their identity within an overarching structure. Recommendations by the Booysen Committee (1961)<sup>61</sup> and the Meijer investigation (1981)<sup>62</sup> both favoured a model where semi-autonomous operating entities were placed under some kind of joint control. Aschenborn, on the other hand, had great faith in legislation as the means of controlling the self-governing operational entities and providing legitimacy.<sup>63</sup>

P.J. Lor (then Director of the State Library), in a study written for UNESCO<sup>64</sup> which is pertinent in the local context, endorsed the necessity for national library legislation, assuming as a given that every country requires a national library. Legislation, he wrote, was needed to establish the national library's relationship with the State so that it did not depend on mere administrative decisions; it provided such a library with the authority it required in its dealing with other libraries, and granted to its management the autonomy of action needed to respond to changes in the library's environment.<sup>65</sup> Lor mentioned that which Aschenborn looked for in legislation: the commitment of the legislators to provide the powers and resources needed by the institution to carry out its functions, adding 'no amount of legislation can make up for a lack of political will to adequately support and empower a country's national library',<sup>66</sup> an important caveat.

National libraries are generally tasked with the preservation of a nation's published and unpublished literary heritage for the benefit of future academics and researchers, while providing current infrastructure which supports and benefits other libraries.<sup>67</sup> In South Africa these two functions were (broadly speaking) the domain of the South African Library and the State Library respectively. Attention has been drawn in several places to unequal Government support for these two national institutions in favour of the latter. Lor wrote (in general, of course) that in the political and administrative environment, such institutional autonomy which a national library

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<sup>60</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A4/2/1/1 (1964-1967). Aschenborn to Robinson, 11 June 1964.

<sup>61</sup> Chapter 3, first section (autonomy under the proposed National Libraries Co-ordinating Committee).

<sup>62</sup> Chapter 4, fourth section, Chapter 5, first section.

<sup>63</sup> Chapter 4, third section.

<sup>64</sup> P.J. Lor, *Guidelines for Legislation for National Library Services*, (Paris : UNESCO, 1997).

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, pp.3-4.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, pp.5-6.

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can exercise will have a relation to the flow of Government funding. 'In a country which does not have a tradition of institutional autonomy, a [national library] which succeeds in escaping from the restrictive confines of its ministry may find that the price of autonomy is penury.'<sup>68</sup> Conversely, the national library which is seen to conform most closely to Government policies will most likely be rewarded. In South Africa one thinks immediately of grand and petty apartheid, but also the affirmation of Western culture referred at the beginning of this Chapter. Lor, in his comments on the critiques of Wyley regarding transformation,<sup>69</sup> noted her opinion that librarians in South Africa were victims of, and active collaborators with, the apartheid system.<sup>70</sup> One may assume that the generosity of Minister Viljoen to the State Library following the work study he authorized there in 1983, while declining to authorize a similar work study at the South African Library (which proved to be the beginning of the end for the South African Library), reflected the Minister's view of their respective utility to the policies of the apartheid Government.<sup>71</sup>

Reference has been made to a paper by State Library Director R.B. Zaaiman, delivered at a seminar at the University of South Africa on 14 August 1990.<sup>72</sup> The point Zaaiman made was that the South African Library lacked authenticity and legitimacy because it had never promoted literacy for the masses but, on becoming a State-aided institution, continued instead to serve the needs of an educated elite.<sup>73</sup>

By implication, these are two contradictory reasons why the South African Library may not have possessed legitimacy in the eyes of the State. In terms of the old South African political dispensation, it neither promoted grand apartheid (the Bantu Homeland system) as the State Library did, nor petty apartheid (by providing segregated services for Blacks and Whites as practised at the State Library until shortly before Zaaiman became its Director<sup>74</sup>). On the other hand, Zaaiman was now criticizing the South African Library for failure to reverse the damage caused by apartheid education and library policies by failing to promote literacy among the illiterate

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>69</sup> Wyley, C., 'Philosophies Informing and Defining Library and Information Work in South Africa: the transformation imperative' in: *Innovation* 6, June 1993, pp.14-15.

<sup>70</sup> P.J. Lor, 'Critiques of, and Alternatives to, "Establishment Librarianship" in South Africa: notes and comments for a discussion of transformation' [paper distributed at a South African Library Transformum meeting, 5 August 1996], p.1.

<sup>71</sup> Chapter 5, second section.

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 6, fifth section.

<sup>73</sup> The first time the 'legitimacy' of the South African Library was questioned was during the long debate in NBAR of which Zaaiman was a member.

<sup>74</sup> State Library. Annual Report, 1984-85, p.19.

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[non-White] masses<sup>75</sup> as he had just advocated in his recently-published study.<sup>76</sup>

Considering the timing of this seminar address, and the audience before which it was delivered, Zaaiman could well have been trying to realign the State Library at the South African Library's expense after the dramatic change in South African political direction announced in President F. W. de Klerk's February 1990 address to Parliament.<sup>77</sup> The real test of the legitimacy of the South African Library is whether it was meeting information needs of actual users.

Director Lloyd and his Deputy Murray knew long ago that changes were needed. When Varley took over as Director of the South African Library in 1938 he assumed that a separate Africana Department was necessary for the future national library without ever testing users' requirements.<sup>78</sup> He worked tirelessly to create the City Library Service to 'liberate' the South African Library from its lending library function, and believed in the rightness of the public library cause although there had never been public demand for better public libraries.<sup>79</sup> Even the Minister of the Interior, at the time directly responsible for funding the 'national library' activities of the South African Library and State Library, believed South Africans were not a nation of readers.<sup>80</sup> The conference held with representatives of Government in 1949 to stake out the way towards becoming a national research library elicited so little response that the exercise was generally regarded as a failure.<sup>81</sup> Years of work were expended on creating the specialist Africana Department, yet eventually, when the newly-built Africana Reading Room was opened (with a flurry of users testing its novelty), patronage was poor.<sup>82</sup> By way of contrast, the Reference Department, created to serve the City despite Varley's misgivings, grew to be the flagship service of the Library<sup>83</sup> and eventually became so crowded with users that restrictions had to be applied

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<sup>75</sup> R.B. Zaaiman, [paper published as] 'Die Stigting van die Suid-Afrikaanse Openbare Biblioteek en die Tydsgees van 1818, 1937 en 1990' in: *Mousaion*, 9(1), 1991, pp.18-20.

<sup>76</sup> R.B. Zaaiman, P.J.A. Roux and J.H. Rykheer, *The Use of Libraries for the Development of South Africa: final report on an investigation for the South African Institute for Library and Information Service* (Pretoria: Centre for Library and Information Service, UNISA, 1988).

<sup>77</sup> When the author attempted to ascertain from Professor Zaaiman the reason for choosing this topic for the seminar, he (then at an advanced age) claimed to have no recollection of either the address or its subsequent publication. (Telephone conversations, June and July 2012.)

<sup>78</sup> Prologue, third section.

<sup>79</sup> Prologue, fourth section.

<sup>80</sup> Prologue, second section.

<sup>81</sup> Chapter 1, first section.

<sup>82</sup> Chapter 3, fifth section and especially notes 19, 20.

<sup>83</sup> Chapter 1, third section, Chapter 4, third section.

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on admissions which, when lifted entirely in 1987, brought the Library's service almost to its knees through swamping by students whom the Library was never intended to serve.<sup>84</sup> Specialist research rooms were proposed for art, the social sciences and literature<sup>85</sup> without undertaking a survey of need, but had they come about they would no doubt have suffered the same fate as the Africana Reading Room. But strangely, an unplanned Special Collections Department which quietly came into being only a few years afterwards, in April 1988,<sup>86</sup> met a distinct research need, but unlike the former Africana Reading Room which aimed to provide books, duplicating the Reference Room, the new Department's focus was on manuscripts, photographs and maps.

The creation of the Reference Department in addition to the Africana Department seems in retrospect to have been unwise, even though (or perhaps because) it provided such an excellent service. Its excellence made it unnecessary for the City Library Service to set up its own reference library but rather subsidize that of the South African Library (which the City did until 1997). Although researchers used the Reference Department, the environment was not conducive for research due to the commotion caused by the large number of users and students with less-specialized needs from the surrounding metropolitan area which the Reference Department attracted. It was impossible to convince the NBAR 'Dagbestuur' that the South African Library served a national function.<sup>87</sup> Instead of serving as a specialized information service provider as envisaged by the Meijer Committee of 1981,<sup>88</sup> it was overwhelmed by users who ought to have been served in the first instance by the city and provincial services or the libraries of the tertiary educational institutions.<sup>89</sup> If the South African Library had not been open to every citizen but admitted only a select few, there would have been a better chance of arranging a merger with the Library of Parliament, whose admission policies were discriminatory. Should the South African Library have followed this route? Professor Zaaiman's rebuke was that even in its state of over-use, it was merely serving an educated elite and not the illiterate masses.<sup>90</sup>

These developments clearly demonstrate poor strategic planning at the South African Library, especially after national library status had been attained. The Board justified Lewin

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<sup>84</sup> Chapter 3, fifth section, Chapter 4, fourth section, Chapter 5, first section, also Annexures 8 and 17.

<sup>85</sup> Chapter 3, second section.

<sup>86</sup> South African Library. Report, 1988, p.13.

<sup>87</sup> Chapter 4, second and fourth sections, Chapter 5, first section. Chapter 5 section two (subsidy formula) suggests why this was not made a declared function: 50% of the City's grant would have been deducted from the State grant.

<sup>88</sup> Chapter 4 fourth section and Chapter 5, first section.

<sup>89</sup> Chapter 5, third section and Annexure 17.

<sup>90</sup> Chapter 6, fifth section, a view echoed by his successor, P.J. Lor (p.261).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Robinson's appointment as Director in 1961 rather than Hans Aschenborn on grounds that Robinson was an expert bibliographer, while Aschenborn was perceived to be too dynamic, too much of an organizer.<sup>91</sup> There was no general strategic plan before the abortive one compiled for the years 1991 to 1995.<sup>92</sup> Even in the important process of computerization, no goals were set, no survey of institutional needs was undertaken, and the process bumbled along at an ultimately ruinous cost to the South African Library.<sup>93</sup> The Library reacted to circumstances instead of making circumstances serve the Library. It only attempted its first user-survey in 1992 because the State Library boasted of an elaborate one it undertook in 1991. Preliminary results of the South African Library survey confirmed what the Library already knew empirically: most users were students, and the overwhelming majority of users considered the Library's service excellent. Further work on the data was abandoned (for a partially-reconstructed report, see Annexure 18). Sometimes the Library got things right by instinct without resorting to trending techniques.

An unequivocal vindication of the South African Library's legitimacy in the eyes of its users would have been the thick file of letters of appreciation and thanks which was kept in the Secretary's office.<sup>94</sup> Regrettably, these letters, like many other valuable records which had not been filed in the relative security of the Library's administrative archive, were lost during the chaotic events of 1998 and 1999.<sup>95</sup>

There is, however, another record which legitimizes the South African Library through usage: the list of hundreds of books up to 1970 in which the Library's assistance is acknowledged (Annexure 1). The pity is that maintaining that record was discontinued, and furthermore, even that list did not include innumerable student bibliographies, assignments, papers and theses, journal and magazine articles (including several hundred research contributions to the Library's Quarterly Bulletin) and contributions to such standard works as the five-volume Dictionary of South African Biography (the first volume of which was compiled and edited within the Library) and the Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa to mention only two. Nor even the extent to which people enriched their own lives through historical and genealogical research without the intention to publish it. Then there were the thousands of written answers to queries, and on-the-run answers to telephone queries (see Annexure 6). If the South African Library's legitimacy in South African research needs proof, it may be found here.

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<sup>91</sup> Chapter 2, sixth section.

<sup>92</sup> Chapter 6, fifth section.

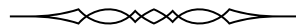
<sup>93</sup> Chapter 6, third section.

<sup>94</sup> Extracts of a few of these were reproduced in the staff newsletter and are quoted in Annexure 18.

<sup>95</sup> A sketch of events from 1994 to 1999 may be found in the Epilogue, which is not submitted for examination.

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

During the transitional administration under the Government of National Unity, it was possible to settle the conundrum of two autonomous national libraries which had vexed the apartheid Government since 1954. The author believes, therefore, that some record should be sketched out how this came about. He admits that it is difficult for him, involved as he was in the amalgamation process, to be entirely objective (see remarks in Preface, p.vi). It was chiefly for this reason that it was resolved that this study should terminate in 1994 rather than 1999 when the South African Library ceased to exist as an autonomous institution. Its one hundred and eighty year history had coincided very nearly with civilian rule in southern Africa, an incidental legacy of the 1814 Congress of Vienna. A proper history of the last turbulent decade at the South African Library and the whole process of its amalgamation into the National Library of South Africa remains to be written, preferably by someone unconnected with the process. What follows below is a suggestive outline of events.



To undertake for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology what the CEPD investigation had done for Education, its Minister, Ben Ngubane, set up the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG, appointed 4 November) to receive input from stakeholders to guide the Department's policies.<sup>1</sup> As with the CEPD investigation, the ACTAG investigation comprised several specialist working groups, one concerned with libraries chaired by Professor Elize Botha (Chairman of the State Library Board) with Peter Lor (Director of the State Library), Amanda Botha (of the South African Library Board) and Andrew Khutsoane (former convener of the CEPD-LIS work-group) amongst its fifteen members. The storm of protest which followed the release of the CEPD-LIS report respecting the proposed creation of a National Library of South Africa and the reduction in the number of legal deposit libraries must have influenced the ACTAG-LIS discussions because its report accepted the status quo on both issues.<sup>2</sup>

While the ACTAG report consequently ruffled no feathers at the South African Library, this Library came to the Department's direct attention in some less-than-positive ways. Chapter 6, fourth section, showed how a disgruntled senior librarian tried to embarrass the Director by submitting accusations of mismanagement and racism to the President, which were duly referred

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<sup>1</sup> 'Arts and Culture Task Group' in: South Africa Yearbook, 1995, pp.361-362; 1996, pp.382-383.

<sup>2</sup> Report on Libraries and Information Services: Chapter six of the Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group as presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology on 31 July 1995 (Pretoria: State Library for the Department, 1995), pp.49-50 (legal deposit) and pp.61-62 (national libraries).

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

to the Department and from there to the Library's Board for investigation.<sup>3</sup> Although the Board made a token attempt to investigate the truth of the matter,<sup>4</sup> the staff member involved not only refused to co-operate,<sup>5</sup> but declared in a staff meeting that the Director, the Management Exco and the Board itself were illegitimate on the grounds that they had not been appointed by the new Government.<sup>6</sup> The Board, which repeatedly had its term of office extended for short periods while the Department delayed forming a new Board, was for its part unwilling at that late stage of its term of office to take disciplinary action and uphold the authority of the Director. It was agreed to dissolve the Management Exco and replace it with a broader-based Management Team<sup>7</sup> consisting of the Director (approaching retirement) and Department Heads (the Deputy Director post being vacant), collectively weak on strategy at a time when a strong strategic sense was required as never before. At the same time it was decided not to seek a new Deputy Director until a new Board was in office, when the staff would be involved in the selection process.<sup>8</sup> The workload normally carried by his Deputy was added to the Director's own commitments.

At this time Director Westra lost his network of contacts in the Department with the simultaneous resignation on 28 February 1995 of all the senior officials in Pretoria with whom he had long been in communication,<sup>9</sup> adding to his isolation. One of these, J.J.H. Booysen, in his parting letter to Westra, warned that the Library's enjoyment of framework autonomy was under review.<sup>10</sup> A co-worker in the Department, Arina Kock, later bid Westra good-bye in what was probably the last official letter in Afrikaans from the new Department.<sup>11</sup> Writing in March

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<sup>3</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/3 (1990-1997). Chairman to Deputy Minister, 5 June 1995, with Director's memorandum.

<sup>4</sup> Staff who met the ad hoc committee of the Board were supportive but not uncritical (*ibid.*, 7 August 1995).

<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 4 August 1995. Their attempt to resolve the matter through the services of a consultant would prove only partially successful (the outcome reported in *South African Library Staff Bulletin* 24/1995, 28 November 1995, p.2).

<sup>6</sup> Copies of the reprimand in this respect and subsequent correspondence were laid before the Board at their next meeting (*ibid.*, Agenda for 1 December 1995: Annexes pp.15-18) but the Board and the Director were afraid to take disciplinary action in view of the public stature of the staff member involved, bearing in mind the public criticism of the Library for successfully prosecuting artist Pippa Skotnes in terms of the Legal Deposit of Publications Act.

<sup>7</sup> [Official records of management and staff meetings for this period are missing, and the author has relied on his personal copies.] Management Team. Minutes, 30 November 1995.

<sup>8</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes Executive Committee, 26 October 1995.

<sup>9</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/3 (1992-1996). Department Circular 4/95, 2 March 1995: resignation of J.C. Paauw, R.E. Chernis and J.J.H. Booysen, appointment of W.R. Jardine and acting appointment of J.F.T. Bartman.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, Booysen to Westra, 10 February 1995.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, Kock (KL045392) to Westra, 6 November 1996.

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

1995 on behalf of the Director-General of the Department, J.F.T. Bartman requested supporting documents for the institutions' budgets be henceforth written in English.<sup>12</sup>

A further setback for the Director was the formation of a staff advisory committee on the Centre for the Book to participate in the Centre's planning and to oversee the use of its funds; a temporary organizer was chosen to arrange the inaugural events scheduled for 23 April 1996.<sup>13</sup> This was one of a number of working groups formed on the recommendation of the consultant. At one time there were thirteen active staff working groups, each with five or more members, meeting during working hours. Some useful proposals were formulated by these groups, such as policies on appointments, grievances and disciplinary action. Gradually these endless discussions quenched the rhetoric of the radicalized staff and attendance at the meetings fell away.

The staff interpreted the advice of consultants Line and Hodgetts to mean that it was everyone's right to manage the South African Library, yet only the Director, who was scorned by some of the staff, was responsible to the Board for the consequences, a position of which he was painfully aware.

Contributing to the Director's problems was the internal staff newsletter, originally set up and run by the staff but taken under the control of management in the early 1980s and became primarily a medium of communication from management to the staff.<sup>14</sup> The occasional rejection of 'unsuitable' staff contributions was regarded by some as a grievance. Two librarians announced in March 1993 a 'chatty, informal staff newsletter' to run parallel with the formal Staff Bulletin<sup>15</sup> but nothing came of this at first. At a staff meeting held in March 1996, during the height of staff demands for democracy in the workplace, the Director sanctioned a popular newsletter.<sup>16</sup> The first under the existing title but edited by staff only appeared on 18 April 1996. Very soon it began to include divisive and offensive contributions, ridiculing the Director<sup>17</sup> and sowing division between radical and conservative staff.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, Bartman (KL092590) to Westra, 23 March 1995. Westra had an excellent command of the English language so this presented no problem for him, but this remark is one indicator how dramatically the denizens of the bureaucratic labyrinth had changed.

<sup>13</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin 24/1995, 28 November 1995, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> This section should be read in tandem with Chapter 6, fourth section, p.242 and n.6, p.244, n.12.

<sup>15</sup> 'Informal circular to all staff' dated 15 March 1993 (copy with the author's file of South African Library Staff Bulletin).

<sup>16</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/5. Heads of Departments and Sections. Minutes, 7 March 1996.

<sup>17</sup> For examples, see South African Library Staff Bulletin, 6 May, 3 June 1996.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 'To the Editor of the Staff Bulletin', 1 July 1996, pp.1-3.

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

In the middle of these developments and just as staff began to depart for the summer vacation, the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology commissioned the firm Deloitte & Touche Management Consultants to investigate the Library's functions and finances and all senior executives were instructed to be on hand from 1 December 1995 to 31 January 1996.<sup>19</sup> After a brief visit in December,<sup>20</sup> the consultants commenced their investigation in January and came back again in March 1996. They required financial statements, copies of institutional mandates, mission statement, a list of functions, and copies of all relevant legislation, all of which had to be produced at short notice.<sup>21</sup> This investigation put Management under exceptionally heavy additional strain, the staff also demanding direct involvement. Despite repeated requests, the consultants' report was never released to the Library,<sup>22</sup> but the Library was assured that the Deloitte & Touche investigators had been very impressed by the quality of its input. The consultancy's investigations had included other cultural institutions as well, since the Department was reviewing all the Acts under its administration, with the amalgamation of these institutions under consideration.<sup>23</sup>

To the dismay of Director Westra, one of his Assistant Directors, who believed that the autonomy of the Library was no longer sustainable in the midst of such staff chaos, pressure of work, overwhelming numbers of users, and ever-diminishing funding, considered that the future lay in the often-suggested amalgamation of the two national libraries and the Library of Parliament. In September 1995 he drew up a proposal for a merger between the three libraries. His memorandum,<sup>24</sup> vehemently opposed by the Director at first,<sup>25</sup> was circulated for discussion to

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<sup>19</sup> NLCT-MC MSL A3/7 (1992-1996). Director-General Jardine (5/1/7/1(B)) to Westra, 1 December 1995. The Director replied that he would be away most of that time, the Library would in any case be shut between Christmas and Second New Year (*ibid.*, Westra to Jardine, 6 December 1995).

<sup>20</sup> The fact that on their arrival on 13 December they found only two Assistant Directors present and needed to visit again in January (the author's personal diary, this date) was hardly a point in the Library's favour.

<sup>21</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A2/3 (1992-1996). C. Coetzee for Director-General (WB130979/960306) to Westra, 6 March 1996.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, Westra to Jardine, 29 October 1996.

<sup>23</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/5. Heads of Departments and Sections. Minutes, 8 February 1996; [NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/2: the record book is missing, author's personal copy consulted] Management Team. Minutes, 20 March 1996 (a fuller record is found in the author's personal diary for this date; the Department had identified the Legal Deposit of Publications Act and the National Libraries Act for review; the Centre for the Book project was at a stalemate as the staff committee wanted it to have a 'grassroots' function, while the Director still envisaged a celebration of 'the beautiful book').

<sup>24</sup> P.R. Coates, 'Memorandum: the Future of National Libraries in South Africa', with covering letter Coates to Westra, 'A Proposal Concerning the Future of the National Libraries of South Africa', 17 September 1995; 'Memorandum on a Future National Library of South Africa', 13 October 1995; 'Proposals for the National Libraries', 15 April 1996

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

the heads of the libraries involved,<sup>26</sup> receiving varying measures of support. This initiative did not lead to the realization of the model of the National Library which he proposed, but it did indicate some unexpected support for amalgamation from within the South African Library. In February 1996, Minister Ngubane appointed a review group on the subject for which the Director of the State Library produced his own document on amalgamation.<sup>27</sup> The logical and frequently-suggested incorporation of the Library of Parliament was rejected. On 26 April the Directorate of Meta-Information of the Department announced the revision of the National Libraries Act, the investigation to commence on 21 June. Staff working groups made preparations, and the official Departmental Working Group on National Libraries met for the first time on 25 July 1996, chaired by Andrew Khutsoane.<sup>28</sup>

Intensive discussions and negotiations followed which it is not necessary to describe here. It was to the advantage of the national libraries that the initiative came from within and not from the Department, so that the outcome could be largely in their own hands, unlike the subsequent amalgamation of other cultural institutions. But the South African Library entered into the negotiations from a distinctly weak position. The National Library of South Africa Bill was ready for comment on 22 June 1998.

The prospect of amalgamation provided the South African Library staff with a real issue for debate. Another was the final collapse of the Library's computer system, and yet another was the discovery that the Library had insoluble financial difficulties. To a large extent these matters had a sobering effect on staff. The contentious staff newsletter ceased for want of contributions.

The Director of Meta-Information had sent an email message to Director Westra about her intention to appoint Deloitte & Touche to arrange a merger between the two national libraries, to which the Director responded in a manner which the rest of management believed demonstrated a lack of leadership. At Management Team meetings on 1 and 2 April 1996 (the

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(some of these documents may be found in NLCT-MC MSN A5/3/1; all are in the author's own files).

<sup>25</sup> P.E. Westra, memo 1 October 1995 giving consent to explore the subject unofficially (author's files).

<sup>26</sup> Copies were supplied to the Chairman of the South African Library Board, Librarian of Parliament, the Director of State Library, and D.H. Varley the former Director of the South African Library, all of whom gave the author their considered replies, although copies were soon in the possession of the Director of Meta-Information and Val Viljoen, MP.

<sup>27</sup> P.J. Lor, 'Models for the Future Relationship Between the Two National Libraries', 13 February 1996 (author's files).

<sup>28</sup> These details are taken from a chronology of events 1994-1998 filed in NLCT-MC MSN A5/3/1. Khutsoane died suddenly on 23 June 1997 (South African Library News Bulletin 7, 9 July 1997, p.1) and the chairmanship was taken over by Seth Manaka of the State Library Board.

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

Director being on leave) it was resolved to request a meeting with the Board, to be held within a fortnight.<sup>29</sup> This was taken by Westra as a vote of no confidence, who at the following meeting of 15 April endorsed the Board's position that the Library should remain autonomous and indicated his intention to retire aged 60 on 1 June 1997; at the same meeting, management resolved to open direct negotiations with their State Library counterparts.<sup>30</sup>

Framework autonomy had made it an easy matter to adjust posts, so that by saving on professional posts, the pay and benefits of lowest-paid Coloured workers could be brought into line with their White colleagues, and also permitted the employment of more lower-graded staff. The danger of this was that it assumed a dependable measure of non-State income. It assumed the State grant (inadequate though it was) would at least increase over time. What could not be predicted was the collapse of the Library's computer system, replacing which soaked up all the Library's remaining assets. What might have been predicted was that the head of Special Collections refused to play his intended role in the original 'Beautiful Book' Centre for the Book plan, and staff made it clear that they would not double up on their duties to get the Centre for the Book going, so several promising and expensive professionals were employed to do promotional and fund-raising work with the Centre in mind.

Throughout the 1990s (under the National Party Government as well as the Government of National Unity) the State grant either declined in absolute terms or at least in after-inflation value. It ought to have been a warning that the Library had repeatedly to use overdraft facilities for short periods to get by. The new Government reduced the adjustment factor on the subsidy from 75.7% down to 72.1% in 1995,<sup>31</sup> and out of that deducted a further 'tithe' of R60,000 (pro rata for the other institutions) to pay for a lavish Freedom Day celebration.<sup>32</sup> The staff's salaries began to overtake the State grant (see Annexure 13). Disregarding the financial crisis, the executive-level staff accepted the large salary increase announced by the Commission for Administration. In August 1997 there was a major funding scare when salaries and perks alone exceeded the State grant by R55,000, and trust funds had to be 'borrowed' to pay for the reinstatement of the computer system (see Chapter 6, section 3), costing half a million Rand.<sup>33</sup> An appeal was

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<sup>29</sup> [NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/2: the record book is missing] Management Team. Minutes, 1 April 1996.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 15 April 1996.

<sup>31</sup> South African Library. Report, 1995, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/1 (1992-1995). Management Exco. Minutes, 8 March 1995.

<sup>33</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Agenda for 5 September 1997: Annexes pp.49-52. The Administrative Officer (email communication I.J. Nieuwoudt, 29 July 2013) states he constantly warned the Director about the high salary outlay.

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

made to the Department for assistance<sup>34</sup> (of which more below).

Adding to the Library's costs, it was decided to secure a Deputy Director. After an expensive exercise, in which the staff interviewed the candidates,<sup>35</sup> the Board offered the position to the librarian of St John's College, Cambridge. However, the staff, who had become accustomed to asserting their views, petitioned against her appointment because there were South African candidates who, in their opinion, were equally well qualified. On being informed of the staff petition,<sup>36</sup> the candidate withdrew her application and the Deputy Director post remained unfilled. Instead, the Board asked that Westra remain in office as Director until the end of February 1998 while the process of selecting a new Director was conducted.<sup>37</sup> Despite the advertisement being placed only in South African publications,<sup>38</sup> the eventually-successful candidate, Ms Carryl Allardice (a South African citizen working in the United Kingdom),<sup>39</sup> was appointed and took up the position in March 1998. Her appointment was preceded by that of Mrs Elisabeth Anderson who was appointed Director of the Centre for the Book from January.<sup>40</sup> Both were shocked to find that the Library's financial position was far worse than had been supposed.

On 2 and 5 December 1997, Library management met to discuss a financial crisis which had arisen as follows. In November 1996 the Board had been informed of a large but manageable anticipated deficit for the 1996-97 financial year caused by the unanticipated replacement of computer software and hardware, but the budget for 1997-98 showed an even larger shortfall, equivalent to about 30% in excess of State and other income combined. Urgent discussions were held with the Minister and officials of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. In January 1997 the Minister wrote informing the Library that he had found funds for a supplementary grant (equivalent to about half of the forecast deficit) for 1997-98. The cheque for a little under one million Rand was duly received and deposited in the Library's bank account on 31 March 1997, the last day of the 1996-97 financial year. This mis-allocated money, which was intended to be part of the State's funding for 1997-98, balanced the books for 1996-97 while making the

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<sup>34</sup> NLCT-MC MSN F7 (1993-1997). Westra to Director-General, 20 October 1997, with appendix 'Financial Situation'.

<sup>35</sup> South African Library News Bulletin 4, 4 April 1997, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/2. Management Team. Minutes, 29 May 1997.

<sup>37</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 9 June 1997. Westra's last Management Team meeting was 14 January 1998.

<sup>38</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/2. Management Team. Minutes, 31 July 1997.

<sup>39</sup> Abridged curricula vitae of applicants appeared in South African Library News Bulletin 13, 17 January 1998, pp.1-2.

<sup>40</sup> Appointment announcement and curriculum vitae published in *ibid.* 12, 10 November 1997; her plans for the Centre for the Book appeared in *ibid.* 1, 12 February 1998, p.1.

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shortfall for 1997-98 greater than ever. This mis-allocation was only detected late in 1997 after the 1996-97 accounts had received a clean audit. The Library kept going at this point by using up its reserve funds (including all the trust funds, and some of the capital and all of the interest on funds earmarked for the Centre for the Book). But during 1996 and 1997, ten additional staff were appointed, mainly to run the Centre for the Book, further aggravating the deficit.<sup>41</sup> The Director expressed the hope that the Department would again bail-out the Library, but this was unlikely because all the institutions funded by DACST were in a similar predicament. It was clear that staff would have to be retrenched, and at this stage (December 1997) an 11% reduction in staff was anticipated, mostly staff with salaries above the median level which formed the upper limit of the subsidy formula,<sup>42</sup> and, ideally, under-performers.

This is what the two new Directors inherited. Ms Allardice mentioned casually to the author that, had she been informed of the financial problems, she would never have accepted the position. Mrs Anderson, on finding the Centre's funds had been raided<sup>43</sup> demanded that all moneys be repaid by the Library, which further complicated the Library's financial troubles, and did everything in her power thereafter to separate the Centre for the Book completely from the South African Library.

Putting the agreed amalgamation of the two national libraries into effect<sup>44</sup> was suspended until the financial difficulties of the South African Library had been resolved. A management consultant was engaged<sup>45</sup> to undertake a human resources audit prior to commencing a process of staff reduction. A consultation meeting with staff was held 6 October when anger was expressed against both Management and the Board for this coming to pass,<sup>46</sup> yet responsibility should

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<sup>41</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/2 (1996-1997). Management Team. Minutes 13 August 1997: warning by Administrative Officer.

<sup>42</sup> Selected sources: NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes: Special Meeting, 10 December 1997; Agenda for 13 February 1998: Annex p.41, Chairman of Board to Minister Mtshali, 30 January 1998, pp.42-47 Memorandum on the Draft Provisional Budget, 1998/9 (includes note on need for retrenchment of staff); NLCT-MC MSN A6/4/2 (1996-1997). Management Team. Minutes: Special Meetings 2, 5 December 1997 (also fuller notes in author's personal diary); Minutes, 10 December 1997; Minutes: Special Meeting, 15 December 1997.

<sup>43</sup> Of the declared capital derived from the Naspers donation, two bequests and a grant from DACST amounting on paper to R750,000 which was intended to make the Centre self-sustaining, only R600,000 remained, the rest having been used by the Library maintaining its services (NLCT-MC SAL Board. Supplementary agenda for 5 June 1998).

<sup>44</sup> The National Library of South Africa Act, no.92 of 1998, passed on 20 October 1998, implemented on 1 November 1999.

<sup>45</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 5 June 1998 [laid on table]; C. Lyall-Watson, 'South African Library: executive summary Human Resources Audit, 29 May 1998 to 4 June 1998'.

<sup>46</sup> NLCT-MC MSN A6/5 (1981-1999). Staff Meetings. Minutes: Meeting of Staff on the Financial Situation ... and [Report] of the Task Team set up by the Board to Consider Involuntary Retrenchment of Staff, 6 October 1998 (author has his own copy).

## EPILOGUE, 1994-1999

be shared by all. Terms for voluntary severance were issued on 22 December 1998, the closing date for acceptance was 20 January 1999.<sup>47</sup> Thirty-four staff members of various ranks applied for severance packages. Since lower-paid workers predominated, the resultant saving on the salaries bill was R2.3 million instead of the envisaged R3 million. Twenty-seven of the applications were accepted immediately and a further seven applications by key staff members were deferred to the next financial year. Since the target had not been met, the Board threatened forced retrenchment of staff who had not applied.<sup>48</sup> A farewell tea party was held on Friday 29 January 1999 for those who had chosen to go, and on that day, 540 years of the South African Library's accumulated institutional memory was lost.

Before the reduction in staff, the Library could barely cope with user demand.<sup>49</sup> The Library was especially popular with students once word got about that the reference staff would assist them with their assignments. In the face of the loss of 40% of the staff (including most of the experienced qualified librarians), it became necessary to dis-incentivize the use of the Library: the Library now closed altogether on Saturdays (its busiest day) and at 5 p.m. on weekdays; photocopies would no longer be made on demand but had to be collected at least 24 hours later; the delivery of material from the stacks was slowed down. And of course, those helpful librarians who gave advice on assignments were no longer there.

Now preparations for the merger into the National Library of South Africa could proceed, and joint working groups were established to make the necessary transitional arrangements. On Friday 29 October 1999 the doors of the South African Library closed to the public for the last time. The following Monday the Library would re-open as the Cape Town Campus of the National Library of South Africa.

The staff marked the occasion with a final nostalgic 'Sapling' tea party which lasted into the twilight. On leaving, the security officer was nowhere to be found, so it fell to the lot of the author and a colleague to finally lock up the venerable building that night with its lingering ghosts of past librarians and researchers, and secure for the use of future researchers the stored knowledge, wisdom and follies of the ages.

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<sup>47</sup> Letter C.M. Allardice to [ . . . ], 'Voluntary Severance Package', 22 December 1998 [handed to each staff member].

<sup>48</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 25 January 1999: Report of Task Team on Restructuring.

<sup>49</sup> See the recollections of reference librarian Kathy Drake about swamping by students in Annexure 17.

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The South African Library's only shelving collapse in 180 years occurred at the Bree Street newspaper store between 5/6 July 1999. Mercifully, it did not occur during working hours.

## ANNEXURES

SOME BOOKS WRITTEN WITH THE ASSISTANCE  
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY UP TO 1970.

(Referred to in Introduction, p.viii n.7, Chapter 6, p.212 n.10; Chapter 7, p.280.)

Note: each entry has a raised numeral. Refer to the endnote to identify the source.

- Alexander, F.L., *Art in South Africa: painting, sculpture and graphic work since 1900*, 1962.<sup>2</sup>
- Arndt, E.H.D., *Banking and Currency Development in South Africa*, 1928.<sup>1</sup>
- Bax, D., *Zuid-Afrika's Eerste Openbare Verzameling op het Gebied van Kunst en Etnologie, 1764-1821*, 1970.<sup>3</sup>
- Bax, D. and Koeman, C., *Argitektoniese Skoonheid in Kaapstad se Kompanjiestuin, 1777-1805*, 1963.<sup>2</sup>
- Beckerling, J.L., *The Medical History of the Anglo-Boer War: a bibliography*, 1967.<sup>3</sup>
- Bouws, J., *Die Musieklewe van Kaapstad, 1800-1850*, 1966.<sup>2</sup>
- Bradlow, E., *The Cape Government's Rule of Basutoland, 1871-1883*, 1968.
- Bradlow, E. and F.R., *Here Comes the Alabama*, 1958.<sup>1</sup>
- *Thomas Bowler of the Cape of Good Hope*, 1955.<sup>1</sup>
- Bradlow, F.R., *Baron von Ludwig and the Ludwig's-burg Garden*, 1966.<sup>2</sup>
- *Bowler's Four Views of Cape Town: facsimile reproductions...with a new introduction*, 1966.<sup>3</sup>
- *Thomas Bowler: his life and work*, 1967.<sup>3</sup>
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### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Sapling 3, October 1961, pp.45-47. A separate list of the writings of D.H. Varley fills eight pages, in: *ibid.*, pp.57-66.
- <sup>2</sup> Sapling 8, November 1966, pp.17-19, plus a further two pages of D.H. Varley's writings, pp.31-33.
- <sup>3</sup> SA Library Staff Newsletter, August 1979, (sup.) pp.1-2.

## ANNEXURES

CLASSIFICATION OF BOOK STOCK LOANS, 1930 – 1950.<sup>1</sup>

(Referred to in Prologue, p.3 n.2; Chapter 1, p.35 n.2.)

SA Library circulation	1930	1935	1940	1945	1950
Religion	1,502	993	1,260	2,008	2,216
Philosophy	1,621	1,208	1,303	2173	2,434
Social Sciences	4,288	4,393	4,062	5331	4,879
History, Biography, Travel	14,095	17,332	20,425	24,565	22,941
Sciences	2,607	1,851	3,041	4,434	3,528
Arts	4,618	4,883	6,786	9,561	11,664
Literature	8,479	6,925	6,913	16,423	12,520
Fiction	97,273	80,676	61,153	108,179	131,084
Main Peninsula libraries	FICTION AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CIRCULATION				
South African Library	72%	68%	58%	63%	69%
Sea Point	96%	91%	89%	88%	89%
Rondebosch	88% (1931)	92% (1936)	87%	85%	92%
Claremont	(No data)	—	—	—	—
Wynberg	93%	89%	85%	89%	86%

<sup>1</sup> Statistical data derived from the annual reports of the libraries concerned.

## ANNEXURES

# SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC LIBRARY.

## Rules and Regulations.

(Amended Rules and Regulations drawn up by the Board of Trustees.)

The following amended Rules and Regulations shall supersede all previous Rules and Regulations drawn up by the Board.

### I. THE BOARD.

1. The Board of Trustees of the South African Public Library shall in general hold its ordinary meeting on the last Wednesday of each month, or such other day as the Chairman and the Secretary may deem advisable, and its proceedings shall be governed by the practice usual at meetings of public bodies.

2. Special meetings shall be summoned by the Secretary in cases of urgency, or at the request of the Chairman or of any two members of the Board.

### II. SUBSCRIBERS.

1. The rates of subscription shall be as follows:—

- (a) Members paying an annual subscription of two pounds (£2) with a deposit of five shillings (5s.) shall be entitled to borrow three works at a time.
- (b) Members paying an annual subscription of one pound ten shillings (£1 10s.) with a deposit of five shillings (5s.) shall be entitled to borrow two works at a time.
- (c) Members paying an annual subscription of one pound (£1), with a deposit of five shillings (5s.), shall be entitled to borrow one work at a time.
- (d) Annual subscribers may also borrow one periodical at a time for ten shillings (10s.) extra per annum, or two periodicals at a time for one pound (£1) extra per annum.
- (e) Subscriptions may also be paid half-yearly: Twelve shillings (12s.) for one work, eighteen shillings (18s.) for two works, and one pound, four shillings (£1 4s.) for three works, with a deposit in each case of five shillings (5s.); or quarterly: Six shillings (6s.) for one work, nine shillings (9s.) for two works, and twelve shillings (12s.) for three works, the deposit in each case being five shillings (5s.)
- (f) Subscribers paying annual and half-yearly rates may each nominate not more than two children as free borrowers from the Juvenile Lending Section, on conditions determined by the Librarian.
- (g) Visitors may be admitted to the borrowing privileges of the Library by paying a monthly subscription of two shillings and sixpence (2s. 6d.) for one work, and five shillings (5s.) for three works, the deposit in each case being five shillings (5s.).
- (h) Subscribers wishing to borrow additional books beyond the quota to which their subscriptions entitle them may obtain these at the discretion of the Librarian, on payment of three pence (3d.) for each book.

- (i) Resident members of an annual subscriber's family, and students (on making special application to the Secretary) may secure the borrowing privileges of a subscriber on payment of half the amount of the subscription.
- (j) Business firms may subscribe on behalf of their employees on special terms, provided that there be not fewer than ten in number, and that the subscription and deposit be paid by the employer in advance. Similar arrangements may be made with Libraries and other groups. Terms may be obtained from the Secretary.
- (k) Notable benefactors to the Library may be elected by the Trustees to honorary life membership giving the full privileges of borrowing accorded to subscribers of Class (a).
- (l) The right to refuse or return a subscription is reserved by the Board of Trustees.
- (m) Every subscriber, on paying the subscription, shall be presented with a copy of the Rules and Regulations and shall sign his or her name in a special book, as testimony that the regulations have been seen and accepted by the subscriber.
- (n) Country subscribers are allowed extra sets of books at ordinary rates of subscription. Conditions may be obtained from the Secretary.

2. Subscribers may change their books at any time from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily except on Public Holidays, when no books can be changed.

3. Subscribers may not lend library books or periodicals to non-subscribers, and they may only exchange them through the officials of the Library, in attendance at their desks.

4. The value of any book or periodical lost or mutilated by subscribers shall be recoverable by the Librarian at the loser's charge.

5. **No work may be retained longer than fourteen days unless the period is extended by an official of the Library. A fine of 1d. a day may be imposed on all overdue books not so renewed. Special arrangements are made with country borrowers.**

6. No works of reference may be removed except under very special circumstances, and then only upon a permission signed by the Librarian.

### III. THE LIBRARY.

1. The Library will be open on week-days from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday and Easter Monday. On all other Statutory Holidays it will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

2. No periodical or magazine may be removed from the reading room, or from the table to which it is attached, by any reader or subscriber, without the consent of the Librarian.

3. All books, papers, maps, etc., shall be consulted under such conditions as the Board of Trustees, through their Librarian, may deem desirable.

### IV. GENERAL REGULATIONS.

1. Smoking within the Library is strictly prohibited.
2. Silence is requested in all the reading rooms of the Library.

By Order of the Trustees.

South African Public Library,  
September, 1941.

H. D.

## ANNEXURES

SUBSCRIPTION RATES, 1949.<sup>1</sup>

(Referred to in Prologue, p.3 n.2.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS	Annual	Half-yearly	Quarterly	Monthly
— 1949 —	<i>Three books at a time</i>			
South African Library	£2 0s.	£1 4s.	£0 12s.	£0 5s.
Sea Point	£1 5s.	£0 13s 6d.	£0 7s.	—
Rondebosch	£1 8s.	£0 18s.	£0 11s.	—
Claremont	£1 3s.	£0 13s 6d.	£0 7s. 6d.	—
Wynberg (about to increase)	£1 7s.	£0 15s.	£0 10s.	£0 3s. 6d.
	<i>Two books at a time</i>			
South African Library	£1 10s	£0 18s.	£0 9s.	—
Sea Point	£1 1s.	£0 12s.	£0 6s. 6d.	£0 3s.
Rondebosch	£1 2s.	£0 12s 6d.	£0 8s. 9d.	—
Claremont	£0 16s. 6d.	£0 8s. 6d.	£0 5s.	£0 2s. 6d.
Wynberg (about to increase)	£1 0s.	£0 11s 6d.	£0 6s. 6d.	£0 2s. 6d.
	<i>One book at a time</i>			
South African Library	£1 0s.	£0 12s.	£0 6s.	£0 2s. 6d.
Sea Point	£0 15s.	£0 9s.	£0 5s.	£0 2s.
Rondebosch	—	—	£0 6s. 3d.	£0 2s. 6d.
Claremont	(Not offered)	—	—	—
Wynberg (about to increase)	£0 12s.	£0 7s.	£0 4s.	£0 1s. 6d.

<sup>1</sup> Statistical data derived from the annual reports of the libraries concerned.

ANNEXURES

CLASSIFICATION OF SUBSCRIBERS.\*  
 (Referred to in Prologue, pp.14 n.36, 20; Chapter 1, p.43 n.3.)

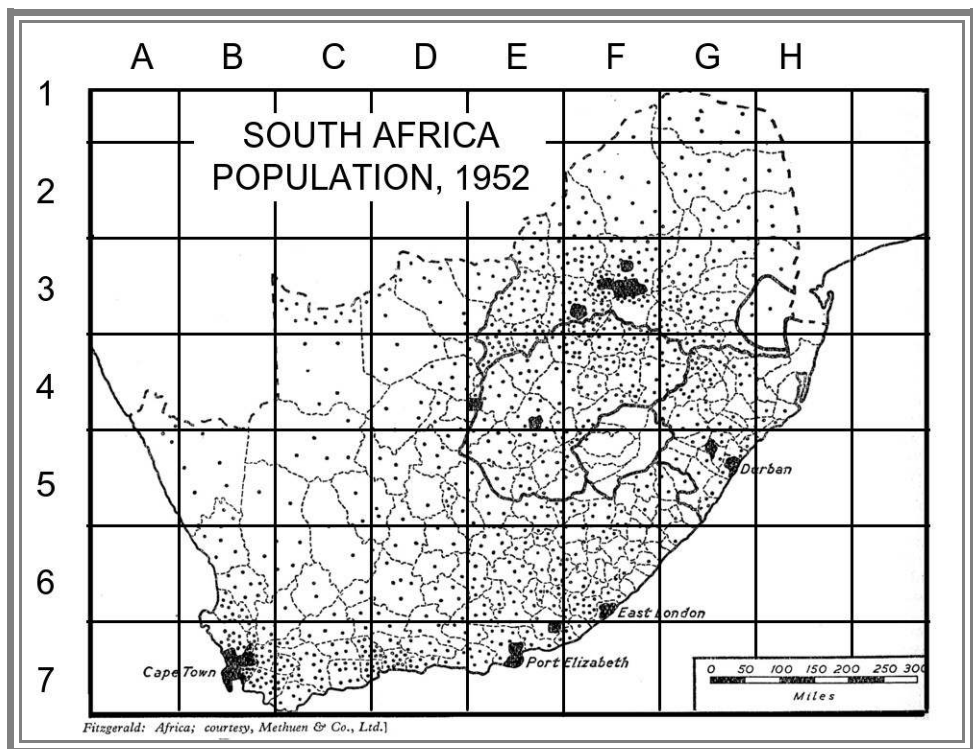
SA Library subscribers (only annual subscribers could vote)	1930	1935	1940	1944 (1945 not seen)	1948 (last list)
Total full (voting) members	976	829	747	1092	1395
'Miss' or 'Mrs'	38%	33%	44%	38%	31%
'Dr.' 'Hon.' 'Prof.' 'Rev.' &c.	14%	13%	20%	17%	11%
	REGISTERED ADDRESS				
	(Central City 50% PO Boxes or work addresses – assume suburban residence)				
Central City (or Suburban)	65% (or 32%)	60% (or 30%)	56% (or 28%)	51% (or 25%)	54% (or 27%)
Western Suburbs	9%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Northern Suburbs	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Southern Suburbs	16%	20%	22%	24%	28%
Country Members (throughout whole of SA)	9%	9%	10%	13%	5%
Central / Suburban / Country	32 / 59 / 9%	30 / 61 / 9%	28 / 62 / 10%	25 / 61 / 13%	27 / 68 / 5%

Comments: Non-White members could not be identified with confidence on the lists of voting members, though a subjective impression indicates that there was a very small but increasing number of Coloured and Black subscribers in 1944 and 1948. There were large numbers of non-voting members subscribing quarterly or monthly, or on subsidized schemes such as factory and office workers, book clubs, and college and university students, many of whom could have been Coloured. The relatively low proportion of female members probably due to family membership being in the husband's name. The increased proportion of female members in 1940-1944 can be ascribed to the absence of male members on active military service. In April 1944 the board decided to limit new country applications to the Cape Province and to exchange books only once a month. In February 1948 country subscriptions were raised 50% to cover rising administrative costs and at the same time railage costs recouped from the country subscribers almost doubled from 4d. to 7d. per book basket, explaining the sharp decline in country membership.

\* Statistical data derived from the lists of subscribers qualified to vote, forming part of the respective notices of the annual general meetings of subscribers of the South African Public Library.

ANNEXURES

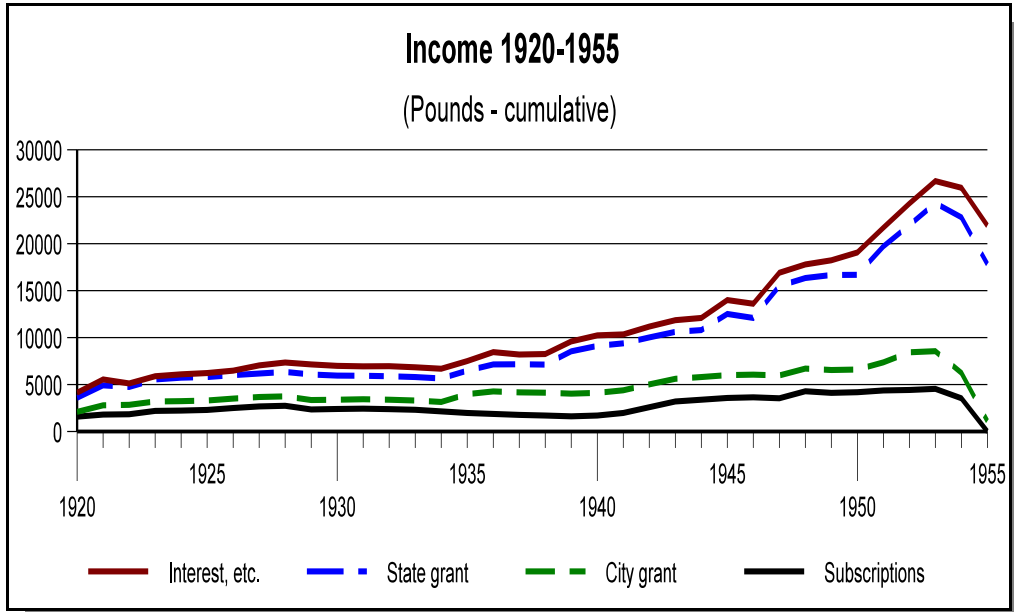
Localities	COUNTRY MEMBERS - GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION								
Outside the Cape:	Betty's Bay. . . . .	B7	Gordon's Bay. . . . .	B7	Louisvale. . . . .	E3	S Michael-on-Sea	G5	
Basutoland. . . . .	1	Bloemfontein. . . . .	E4	Gouda. . . . .	B7	Malmesbury. . . . .	B7	Sir Lowry's Pass. B7	
Bechuanaland. . . . .	1	Bredasdorp. . . . .	C7	Grabouw. . . . .	B7	Moorreesburg. . . . .	B7	Somerset West. . . . .	B7
Natal. . . . .	4	Calvinia. . . . .	B6	Grt Drakenstein. . . . .	B7	Mossel Bay. . . . .	D7	Steinkopf. . . . .	B5
Orange Free State. . . . .	5	Ceres. . . . .	B7	Hermanus. . . . .	B7	Muldersvlei. . . . .	B7	Stellenbosch. . . . .	B7
South West Africa. . . . .	2	Citrusdal. . . . .	B6	Hope Town. . . . .	D5	Namabeep. . . . .	B5	Strand. . . . .	B7
Transvaal. . . . .	2	Clanwilliam. . . . .	B6	Johannesburg. . . . .	F3	Nuwerus. . . . .	B5	Sutherland. . . . .	C6
		Dal Josephat. . . . .	B7	Kleinzee. . . . .	A5	Oranjemund. . . . .	A4	Villiersdorp. . . . .	B7
		Durban. . . . .	G5	Klipheuveld. . . . .	B7	Orchard. . . . .	B7	Vlottenberg. . . . .	B7
		Durbanville. . . . .	B7	Kloof. . . . .	G5	Paarl. . . . .	B7	Vredenburg. . . . .	B6
		East London. . . . .	F6	Kroonstad. . . . .	F4	Petrus Steyn. . . . .	F4	Vredendal. . . . .	B6
		Eerste Rivier. . . . .	B7	Kuilsrivier. . . . .	B7	Pietermaritzburg	G5	Wellington. . . . .	B7
		Elgin. . . . .	B7	Ladismith. . . . .	D7	Pretoria. . . . .	F3	Wilderness. . . . .	D7
		Faure. . . . .	B7	Ladybrand. . . . .	F4	Quithing. . . . .	F5	Windhoek. . . . .	A1
		Franschhoek. . . . .	B7	Laingsburg. . . . .	C6	Rawsonville. . . . .	B7	Wolseley. . . . .	B7
		Gaberone. . . . .	E2	Lamberts Bay. . . . .	B6	Rivierzonderend	C7	Worcester. . . . .	B7
		Garies. . . . .	B5	La Mott. . . . .	B7	Robertson. . . . .	C7	Zastron. . . . .	E5



ANNEXURES

SOURCES OF LIBRARY INCOME, 1920-1955\*\*

(Referred to in Chapter 1, p.35 n.1.)



\*\* Statistics derived from South African Public Library. *Annual Reports*.

## ANNEXURES

### DATA

Income for...	Subscriptions	City grant	State grant	Interest, etc.
1920	£ 1584	£ 500	£ 1500	£ 554
1921	1797	1000	2125	619
1922	1843	1000	1900	383
1923	2191	1000	2350	335
1924	2235	1000	2500	356
1925	2294	1000	2500	423
1926	2506	1000	2500	477
1927	2665	1000	2505	873
1928	2735	1000	2610	996
1929	2346	1000	2731	1068
1930	2392	1000	2559	1031
1931	2436	1000	2500	1000
1932	2382	1000	2500	1066
1933	2307	1000	2500	1031
1934	2141	1000	2500	1038
1935	1977	2000	2500	1016
1936	1869	2400	2875	1304
1937	1768	2400	3000	1021
1938	1705	2420	3000	1124
1939	1611	2420	4500	1067
1940	1698	2420	5000	1119
1941	1972	2420	5000	953
1942	2591	2420	5000	1157
1943	3195	2420	5000	1243
1944	3384	2420	5000	1291
1945	3577	2420	6525	1481
1946	3641	2420	6037	1502
1947	3542	2420	9533	1414
1948	4284	2420	9642	1441
1949	4120	2420	10127	1568
1950	4180	2420	10082	2390
1951	4367	3000	12342	1993
1952	4429	4000	13541	2305
1953	4549	4000	15777	2338
1954	3586	2700	16576	3142
1955	—	1100	16730	4092

## ANNEXURES

## QUICK REFERENCE BY TELEPHONE

(Referred to in Chapter 2, p.70; Chapter 4, p.180; Chapter 5, pp.174, 197; Chapter 7, p.280.)

The South African Library Staff Newsletter  
January 1983, p.13.

The telephone queries at Ref. have been increasing steadily. We looked through the diary to see what sort of questions are asked. A tremendous number are from the book trade wanting dates of publication, publishers, publishers' addresses, authors when they have only title, prices, etc. A vast number too are queries about Government Gazettes. We noted just a selection of others and here they are: what does the abbreviation S.Q. stand for, when was the Swedish ship BIA wrecked, information on Richards Bay, someone was coming in and wanted a map of Morokweng, Ciskei Income Tax Act, address of the University of North Carolina, a translator from Tsonga into English, where von Schade, editor of the Wynberg Times lived in 1880, address of the Toronto Medical School, where is Cahabaco, a telephone number in Zimbabwe, address of the London Art Gallery, address of Harvard University, what was Uppington's previous name, meaning of the word proprium, address of the homeland newspaper Mhahamhala, which library holds copies of the periodical New York Times Book Review Supplement, origin of the barber's pole, obituary of George Lyttleton, a source of Braille Christmas cards, the holder of a box number in Durban, information on the amount of salt fish imported in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, where do the Atlantic and Indian oceans meet, to which libraries do legal deposit copies of books have to be, how many Muslims in South Africa, what is a collector of post-cards called, what are the public holidays in India, at what date did the London Times start publishing photographs regularly, address of the Bureau of Heraldry, address of the Health and Safety Commission in Britain, prices that two titles fetched at rare book auctions, the phone number of the Scottish Ballet in Glasgow, address of bookshops, wording of the Magna Carta, the names of the Springbok cricket team in 1972, the capital of Costa Rica, address of historical societies in the U.K. and Belgium, - quite a gamut, and this selection was taken from the December pages of the diary.



## ANNEXURES

## SWAMPING OF LIBRARIES BY STUDENTS, 1986.

(Referred to in Chapter 5, p.174 n.37.)

SAILIS MEMORANDUM

(2nd draft)

THE CURRENT CRISIS IN BLACK EDUCATION

Everyone is aware of the difficulties this country is facing in the field of black education. There has recently been a tremendous upsurge in the demand for education : an increase of 1.2 million in black school and university enrolment in the last 10 years (South Africa: official yearbook, 1985).

IMPACT ON LIBRARIES

The various school, college and university libraries have evidently been unable to cope with the flood of students. The result is that other libraries - especially the public libraries - have had an unprecedented influx of students which at times has all but swamped them. The consequences of this have been entirely negative:

Seating capacity is inadequate.

Student texts should not be provided by Public Libraries.

Some libraries do not admit blacks at all.

After hours facilities so necessary for students, are very limited.

The traditional rate-paying user suffers in the overcrowding.

Public libraries do not have the funds to cater for non-ratepayers.

Thus the libraries are suffering and the students are frustrated.

The 1985 SAILIS CONFERENCE

The seriousness of this problem emerged fully at the Conference, held in Pretoria in October. Librarians from all over the country reported similar problems. The role of libraries in black education was a central pre-occupation at the Conference. It was resolved to approach the authorities in an effort to ease the problems.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

It is proposed that:

It be emphasised that the school, college and university libraries have a responsibility to provide adequate facilities in respect of accommodation, textbooks, and long hours.

Local authorities be urged to open their library doors to all races - possibly with the incentive of a subsidy.

The State provides a subsidy for Public Libraries because they are now performing a function within the orbit of national education.

Regional, local and national authorities cooperate to provide study halls in major centres. These should be open for long hours and should have the basic reference works.

BEN

ANNEXURES

SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY USAGE, 1975-1999

(Referred to in Chapter 5: pp.193, 197; Chapter 6: pp.210, 249 n.12; Chapter 7, p.278 n.82.)

Chart 1. Users of the Library's services (from 1998 closed Saturdays).

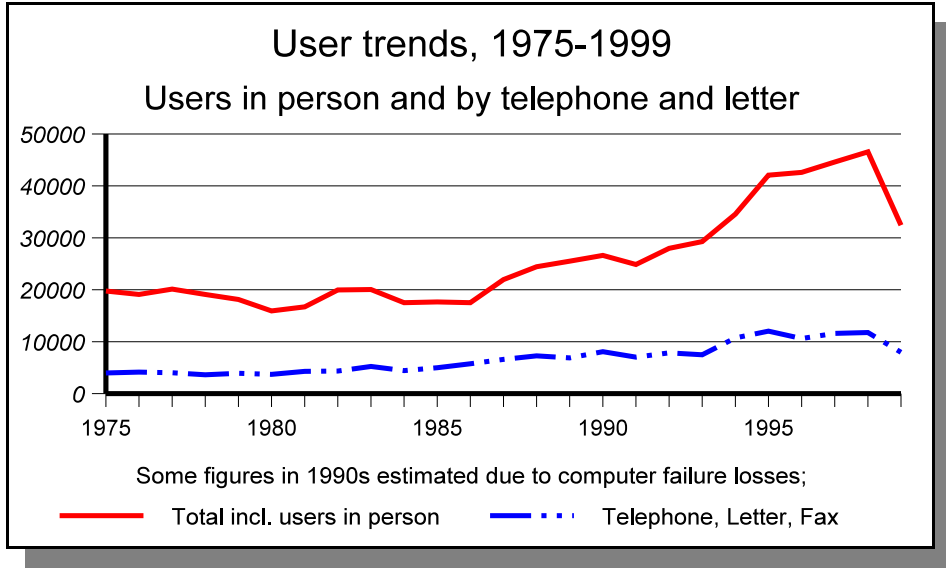
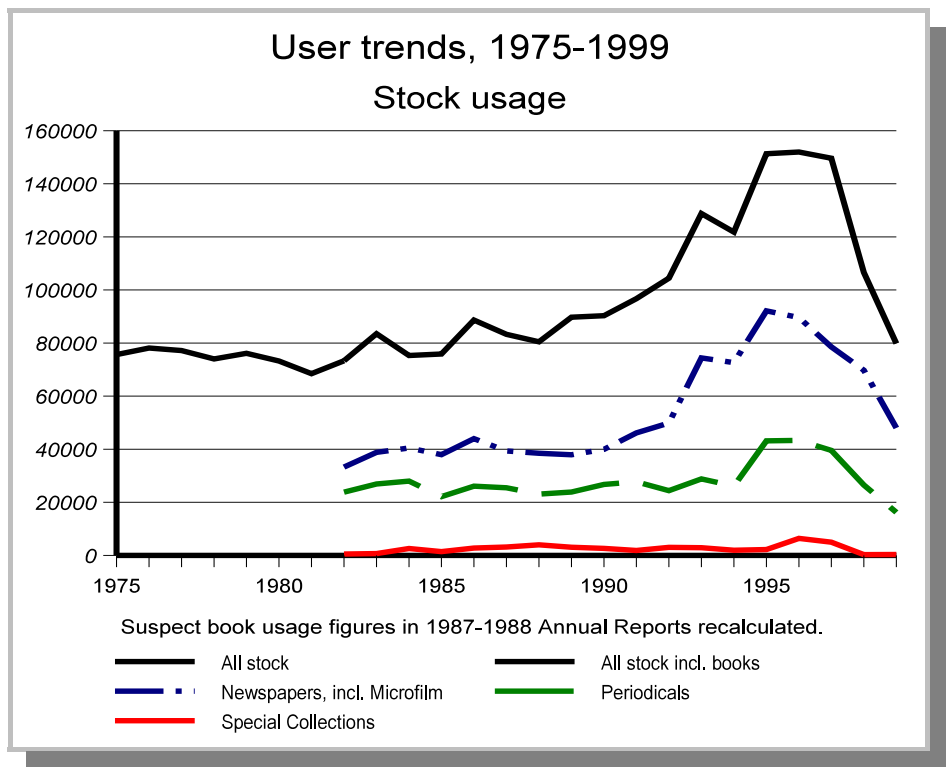


Chart 2. Usage of the Library's stock (from 1998 closed Saturdays).

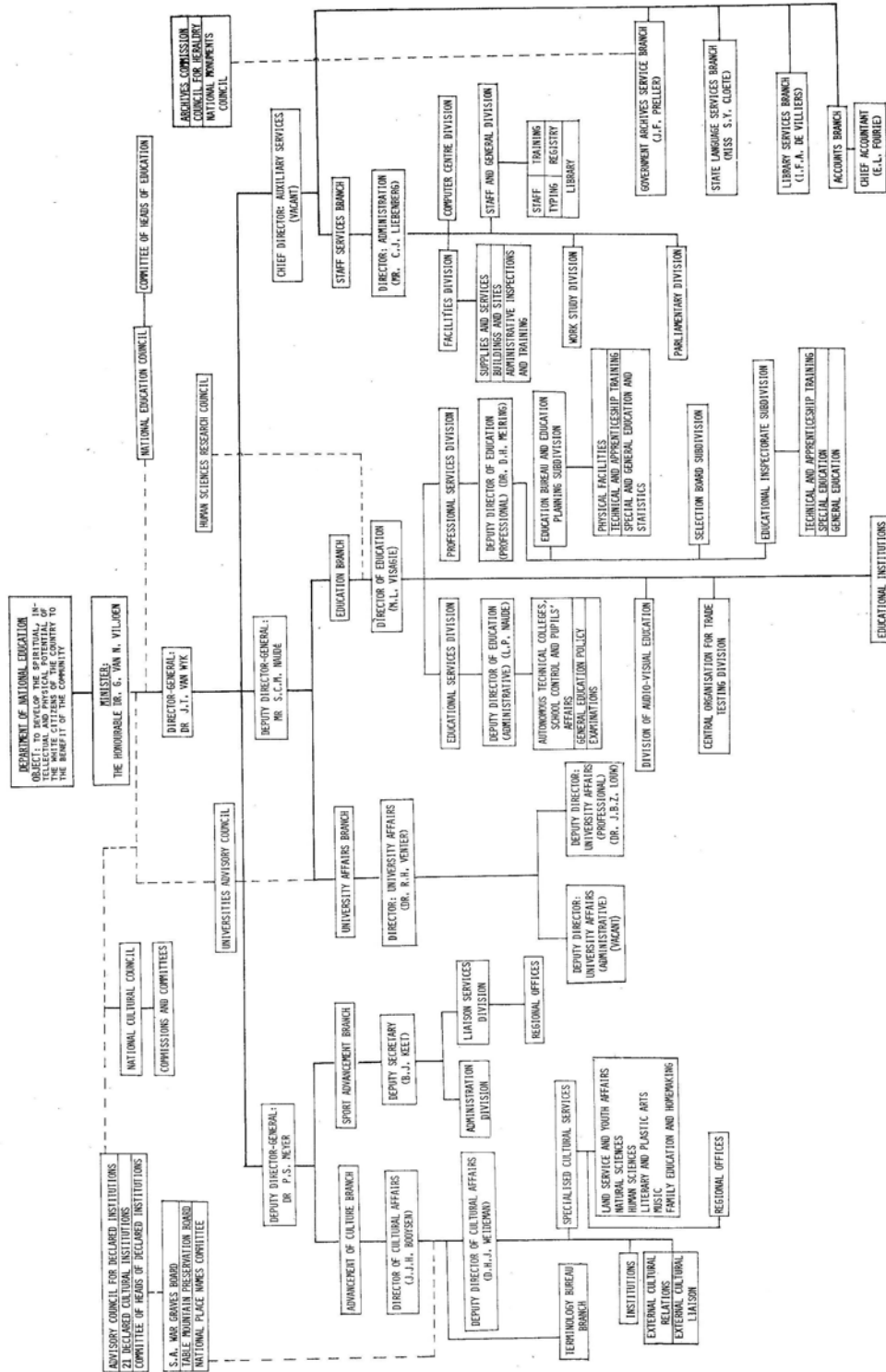


ANNEXURES

ORGANOGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION  
(Referred to in Chapter 5, p.203.)

Chart 1. Department of National Education: Organogram, 1980 (source: Annual Report, 1980, p.4B)

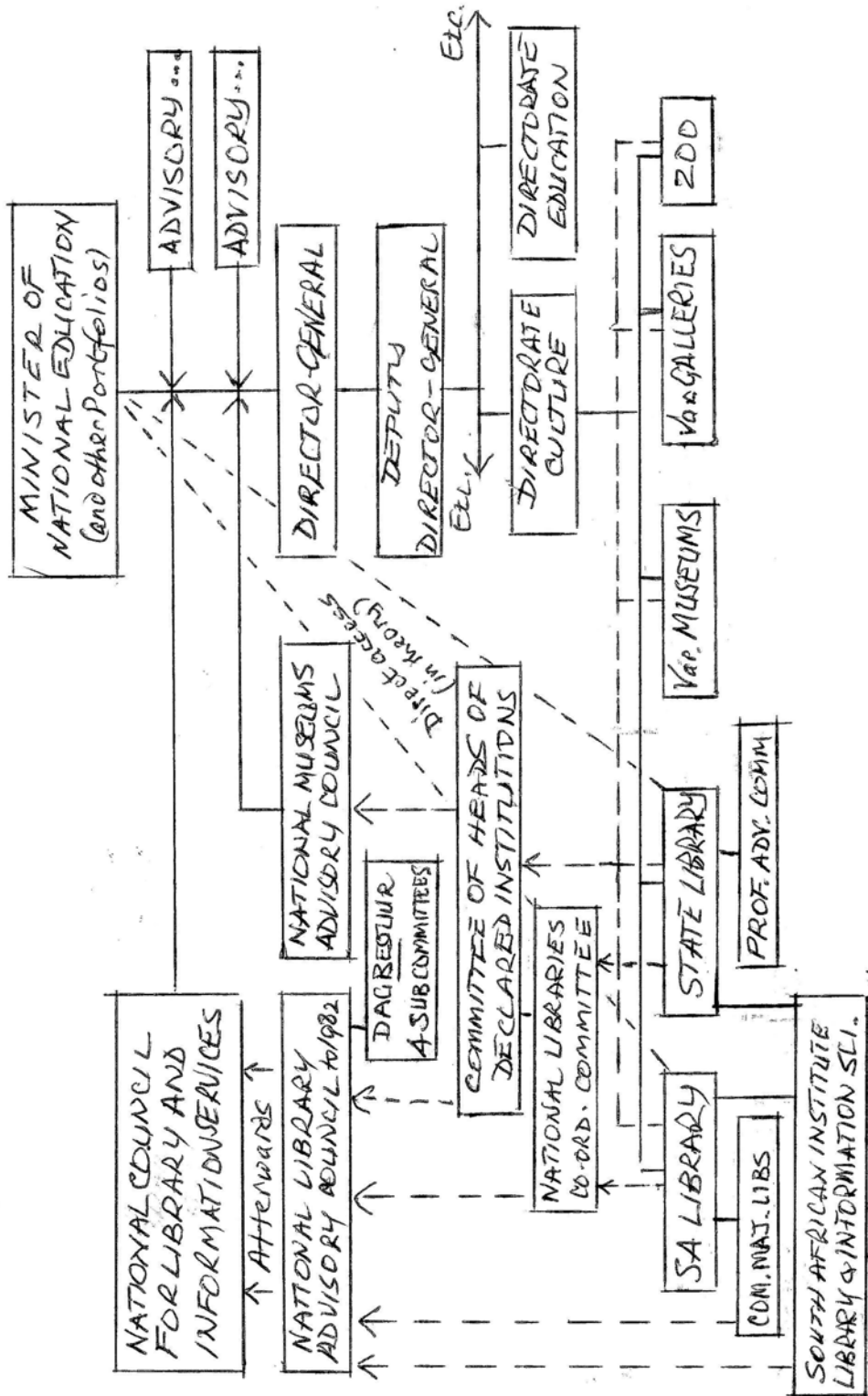
9. CHART—THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION—ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONS





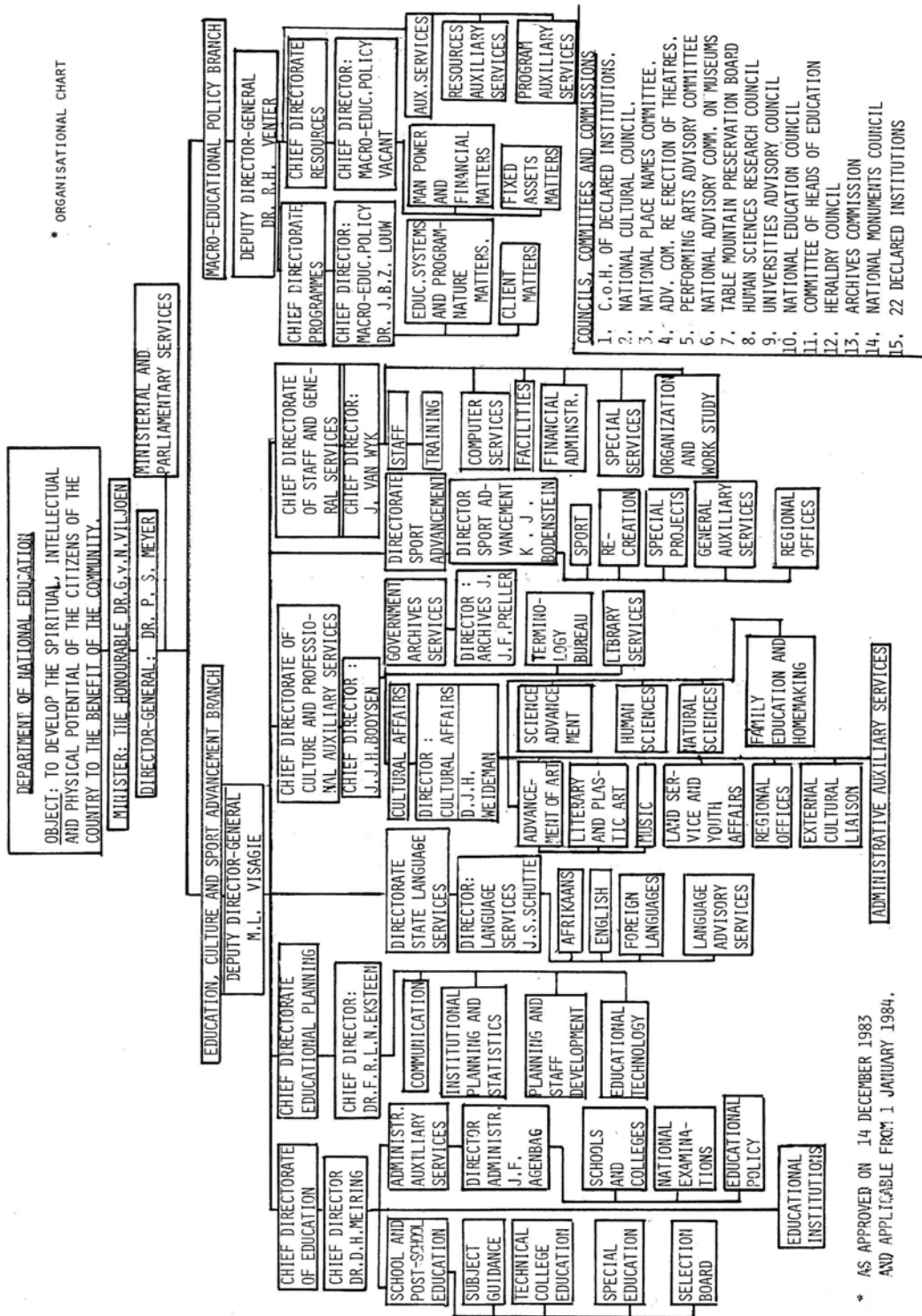
ANNEXURES

Chart 3. Sub-Organogram: Declared Institutions circa 1981 (compiled by the author).



ANNEXURES

Chart 4. Department of National Education: Organogram January 1984 after implementation of the Tricameral Constitution (source: Annual Report, 1983, p.12).



\* ORGANISATIONAL CHART

\* AS APPROVED ON 14 DECEMBER 1983 AND APPLICABLE FROM 1 JANUARY 1984.

## ANNEXURES

## MANAGEMENT STYLE AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY

(Referred to in Chapter 6, pp.215 n.29, 244 n.13.)

## A REVIEW, 1954-1999

Under Directors Varley and Robinson, there was no formal management structure (the Director being in personal control of everything). Senior staff were allowed considerable independence of action, trusted to perform their duties in a professional manner in the best interests of Library users. For the senior staff themselves, this trust and personal responsibility was gratifying. Under Varley, rare staff meetings (Whites and non-Whites meeting separately) were occasions for the Director to issue directives or reprimands, and there is no evidence that opinions were sought or discussions took place. Staff memorandums were occasionally issued to the same end. While Varley inspired great loyalty and professionalism at all levels of staff from the most senior professional downward, he had an introverted nature coupled with an unwavering self-assurance (something which offended his peers in the library community), and never shared his plans or decision-making with the staff.<sup>1</sup> Departments began to emerge during Varley's term of office but the boundaries were not distinctly drawn, so when Lewin Robinson took over as Director in 1961, the staff were still closely-integrated and might do relief work anywhere.

A structured hierarchy was slow to develop. Tyrrell-Glynn (Robinson's Deputy) had ill-defined responsibilities,<sup>2</sup> an Administrative Officer was appointed in 1964 in charge of accounting, staff administration, technical and cleaning services, and two Chief Librarians (supervising professional services, one upgraded from Chief Woman Assistant, the other appointed in a new post in 1978). To counteract growing compartmentalization of services and promote collegiality, a newsletter was started in April 1978 on the initiative of a staff member. An informal 'grapevine' was very effective in disseminating rumours among the staff. Memorandums became much more numerous under Robinson, who also held informal discussions with the most-senior staff.<sup>3</sup> The first recorded formal meeting of heads of sections for the purpose of discussion seems to be that of 10 February 1981 when it was decided that minutes would be kept.<sup>4</sup>

On the appointment of Director Piet Westra in November 1981, an Executive Committee of the most senior staff (Director, Deputy Director, both Chief Librarians and the Administrative Officer) was formed on 2 December 1981, functioning until 6 September 1995, being replaced during a time of crisis by a Management Team of department heads which met for the first time on 30 November 1995.<sup>5</sup>

A Staff Association with monthly meetings was formed in August 1982. This continued to function without a great deal of enthusiasm, with a subcommittee managing the tea and

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<sup>1</sup> He appeared to take the senior librarian Stella Bradshaw into his confidence, but (according to Margaret Cartwright, interviewed 27 July 2012) he was a bit odd, and had little confidence in his Deputy, Lewin Robinson, who in turn, on succeeding as Director, did not write a tribute to Varley in the Quarterly Bulletin when he resigned. Enid Kirk told the author many years ago that at times Varley would act in a very remote manner and seemed not to notice the staff: 'Sniffing the drains again!' they would say when that mood took him.

<sup>2</sup> Most of Tyrrell-Glynn's time while on the Library staff was spent researching and writing his theses on the Library's history, just as Robinson had done while Deputy Director, preparing his thesis on the freedom of the press.

<sup>3</sup> No record of such discussions are to be found in the Library's administrative archives.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes for 1981-1986 will be found at NLCT-MC MSN A6/5.

<sup>5</sup> Records 1981 to 2000 filed NLCT-MC MSN A6/4.

## ANNEXURES

presentation funds, the latter responsible for gifts or cards for staff on special occasions to avoid going around making collections on each occasion. A more radical South African Library employees' organization was established in 1995.

An administrative change of far-reaching importance to the South African Library during the next two decades was the formal restructuring of the Library's operating units. This followed the appointment of the new Deputy Director, Andrew Kerkham, on 1 April 1987, and the concurrent introduction of framework autonomy which allowed the Library to undertake a rationalization of its management structure.<sup>1</sup> The existing structure (such as it was) had developed in a haphazard manner (like so much else) during the term of office of Lewin Robinson. What Westra inherited was a shambolic grouping of staff into so-called Departments which had grown up around senior staff. Soon after his appointment, Deputy Director Kerkham described his new concept of 'Teams': 'The introduction of "Framework Autonomy" provides us with the opportunity to create improved staff structures... [W]e are no longer tied rigidly to fixed salary scales and personnel ranks which have governed our structure in the past. Salaries will be set on the basis of merit in terms of experience, ability and responsibility.... The staff will be restructured to reduce the bureaucratic hierarchy.... By mutual agreement, staff may be moved from one team to another...on a day to day basis.... Within a team, staff will be encouraged to work together on a collegiate basis....'<sup>2</sup>

The new management structure was well received, and for the first time several individual specialists were brought together to form the Special Collections Department. Heads of the new teams or departments met with the Directorate fortnightly, while the Executive Committee met alternate weeks.<sup>3</sup> This structure lasted to 1995.<sup>4</sup>

Deputy Director Kerkham resigned in September 1994 and emigrated, leaving a vacancy at a very critical moment which would never be filled, while the Director himself was distracted by moves beginning early in 1994 by his State Library counterpart P.J. Lor to align himself with the new African National Congress Government to the prejudice of the South African Library. Dr Maurice Line (former Director of the British Library, Lending Division) who visited the South African Library early in 1995 on the official invitation of the Director,<sup>5</sup> exhorted the staff, among other things, to demand democracy in the workplace, that managers should learn to let go and give their staff real responsibility, empowerment and job ownership, and that the staff should undertake a visioning exercise to decide where they wanted the Library to go.<sup>6</sup> Line had seriously misjudged the mood of the staff and the political environment of the time. A train of events followed with increasing velocity, contributing to a breakdown in the management of the South African Library.

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<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely that the Department prescribed the structure which Westra inherited in 1981, yet it is significant that the Department's O&M officer Le Grange censured the National English Language Museum for creating a new department without obtaining official approval (NLCT-MC MSL A4/1/4 (1983). Le Grange-verslag (S2/2/1/3), undated).

<sup>2</sup> Office document of A.S. Kerkham, unsigned, about 30 March 1988, in the author's possession.

<sup>3</sup> South African Library Staff Bulletin 11, 15 April 1988, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Events after 1994 are not the direct concern of the present study.

<sup>5</sup> NLCT-MC SAL Board. Minutes, 24 February 1995, Annex 45: Westra to Line 12 January 1995.

<sup>6</sup> M.B. Line, 'South African Library: report on a visit, February 14-15, 1995' (author's personal copy cited).

ANNEXURES

CLASSIFICATION OF STAFF BY OCCUPATIONAL GRADE

(Referred to in Chapter 6, pp.216, 250.)

Chart 1. Staff occupational groups, 1955-1980 (actual filled posts at end of every other year except 1968). 'Professional' and 'General Assistant' grades not yet subdivided as in Chart 2.

NOTES:

1. In 1994, General Assistants (semi-skilled) were absorbed into Technical and Professional grades, while General Assistants (unskilled) work was progressively contracted-out.

2. Data extracted by the author from 738 staff files at NLCT-MC MSN S7 supplemented from staff lists in the Library's reports from 1977-1978 onwards.

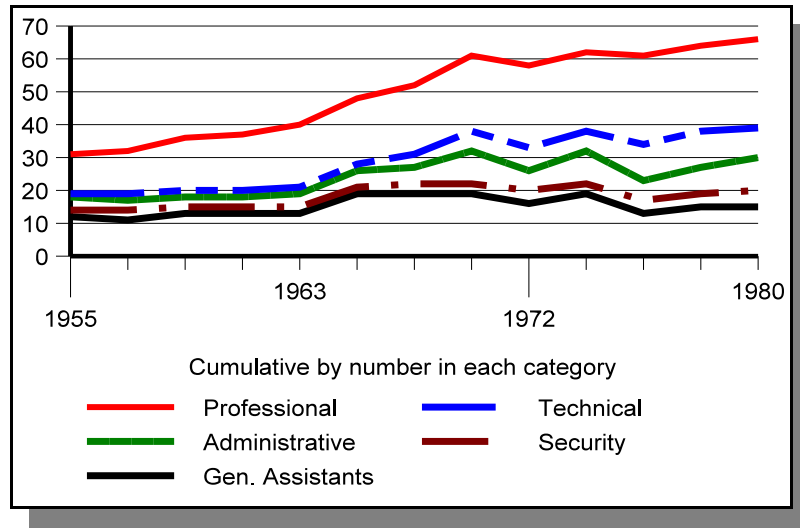
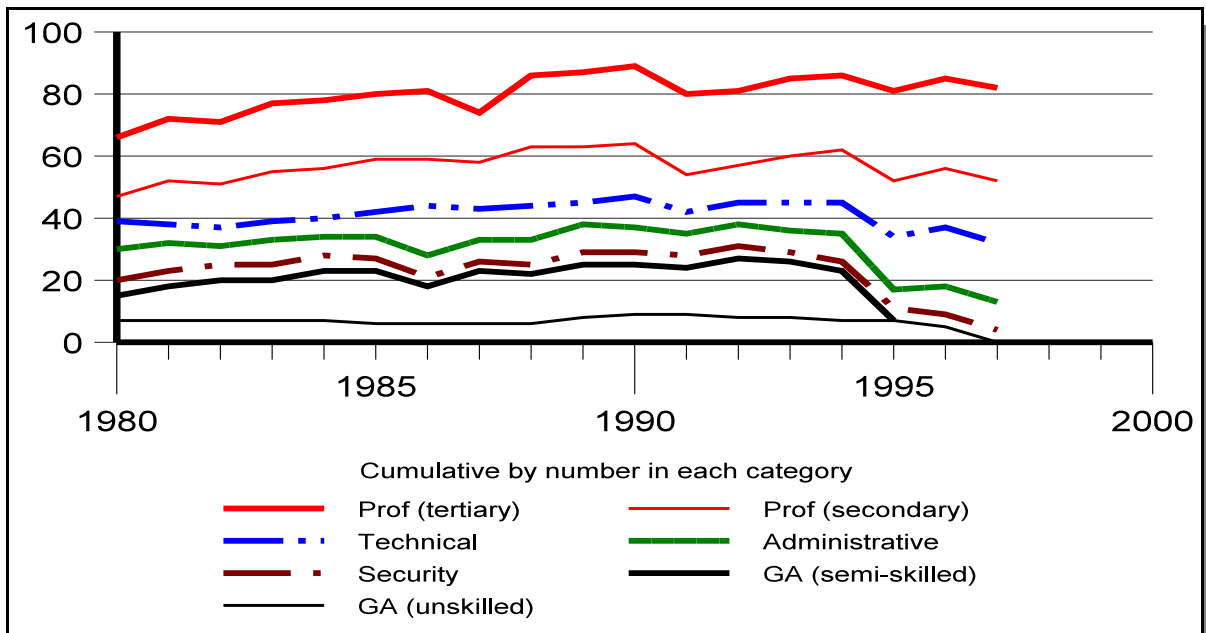


Chart 2. Staff occupational groups, 1980-1997 (actual filled posts every year).

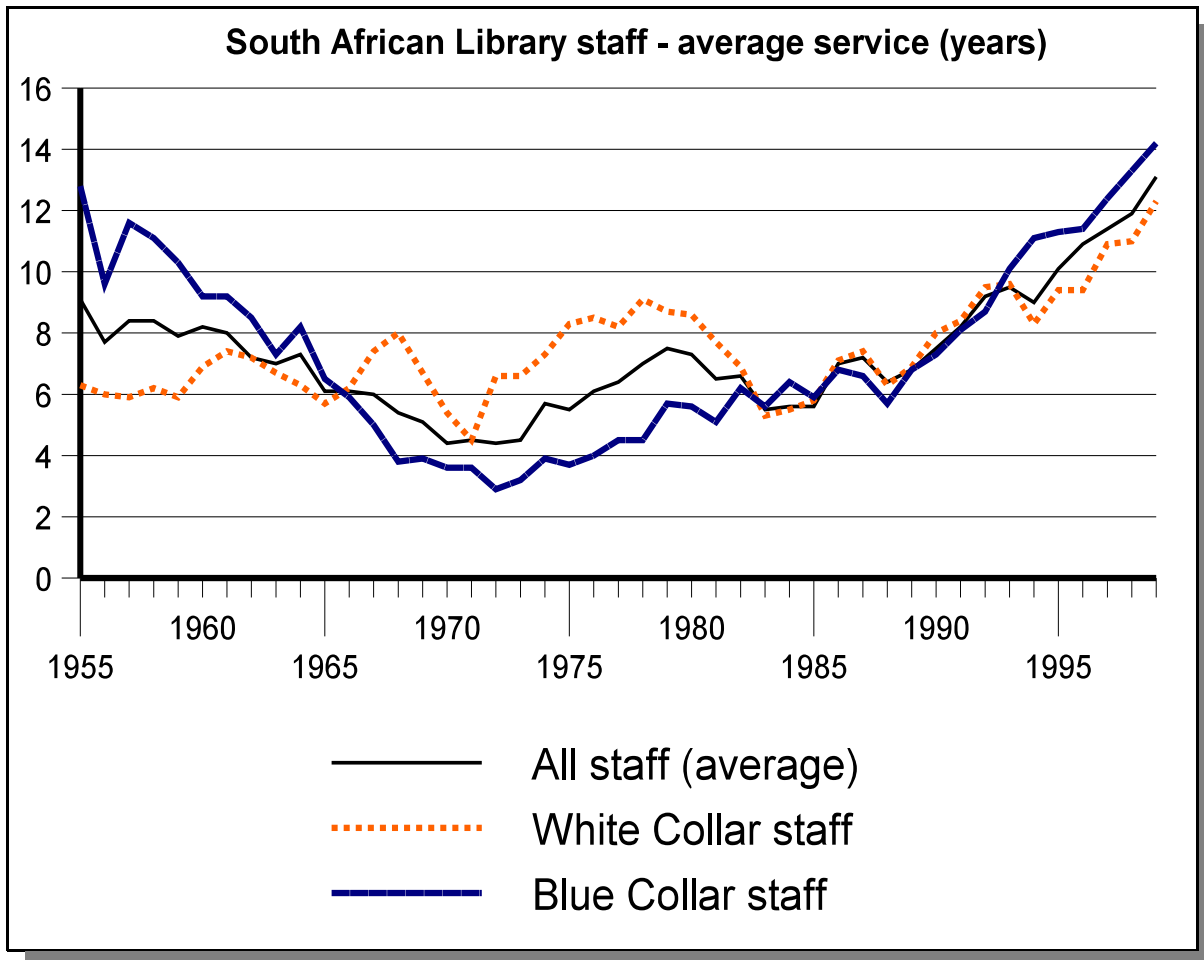


## ANNEXURES

STAFF SERVICE 1955-1999  
SHOWING FLUCTUATIONS OVER THIS PERIOD

(Referred to in Chapter 6, pp.218, 242, 249.)

Chart 1. Average length of service in years. The extremes ranged between 50 years and a week.

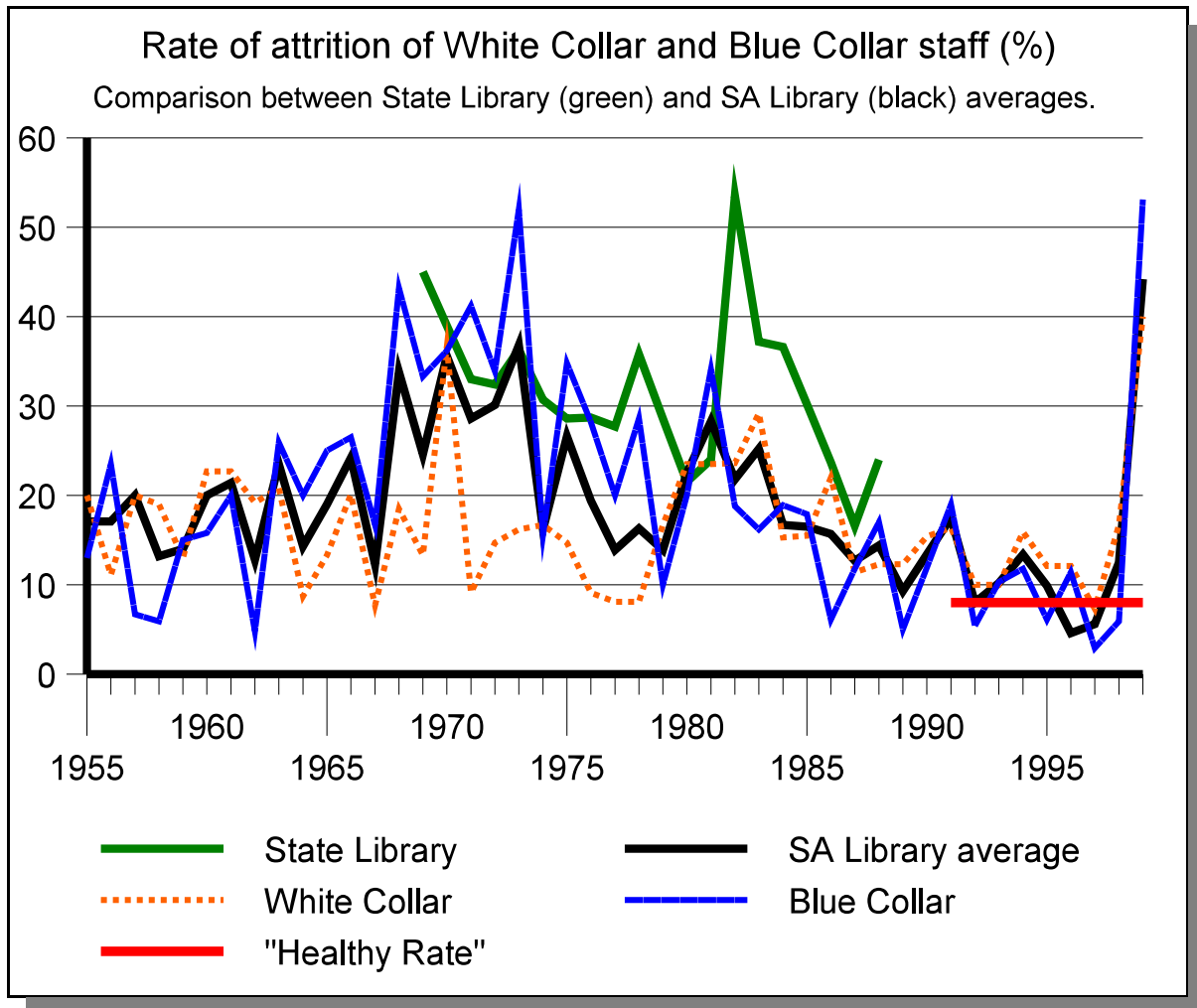


## NOTES:

Generally – When additional posts granted, intake of new staff depresses the average length of service.  
 White Collar workers: Management, Librarians, Clerical and Administrative staff and Typists.  
 Blue Collar workers: Bookbinders, Photographic staff, Stack Attendants, Security staff and cleaners.  
 1965 – Clearing of District Six commences, the Library unable to maintain a stable Coloured work-force.  
 1970-1973 – Figures influenced by hiring large numbers of casual labourers for moving of library stock.  
 1988 – Framework Autonomy permitted many Coloured Blue Collar staff to be graded White Collar staff.  
 1994 onwards – Accurate staff records not available to the author, and estimates may be on high side.  
 1995 onwards – There is reduced attrition (resulting in longer service) despite alleged staff 'discontent'.  
 Data from South African Library staff records.

ANNEXURES

Chart 2 Demonstrating the problem facing Management in respect of fluctuating rates of staff losses.



NOTES:

The graph clearly demonstrates the difficulty maintaining an adequate level of trained staff.  
 1972-1973 – Heavy blue-collar attrition: completion of removal of stock, casual labour dispensed with.  
 1991-1998 – “Healthy Rate” advised by C. Lyall-Watson, Human Resources Consultant (1998),  
 1999 – Retrenchment of 40% of the staff.  
 State Library trends (solid green line) mirrored by South African Library with more modest swings.  
 South African Library data from staff records.  
 State Library data calculated from figures in its annual reports.

ANNEXURES

STAFF, ACQUISITIONS AND OTHER COSTS  
(Referred to in Chapter 6, p.217; Epilogue, p.286.)

Chart 1: State grant relative to staff costs, 1980-1999.

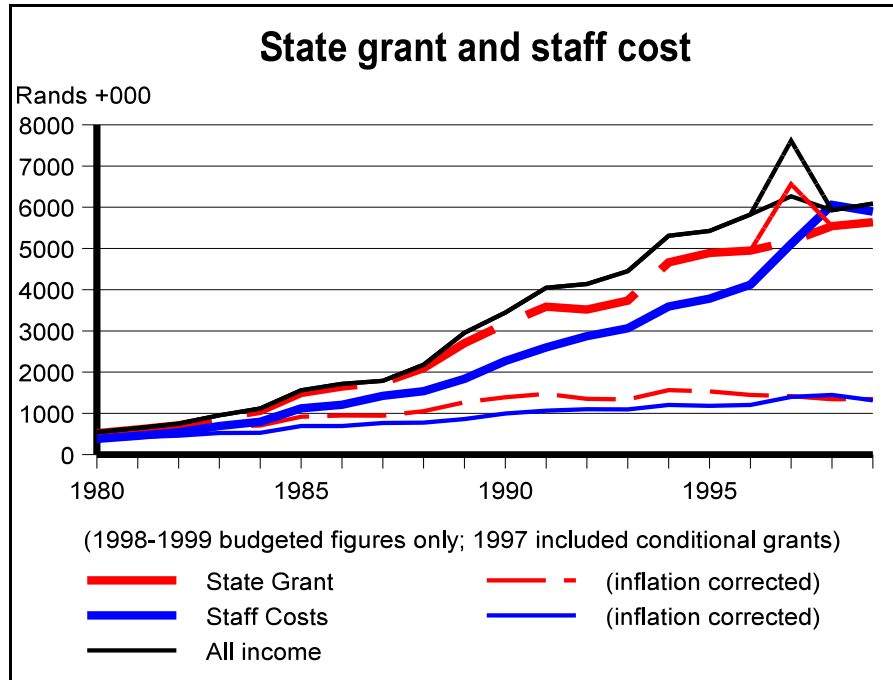
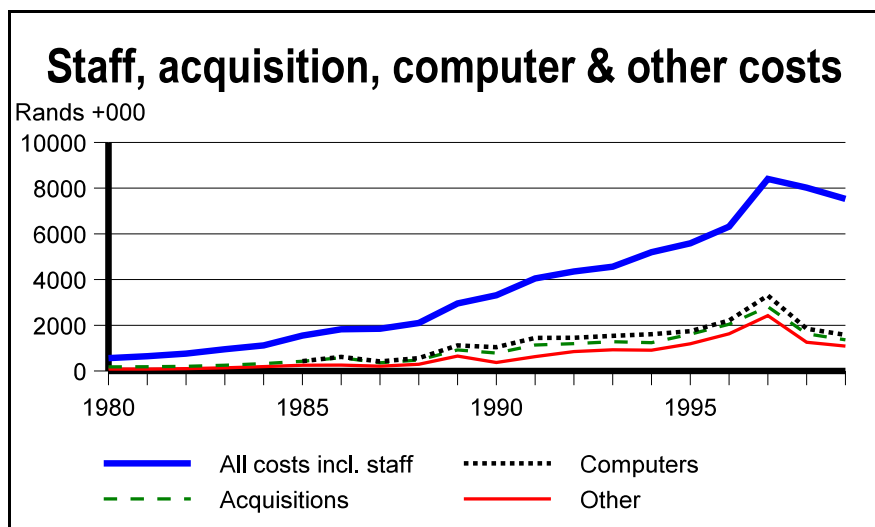


Chart 2: Expenditure: staff, acquisitions, computerization and other expenditure, 1980-1999.

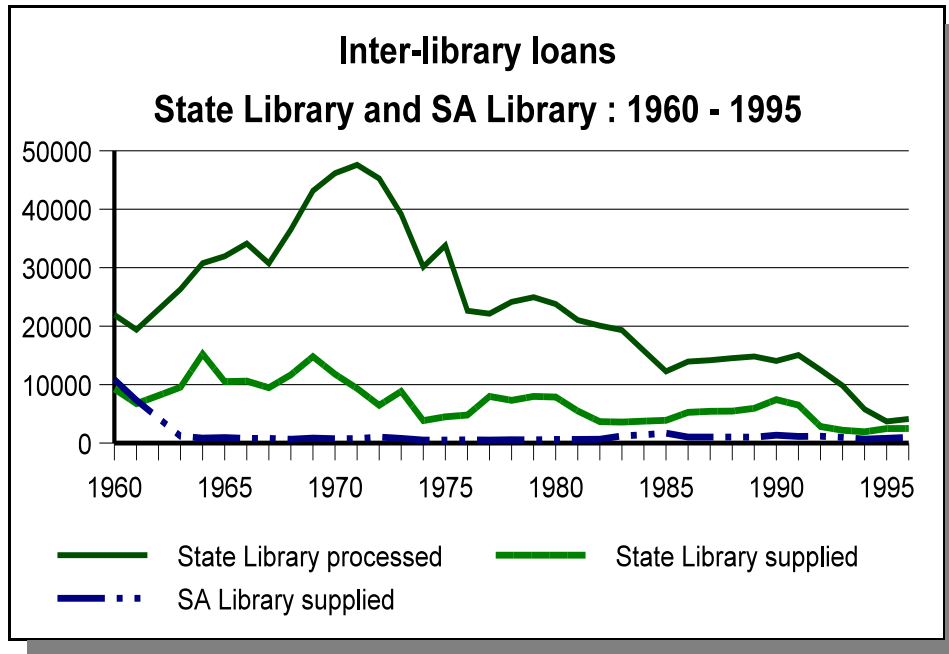


Expenditure 1997-1998 includes setting up and staffing the Centre for the Book paid out of a reserve fund and special Government grant. Statistics derived from annual reports to 1990-91, thereafter statements laid before the Board.

## ANNEXURES

## THE DECLINING RELEVANCE OF INTER-LIBRARY LOANS

(Referred to in Chapter 5, p.170 n.8; Chapter 6, pp.210, 218 n.45, 262.)



## NOTES.

## STATE LIBRARY

Managing inter-library loans and maintaining the union catalogue were primary 'Central Library' functions. From 1972 requests had to be made by ISBN only.

From 1974 Periodicals in South African Libraries on microfiche facilitated direct loans between libraries. After 1983 libraries increasingly used the on-line SABINET service to transact inter-library loans.

In 1988 membership fee introduced; from 1991 a charge for each request led to a steep decline in requests. (Source of statistics: State Library. Annual Reports; median values provided for 1962, 1984.)

## SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY

1960-1962 figures inflated by internal loans to City Library Service (Central); vacated the building in July 1962.

From 1986 only photocopies provided instead of original publications.

From 1994 all transactions done through SABINET only.

(Source of statistics: South African Library. Reports; median values provided for 1966-67, 1987-88, 1995.)

## GENERAL

Better-stocked libraries and increased postage costs hastened the decline in inter-library transactions.

## ANNEXURES

LETTER TO IFLA SECRETARY-GENERAL  
 CLARIFYING THE POSITION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY  
 IN RESPECT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S APARTHEID POLICIES.

(Referred to in Chapter 6, p.222.)

S3/W/H

B2/2/1  
 PEW/pvh

5 October 1987

The Secretary General of IFLA  
 c/o Koninklijke Bibliotheek  
 Prins Willem Alexanderhof 5  
 THE HAGUE  
 NETHERLANDS

Sir

The content of your letter dated 28 August 1987 has been noted with regret. It seems that the Executive Board of IFLA is under considerable pressure to force at least some of its current South African members into resigning from IFLA. In previous correspondence on this subject I tried to make it clear to you that the S A Library does not "adhere to apartheid policies". This situation has not changed. Kindly convey the following to your Executive Board:

1. The S A Library is a completely non-political organisation, a national library in the same way as for instance the Royal Library of the Netherlands, the British Library and the Library of Congress. Its doors have always been open to all and its services available to the whole community. Members of the Executive or representatives thereof are welcome to visit the Library at any time to establish the practical realities of this policy. The Library and the State Library function as national libraries in terms of the National Libraries Act, 1985, Section 3 of which requires us by law to "promote the rendering of information services to the population of the Republic", i.e. no race nor group is excluded from its clientele. (See Annexure I). All staff is appointed on a strictly non-discriminatory basis.
2. In terms of Section 5 of this same Act, a National Library may perform "any act which in the opinion of its board is necessary for or incidental to the exercise of its powers and the performance of its functions". In practical terms the Boards of the National Libraries have full control over the policies and practices of the institution within the financial framework of the State's subsidy and have autonomy similar to that of local universities and other educational institutions.

2/...

ANNEXURES

- 2 -

3. As a National Library we have acquired full exemption from the Publications Act, which means in practice that all material in the Library's collections including banned items can be made available for bona fide research.
4. The Library has an internal Acquisitions Policy (Annexure 2) Section 1.5 of which clearly states that "The Library acquires material for the serious reader irrespective of race, culture, or creed". Regarding South Africa we actively seek to collect material representing all political points of view.
5. The Library is constantly seeking to enhance the free flow of information in South Africa inter alia by publishing bibliographies and other publications on a wide variety of subjects (Annexure 3), and also by trying to get publications unbanned (see Annexure 4).

We trust that the above information will convince the Executive Board that the Library does not "adhere to apartheid policies". The only "government policy" it is required to implement is as stipulated in the National Libraries Act, a policy which should be acceptable to the international library community.

We also enclose our latest Annual Report and a recently published "Guide to the S A Library" for your information.

Yours faithfully

P E Westra

DIRECTOR

## ANNEXURES

## LETTER OF FUAD BOHARDIEN REQUESTING PROMOTION.

(Referred to in Chapter 6, p.242 n.4.)

is what I feel for my job. If I had been cleaning door-knobs at any other place I might have felt advanced.

Sir, I believe that all the trouble which prevails in the world today is due to a lack of education, therefore, I would consider it a great honour to be able to serve humanity in a more direct way, namely, through doing the work of a start-attendant.

Your Sincerely  
Fuad Bohardien

20. Carson Street,  
Cape Town.  
21-9-59.

When I first came to work for S.A.P.E. I asked you if there is a chance of my rising above the position of cleaner. You answered in the affirmative, but, stated that such a position was not open at the moment. This then is an application for the position of start-attendant if ever the need arises for one. Sir, I know I have been here for only a year and if I seem to be impatient to trade my time then I will try to explain myself.

I am not disappointed with my job as cleaner. Indeed I am proud to keep clean this house of knowledge and enlightenment. On several occasions while cleaning the brass-knobs of the front door, university students who went to school with me had come into the library. I had greeted them with pride in my heart for that

(Source: NLCT-MC MSN S7 Bohardien)

## ANNEXURES

## MEMORIES OF SATURDAYS IN THE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

(Referred to in Chapter 3, p.132; Chapter 6, p.201 n.48; Chapter 7, pp.278 n.82, 279 n.87; Epilogue p.289 n.49.)

*Email message*

From Kathy Drake  
 Date 01 April 2014 14:40  
 To Peter Coates  
 Re: Library reading room in the past

Hi Peter, your memory of all these things, ie. the seating of ref and the Octagonal room, is WAY better than mine! I just kept my nose to the grindstone! How can I forget the constant change of admission policies. I hated (AND felt embarrassed) at having to explain – no school children or no 1-2yr univ students, but when we were swamped, esp on sats, I suppose we had to do some "culling" – perhaps the wrong people were culled eg the univ students? We couldn't see any alternatives. How can I forget those all-day sats when we ran around like lunatics trying to cope with the stream of readers. I would fetch books to take off the pressure from the stack attendants etc. There were 4? staff on in the morn and 2 in the afternoon. I remember the non-ref staff hating to work on Sats because it wasn't their thing. I think it was decided at some point that only ref staff would do it and maybe that is why they cut the sat afternoons. - not enough staff. I can't remember when they cut sats altogether. It was a relief, but so many people couldn't make it in the week and I felt so sorry for them. People from overseas only here for a short time or people that worked in the week, really needed the library to be open on a sat even tho it was chaotic. We liaised with City Libraries but they were in the same boat! We used to ring that silly bell at 5 30 to try and get everyone out at 6 but sometimes we worked after that with the security person tapping his foot trying to get us to leave. The place was often chaos when we left and on mon mornings we had to clear up the backlog and tidy up I can remember getting home on sat evening absolutely EXHAUSTED and dreading the following ones. I didn't want to go out on a fri night so I could be "in fine fettle" for sat! And that BOOK we had to fill in for every item and tick them off when the material was handed back and then tick off the 2nd column when the slip came back! It was so time-consuming and there were always gaps. I used to run around checking on the shelves for the "missing" books to get the register "straight"! So I can't help you with all the moves back and forth, only the Sat thing. When you are there for 30 odd years you don't care about all the moving around, you just do it 'cos you are so busy answering the phone and then sorting out the queries, attending to people, filing all those notices/stats from the govt, bloody Butterworth updates and Prentice-Hall law things and picking up the slack from other "lazy", incompetent ref librarians (no names mentioned!) Also keeping up the information file and pamphlet files. I could go on and on but you know all that. I hated anything to do with exhibitions – took me away from Ref proper.

Regards,

Kathy

Kathy Drake served in the Reference Department from 1971 to 1999.  
 (Department Head 1974 to 1983.)

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## ANNEXURES

## TESTIMONIALS IN THE 1990s BY SATISFIED CLIENTS.

(Referred to in Chapter 6, pp.228 n.53, 245; Chapter 7, pp.280, 280 n.75.)

The Library's first user-survey was conducted in 1992. Compiling the results was abandoned owing to preparation of submissions to CODESA. The survey forms are now lost. An attempt to construct a report retrospectively will be found opposite (data provided in 2013 by former Deputy Director Kerkham). Letters praising the South African Library for its service were very numerous and were kept in a special file in the Secretary's office. This file has not been seen since the chaotic events of 1998 and 1999, but fortunately some extracts appeared in the Staff Newsletter, the News from the South African Library, and the minutes of the Board, which are reproduced below.

'I wish to express my appreciation and admiration in respect of the extremely well-organized service offered. ... The speed of execution of their duties is stunning.' (South Africa, 1991.)

Norris McWhirter, Guinness Book of Records, speaking on SAFM radio: 'In all my travels the South African Library has proven to be the best reference library I have ever visited and the staff have been particularly helpful and friendly.' (UK, 1992.)

'I thought I'd drop you a note to praise your level of service to researchers. I've used libraries throughout Canada and the United States, and your staff compare very favourably. ... Most of all your staff were very helpful and friendly, a pleasant contrast from the many officious and inefficient institutions I've encountered elsewhere in South Africa.' (Canada, 1992.)

'With this letter, I would like to express my gratitude to you and your staff for all the help I was given when I visited you. ... I have received a very warm welcome which is not common in Europe (specially French libraries, archives and museums).' (France, 1992.)

'Thanks for the outstanding service given by the Reference Department.' (South Africa, 1993.)

'The S.A. Library is a valuable asset to the country.' (USA, 1993.)

'I don't believe I could have completed the book without your brilliant back-up. The SAPL is an unique institution anyway, but your personal service has been a bonus.' (UK, 1994.)

'1995 will hopefully be the year of my 70th birthday and it seems to me that I should celebrate this extraordinary piece of good luck by making a one-off distribution to causes for which I have great admiration. The S.A. Library is very near the top of this list.' (South Africa, 1994.)

'Not only the place and the building but over all, the people working there, gave me a deep feeling of efficiency and kindness. From the people in the entrance, through [to] the nice woman advising me about what books I could find, all of them made me feel comfortable and very well helped.' (Argentina, 1995.)

'We write to express our esteem for the assistance rendered to us by your Reference personnel lately. ... During the past two years we have sought reference guidance and advice from your library. So often have we done so, in fact, that at times we have felt embarrassed to ask yet again. However, we have received at all times not only the most precise and well-informed responses, but also an exceptional grace and courtesy. We have been made to feel welcome, and we have been expertly assisted. This is a rare and fine quality in your staff ... We routinely deal with libraries and archives worldwide, thus with adequate experience can say that South African Library responses to our inquiries have been superb.' (USA, 1995.)

'The staff at the South African Library are a pleasant surprise. In a country where the attitude towards service is very poor, they are efficient and none of them ever rude, sullen or unhelpful. Three cheers!' (Langa, Cape Town, 1997.)

'I just received the two photocopies you sent. I held it with emotion and gratitude for your kindness and good will securing me with the last link [in my researches].' (Brazil, 1997.)

## ANNEXURES

### Partial Reconstruction of Reader Survey, May 1992.

#### Background

The South African Library, Cape Town is one of two libraries designated as National Libraries in the National Libraries Act, no.56 of 1985, the other being the State Library, Pretoria. The Act defines the objects of a National Library as 'to promote the rendering of information services to the population of the Republic...' (s.3). The South African Library is further defined in the Act and the Functions (Regulation no. R.1618, 31 July 1987) as the 'Central Reference Library' and the 'National Preservation Library'. These two functions are interpreted by the South African Library as being interrelated - items are preserved, not primarily for their intrinsic value, antiquarian interest or any museological functions, but preservation is for future use. Both libraries are also Legal Deposit Libraries in terms of the Legal Deposit of Publications Act, no.17 of 1982. This Act requires that copies of publications supplied to a legal deposit library shall be 'accessioned, classified, catalogued, preserved and maintained by that library for use by all persons who...have access to the library' (s.6(1)). Again, the emphasis is on making material available for use.

For some time, the management of the Library has realised that they knew very little about who was using the Library, why they were using it and what material was in demand. Staff in the Information Department were able to provide subjective answers to these questions based on day-to-day interaction with the Library's users, but there was no way of confirming their observations in scientific or statistical terms. Clearly, a properly conducted user survey was needed.

In May 1992 a questionnaire survey of people using the Library was conducted. Questionnaires were handed to everyone using the Library on the 22 days that the Library was open, with the exception of those who had previously completed the questionnaire form. They were asked to complete the form and hand it in as they left. 'Use' of the Library was defined as anyone using the Reading Room, the Reference Room (where the catalogues and Reference Librarians are located), the Government Publications counter, the photocopying and photographic services and the Special Collections Department. Excluded were people who were only visiting, or collecting previously-ordered photocopies, or purchasing books or cards in the Foyer.

#### Response and accuracy

There were 1741 people who signed into the Library during this period (this figure includes repeat visits), and 417 usable forms were returned. (In the 1988 survey 4690 persons signed the register.) The survey indicated a fairly high level of repeat-visit activity (27,6% used the Library 'at least once a week' and 32,9% 'at least once a month'), so the response is not unreasonable. Furthermore, statistical formulae indicate that for large populations (say +2000, it can safely be assumed that with some 18 000 visits to the Library per year the user population is at least 2000), a sample size of 400 is sufficient for a fairly high degree of accuracy of  $\pm 3\%$  at the 95% level of confidence.

#### May 1992 Survey

##### Classification of users

Students 49% (81% tertiary level)  
 Researchers –  
 Other categories –

##### Types of material requested

Books 59%  
 Periodicals 21%  
 Newspapers and microfilm 18%  
 Special collections 2%

##### Declared subject field of interest

Material relating to southern Africa 49%  
 Subjects in descending order: History; Law;  
 Politics; Literature; Education; Economics;  
 Science & Technology; Philosophy &  
 Religion; Sociology; Art

##### Reason for choosing the South African Library

Material available nowhere else 82,7%

##### Opinion of quality of service

Service rated as efficient 80%  
 Staff rated highly professional 91%

#### June-August 1988 (Retrospective survey, 1992)

##### Classification of users

Students 49%  
 Researchers 23%  
 Other categories 28%

##### Types of material requested

Books 67%  
 Periodicals 18%  
 Newspapers and microfilm 12%  
 Special collections 3%

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#### May-October 1999 Survey (Extracts)

##### Classification of users

Students 47%  
 Researchers and other 53%

##### Opinion of quality of service

Reference 55% excellent, 45% good.  
 Reading Room 54% excellent, 44% good, ...  
 Research Sect. 57% excellent, 39% good, ...

ANNEXURES



S.A. Library Staff Newsletter, October 1985, p.3.



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A.1. NLCT-MC MSB: MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTION

MSB 137 Cape Libraries Extension Association

2(5) Correspondence and Other Papers, 1944. . . . . [20]

A.2. NLCT-MC MSL-MSN: SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATIVE ARCHIVE

Citations arranged according to the Inventory of the Administrative Archives, 2011. National Library of South Africa, Manuscripts Collection. 'South African Library (1818-1999) Administrative Archives: MSL, MSM, MSN', compiled by P.R. Coates, 1999, revised 2011. Unpublished.

A.2(a). MSL: OVERALL MANAGEMENT

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author also consulted copies at  
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