



Office of the LIASA President

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14 June 2019

Commissioner Themba T.C. Dlamini
Chairperson, Governing Board National Library of South Africa
Pretoria
South Africa

Dear Mr Dlamini,

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF THE MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE CEO OF THE NLSA

LIASA, the SAQA-recognised Professional Body for Library and Information Services (LIS) in South Africa, notes with deep concern that the current advertisement for the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer of the National Library of South Africa which places the professional LIS qualification as a recommendation, diminishes the role of the NLSA and that of the LIS profession. The focus of the recruitment we believe should be on the LIS Professional Executive, with Business Administration as the recommendation.

The objectives of the NLSA related to the collection, curation and dissemination of all materials alongside the promotion of information literacy articulates with the core aspects of the LIS profession and therefore it follows that the CEO of the NLSA has to be a qualified librarian with extensive senior leadership experience and practice. The Act describes this relationship in 9 (1) (b) (iii) stating: 'The chief executive officer of the National Library is known as the National Librarian.'

The NLSA's National Librarian holds a key position in the South African LIS structure in their role of driving national and international LIS policies and strategies. As such, the position also plays an influential role on the global LIS stage representing the South African LIS sector; and engaging with related continental and international library associations and organisations. Previous occupants of this position have all been highly respected LIS professionals who have been heralded in these roles and within LIS circles, precisely because of their LIS qualifications and deep expertise within this sector.

The current advert allows for non-LIS qualified individuals, to be eligible and thus ultimately be recruited to the position. At a time when huge advances have been made in this country, notably the recognition of the importance of library qualifications in the profession and to Libraries, it is disheartening to find ourselves in this position where despite the utterances of the Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture and Sport, Mr N Mthethwa on the importance of Libraries to the development agendas, that the likelihood exists of the appointment of a National Librarian with less focus on the imperatives of the profession and instead places greater focus on the National Library as a corporate entity.

Executive Committee Members:

Ms N Crowster (President), Mr N Hardy (President-Elect),
Ms S Welman, Ms R Senyolo, Mr S Mokhabukhi, Mr T Morajane,
Ms L Ntaka, Mr W van der Walt

LIASA is a SAQA recognised Professional Body
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Without an LIS qualification and requisite related professional experience, the CEO and National Librarian will not qualify for a SAQA recognised professional designation, which forms part of the requirements of the Professional Body status. This will be a sad state of affairs for such a prominent figure who is expected to be a leader and role model within the LIS profession (as has been the case to date and as described in the Act) and would result in the credibility of this person being diminished.

As the Professional Body for LIS in South Africa, LIASA cannot support this situation as it goes against the responsibility of among others, protecting and upholding the LIS profession. In the present case, while the practice is accounted for in the recruitment, the core LIS qualification is not mandatory – it should be. At present, Librarians in senior leadership roles have executive experience and working knowledge of good governance and corporate practices that include strategic and financial planning.

Therefore Sir, LIASA respectfully requests a reconsideration of the mandatory requirements of this key role and, move to the appointment of a professional librarian.

The Association is available to assist and to engage as deemed necessary by yourselves. As partners and collaborators of the drive to a better life for all South Africans through access to information, we wish you the best for our National Library and hope that our call for a revision of the current recruitment process will be seen in that light.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nikki Crowster".

Nikki Crowster

LIASA President 2018 - 2020

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