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Regional Librarian, South

Masiphumelele (previously known as Site Five) is an informal settlement situated between the communities of Fish Hoek and Ocean View that came into existence in 1992.

In 1994 Jean Williams, former librarian of Ocean View and now director of Biblionef, started taking donated books to Masiphumelele on Thursday afternoons, offering passers-by the books from the boot of her car.

As interest grew and requests were made for specific subjects, she investigated several locations for a more permanent venue. For some time, she used a corner of the clinic in the mornings. She was now in contact with a different section of the community from those she had served in the afternoons and thus felt she was neglecting her original contacts. From there she used an area at the local school but had to ferry all the books, a table and chair to the venue every week. Jean continued her search for a more suitable location. An unused container looked promising but after she had emptied, cleaned it and made it presentable, the school authorities decided it could serve as a classroom. Eventually she was offered a room that the school used as a storeroom. Although the situation was not always convenient and the room very cramped, Jean persisted and started teaching the children the concept of a library, that is, borrowing and returning the library material.

A teacher's report that the school recorded less absentees on library day appeared to Jean confirmation of a measure of success. It was at about this stage of the project that Sue Alexander (librarian) from Fish Hoek Library started to contribute time and resources, sharing responsibility with Ocean View Library for maintaining the service. The library was at that time accessible to scholars only.

From squatter camp to informal settlement

In 1996, Jean discovered that the municipality owned an old farmhouse near the main road at the entrance of the settlement. Partly occupied by the Housing Department, the house had three empty unused rooms. On Jean's request Fish Hoek Municipality authorised the use of those rooms as a community library.

Once again Jean, Sue and their volunteers cleaned and spruced up the new venue;

**MASIPHUMELELE
LIBRARY
BLOSSOMS**

funds from the Ocean View Library Trust covered some of the expenses; shelving was contributed by Hangberg Library; the small stoep was enclosed and a bench and other items were donated.

The Western Cape Provincial Library Service provided suitable book material. Soon afterwards an official opening of the Masiphumelele Community Library was arranged and attended by local councillors. The keynote speaker was Virginia Kasana, the chief librarian from Langa Library.

After a housing dispute on 22 August 1999, the building was destroyed by fire. Continued efforts to start a library failed due to lack of funding. In 2002 funding was approved for the library plus an additional amount donated by Masiphumelele Corporation run by John and Carol Thompson, benefactors from the United States of America (USA). When the council money was withdrawn the Thompsons decided to take on the project alone with the assurance that the Fish Hoek Library would run and oversee the operation of the library.

The library was built at the beginning of 2003 and opened on 15 September 2003. The book supply was limited but with local and overseas donations plus the Provincial Library Service bookstock, the library now

offers a broad selection of titles. The library operates as a satellite of Fish Hoek Library. The staff are at present all on contract. Thando Melamane works at the library every day and is assisted by Fish Hoek contract staff. Additional opening hours are funded by Masiphumelele

Corporation.

The library has gone from strength to strength offering story-telling, school visits and a venue for outreach activities. Five nursery schools visit the library every Thursday morning (more than 100 children). They exchange their books and listen to stories. The staff attended the children's graduation ceremonies at the end of the year to witness the success of the programme.

Lap Reading

A unique programme, Lap Reading was started at Masiphumelele Library. Lap Reading is a concept used in the United States. Two teachers are required to present the project: one to do the literacy training and one to occupy the children. The Masiphumelele Corporation sponsors the project and Milli Firth, (Fish Hoek) and Emma Booï (Masiphumelele) currently run the programme. Mothers can bring their toddlers to the library and while they learn the basics of literacy the children listen to stories and enjoy a formal pre-school programme. Mothers then use their newfound skills to read to their children. Some comments from the students include:

- 'the Lap Reading programme is a ray of hope for mothers and children to help them bond through reading and books'
- 'books help children to open their imagination and be able to explore a world unknown to them'
- 'the mothers are encouraged to read in English and are taught how to go about their daily lives communicating in English'
- 'the programme has been a blessing and has helped to develop children from Masiphumelele intellectually, physically and socially'
- 'Dear friends, I'm healthy, I am well, hoping you guys the same. I still thinking of you all, missing my class too. Thanks to have library Masiphumelele because I got friends and sister now I love. Thanks for books. I did read things I learn, word I listen to pronounce. Lots to say guys, wishing all wonderful Christmas. I will be in King William's Town for three week. Be at work 10 January. Love you all. From your friend, Lorraine. Bye.'



Milli Firth from Fish Hoek getting down to work with Cynthia, one of the learners



Above: The Lap Reading group

Readers are Leaders

The Readers are Leaders programme, provided by the Provincial Library Service, assists students in developing their reading skills. The course is presented at different levels, from beginners to tertiary level. Three languages are available: Afrikaans, Xhosa and English.

Other activities

A group of mothers from Fish Hoek and Masiphumelele bring their children together one afternoon a week to read, play and socialise. On a daily basis, volunteers from Fish Hoek read to the children, help with homework and teach chess. They involve the children in a variety of activities to stimulate interest in reading.

Local schools have also shared projects with the children at the library.

During the year Masiphumelele Library was fortunate enough to host a morning of stories and traditional music from Mmadosini, the well-known Xhosa musician and story-teller. She thrilled adults and children with her haunting music and lively stories.

Computers have also been donated to the library. Educational programmes have been loaded onto the computer and staff and children are being taught how to use them.

False Bay College students also make use of the library to supplement their studies.

A few sets of board games have been donated for use by the children and during the holidays Fish Hoek Library presented some video shows provided by the Western Cape Provincial Library.

John and Carol Thompson have raised funds to add a double story to the library

Above right: Emma Booie and Thando Melamane choose a story for the children for the Lap Reading session



Right: Athandile playing while his mother is learning to read



which will provide a quiet study area. The first floor will be used for library extension activities. As John said, 'This programme has so many of the elements of what we stand for in MasiCorp: we built a library that the community lacked; Fish Hoek Library took responsibility for the success of the operation; Masiphumelele people were trained and jobs created for them; children are the beneficiaries; and the programme is expanded by the Fish Hoek community, using their skills to benefit the children.'

The project continues to grow and provides a much-needed service to the people of Masiphumelele, enriching both the local community and those in Fish Hoek who participate so enthusiastically.

Statistics

Book stock (Western Cape Library Service)

Afrikaans Fiction	20
Afrikaans Junior Fiction	100
Xhosa Fiction	147
Xhosa Junior Fiction	550
English Fiction	594
English Junior Fiction	624
Non-fiction	651
Junior Non-fiction	548
Study Collection	199
Junior Reference	69
Adult Reference	92

Circulation statistics for January to December 2004

Afrikaans Fiction	0
English Fiction	23
Xhosa Fiction	30
Non-fiction	9
Afrikaans Junior Fiction	0
English Junior Fiction	40
Xhosa Junior Fiction	59
Junior Non-fiction	22
Periodicals	8
Total	191