

SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY REPORT 2000 - 2002

Ms Ellen Tise
President

Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)

Introduction

A new and exciting phase for LIASA began in mid-2000 when the Representative Council announced that the Carnegie Corporation of New York had awarded LIASA \$249 400.00 over a three-year period to support the appointment of an executive director and administrative staff, as well as the necessary infrastructure for a fulltime secretariat. The LIASA National Office was established in February 2001 and today employs 5 salaried staff. These developments have brought forth, not only a number of changes within LIASA's structures but also, many new challenges and demands from members and the LIS sector in general

Membership

There has been an increase in the total membership since 2000. The Association welcomed 230 new members in 2000 and 387 who joined in 2001. The paid-up membership in September 2001 stood at 1147. The most recent membership figures for 2002 indicate that the Association has 1037 paid up members of which 249 are new members. The issue of members not renewing their membership remains a concern for the LIASA management which has devised a number of action plans to address the issue. The Association has a membership strategy which is currently being implemented to encourage all the structures within LIASA to actively recruit new members.

Representative Council and EXCO

LIASA held elections in 2000 and the new Representative Council and Exco assumed office in September of that year. These governance structures meet on a regular basis. The Representative Council has thirteen standing committees which are responsible for a wide range of LIS issues.

Branches and Interest Groups

By the start of 2001, all ten branches were fully functional with constitutions approved by the Representative Council. All the branches hold regular meetings and present wide ranging programmes for their members. Activities in 2001 included planning national library week programmes, participating in the Masifunde Sonke campaign, producing newsletters, etc. The Northern Province Branch organized a successful mini-conference on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Rural Librarianship in June 2001. The Gauteng North Branch and the National Library of South Africa organized a March for Literacy in Pretoria in September to support the Masifunde Sonke Campaign and again in March 2002 to promote National Library Week.

A number of the branches also arrange meetings outside of the main centres in order to serve all the members and raise awareness about LIASA in the remote regions of the provinces. The

Executive Director and Professional Officer of LIASA visited almost all the branches during 2001 using the opportunity to attend branch and stakeholder meetings.

The past two years have seen strong growth and development among the Interest Groups. LIASA currently has nine Interest Groups with one in the process of being established. The Interest Groups have a national coordinator who advises and guides the members on setting up, drafting constitutions and encouraging them to arrange sessions at conference together with a business meeting. The Interest Groups have properly elected representatives to send to meetings of the Representative Council and a number of them have active Branch Interest Groups that hold regular meetings and are proving popular with the members.

Communication and Marketing

Considerable time and effort have been spent to improve communication within LIASA's structures, members at large and the LIS Sector in general. A communication strategy is being developed and will be implemented soon. A public relations strategy which included capacity building of the Branch PROs was approved in January 2001.

Significant progress in the area of communications has been made since 2001 and achievements include:

- Regular updates to Representative Council members
- Regular postings on Listservs, e.g. SABINEWS, AFLIB-L, IFLANET
- Quarterly issues of LIASA-IN-TOUCH published
- Quarterly issues of LIASA News printed
- Updates on LIASA web site – sponsored by NISC, South Africa
- A Listserv – LIASAonline launched on 6 September, sponsored by Sabinet Online
- A web site for the SCECSAL Conference

National Library Week was celebrated from 14-25 May 2001 with the theme *African Renaissance through Libraries*. A poster, part-sponsored by a South African company, was printed and distributed to all branches. The overall response was very good and branches and libraries in all the provinces reported very exciting programmes. An article on national library week was submitted to the IFLA Africa Journal.

This year witnessed LIASA taking the initiative and declaring that National Library Week would be celebrated during the week of 20 March. All LIASA branches were requested to discuss a proposal that the date of Library Week be changed to 20 March to celebrate the date when the South African Library (now National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Division) first opened its door to the public. This was the beginning of public access to libraries in South Africa. Given that 21 March is Human Rights Day, it was felt that it would be appropriate to focus on the fact that our Bill of Rights recognises freedom of access to information as a basic human right. The 2002 launch of National Library Week, with the theme *Free your mind – read!*, took place at the Jerry Moloi Community Library in Etwatwa in Gauteng. Posters, with bookmarks to match, were fully sponsored by four South African organisations and distributed throughout the country to LIASA branches and libraries. As a further step to advocate the importance of National Library

Week celebrations, the LIASA President has written to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology to have it formally declared as an annual government calendar event in the same way as other national weeks such as Environmental Week.

Another notable achievement for LIASA is the agreement to take over the management of a research journal as the official publication of the Association. The publication with the title *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* is intended to incorporate a strong practical research component and encourage young researchers to publish. The editorial board has been appointed and the first issue will be published in June 2002.

The Patience Maisela Library Staff Development Fund was established in March 2001 which commemorates the life and work of the late Patience Maisela who was a prominent leader in librarianship and information work in South Africa. The Trustees are working on sponsorships to increase the fund that it can promote staff training and development programmes and offer student grants for study.

The third annual LIASA Conference was held from 25-29 September 2000 in Durban, KwaZulu Natal. Five international speakers were sponsored by the national Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST).

The LIASA Conference held in Johannesburg from 24-28 September 2001 was attended by more than 600 delegates. The theme was African Renaissance through Libraries. At the 2001 Conference awards were presented for the first time:

- SABINET Online sponsored three awards for the following categories:
 - Academic librarian of the year – D Nicholson
 - School librarian of the year – W Wardale
 - Public librarian of the year – N S Mokgaboki.
- The Patience Maisela Library Staff Development Fund sponsored two awards
 - Best paper presented by a student – V Khadambi
 - Best paper presented by a first time speaker – S Bosch

Relations with Other Library Associations and Partnerships

The past two years have seen a number of exciting programmes and developments take place with regard to relations with other library associations and the establishment of partnerships, both in South Africa and internationally.

IFLA

The IFLA President, Ms Christine Deschamps, visited South Africa in October 2000 and was hosted by the Gauteng North and South Branches. We are pleased to announce that the IFLA President will be conducting a second visit to South Africa as a guest and speaker at the SCECSAL Conference.

In 2001, LIASA was invited to nominate two persons to attend an African/Arab Conference on school and public librarianship in Rabat, Morocco in September. Two South Africans were successful and selected to attend.

2001 was IFLA election year. Ellen Tise was elected to the IFLA Governing Board and Executive committee. Three LIASA officers were elected to Standing Committees, Sandy Zinn to the Standing Committee for School and Resource Centre Libraries, Ellen Tise to the Standing Committee of the Africa Section and Denise Nicholson to the Copyright and Legal Matters Committee. Approximately 30 South Africans (among them 15 LIASA members) attended the IFLA 2001 conference in Boston, U.S.A.

EBSCO Information Services (South Africa) will sponsor one LIASA member to attend the IFLA 2002 conference in Glasgow.

LIASA is one of two countries that is bidding for the IFLA 2007 Conference. The bid book was submitted to the IFLA Headquarters in March 2002 and the site visit is scheduled for June 2002. The successful country will be announced in Glasgow in August 2002.

SCECSAL

LIASA is hosting the 2002 SCECSAL conference. This is the first time that the Standing Conference for Eastern, Central and Southern African Library and Information Associations will be presented in South Africa. The conference will be held from 15-19 April 2002 at Caesars Convention Centre in the Gauteng Province. The theme of the conference is: "From Africa to the world – the globalisation of indigenous knowledge systems". Government departments, international organisations and library associations have been supportive with funds to sponsor international speakers and delegates from African countries. LIASA is sponsoring 13 of its own members to attend this important African regional conference.

COMLA

LIASA was invited by the Commonwealth Library Association to nominate one person for the Commonwealth Foundation Fellowship Grant. Unfortunately our candidate was not successful in 2002.

COMLA continues to support its members and four South African library and information science students have been sponsored to attend SCECSAL 2002. They participated in an essay writing competition and are required to publish their winning articles in the COMLA journal as an initiative to encourage our young researchers and writers.

SALLP

This is a very exciting project for South Africa which was formally announced and implemented in January 2001. The South African Library Leadership Project is a three year project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and was established through a partnership between LIASA

and the Mortenson Centre, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The objectives of the project are to:

- develop leadership qualities;
- refine communication and advocacy skills;
- highlight use of best practices in management of library services;
- learn about change management and organizational structure.

In total, 18 library professionals will be selected for this Programme over a two year period. The interviews were conducted in January 2002 and the first nine candidates announced. The pre-departure training has already started and the group leaves for Illinois in June 2002. The next phase for candidates begins in September 2002.

ACURIL

LIASA was invited by the President of the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries to attend the 2002 ACURIL conference followed by a tour of the West Indies in June 2002. However, the Rand's poor performance over the past six months precluded any further developments with this initiative.

PASA

LIASA, represented by the President, participated in a strategic planning session of the Publisher's Association of South Africa (PASA) in Cape Town in January 2001. Currently, initiatives are taking place to set up a meeting with PASA to explore joint action plans between PASA and LIASA eg VAT, copyright etc.

South African International Festival of Books (SA Bookfest)

This is an initiative of PASA to establish a SA Bookfest (launch in August) to promote reading in South through a number of high profile activities including an international book festival to be launched in 2004. LIASA has been invited to have representation on the Advisory Council - the President is a member.

World Library Partnership

In March 2002, the World Library Partnership (a US based non-profit organisation which sends volunteers to South Africa to work in rural school libraries) approached LIASA with a request that their recently appointed Regional Coordinator for South Africa establish an office within the infrastructure of the LIASA National Office. Ms Nene Moitsheki will be managing the WLP programmes in South Africa. This is an important partnership and we hope to establish similar partnerships in future.

Contact with other library associations

In mid-2000, the LIASA President was invited by the Carnegie Corporation of New York to attend a donors meeting to discuss the revitalization of public libraries in Commonwealth countries in Africa in May at the offices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in New York City. The meeting was preceded by visits to various public libraries in Washington DC and New York. The purpose of the meeting was to gain input from potential donors and grantees on how Carnegie should embark on this project. The President was also invited by the Carnegie Corporation to attend a workshop on the “effective use of online communication” in New York.

A similar workshop on ICT was planned for September 2001 by the Carnegie Corporation at which two Executive Committee members of LIASA were to represent the Association. The meeting was cancelled due to the September events in the United States.

The Executive Director of LIASA visited a variety of American library associations in Chicago and Washington after the IFLA Conference in Boston as part of a Voluntary Visitor Programme arranged by the US Embassy and State Department. In late 2001, visits were carried out to the Head Quarters of IFLA and the Library Associations of Norway and Sweden. The visits aimed to strengthen relations between the library associations and to learn about best practices in library association management.

Activities and Achievements of 2001-2002

June 2000	Carnegie announced grant awarded to LIASA
September 2000	LIASA Annual Conference and elections, Durban
November 2000	Appointment of Executive Director Tommy Matthee presented a paper at Ghana Conference
December 2000	Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant for the SALLP awarded
January 2001	Successful Grant Proposal Writing Workshop for the Carnegie Corporation of New York Revitalization Public Library Programme – US Embassy, Pretoria
February 2001	Opening of LIASA National Office
March 2001	Launch of the Patience Maisela Staff Development Fund LIASA signs agreement with Masifunde Sonke
April 2001	Professional Officer appointed
May 2001	National Library Week Celebrations LIASA Corporate Plan approved Library Advocacy Action Plan approved
June 2001	SALLP Co-ordinator appointed Kay Raseroka elected as President-elect of IFLA Ellen Tise wins seat on IFLA Governing Board
July 2001	National Council for Library and Information Services (NACLIS) enacted Approval of LIASA Corporate Products LIASA joins action to abolish VAT on Books

August 2001	Responded to Parliamentary Secretary on the Monitoring & Interception Bill
September 2001	Launch of listserv, LIASA Online Invitation for LIS community to participate in the South African Library Leadership Project LIASA Annual Conference, Johannesburg 2001 Patience Maisela Staff Development Fund makes two awards at the LIASA conference
November 2001	Patience Maisela Staff Development Fund makes travel grant award available for a young professional librarian working in a rural library (Gauteng Province) to attend SCECSAL
December 2001	South Africa named as one of two successful countries to bid for IFLA 2007
January 2002	Standards Generating Board (SGB) for Library and Information Studies gazetted LIASA drafts Code of Ethics – in progress
February 2002	Nominations for NACLIS close
March 2002	Launch of National Library Week Secretarial support appointed in National Office WLP establishes office in LIASA National Office
April 2002	15th SCECSAL hosted by LIASA

Conclusion

I am sure everyone agrees that we have much to be proud and thankful of. This was all possible through the generous grants of our partners and sponsors, the hard work and commitment of LIASA's staff and all the officers, from the Representative Council, Branch Committees, Interest Groups Committees, volunteers and our many members and supporters.