

Library and Information Association of South Africa



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SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY WEEK (SALW): HISTORY

LIASA has declared 22 – 27 March 2010 as South African Library Week with the theme “Reading changes lives”. During this week libraries will promote the importance of library and information services throughout South Africa. This theme encourages a culture of reading and raises awareness about the benefits of reading. It is LIASA's vision to celebrate a truly national Library Week that will embrace all types of libraries in all communities.

LIASA has developed a new model of celebrating SALW that will involve extensive media coverage which will have a national impact. This will enable LIASA to involve the broader communities in South Africa in a one month long awareness campaign on reading. This campaign will start with the launch of SALW on 20 March and will conclude on 23 April, which is the UNESCO World Book Day. We will conclude on 23 April 2010 with an event to celebrate World Book Day.

For the Launch the minister, Ms L Xingwana, has been invited to open the SALW officially and deliver a keynote address. High profile speakers from the Book Chain Industry will be included on the program. A panel discussion to engage the theme will follow their presentations. Ms Ellen Tise, the IFLA President has also been invited as a speaker. See Press Release dated 19 March 2010.

History of SALW celebrations:

Since its inception in 1997, the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) has worked concertedly at centralising library and information services (LIS) related activities. One of the main objectives of the association is to promote the importance of libraries and instil a culture of reading in order to create an informed nation. Promotional activities are held at different times of the year by the various public, academic and community library Services including LIASA.

In 2001 LIASA initiated a drive to have a week recognised by government as the National Library Week to raise awareness about the value of libraries. Libraries across the country would use it to market their services to their users, promote reading, access to information and building a reading nation. LIASA would also use the week to promote the image of information profession and engage the entire nation on the importance of libraries, raise awareness about the right to libraries and information access. A formal application was made to the then Minister of Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Dr Ben Ngubane who approved the proposal. His Deputy Minister, Ms Brigitte Mabandla, suggested that the week be called the South African Library Week instead of National Library Week. In 2002, South African Library Week became part of the national calendar.

Thereafter LIASA has been tasked with setting the dates of the South African Library Week (**SALW**) and arranging the launch thereof with the support and in partnership with the Department of Arts and Culture. The Minister of Arts and Culture or his/her representative opens the week formally with a keynote address around the theme of the library week. The week within which 20 March falls is celebrated as South African Library Week. The date was chosen based on research into the history of libraries in South Africa.

The South African Public Library, now known as the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town), was established by government proclamation on 20 March 1818. The choice of date was also inspired by the 21st March, the Human Rights Day. Given that libraries are best positioned to ensure the freedom of access to information as enshrined in our Bill of Rights, the week will also inform the nation about their fundamental right to access information. There is an important link between libraries human rights new democracy. In the event of the 20th March falling within a weekend, the week before is celebrated as South African Library Week. (http://www.liasa.org.za/activities/natlibweek2008_history.php)

To date, it has become tradition to launch the SALW in a one of our nine provinces thereby highlighting the role that libraries play in a democratic society, promoting reading, advancing literacy and making the basic human right of freedom of access to information a reality. Furthermore LIASA aims to make all South Africans aware that libraries contribute to nation - building and improve the quality of life of all who use them.

SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY WEEK THEMES:

In order to enable the library and information sector to focus on particular aspects of their work, LIASA annually selects a theme to underpin activities of the library week. Members of the LIS sector through the LIASA's 10 branches submit suggestions for themes every year. To date these have been:

- 2001 – African renaissance through libraries
- 2002 – Free your mind – read
- 2003 – Your right to read
- 2004 – 1994-2004 Libraries in a decade of democracy
- 2005 – Libraries: Opening the doors of learning and culture to all
- 2006 – Libraries: Partners in learning, nation building and development
- 2007 – Libraries: Your key to the future
- 2008 – From Local to Global @ your library
- 2009 – Access for all @ your library
- 2010 – Reading changes lives