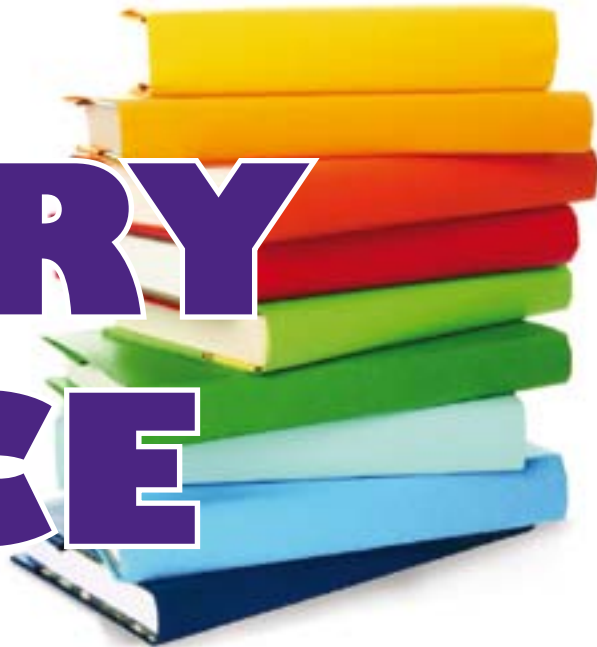


# OUR LIBRARY SERVICE



## Introduction

After being asked the same question for the umpteenth time, namely, 'oh, are you the guys near the Grand Parade?', we decided it is time. Time to once again highlight exactly what role the Western Cape Provincial Library Service plays in getting books to the end user.

This is thus the first in a series of illustrated articles explaining the activities of the different sections of the Western Cape Provincial Library Service. The Library Service works in conjunction with local authorities to provide a public library service to the people of the Western Cape. The public library on the other hand is the site that interfaces with the user.

The Provincial Library Service operates behind the scenes and is the organisation that provides the material and assists with providing the infrastructure and professional support to public librarians and local authorities. Being in the background often results in the wrong perception as the Service can appear to be 'invisible'. This is therefore the *raison d'être* for taking you on a photographic journey of our organisation and its different departments and giving you

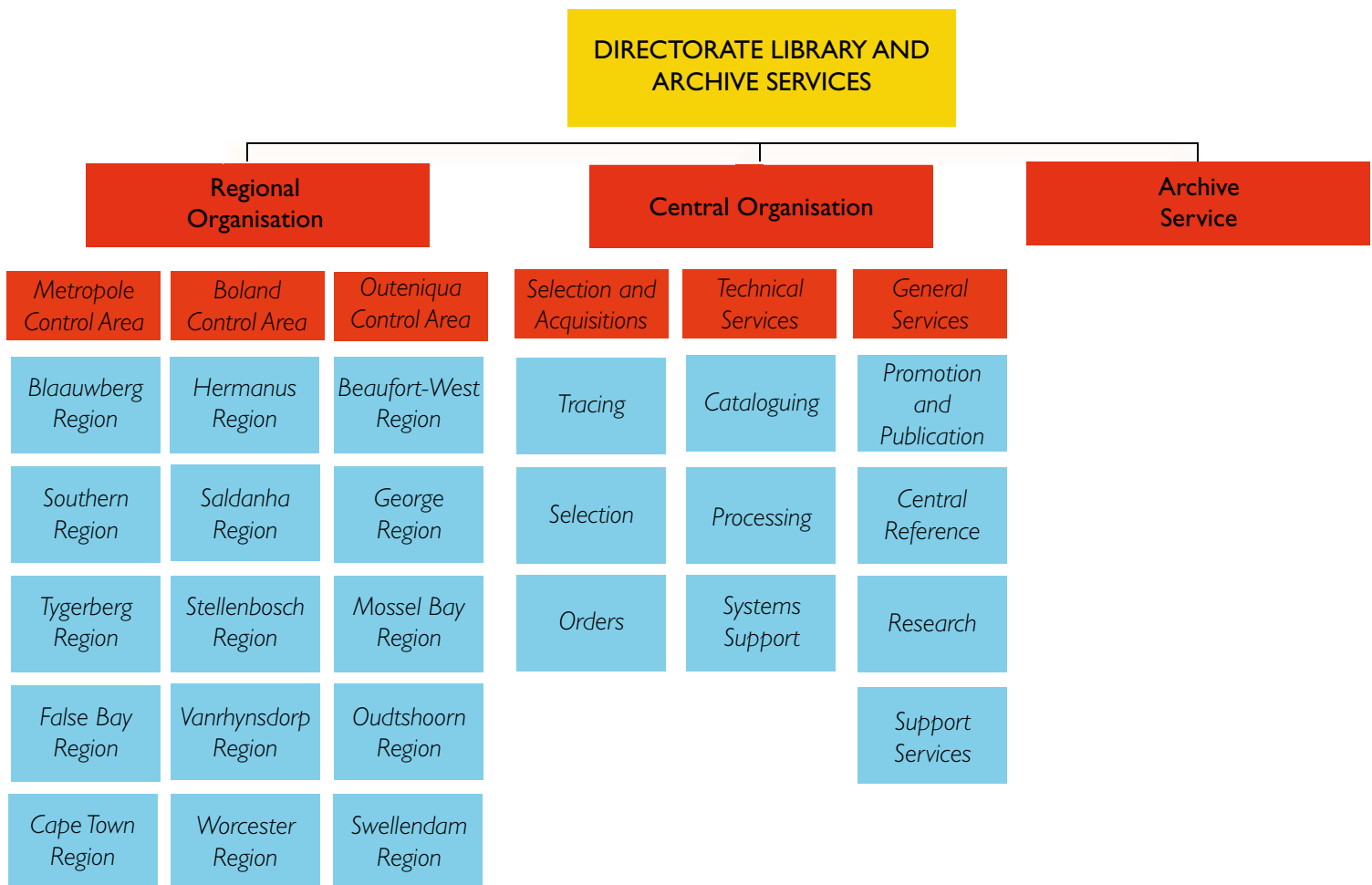
concrete examples of the work that is done in the various sections of the Library Service. Apart from familiarising readers with the activities of each section, readers will also 'meet' some of the faces behind the voices of the people who make things happen - those who facilitate the process to ensure that the public can ultimately have access to the wonderful gifts that libraries have on offer.

In the six issues of the **CL** to be published this year, we will be looking at the following sections:

January/February	Selection and Acquisitions
March/April	Technical Section
May/June	Regional libraries serving the City of Cape Town
July/August	Regional libraries serving rural areas
September/October	Publication and Promotion Section
November/December	Support Services

The organogram below will provide a context for this overview. It needs to be pointed out that some of the activities overlap, especially within the Central Organisation, and so we have not been territorial in our coverage of the work of sections, but made natural breaks between issues of **CL** where it would make the most sense to the reader.





## Selection and Acquisitions

Compiled by JOHANNA DE BEER

Assistant Director: Selection and Acquisitions

The key responsibility of the Provincial Library Service is the provision of library material to affiliated public libraries. This is done through a centralised system of selection, acquisition and processing of materials that are then distributed to public libraries via a network of regional libraries who also offer professional support. In this first article we will look at the Selection and Acquisitions Section. The work that we do focuses on two main areas:

- review, selection and acquisition of library material
- collection development.

Underpinning these tasks are the necessary and vital activities of budgetary control, record-keeping and the creation and maintenance of our on-line bibliographic database, which reflects all decisions made. Although book selection is covered here, the

Selection Section is also responsible for audio-visual material, that is, CDs and DVDs.

Our selection and acquisition system is distinguished by the following:

- The selection of books is based on reviews of actual books - copies need to be seen and handled to determine if they are suitable for public library purposes and to get a real idea of the contents that cannot be described with 100% accuracy by a review in a journal or a description in a catalogue, no matter how comprehensive.
- Reviews are written by a team of professional librarians.
- Registered vendors submit books on set dates, twice a month at present. Each book is accompanied by a tender slip. Once a selection decision is made, the order for a title is placed with the vendor who has offered the highest discount, accompanied by an approval copy, within a three consecutive day submission date period.
- Collective decision-making and representivity are features of our participative selection process that we are particularly proud of.

### Book selection meetings

Two book selection meetings are held per month, one for children's books and one for adult books. A book selection meeting date is added to a bibliographic record once a book is reviewed, with the list of titles to be considered at a meeting closed off on the Monday night of the week before a meeting is held. The reviews are now available online for public librarians and regional staff to read. They can make their decisions as to which titles they would like based on those reviews, their price, their needs, what other books are being considered, et cetera.

Though book selection meetings are held on a Thursday, the books to be considered, together with printouts of the reviews, are available two days prior to the meeting. Public librarians come in and look at the books on those days. Their requests as well as those of other public librarians who were only able to read the reviews online are channelled into the selection meeting in several ways, for example, requests are sent via e-mail and added to the bibliographic record, requests cards are filled in and put inside the book, or lists of titles are forwarded to librarians attending the selection meeting.

At book selection meetings we deal with the books themselves, the reviews, consider the opinions of the librarians attending the meeting and the wishes of those they represent as well as the needs of those librarians who have given their input in other ways. We have a budget that is divided into categories of material, for example, Afrikaans fiction, non-fiction, study material. That budget is then also divided between the metropolitan and rural areas as their needs also differ.

The decision to buy a title or not is made collectively by those attending the meeting. The number of copies that we buy of a title depends on many factors including funds available, 'competing' titles at a meeting, our coverage of the subject, the demand from libraries and the expected demand. The Provincial Library Service has 329 affiliated libraries and we order copies, not for individual libraries, but for the service as a whole. How titles and copies are distributed to libraries will be discussed in the articles on the Regional Organisation.



### UNPACKING OF SUBMISSION COPIES

Submission copies are delivered by registered vendors and unpacked every second Tuesday. Here Pansy Stevens, Vanessa Solomons and Redewaan Williams are checking titles against delivery notes.



### CHECKING OF SUBMISSION COPIES

Submission copies are checked against our bibliographic database. Current information will determine whether we will review the title or not. For exam-

ple, if we only have two old copies of a title in stock we would need to consider buying a reprint. Or, we can see that we have not bought any titles in this fiction series and therefore need not review volume 5, when volumes 1-4 are not in stock.

Ronel Bladen is seen here doing some of this checking. In the background are cabinets containing reviews of books reviewed from the beginning of the Library Service in the 1950s up until we computerised in the early 1990s, when the on-line selection database 'took over'.



### PRE-SELECTION MEETING

A collective decision is taken as to which approval copies to review. These early morning Friday meetings are the site of much heated debate as the opinions of reviewers and other librarians

are raised. Our motto is 'If in doubt, leave it in (to be reviewed)'. Together, the book selectors (or more accurately, book reviewers) have a rich and varied professional background in public and regional library work, which is augmented by the experience of others at this meeting. (Ltr) Dalena le Roux (Central Reference); Gerda Theron (Central Reference); Erich Buchhaus (Selection); Brenda Kyle (City of Cape Town Library Service) and Stanley Jonck (Selection). After this meeting, the books to be reviewed are divided up amongst the book selectors.

### MAKING OF RECORDS

Before a book is reviewed a record for that individual copy is created on the database by Vanessa Solomons. In addition to bibliographic details, information as to price and vendor are also included.







### REVIEWING A BOOK

Here Erich Buchhaus (right) reviews a book while Stanley Jonck is looking through some of the local and international newspapers and journals that are

used to source reviews.

After perusing a book, the book selector writes a review in which the contents of the book is described and a professional recommendation given. The way in which a book relates to our bookstock is indicated, for example, in the case of non-fiction what coverage we have on a subject. Wherever possible full text or quotes from published reviews are included to add to the range of opinions contained in a review. Selectors also make use of online sources and review databases such as Bowkers.



### BOOKPLUS LIBRARIANS LOOKING AT BOOKS BEFORE THE MEETING

Librarians from public libraries in Cape Town who use the Bookplus computerised library system

view the books on a Tuesday before a book selection meeting. They read reviews and make their selections. Each librarian also represents other libraries in a geographical grouping. Featured here are: (ltr) Karen Nefdt (Rondebosch Library); Nazlie Pandit (Mobiles); Felicia Truebody (Bridgetown Library); Angelika von Hees (Central Library); and Kumbula Macilikishe (Crossroads Library).



### LIBRARIANS LOOKING AT BOOKS BEFORE THE MEETING

Librarians from some public libraries in Cape Town view the books on a Wednesday before a book selection meeting. Other

librarians from the Library Service make use of this opportunity too. They read reviews and make their selections. Once again each librarian

also represents other libraries in his or her buddy group. Featured in this photo is (ltr) Lindelwa Mnyengeza (Tokai Library) and Yvette du Preez (Adriaanse Library).

### BOOK SELECTION MEETING

Librarians from public and regional libraries attend book selection meetings where book selectors present the titles that they have reviewed.



Public librarians from Cape Town represent their buddies, while regional librarians represent group interests too. Here book selector Linda Ngaleka appears to be enjoying the review of her colleague

Nomonde Ngqoba. Next to them, listening to the review and looking at other books under consideration are: (ltr) Agnes Adonis (Hout Bay Library); Shirley Dubois (Southern Region); Theuns Botha (Oudtshoorn Region); Erich Buchhaus (Selection); Mhlengi Ngcobo (Hermanus Region) and Stanley Jonck (Selection).



### BOOK SELECTION MEETING

The chairperson of the book selection meeting is Johanna de Beer, assistant director for Selection and Acquisitions. Here she is calling for opinions from the floor as to whether the book should be considered for purchase or not. Next to her, in front of the computer, is Jasmina Harker, who enters all decisions onto a spreadsheet. In this way budgetary control is

maintained at each meeting.



### BOOK SELECTION MEETING

Here one can see how many public and regional librarians attend a book selection meeting.

Meetings are open to all libraries from affiliated libraries. At this children's book selection meeting, held on 28 January 2010, there were librarians from as far afield as Worcester; Ceres, Oudtshoorn, Milnerton, Wynberg, Kuilsriver, Delft and Valhalla Park.



Pansy Stevens (right) does some of that necessary checking while Johanna de Beer signs the orders. Once this is done, the approval copies are returned to the vendors.



Seen here is Anna-Marie Rabie entering an order. Orders are faxed to vendors or they collect them personally.



from this libraries can select titles for subscription. At present Lindsay Bird handles 6656 subscriptions for periodicals and newspapers.

### THE TROLLEY

After a book selection meeting there is administrative work, checking and rechecking to see that quantities and bibliographic details are correct, et cetera.

### ORDERS

The signed requisitions from a selection meeting leave the Selection Section and are taken to the Orders Section where orders are placed with vendors.

### PERIODICALS

The Acquisitions Section is also responsible for the ordering of periodicals for public libraries. Every three years a catalogue of periodical titles is compiled and

### SPECIAL BUYS and BOOKLISTS

The Selection Section is responsible for the development of the Library Service's collection as a whole. To supplement what is ordered at regular selection meetings, some materials may be purchased as part of a special buy, for example, we have standing orders for some annuals and reference works. Although book selectors all review a range of materials, they also tend to 'look after' areas of the stock. Here Sabrina Gosling considers some travel guides.



Selectors promote the Library Service's stock through the reviews they write for the **Cape Librarian**, the articles they write and the booklists they compile for the **CL**, as well as compiling the annual list of literary awards.

In the next article, we will see what happens once an order is delivered.

