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18th SCECSAL MEETING LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

COUNTRY REPORT

SOUTH AFRICA

(July 2008)

**18TH STANDING CONFERENCE OF EASTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN
AFRICAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATIONS**

SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY REPORT 2006 - 2008

Presented by Ms Rachel More

President Elect: Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)

INTRODUCTION

This report outlines activities, developments and achievements of LIASA from July 2006 to June 2008.

LIASA as an organic structure had its fair share of highs and lows which is common to structures of its size and nature. In this report it is our aim to reflect on developments in the Association and future plans.

On our return from the 17th SCECSAL Conference, LIASA held its 9th Annual Conference in Tshwane from 26 to 29th September 2006. The theme of the conference was "Libraries: partners in learning, nation-building and development" The conference was a huge success and was attended by 700+ delegates.

In 2005, LIASA's constitution was amended to create a new position of President-Elect to help ensure continuation in leadership and better succession planning. At the elections of the Executive Committee and Representative Council in September 2006, Mrs Rachel More was elected as President-Elect. Mr Tommy Matthee's term of Presidency comes to an end in September 2008, when Mrs More steps into office.

2007 was a milestone and particular highlight for LIASA – we celebrated our first decade of existence and hosted the WLIC/IFLA 2007 Conference in Durban. Our 10th anniversary celebrations took place all over the country during the year and culminated in a gala dinner where special honorary awards and acknowledgements were made to colleagues and partners recognizing their contributions to LIASA and the library sector.

As LIASA was hosting the WLIC/IFLA Conference in 2007, no annual LIASA conference was held in 2007. Instead, members were encouraged to attend the WLIC/IFLA Conference. The AGM was held on 17 August 2007 just prior to the WLIC/IFLA Conference in Durban.

LIASA is currently preparing for elections of the Executive Committee and the Representative Council in October 2008; and the 10th LIASA Annual Conference.

MANAGEMENT OF LIASA NATIONAL OFFICE

The LIASA national office continued to play an important role in complimenting the elected leadership who are all volunteers, as well as executing the operations and decisions of the Representative Council and Executive committee. At the end of 2006 the Office manager, Mrs Adelaide Vilikazi, took up a new position and as a result caused some disruption in the office, as this post has not been filled since. Mr Solomon Dude, Project Co-ordinator for the Centre for Information Career Development, also resigned. Mrs Ina van Straten has been promoted to Office Administrator and continues to perform the duties of the Membership Administrator, reporting to the National Secretary. A Library Science student has been working on a contract basis to assist the Office Administrator. This means however that a number of vacancies exist, including that of Membership Administrator and Office Manager, in the national office. These positions should be filled as soon as the financial situation of the association improves.

The LIASA national office will shortly be hosted in the new National Library of South Africa (NLSA) building. The official opening of the new building is on 1 August 2008 and it is hoped that the LIASA national office would be able to relocate early in 2009. This is expected to encourage further good relationships with the NLSA as one of our main partners.

MEMBERSHIP

Statistics in the last report reflected a total membership of 1740 paid up of which 99 were new members. Currently (June 2008) our membership statistics reflect a total of 1250 paid up members including 240 new members. The biggest challenge faced by LIASA is the retention of existing members. This phenomenon can be ascribed to various factors which include:

- Apathy
- The laborious process of renewing membership
- Lack of activity in certain branches and Interest Groups
- Inability to participate in LIASA activities due to lack of staff at centres where members work and thus it becomes “difficult” for members to pay membership knowing that they are unable to access all the benefits LIASA offers.

The abovementioned challenges seem to be common problems with a number of Library Associations throughout Africa and indeed the whole world. We however continue our efforts to overcome these and other challenges relating to membership.

REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL AND EXCO

As mentioned earlier a new Representative Council was elected in September 2006, during the 9th Annual Conference of LIASA held in Tshwane, Gauteng. The constitution was amended in 2005 and the most significant change effected was that of creating a new position of President-Elect. This will help in ensuring continuation in leadership and better succession planning. Elections for a new Representative Council and the Executive Committee are due in October 2008 at the 10th Annual Conference to be held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. The Representative Council and Executive Committee for 2008-2010 will be announced at the Conference. The newly elected members will commence with duties from October 2008.

BRANCHES AND INTEREST GROUPS

The ten branches and Interest Groups of LIASA are continuing to play a pivotal role in taking LIASA and its activities to the members. Branch Executive Committees are also being elected for a 2-year period and we still experience an imbalance between branches and Interest Groups in respect of capacity and resources. The leadership however at these levels are very committed and are doing their best in ensuring that our members receive services. In 2005 we introduced the NielsenBookdata/ Presidents Award for the branch that excel at various levels. In 2006, the NielsenBookdata/Presidents Award was made to the Free State branch who received a plaque and cash prize of R 5000, 00. In 2007, the name of the award was changed to the LIASA President’s Award and was made to the Western Cape branch. This Award provides an incentive to branches to provide services to the LIASA members and to actively recruit and retain membership.

The focus areas of LIASA (Branches and Interest Groups), since SCECSAL 2006 are training, social development and building partnerships, so are the themes of the Conference and the Library week events. The interest group and branches have also been embracing the theme in the 2008 Pre- and post-Conference Workshops.

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING:

LIASA has done well in the improvement of communication and its image-building; this includes the promotion of events such as South African Library Week, publications of the Association i.e. LIT and SAJLIS, the webpage and Listserv. The success is evident in that LIASA has gained partnerships in government, private and non- governmental sectors.

○ **South African Library Week**

From the time when the Minister of Arts and Culture formally declared the 2nd week of March as South African Library Week as an annual government calendar event, LIASA was committed to the call and presented very successful national and regional events over the years. A promotional poster is created every year reflecting the overall theme and these images can be found on the LIASA website. The posters are distributed across the country for display during SALW.

- In 2007 the library week launch took place at the Saulsville Community Library in Tshwane. The theme was 'Libraries: Your key to the future', picking up on sentiments expressed by the South African Minister of Arts and Culture, Dr Pallo Jordan when he described libraries as the "universities of the poor" because they bring within the reach of all, the wonder contained in books and other media.
- The 2008 Library week launch took place in Skukuza, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga. The theme was "From local to global @ your library". A very successful children's programme was run concurrently with a new partner: the Parliamentary Millennium Project.

LIASA signed up for IFLA World Campaign for Libraries at WLIC/IFLA Conference during 2007 and incorporated the @ your library slogan for SALW 2008.

○ **LIASA publications**

Our publications improved tremendously as a result of the highly competent and committed editors. Their sterling work resulted in a regular, on time and professional magazine (LIASA-in-Touch) and accredited journal (SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE - SAJLIS).

○ **LIASA-in-Touch (LIT)**

LIASA-in-Touch (LIT) is published quarterly and reaches 1700 institutional and individual members of LIASA. LIT is gradually becoming more popular, judging by the increasing number of advertising returns. This magazine reaches all LIS workers in South Africa, Library associations in Africa and international partners and donors. The editor, Nohra Moerat, stood down at the end of 2007 and has been replaced by acting editor Mrs Marie Roux. In September 2008, a new editor will be appointed. The third issue in 2007 was published as a special issue as part of our 10th anniversary celebrations.

○ **SAJLIS**

The South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science (SAJLIS) is published twice per annum. An Editorial Management Committee has been appointed under the Chief Editor, Professor Dennis Ocholla of the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Zululand, KwaZulu Natal. The Editorial term is two years and in September 2008 a new Editorial Board will be appointed. A 3rd issue was published during 2007 as part of our 10th anniversary celebrations.

- **LIASA Website (www.liasa.org.za)**

The greatly improved look and functionality of the website serves as one of the marketing tools for the Association by presenting the image and face of LIASA, not only to its members, but also to the world, both locally and internationally. The website is current and the contents are updated on a regular basis.

LIASA also has a group on Facebook.

- **Listserv**

The LIASA-online listserv is running very smoothly and all members of LIASA worldwide have access to all announcements being made within the LIS sector. It is very popular in announcing events being held by Branches and Interest Groups, and even international members are making use of the listserv to announce conferences and other international events pertaining to LIS. We are in the process of moving the LIASAOonline listserv to Google groups.

- **Short Messaging Service (SMS) or Text Message**

A number of LIASA members do not have email access and thus do not receive listserv announcements, but most have mobile phones. LIASA uses a text-messaging service to communicate with these members. This service is popular with a number of the branches where members are scattered throughout the provinces. The service we use is a reliable one, so members can respond to the text messages.

- **Media Coverage**

The PRO submitted articles to several publications regarding the President, LIASA leadership, South Africa Library Week and all LIASA conferences.

During South African Library Week LIASA received media coverage from numerous radio and television stations, as well as the print media. .

- **Conferences**

The 9th Annual Conference took place from 25th to 29th September 2006 at St Georges Hotel, Tshwane with the theme: Libraries: partners in learning, nation building and development.

The 73rd Annual WLIC/IFLA Conference took place from 19-23 August 2007 at the Durban International Convention Centre. This was a great honour and privilege for LIASA to host this prestigious event and provided many opportunities for networking and professional interaction.

The 10th Annual Conference will take place from 6 – 10th October 2008 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. More details are available on the website, including online registration. The theme is: “Looking ahead: the changing role of LIS”.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Relations with other library associations and partnerships, include the following:

○ **NCLIS**

LIASA is represented on the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS). Several members of the National Executive are on NCLIS in their personal capacities and the President serves ex officio. NCLIS is currently hosting public consultative meetings for input on a national transformation charter for libraries and information services. .

○ **Carnegie Corporation of New York**

The initial support by Carnegie Corporation of New York for infrastructural support of LIASA ended in March 2004, but LIASA was fortunate to obtain a grant of \$500 000 to establish a Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD) programme for the:

- Establishment of a resource centre and training database
- Education and Training of the ten Interest Groups with the focus on public libraries
- Support to Carnegie model libraries by facilitation training in the US at the Mortenson Centre(Illinois University)

Some difficulties were experienced after the resignation of the Project Coordinator early in 2007. This resulted in the temporary suspension of the project. The Carnegie Corporation accepted our request for a grant extension until end of 2009 and revised timelines of the project. Training commenced in June/July and by the end of 2009, 1200 public and community librarians would have received training. Two pre-conference training workshops will take place in October 2008. Interviews have been held for a new Programme Manager and an appointment should take place very soon.

○ **Finnish Library Association (FLA)**

We continued building our relationship with our partners, the Finnish Library Association. President Tommy Matthee co- presented a paper with Marjatta Lahti of the Finnish Library Association entitled “Co-operation across continents: case of Library and Information Association and Finnish Library Associations” during WLIC/IFLA 2007. President-Elect Rachel More visited Finland on invitation of the Finnish Library Association during May 2008. She attended their international conference on Marketing and advocacy and presented a paper on South African Libraries for development and Nation- building. She also had a very fruitful one-day meeting with the FLA. A new Memorandum of Cooperation between LIASA and the FLA was signed. It was decided that the FLA should be invited to the 2009 LIASA Conference as part of the cooperation agreement and in view of the LIASA visit that took place in 2008.

○ **WLIC/ IFLA**

The WLIC hosted in Durban, South Africa from 19-23 August 2007, was a great success for LIASA. Very generous funding was secured from various sources which ensured that a significant number of African and South African delegates could attend WLIC 2007.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2006-2008:

- September 2006 - 8th Annual LIASA Conference, held in Tshwane with the theme "Libraries: partners in learning, nation-building and development"
- March 2007 - South African Library Week held at Saulsville Community Library, Atteridgeville, Tshwane with the theme "Libraries: your key to the future"
- Jan - August 2007 - 10th Anniversary Celebrations across the country which culminated in a celebratory banquet in Durban on 17 August 2007
- 19-23 August 2007 - WLIC/IFLA Conference in Durban, KwaZulu Natal
- March 2008 - South African Library Week celebrated across all branches of LIASA with the national launch held in Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga. Theme: "From local to global@ your library"
- April 2008 - Commencement of LIASA training supported with SABINET grant.
- June 2008 - Commencement of Carnegie Corporation training programme;

GRANTS

The operating costs of LIASA are mainly covered by membership fees but we were successful in securing financial support from our partners and donors which include:

- o Carnegie Corporation of New York - \$ 500,000 over three year period ending December 2007 (extended to December 2009)
- o National Lottery Development Trust Fund(NLDTF) - R642 000
- o Sabinet R500 000 – grants for WLIC/IFLA Conference
- o Sabinet R500 000 for training in cataloguing, inter-lending and management
- o Sabinet – financial support for "Librarian of the Year" award
- o US Embassy - grants for WLIC/IFLA Conference
- o Libraries for Africa – grants for WLIC/IFLA Conference
- o EbscoHost – grants for WLIC/IFLA Conference
- o Swets – grants for WLIC/IFLA Conference
- o Sali Trust – R 20 000 to support production of DVD for 10th Anniversary celebrations
- o National Research Foundation – R 400 000 – grants for WLIC/IFLA Conference
- o Department Arts and Culture – 2007 – R 3,96 million towards the WLIC/IFLA Conference, including grants to support delegates

FUTURE PLANS

Our immediate plans for the next two years include:

- o Relocation to a new office with the National Library in 2008
- o Adequate Staffing for the LIASA office
- o Implementing the continuing education and development programme (CICD) with the rollout of training programmes to members at branch levels.

- Continue building the organisation with emphasis on membership and the administration
e.g. updating membership database
- Consolidation and improving services to members
- Enhancing partnerships and developing new ones where possible
- Enhancement of communication with members

CONCLUSION

Despite all the challenges faced during this period, we can state without hesitation that it still represented a very successful two years for LIASA.

All of the above achievements wouldn't have been possible without the generous grants awarded by partners of LIASA and sponsors. Special thanks are hereby extended to our regular sponsors, the hard work and commitment of LIASA staff members and all office bearers from the Representative Council, Branch Committees, Interest Groups Committees, volunteers, our members and supporters.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tommy Matthee', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tommy Matthee
President: LIASA, June 2008