

# LIBRARY WEEK

## 2012

### focus on the youth

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### *Background*

The annual celebration of Library Week during the third week of March forms part of a national drive to promote information services and resources as well as reading and the benefits of literacy. This is made possible by the Western Cape Provincial Library Service in partnership with local authorities.

### *Role of the Library Service*

- Promotion of literacy  
One of the key objectives of the Provincial Library Service is the promotion of library usage and provision of library material, to create a culture of reading and lifelong learning and to provide in the information, reading and learning needs of people in the Western Cape. Public libraries act as an agent for life-long learning by providing resources for formal and non-formal education. Libraries also assist in combating illiteracy. As an agent for lifelong learning one of the objectives of the Library Service is to provide funding to local libraries for literacy promotion and projects as well as to assist in presenting literacy projects at public libraries.
- Provision of educational material  
The core business of the Library Service is to provide books and non-book material to public libraries in the Western Cape. The material supplied by the Service to inform and educate the population can

lead to recreational activities such as reading, listening to music and watching videos instead of becoming involved in drug use and crime. Encouraging the youth to read will also contribute to economic growth, as the information resources at their disposal can equip them with the necessary skills required in the job market. The Service endeavours to provide safe public spaces for study and a recreational facility beneficial to positive social development. An informed youth is important for the alleviation of social problems.

The Service aims to better the quality of life for all through the provision of relevant library material. Providing free access to a wealth of informational, educational and recreational resources also assist in the fight against poverty. The Service places special emphasis on the role of libraries to act as information resource centres for local communities. Appropriate training of staff and utilising of electronic information sources will strengthen the provision of information for school projects to public libraries by the Central Reference Section of the Library Service.

The Library Service also strives to make libraries accessible to disadvantaged communities. Through making library services accessible to these communities the Service plays an important role not only in the maintaining, but especially the development of economic and social infrastructure.

- Targeting the youth  
More libraries with appropriate facilities are needed to enhance the education

level of the youth and to prepare them for employment. Youth development is also promoted through outreach activities at public libraries. Promotional material aimed at the youth is produced to create an awareness of the role of libraries as a centre for education and information and to establish a reading culture. Cultural programmes for the youth are also offered by public libraries.

#### • Library Week

The purpose of celebrating Library Week is the marketing and promotion of public libraries to library users and potential library users, and to make people aware of the importance of their library. It strives to encourage public libraries to highlight the cultural, educational and recreational aspects of the library. The public library plays a vital role in the information and technological age we live in as much of the work we do has become information based.

The theme for Library Week 2012 focuses on the youth and teenagers: *Stay connected @ your library.*

The promotional material provided to the public libraries will enable librarians to organise activities for the communities which they serve. Attractive promotional material has been produced, such as recyclable plastic library bags, bookmarks in the shape of a cell phone; balloons; attractive posters; practical activity books for children; multi-functional library stickers and peaks. Limited additional promotional material has been produced for the launch of Library Week 2012, such as printed highlight-

ers and cell phone pouches. Librarians are encouraged to also display the posters in venues other than their libraries, such as taxi ranks, churches, clinics and schools so as to attract non-library users.

1,000 spunbound library bags will be showcased at the launch to promote a potential alternative library bag that is environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Although there is an intense focus on the information resources and the information services in our public libraries during this week, it should not be limited to only this week – promoting libraries should be done throughout the year.

Librarians are encouraged to provide inputs for the theme for Library Week 2013. Suggestions can be forwarded to Neville Adonis at: <neville.adonis@pgwc.gov.za>

Librarians, be part of a great opportunity in celebrating Library Week 2012 and *Stay connected @ your library!*

### *Origin and development of Public Library Week through the years*

The idea of a National Library Week for South Africa was aired for the first time at the annual conference of the South African Library Association, which was held in Kimberley, 20-23 September 1965.

Nothing materialised until 1985 when Public Library Day, driven by the Public Libraries Group of the South African Institute for Library and Information Science (SAILIS) and coordinated by Brian Paterson and Michael Barbour, was celebrated for the first time on 6 June 1985. The objective of this project was to bring the many services offered by the public library to the attention of the community. In 1986 Public Library Day was celebrated on 8 October.

In 1987 no official Public Library Day was held, but public libraries presented activities on an ad hoc basis.

In 1988 SAILIS declared that from that year onwards Library Week would be cel-

ebrated during the third week of May each year in libraries throughout South Africa.

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) had as its vision a celebration of a truly National Library Week, one that would embrace all types of libraries and all kinds of users and potential users. With this in mind, in 2001 LIASA embarked on a process of consultation with its membership and the following proposal, supported by the Western Cape Provincial Library Service, was accepted: 'that the week within which 20 March falls should be National Library Week. In the event of this day falling on a weekend, the week preceding it should be celebrated as National Library Week.'

20 March is an important date in the history of libraries in South Africa. The South African Public Library, now known as the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town) was the first library to be established in South Africa. This was done by a government proclamation on 20 March 1818. The South African Public Library started off as a true public library and has played an important role in South African library history.

