

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE STRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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1. INTRODUCTION

South African library and information services (LIS) have developed over a period of more than 150 years. Starting with free public libraries, the LIS structure gradually expanded to include the typical kinds of libraries also found in other countries, professional organisations, training institutions, and so forth. Some of these will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapters. As the purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview of the LIS structure in South Africa, how it is governed by legislation and supported by numerous role-players, as well as to give some context for the rest of the book, overlap with other chapters is unavoidable. Issues dealt with in detail in other chapters are mostly dealt with only briefly here.

The earlier history of the South African LIS structure is well documented by, for instance, Friis (1962) and Walker (1993). The various papers of Aucamp (1978), Ehlers (1978), Kruger (1978), Robinson (1978) and Vink (1978) in the published proceedings of the South African Library Association's 1978 conference respectively review the development of university and college libraries, public libraries, school libraries, national libraries and government libraries. Numerous articles also appeared in the former professional journals *South African Libraries* and *South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, as well as in journals such as *Mousaion*, *Meta-Info Bulletin*, *Cape Librarian* and the *Free State Librarian*.

It is, however, more difficult to trace reports on the current South African LIS structure. Apart from a few articles (often reporting on research projects), reviews of specific services, associations, legislation and syntheses/reflections of the status quo seem not to feature very strongly in South African literature over the last few years, or are captured in grey literature, unpublished conference papers or websites (with the latter not always up to date).

Work on this chapter stressed the need for LIS-related websites – as sources of communication, marketing and information dissemination – to be up to date. Moreover, there is a need for review articles on issues of concern, such as government involvement in LIS, the role and impact of non-governmental bodies, the impact of the professional association in securing the role of LIS in South Africa, changing roles of LIS, and the like.

Libraries are not only to keep, record and preserve our national recorded heritage, but also need to support education, standards of living and financial prosperity. In training LIS students (at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level), it is vital to have a body of professional literature reporting on local LIS projects, initiatives, failures and successes. To fulfil these roles it is essential to have less scattered reports of the country's LIS structure and activities.

1.1 Background to South African LIS

In 1994, South Africa had its first free democratic election involving eligible voters from all racial groups. Since then, the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Promotion of Access to Information Act and its Amendment Act have formed the broad legislative framework for the country's provision of LIS and for access to information.⁽¹⁾

The focus is on the *right of access to information for all*. It seeks to counter the impact of the pre-1994 era of legally enforced separate structures for education and public libraries for different racial groups, as well as the marked discrepancy between LIS for urban and rural areas. (Library services in black townships, informal settlements and rural communities still leave much to be desired.)

The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC),⁽²⁾ and specifically the Subdirectorate of Meta-Information, is responsible for creating, maintaining and administering the broad legislative framework for LIS at national level. According to the Constitution, provincial and local legislature (e.g. for metropolitan areas and municipalities) determines the responsibilities for LIS other than national libraries, while the Department of Education determines the LIS for educational libraries.⁽³⁾

1.2 Landmarks in shaping the South African LIS structure

The following landmarks give some indication of how the country's LIS structure evolved. The list is, however, not exhaustive and should be read with the legislation mentioned in section 2 of this chapter.

- 1928 The Carnegie Corporation Survey led to the Carnegie Memorandum with recommendations for, among other things, free library services. At the Bloemfontein Library Conference the recommendations were discussed and some adopted.
- 1937 The report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Libraries of the Union of South Africa was made available. It commented on free rural and urban library services, library services for juveniles, library services for the blind, non-European services, university libraries (including university colleges), departmental libraries, national libraries, copyright libraries, and factors influencing LIS – such as training and legislation.

1 www.info.gov.za/document

2 Formerly the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST); www.dac.gov.za.

3 www.education.gov.za

- 1959 An Action Committee was appointed to submit a report and make recommendations. This led to a request to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science to convene a National Conference of Library Authorities in 1962.
- 1962 The Programme for Future Library Development was adopted by the National Conference of Library Authorities.
- 1967 The National Library Advisory Council was established. In 1974 it became the National Advisory Council for Libraries and Information, which was dissolved in 1987 when the government no longer saw the need for a national policy on libraries and information (Walker, 1993:71). It was succeeded by the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS), established in terms of the National Council for Library and Information Services Act.
- 1983 The South African Bibliographic and Information Network (Sabinet) was established as a not-for-profit organisation supporting, among other things, bibliographic control and computerised cataloguing.
- 1985 The University of South Africa (Unisa) was commissioned to investigate the role libraries could, and should, play in developing South Africa. The investigation made its report – focusing on Africanisation – available in 1998.
- 1992 The Library and Information Services Report of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), following the investigation in 1990–1992, was made available. The report states: “In order to improve education (both formal and informal) cost-effectively in South Africa and to address the education crisis, a national library and information system needs to be properly planned and funded” (as cited by Walker, 1993). It especially addressed the issue of libraries and information literacy.
- 1996 A Working Group on the National Libraries of South Africa was formed.
- 1997 The Legal Deposit Committee was established in terms of the Legal Deposit Act.
- 1998 The South African Library for the Blind (Blindlib) was established in terms of the South African Library for the Blind Act.
- 1998 The National Library of South Africa (NLSA) was established in terms of the National Library of South Africa Act.
- 1999 The Coalition of South African Library Consortia (COSALC) was formed.⁽⁴⁾ This was preceded by the establishment of five academic consortia between 1992 and 1998.
- 2001 The NCLIS was established in terms of the National Council for Library and Information Services Act.
- 2004 The inaugural meeting of the NCLIS was held in Cape Town on 11 March.

⁴ www.cosalc.ac.za

- 2004 The Report of the Print Industries Cluster Council (PICC) Working Group on Libraries on the funding and governance of public libraries in South Africa was initiated in mid-2004.⁽⁵⁾



A colourful entrance to the Koffiefontein Public Library in the Free State.
The town was originally a diamond mining centre in 1892.
(Courtesy of the Directorate of Information Services and Heritage, Free State)

1.3 Scope of the South African LIS structure

The South African LIS structure consists of:

- a national library service, the NLSA (discussed in section 3.1);
- libraries serving higher education institutions (HEIs), including colleges, universities, universities of technology and formerly also technikons (section 3.3);
- public and metro libraries, as well as community information services functioning under provincial and local authorities (section 3.4);
- school libraries (section 3.5);
- special LIS, also known as documentation centres, including research, industry, business and government departments and other government foci (section 3.6);

5 www.picc.org.za/pdf/library_report2.pdf

- the Subdirectorate of Meta-Information in the DAC, which serves as a focal point for libraries within the government (section 4.1); and
- other stakeholders in LIS and the publishing and information industry, including professional organisations such as the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) and the South African Booksellers' Association (SABA), and interest groups (section 4).

The South African LIS structure is located in a legislative framework that includes certain national LIS Acts, such as the National Library of South Africa Act, the South African Library for the Blind Act, the National Council for Libraries and Information Services Act and the Legal Deposit Act. These and a number of other important legislative pieces are dealt with in more detail in the following section.

2. LEGISLATION AND GOVERNING BODIES

Apart from the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and the Promotion of Access to Information Act, other legislation has impacted on the current LIS structure. A chronological list of some of these follows below.⁽⁶⁾

- National Archives of South Africa Act of 1996;
- Local Government Transitional Act of 1996;
- The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage (1996), which considers libraries to be an important part of cultural life:
- Libraries are an integral part of society, providing access to education and recreational documents, programmes and resources. Various types of libraries and resource centres play a vital role in the provision of information support to formal and non-formal education, and the promotion of reading and learning.
- According to the Legal Deposit Act of 1997, all publishers in the country are required to deposit copies of each new publication with specified agencies. The implementation of the Act is coordinated and promoted by a Legal Deposit Committee, consisting of the heads of the places of legal deposit, the head of the Government Printing Works, a representative of all provincial Official Publications Depositories (OPDs), and two representatives of the publishing industry. In addition, the Act allows for the creation of official publications deposits to ensure the availability of government publications (this is discussed in more detail in section 4.3);
- White Paper on Education (1997);
- The Local Government Municipal Structures Act of 1998, which excludes libraries from the responsibilities of municipalities;
- The National Library of South Africa Act of 1998, which enforced the amalgamation of the former State Library in Pretoria and the South African Library in Cape Town into the NLSA;
- The South African Library for the Blind Act of 1998, which provides for Blindlib and for the Blind and for LIS to the blind and print-handicapped;

⁶ More detail can be found at www.info.gov.za/documents. At the end of the chapter there is also a full list of Acts referred to.

- Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000;
- The NCLIS was established in terms of the National Council for Libraries and Information Services Act of 2001 for the coordination of LIS in South Africa. The Council advises the Ministers of Arts and Culture and of Education on matters relating to LIS, such as the development and coordination of LIS; the promotion of cooperation among such services; legislation affecting LIS; policies, principles and criteria that should govern the allocation of public funds for LIS; the effectiveness of LIS education and training; service priorities; and the promotion of basic and functional literacy; and
- Individual Provincial Library Acts that are currently available for only some of the 11 provinces, for example the Free State Library and Information Services Act of 1998 and the Limpopo Provincial Library and Information Services Act of 2001. Limpopo also has its own Library and Information Services Board.

3. LIBRARIES ACCORDING TO TYPE

3.1 National Library of South Africa

The NLSA acts as the national bibliographic and preservation agency.⁽⁷⁾ It is responsible for building a complete collection of published documents emanating from or relating to South Africa; to maintain and preserve the collections; and to provide access to them through bibliographic, reference and information services, as well as through the Southern African Interlending Scheme (SAIS).

The NLSA, situated in Pretoria and Cape Town, was formed on 1 November 1999 through the National Library of South Africa Act. The Centre for the Book in Cape Town is a specialist unit of the NLSA, whereas the Office of the National Librarian is located in Pretoria. A new building for the Pretoria Campus is being constructed.

3.2 South African Library for the Blind

Blindlib, in Grahamstown, was founded in 1918 and provides a national LIS to blind and print-handicapped readers in South Africa. It was first declared under section 1 of the State-aided Institutions Act and works closely with Blind SA, an organisation of the blind governed by the blind, which is located in Johannesburg.

Blindlib is currently regulated by the South African Library for the Blind Act. It is partly state-funded and depends for the remainder of its financial needs on soliciting funds from the private sector and general public. As a partly state-funded institution, its financial affairs are subject to controls and oversight measures implemented in respect of the public sector and public entities by the provisions of the Public Finance Management Act and Treasury Regulations.

3.3 Libraries serving higher education institutions

Libraries serving HEIs include university libraries, college libraries and university of technology libraries. These LIS fall under the control of the academic institutions they

⁷ www.nlsa.ac.za



Experiencing reading through touch: a child is being guided to read Braille.
(Courtesy of the South African Library for the Blind)

service, as well as the Department of Education. Many have special branch or satellite libraries, for example for medicine, law, music and science.

The former Committee of University Librarians and the Committee of Technikon Librarians were replaced by the Inter-University Library Committee (IULC) of the Committee of University Principals, followed by the Forum for University Librarians in South Africa (FULSA), and currently by the Committee for Higher Education Librarians in South Africa (CHELSA). CHELSA is responsible, among other things, for quality assurance in higher education libraries. Its vision is to transform existing library practices in order to respond to the new realities, and to lay the foundation for the development of a learning society.

Before the 2002–2004 mergers that resulted from the National Plan for Education (2001) there were also technikon libraries. The mergers resulted in name changes and new administrative and LIS structures, and also caused many teething problems. (The tertiary institutions resulting from the mergers are listed at the end of the chapter.)

3.4 Public library and community information services

As indicated earlier, public libraries in South Africa date back to the early 1800s. Before 1994, the four provincial library services were responsible for public libraries. Currently, public library and community information services fall under the DAC, with heavy involvement from the nine provincial authorities and their local (municipality or metropolitan) authorities.

The governance of public libraries is determined by the Constitution, the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, the Library and Information Services Act, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, as well as Acts for individual provincial libraries (of which there are currently only three).

The nine provincial library services include the Eastern Cape Provincial Library and Information Services, the Free State Library and Information Services, and the Provincial Library Services for Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North-West, Northern Cape and the Western Cape respectively.

Unfortunately, the responsibilities of the provincial and local authorities are not clear cut. In some instances, the local authorities provide and maintain buildings and pay the salaries of staff, while in others the provincial authorities are responsible for the salaries. Most provinces rely on central development of book collections, as funding is a serious problem. Nassimbeni and May (2006) cite the Budlander report:

The constitutional issues as to which sphere of government bears responsibility for funding and, if shared, which sphere bears responsibility for which aspects, is clearly a significant factor in the current funding problems faced by libraries.

In the provinces, libraries fall under different departments, such as the Department of Social Development, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture or the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation. Among other services, the libraries increasingly render community and general information services, and provide study material and facilities for school and tertiary students. They are responsible for LIS services to adults and children in cooperation with local municipalities. These include access and lending facilities for books, audio books, music CDs, videos, CD-ROMs, newspapers and periodicals.

Services aim to encourage reading, promote literacy, present video shows, run events, offer holiday programmes for learners and provide story hours for toddlers. Small Business Corners at some libraries provide entrepreneurs with business advice literature. Material can be requested from other libraries, photocopy services are often available and some offer free Internet access. There is, however, not uniformity between the approaches of the different provinces or the quality of service that is rendered.

Unlike in the past, it is difficult to obtain statistics on public libraries. During 2000–2004 the Public and Community Libraries Inventory of South Africa (PaCLISA) was undertaken to create a comprehensive and informative inventory of South African public and community libraries. Lor et al. (2005) report on the outcomes as well as difficulties experienced. De Jager and Nassimbeni (2005) report on a project managed by the Library Working Group of the PICC to refine a data instrument for collecting statistics on public libraries.

The uncertainties concerning LIS at provincial and local level also affect school libraries, in which case public libraries often need to fulfil a supplementary role.

3.5 School libraries

Since the Carnegie survey in 1928 and the Interdepartmental Committee Report of 1937 (mentioned earlier), there were several attempts to establish closer relationships between libraries and education. In spite of the expectations that Curriculum 2005 – implemented in 1997 – would raise the importance of school libraries, the reality is that the majority of South African schools do not have functional libraries and the provincial education departments do not have the finances or staff to overcome this problem.

The policy on the provision of school library services is prescribed by legislation. As with public libraries there are, however, many grey areas, for example who needs to take responsibility and how to address the lack of funding. The National Educational Policy Act comments on the provision of facilities such as libraries, and although libraries are not specifically mentioned in the South African Schools Act, it impacts on school libraries due to the functions assigned to school governing bodies – who are expected to do their best to improve the quality of education in their schools. This is interpreted as implying budgeting for school libraries (Le Roux, 2002:116).

Other documents impacting on the current school library structure include:

- A national framework for school library standards: A four-year implementation plan of the policy framework for school library standards, released by the Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education (CETDE);
- White Paper on Education and Training (1995), which mentions educational facilities such as libraries;
- Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R–9 (schools) which, for example, does not mention the role of libraries;
- Policy on South African School Library Services;
- National Norms and Standards for School Funding; and
- South African School Library Survey Report (1999).

The absence of a specific reference to school libraries in some of these documents is interesting, as the Department of Education seems to assume that educators and learners will only be able to access an outcomes-based education curriculum if they have access to learning resources (Le Roux, 2002).

A Standing Committee of Heads of Education Library and Information Services (SCHELIS) represents all nine provinces.

3.6 Special LIS

A very wide variety of special LIS (including research, industry and government foci) operates in South Africa under the auspices of the respective governing bodies. These include private companies, financial institutions, legal firms, mining companies, research institutions and government bodies. Special libraries support the research and development work of their companies, such as the South African Grain Information Service, the Constitutional Court of South Africa Library and the South African National Gallery Reference Library.⁽⁸⁾ There are, however, many other special LIS.

8 www.sagis.org.za; www.constitutionalcourt.org.za; www.iziko.org.za

4. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIS STRUCTURE

Apart from the legislation and library types discussed thus far, there are also other stakeholders that need to be briefly noted.

4.1 Subdirectorates of Meta-Information

The Subdirectorates of Meta-Information in the DAC is the national focal point within the national government that deals with certain policy matters pertaining to LIS and related matters at national level. (*Meta-information* means “information about information”). As the Subdirectorates are not discussed in other chapters in this book, it is dealt with in more detail here.

The Subdirectorates are located in the National Archives, Records, Meta-Information and Heraldic Services Chief Directorate of the national DAC and reports to the National Archivist. Its vision is to create and maintain an effective meta-information system that will promote access to information, ensuring that all communities participate in the information society, thereby contributing to the development of the country. Its mission is to advise the Minister of Arts and Culture on the development, coordination and maintenance of national meta-information policy and infrastructure.

The national meta-information system in South Africa consists of various types of libraries and other information organisations and is enabled by a legislative framework. The Subdirectorates’ remit, within this framework, pertains specifically to the:

- NCLIS;
- NLSA;
- Blindlib;
- Legal Deposit Committee and those libraries and archives that function as places of legal deposit and/or OPDs; and
- Blind SA (formerly the South Africa Blind Workers Organisation), the Braille Services Trust, and the South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB), regarding Braille projects.

The Subdirectorates administer the following national LIS Acts, which form part of the legislative framework of the national meta-information system: National Council for Library and Information Services Act, National Library of South Africa Act, South African Library for the Blind Act, and the Legal Deposit Act. Arising from this legislation, the Subdirectorates are also involved in aspects of institutional governance of the NLSA, Blindlib and Blind SA, and administer the process of reconstituting the boards of the NLSA and Blindlib every three years.

The Subdirectorates act as secretariat for the statutory Legal Deposit Committee and the statutory NCLIS. Meta-information also administers the process of reconstituting the Committee and the Council.

Besides its associated institutions, the Subdirectorates also liaise closely with other major players at the national level, including other Chief Directorates within the DAC; Department of Science and Technology; Department of Education; Department of Land Affairs, in particular the National Spatial Information Framework; Department of Communications (including the Presidential National Commission on Information Soci-

ety and Development); the nine provincial library services; SANCB; Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA); South African Data Archives of the National Research Foundation (NRF); PASA; Printing Industries Federation of South Africa; SABA; National Film and Video Foundation; and universities' Departments of Information Science.

Among other things, international liaison takes place with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, certain United Nations bodies, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications.

4.2 National Archives and Records Service

The National Archives and Records Service (NARS) can be linked to the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act.⁽⁹⁾ Its function is to preserve a national archival heritage for use by the government and people of South Africa, and to promote efficient, accountable and transparent government through the proper management and care of government records.

It is also the coordinating body for union catalogues for archival records. It is situated in Pretoria and has additional repositories in Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein and Durban. There is also the National Film, Video and Sound Archives, which acts as legal depository for certain categories of documents.

4.3 Legal depository libraries

The legal depository libraries are supported by the Legal Deposit Committee and the OPDs which, as mentioned, receive deposit copies of each publication as soon as it becomes available. Following the Legal Deposit Act of 1997, this is a requirement with which all publishers must comply. The places of legal deposit are the:

- NLSA in Pretoria and Cape Town;
- City Library Services in Bloemfontein (its new name is Mangaung Library Services);
- Library of Parliament in Cape Town;
- Natal Society Library in Pietermaritzburg (now Msunduzi Municipal Library); and
- National Film, Video and Sound Archives in Pretoria.

The new names will be reflected in the amended Legal Deposit Act, which is currently being revised.

4.4 National Research Foundation

The NRF was established in 1999.⁽¹⁰⁾ Its objective is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of the natural and social sciences, humanities and technology.

⁹ www.national.archives.gov.za

¹⁰ www.nrf.ac.za



Library of Parliament in Parliament House, Cape Town. Established in 1857, the collection now stands at well over a million items.

(Courtesy of the Library of Parliament)

Among other functions, the NRF provides the NEXUS database of completed and current South African research projects.⁽¹¹⁾ NEXUS includes several databases:

- a current, completed research projects database, with bibliographic descriptions of more than 70 000 research reports, including Master's and doctoral theses. It provides all non-English titles with the English equivalent;
- talk conference database, with detail on national and international forthcoming conferences;
- human sciences professional associations database;
- human sciences research networking database, listing over 3000 biographical profiles of research experts;
- research methodology teachers and courses database; and
- periodical submissions and requirements database.

The records of the Union Catalogue of Theses and Dissertations (UCTD), formerly maintained by the Library of the Potchefstroom University, are also included.

¹¹ stardata.nrf.ac.za

4.5 National networks

Networks such as Tenet, Sangonet and Sabinet contribute to the supporting LIS infrastructure.⁽¹²⁾

4.5.1 Sangonet

Founded in 1987, Sangonet is one of very few non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Africa involved in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs). It continues to serve civil society with a wide range of ICT products and services, and customises these to the specific needs of the NGO sector. The Sangonet NGO Portal was established on 24 October 2005.

4.5.2 Sabinet

The most important network for LIS is, however, the South African Bibliographic and Information Network, which was founded in 1983 as a not-for-profit organisation. It sold its operational activities in 1997 to Sabinet Online. The administrative headquarters is in Centurion near Pretoria.

Although initially aimed at supporting national bibliographic control, it currently also caters for commercial and business sectors, providing access to an extensive list of information sources and bibliographic and full-text databases via the Internet. Apart from consulting services, training and web publishing, Sabinet supports cataloguing services (*SABICat*), information retrieval services (*MagNet*) and interlending support services (*ReQuest*).

A number of databases reflecting South Africa's efforts at national bibliographic control are available through *MagNet*. These include the following:

- **SA gazettes** offers the full text of the South African Government and Provincial Gazettes and Bills, the index to the *Government Gazette*, and the weekly *Government Gazette Index* and parliamentary Bills. *Contemporary Gazette* is a fortnightly email notification service and website that focuses on new legislation and Bills for business.
- **SA tenders** offers full-text access to the Government Tender Bulletin, Provincial Tender Bulletins, private tenders that appear in newspapers and journals, and news items from newspapers and journals.
- **SA citation plus** is an index of journal articles, research reports, chapters in books and conference proceedings that are available in South African libraries. The extended Index to South African Periodicals (ISAP) database is included and there are links to holdings in South African libraries. Document delivery options are also provided.
- **SA news** is a combination of two databases, namely the South African Press Association's database of news reports and the *SA media* database, a collection of press cuttings compiled by the University of the Free State. Most cuttings are from newspapers such as the *Cape Times*, *Cape Argus*, *Rapport*, *Sowetan* and *Star*.
- **SACat plus** is a combination of bibliographic databases that can be used to support cataloguing activities and includes the *SACat*, South African National Bibliography (SANB), UCTD, *Navtech* and *Bookdata*.

12 www.tenet.ac.za; www.sangonet.org.za; www.sabinet.com

- *SA legal* focuses on legal information, including the database of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, and law reports.

In addition, there is *Sabinet Parliamentary Information* (a daily customised alerting service), *NetLaw* (offering immediate access to updated South African principal Acts and statutes) and *Law Journal Collection* (abstracted records and full-text documents of many law journals published in South Africa in a single user-friendly service).

4.6 Coalition of South African Library Consortia

Established in 1999, the main focus of COSALC is to provide access to electronic information through the establishment of the South African Site Licensing Initiative (SASLI). It seeks to promote and support national cooperative initiatives, such as contributing to the South African National Catalogue (*SACat*), and interlending agreements, training, capacity building, communication, liaison and lobbying.

COSALC is governed by a board of directors and has three membership categories: consortium membership, public entity membership and general membership. The following consortia members are also linked to the academic consortia established between 1992 and 1998 (discussed in more detail by Thomas & Fourie, 2006):

- Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) linked to the Cape Library Consortium (CALICO), established in 1992;
- Foundation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis (FOTIM) linked to the Gauteng and Environs Library Consortium (GAELIC), established in 1996;
- Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (ESATI) linked to the Eastern Seaboard Association of Libraries (ESAL), established in 1997;
- Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA) linked to the South Eastern Alliance of Library Systems (SEALS), established in 1998;
- Free State Higher and Further Education and Training Trust (FSHETT) linked to the Free State Library and Information Consortium (FRELICO), established in 1996/1997; and
- South African National Research Information Consortium (SANRIC), established as the Library and Information Services of Science Councils (LISSCO) in 1999.

4.7 South African National Council for the Blind

The SANCB is an NGO striving to meet the needs of all blind and partially sighted people in South Africa.⁽¹³⁾ Its services include rehabilitation, education and training; the provision of assistive devices; and social and economic development and programmes promoting the prevention of blindness and the restoration of sight. SANCB comprises nine provincial councils, 32 national and seven international blindness-related organisations, 20 workshops, 51 self-help groups and 20 schools for blind and partially sighted learners, making it the largest South African NGO.

13 www.sanCB.org.za



A child using the Perkins Braillewriter, the most popular personal braillewriter, as it creates consistent, easy-to-read, superior quality Braille.

(Courtesy of the South African Library of the Blind)

4.8 Professional and other LIS associations

A number of professional and other LIS associations play an important role in the LIS structure. LIASA is a professional non-profit organisation that represents all institutions and people working in LIS in South Africa.⁽¹⁴⁾

LIASA was launched on 10 July 1997. It superseded existing library organisations such as the South African Institute for Library and Information Science (SAILIS) and the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) – however, the Library and Information Workers Organisation (LIWO) remained outside the unification process. This process of unifying the former separate organisations was initiated in January 1995 at the Conference on Libraries and Information Services in Developing South Africa (LISDESA). Here, the first Steering Committee for the Unification of Library and Information Stakeholders (ULIS) was elected and given the mandate to carry forward the process for a new organisation.

LIASA offers access to many projects and opportunities, such as the South African Library Leadership Project and the Centre for Information Career Development, a Carnegie-funded project. It also has a number of special interest groups such as the LIASA Special Libraries Interest Group; Higher Education Interest Group; Interest Group for Bibliographic Standards; Interlending Interest Group; Information and Communication Technology in Libraries Interest Group; Public and Community Libraries Interest

14 www.liasa.org.za

Group; Research, Education and Training Interest Group; School Libraries Interest Group; and Support Staff Interest Group.

In addition there are the Special Libraries and Information Services (SLIS) Group; Southern African Online User Group; Organisation of South African Law Libraries (OSALL); Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers; South African Museum Association; South African Society of Archivists; and PASA.⁽¹⁵⁾

4.9 Mechanisms for reporting research and LIS activities

South African LIS activities and research are reported through various mechanisms such as the *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science*, *LIASA-in-touch*, *LIASA News*, *Mousaion*, and *Innovation: Journal of Appropriate Librarianship and Information Work in Southern Africa*. Apart from the annual LIASA conference, there is also, amongst others, the biannual SLIS/OSALL conference, the Southern African On-line Information Meeting, and the biannual ProLISSA conference.

4.10 Others

There are also many other role-players that contribute to the South African LIS structure, which will not be discussed here, for example academic departments (e.g. at the Universities of Pretoria, Cape Town, Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, South Africa and the Western Cape), as well as programmes for continuing education, such as those offered by academic institutions or the National Library. Several database or information service providers such as EbscoHost, Dialog South Africa, National Information Services Corporation South Africa and companies like Mindex supply information and content management products.

5. CONCLUSION

The preceding sections offered a brief overview of the South African LIS structure with the emphasis on the post-1994 era. Although this period has been marked by efforts to improve access to information for all, there are still many grey areas of responsibility, inadequate recognition of the role of libraries in some educational contexts and inadequate funding, which urgently need to be considered in improving the national LIS structure. It was also noted that the literature on the South African LIS structure is very scattered at this point, making it difficult to gain a holistic view of the status quo.

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- Limpopo Provincial Library and Information Services Act, Act No. 7 of 2001
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White Paper on Education, 1997
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