



LIASA National Office

P O Box 1598

Pretoria, 0001

Tel: 012 324 6096

e-mail: salw@liasa.org.za

SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY WEEK: 15 – 21 MARCH 2021

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) is celebrating South African Library Week (SALW) with the theme "**Libraries Matter!**" from **15 - 21 March 2021**. The week will be launched through a virtual event on **Monday, 15 March 2021**.

The past year has seen the whole world disrupted in ways that were unimaginable in March 2020 when LIASA presented the annual SALW celebration of all types of libraries and the services they offer to all communities across South Africa. The global pandemic has upended everything as we know it and libraries are no exception. The very nature of what libraries are and do has been impacted and we are forced to re-evaluate not only our services and how we deliver them to our user communities, but also the manner in which libraries will operate in the future.

Despite this upheaval, many libraries have managed to operate in novel ways in order to remain present and relevant in the lives of their user communities. From online storytelling to remote access to databases, from curb-side pickups to online programming, libraries have managed to continue providing a service to their communities.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that to a large extent access to information and resources has been severely curtailed in all types of libraries, whether school, academic, public or special libraries. Restriction on the number of onsite users and rising data costs have impacted severely on our most vulnerable members of society, rendering libraries almost invisible and vulnerable to further cost-cutting measures.

South Africa has the largest and most well-developed LIS sector in Africa and we need to remind our entire society that **Libraries Matter!**

Now more than ever we should advocate for libraries and the role that they play in society. Now more than ever we should show that LIBRARIES MATTER! They matter because:

- ❖ A core value of libraries is the right to freedom of access to information and freedom of expression as enshrined in our Bill of Rights and is a cornerstone of a democratic society.
- ❖ Libraries provide communal spaces for social, cultural, political and economic interaction especially in communities where such spaces do not exist. This may not be possible under prevailing circumstances, but at its heart, the library gives meaning to the ancient Greek concept of "*agora*" - an open space that served as a meeting ground for various activities of the citizens.
- ❖ Libraries contribute to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the UN 2030 Agenda through, among others, the inclusion of access to information, universal literacy, public access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and cultural heritage.
- ❖ Libraries play an important role in preserving and promoting our literary and cultural heritage.

Executive Committee Members:

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

LIASA is a SAQA recognised Professional Body
in accordance with the NQF Act 67 of 2008
Professional Body Number 920





LIASA National Office

P O Box 1598

Pretoria, 0001

Tel: 012 324 6096

e-mail: salw@liasa.org.za

- ❖ Libraries play a vital role in inculcating and fostering a literate society, from early literacy through storytelling and making materials available to children for reading and play, to providing access to a variety of reading and audio-visual materials for all ages, in all languages and reading formats.
- ❖ Libraries support academic success by providing access to valuable reference sources and databases; they encourage further research and thus contribute to the growth of the knowledge base of the country
- ❖ Libraries provide access to the internet (Wi-Fi as well as public computer access)
- ❖ Libraries play an important role in life-long learning by providing access to learning programmes from the cradle to the grave.

ABOUT SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY WEEK

LIASA initiated SALW in 2001 as a commemorative period when all types of libraries across the country use it as an opportunity to market their services and create awareness of the important role that libraries play in a democracy, advancing literacy, making the basic human right of freedom of access to information a reality, and to promote tolerance and respect in society.

The choice of the date commemorates the establishment by proclamation of the first public library, the South African Public Library, now the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town Campus), on **20 March 1818**. Furthermore, on **21 March** we celebrate **Human Rights Day** and our Bill of Rights recognises the **freedom of access to information as a basic human right**. An important historical event is thus linked with a crucial date in our democracy.

SALW was officially celebrated for the first time in 2002. The Week is a flagship LIASA project and is celebrated by all types of libraries across the country through programmes and activities.

ABOUT LIASA

LIASA is the SAQA recognised Professional Body for the Library and Information Services sector according to the NQF Act 67 of 2008 and a voluntary association which represents persons engaged or interested in library and information service (LIS) and millions of users and potential users of libraries in South Africa. LIASA aims to unite, develop and empower all people in the library and information field. It represents the interests of and promotes the development and image of library and information services in South Africa. More information can be found at: <https://www.liasa.org.za/> and about SALW at <https://www.liasa.org.za/page/salw> and <https://www.liasa.org.za/page/2021salw>

Executive Committee Members:

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

LIASA is a SAQA recognised Professional Body
in accordance with the NQF Act 67 of 2008
Professional Body Number 920

