



South African Library Week 2023

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) is celebrating South African Library Week (SALW) with the theme **"Libraries: telling powerful stories"** from **20-26 March 2023**.

Humans have told stories for as long as we can remember. These stories are used to share news, amplify heroes' accomplishments, pass on cultural traditions, and transfer knowledge and history. Libraries have been central in collecting, preserving, and sharing these stories. The first library in South Africa dates to 20 March 1818, with the establishment by proclamation of the first public library, the South African Public Library, now the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town Campus).

Stories make complex information easier to understand. Stories can change the future for the better. This year we are focusing on telling those stories, both from a librarian's and library user's perspective, focusing on the achievements of libraries in South Africa over the years as libraries transform to fit into the New World.

Libraries are currently facing many challenges, including funding constraints, the provisioning of adequate and relevant materials, infrastructure problems, insufficient internet access and connectivity, inadequate disaster management, and vandalism. These challenges are not new and speak to the resilience of libraries. It is human nature to highlight challenges more than achievements. This year LIASA would like to focus on what we are doing right and what we have achieved. The focus will be on libraries telling a good story and involving patrons to highlight the benefits of libraries in South Africa and, in the process, marketing and advocating for libraries.

Libraries are central to communities; they provide not only access to books but also a space for knowledge and access to information for all and offer an escape from harsh realities. We know that libraries are during a dramatic change. Technology has transformed how we find and use books, gather information, and learn. The 4IR has shifted the landscape and how we tell these stories, contributing to global knowledge, memory, and communication. Libraries in South Africa are transforming their stories and how they share them. This includes the platforms that are used to tell these stories, whether they are recreational, educational, or historical.

Despite the challenges that libraries face, they have persevered and continue to add to the good stories they tell. These stories will focus on the following:

- **The value of libraries that adds to the community - the focus is on the people whose lives libraries have changed**



- **Highlighting how libraries have embraced the 4IR- a reflection on what libraries have achieved so far and what the future of South African libraries entails in connection with 4IR**
- **How do libraries support the SDGs? Libraries in South Africa offer a wide range of products and services that promote the achievement of each and every one of the SDGs, from promoting literacy, to offering free access to information, to providing safe, welcoming spaces at the heart of diverse communities.**

Librarians understand the power of storytelling more than most. A good story draws you in, shows you different ways to think, and touches your mind, heart, and life. Yet, even when in the business of sharing stories. It's easy to forget the power of your own account—why you love working for the library, what your library has achieved, and what you've learned along the way. Stories like these will help the public understand and connect with their libraries. These stories will also help highlight the importance and value of libraries to all. Let's take ownership and use storytelling to communicate more effectively with our communities. Libraries have a powerful story to tell.

Yes #powerfullibrarystories! #bevisible