

MAKWENZEKE

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SALB OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



sport, arts & culture

Department:
Sport, Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**SOUTH AFRICAN
LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND**

An agency of the
Department of Sport, Arts and Culture



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MR VUSUMZI MKHETSHANE
CHIEF EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Being the editor of the Makwenzeke Quarterly Newsletter is an enormous honour, and it gives me great pleasure to bring this version of the newsletter back for 2023.

The numerous projects and activities that South African Library for the Blind (SALB) staff and members were actively involved in during the third quarter of the 2023/2024 financial year will be highlighted in this issue.

The library obtained an unqualified audit report from the Auditor General (AGSA), and our Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dr. Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya, was recently appointed to the IFLA committee. These will be the two main themes.

Additionally, we'll read accounts of the remaining SALB activities from the second quarter. This library is renowned for its commitment to providing the blind community with library services and access to knowledge and information through perseverance in the face of adversity.

Highlights from the "Casual Day Celebration" will also be shown, and you can view some of the pictures in our gallery section. I want to extend my sincere gratitude to every employee who helped write the fantastic and motivational pieces that made this newsletter issue possible.

The SALB CEO, Dr. Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya, the SALB Board of Directors, our leadership at the Departments of Sport, Arts, and Culture (DSAC), as well as our donors, deserve special thanks for their unwavering support throughout our endeavours as an organisation and for making it possible for us to see this edition's successful creation.

As the editor, I pledge to improve your favourite newsletter's format, appearance, and feel while bringing you more thrilling content.

Enjoy the reading.

Public Relations and Communication Officer
South African Library for the Blind



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE DR PATEKA NTSHUNTSHE-MATSHAYA

On behalf of SALB, let me take this opportunity to welcome you on our resuscitated newsletter aimed at keeping abreast our members, donors and oversight forums on the developments taking place at our library. Take a big breath and familiarise yourself with this platform, so much positive revelations are coming, do not miss them.

As the end of 2023 draw to a close whilst reflecting on quarter two (2) reports, it is my great pleasure to reflect upon the changes and upheaval we have experienced this year.

I appreciate the resiliency and persistence I have witnessed across all the SALB main and mini library staff over the past several months as we worked and planned together to ensure the continued access of blind, visually impaired people to reading material and devices to effectively read. I appreciate the SABC Radio stations' support of a project that has been steered by our enthusiastic

Chairperson of the Board, Mr Xolisa Yekani. Despite the upheaval the entity experienced when it comes to budgets, post the Covid 19 period, we can attest to doubled up staff's commitment to providing equitable and inclusive access to information and technological resources.

We live in a technology-rich world in which most of us have access to the infrastructure. The switch to virtual reading and information access possibility needs to be further explored for our blind and visually impaired communities and SALB like all other Libraries is here to fill that gap. The mini libraries though on a smaller scale does also fill the information gap by creating spaces and platforms for blind and visually impaired people to be able to meet, engage and socialise with each other mitigating isolation that comes with being "blind". We worked very close with courier services, eBooks and talking books suppliers to ensure these electronic copies of books are made available through the SALB website to blind and visually impaired people with internet in remote areas. Our libraries continue to be here to fill the isolation gaps our blind people have. The transition in terms of creating conducive engagement spaces is in the pipeline of our main library at Makhanda. The first reading space, gallery and the upcoming training laboratory will somewhat bring our blind people to the main library. It is part of my philosophy and library training that, to fulfil the role of

being a librarian, spaces and opportunities must be created to integrate reading material, technology, reading devices and library user to execute the full function of being a “library”.

We strive to provide equitable and inclusive access with a user centred approach to our resources, services, and spaces, especially during times of change and upheaval.



SALB OBTAINS AN UNQUALIFIED OPINION ON AGSA EXTERNAL AUDIT 2022/2023

By Pumla Mahanjana

Dear newsletter subscribers and readers,

We are thrilled to share some fantastic news with you. After careful consideration and thorough evaluation, we are proud to announce that SALB has received an unqualified opinion regarding AGSA External Audit for the financial period 2022/2023.

This signifies that our team of experts, after extensive analysis, has given an unreserved endorsement to be progressing positively and striving for continuous growth as a public entity.

SALB Board and Management wish to express their gratitude to our staff, stakeholders, and mostly our readers and the experts who contributed to this unqualified opinion. We acknowledge their support, feedback and contributions that have led to this positive outcome.

In closing, we want to emphasize that this unqualified opinion reflects our collective efforts. Together we have reached this milestone and together we will continue to achieve great things. Thank you for being part of our journey.



LIBRARY VISIT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE SENIOR OFFICIALS

By Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya



Being a Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) national entity whose main office is located at Makhandla, there would be that feeling of being far from the main national oversight but during the months of July to September, that perception was rather changed by the visit of the three oversight senior officials (Infrastructure led by Ms Pam Ben Mazwi, Governance and Compliance led by Ms Tembeka Mpanza and Mr Kgaogelo Pasha and National Archives and Libraries Chief Director Mr Puleng Kekana).



Photo: Ms Pam Ben Mazwi



These visits created a sense of belonging and hope to the library management team led by Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya. "The three delegates came at the right time for the right cause" said Dr Ntshuntshe-Matshaya.

The infrastructure team left the entity with so much smiles as through their library tour managed to guide and assist on how the CEO's vision of a user centred 21st century library can be realised through the establishment of services that will place the blind people at the centre of the newly renovated building. The library management cannot wait to launch the first of its kind spaces that includes the Reading room, Training/Learning Hub and a Gallery showcasing how the library has transitioned from the 100 years old Josie Wood blindlib to the state-of-the-art South African Library for the Blind.

The team led by Ms Mpanza took us through new developments taking place at the national office and the awaited transition post appointment of the new Minister, Mr Zizi Kodwa.

On the other hand, the library management shared its envisioned upcoming developments, challenges, and milestones on instability in terms of budget, staffing and how the team of four ladies (Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya, Ms Pumla Mahanjana, Ms Linda Ngaleka and Ms Lizeka Qumza) strives to rise against all odds by working hard and smarter to make sure SALB receives unqualified audits.

Behind all these positive spin-offs is the dedication and commitment of SALB staff who are the pillars behind the management to make sure the entity remains relevant in alignment with the SALB Act 91 of 1998.

The visit by the Chief Director of Archives and Libraries on Monday, 11 September 2023, added another value as the department managed to convince provincial libraries to review and increase the funds transferred to the entity so as the MOA and appointment of the provincial Coordinators and their Assistants to three years as a one-year approach was yielding positive results in staff recruitment.

“As we chant our way forward to the newly revitalized library building and spaces, we hope these strides will trigger new revelations to government funding and potential funders of this South African and an African jewel for blind people” expressed Dr P Ntshuntshe-Matshaya.



Photo: Mr Jonathan Bennette - SALB Technical Officer leading the delegation on a tour to the construction site.



Photo: Ms Pumla Mahanjana, Mr Puleng Kekana, Mr Thembile Gxekwa, Ms Charlene Prince

THE CEO OF SALB, DR PATEKA NTSHUNTSHE-MATSHAYA APPOINTED AS THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REGIONAL DIVISION COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR IFLA 2023-2025

By Vusumzi Mkhetsane



We are happy to share the new leadership for the IFLA Sub-Saharan Africa Region Division Committee for the next two years (2023-2025).

The committee comprises of twenty members representing the Sub-Saharan Africa Region. Our very own Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya has also been appointed as the member of this International Federation. Congratulations to the CEO on her appointment to the IFLA Sub-Saharan Africa Region Division. We wish her all the best during the two-year service in the International Federation.

SALB STEALS THE WORLD CONGRESS FOR LIBRARIANS HELD AT ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

By Pasha Alden

The team from the SALB led by the CEO, Dr Ntshuntshe-Matshaya and the Chairperson of the SALB Board stole over 3500 delegates when they presented their paper titled “Promoting Social Cohesion to South African Blind people: A case study of the Library for the Blind”. The topic on its own catchy as it was, it drew more attention from the world congress librarians when the CEO who is fully sighted presented with Ms Pasha Alden using three devices (two laptops and a braille reading device Pasha use). This transformative way of showcasing “social cohesion” in action did not only elevate the flag of the South African Library for the Blind but has placed South Africa and Africa as a continent in the European spotlight.



Photo: Ms Pasha Alden and Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya

In these congresses rarely does participants finds opportunity to mingle with the IFLA President, however because of the uniqueness of blind people attending the congress, the President of IFLA Barbara Lison could not hold her breath. As the South African Library for the Blind, with our new philosophy drawn from UBUNTU, “we still believe blindness or any physical challenges should not view as hindering factors to realise our vision and goals”, so says Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya- SALB CEO.

It is through such encouraging wisdom that we urge our blind colleagues, to take advantage of various opportunities brought in their midst. DSAC has now opened opportunities for everyone to express themselves through publishing and or join the South African authors through scholarly engagements. We do have our blind people wherever they are that ready to work with us towards realisation of their publishing dreams. On behalf of SALB we would like to

express our gratitude the Board, DSAC and Library Association of South Africa whose members made our IFLA Conference navigation easier. On that team Dr Sentoo- DUT, Rose Pasha- DSAC, Dora Akerman-CUT, Mandla Ntombela- Msunduzi library, Dr Selamatsela- Wits University Library, Betsy Eister- CUT Library, Lindi Nhlapo-UNISA- AFLIA regional office and Ms Khotsoane. Their extra ordinary collegial support will never be underestimated, together we have taught the world what “UBUNTU” stands for.



Photo: Mr Xolisa Yekani- SALB Board Chairperson, Ms Barbara Loison-IFLA President (2021-2023), Mr Mandla Ntombela- Library Director Msunduzi Library, Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya- SALB CEO and Pasha Alden



Photo: Dr Daisy Selematsela (Wits University) and Dr P Ntshuntshe - Matshaya (SALB CEO)



Backrow: Ms Nthabiseng Kotsokoane (IFLA), Ms Rose Pasha, Mr Mandla Ntombela- Library Director Msunduzi Library

Right to left: Pasha Alden- SALB Braille Advisory Standards Specialist, Mr Xolisa Yekani- SALB Chairperson, Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya- SALB CEO

THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AUDIO PRODUCTION SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE

By Charlene Prince

During the final week of Term 2, June 19 to June 23, Grade 10's from Victoria Girls High School were to be involved in Community Service as part of their Life Orientation course. The course involved finding an organization or person involved in community projects who is willing to have the girls work with them. The learners were encouraged to organize being involved in a service that they find interesting and worthwhile. The learners had to organize the community service on their own and had to contact the relevant person or organization in which they were interested in working for themselves.



Photo: Mila doing a Voice Test

Learners had to be involved in community service for at least one week [Monday to Friday] for a minimum of three hours per day. Four learners showed an interest in The South African Library for the Blind's Audio Production Department. The girls were split into two groups and during the weeks of 26 - 30 June 2023 and 10 - 14 July 2023 Audio Production hosted them, they were Amy Arends, Cayden Daniels, Sue-Ann Swanepoel and Mila Mandongana.

On their first day they received an introduction to what audio production entails before being tasked with sorting and shelving print copies in their language order. Amy Arends and Cayden Daniels made light work of this task and surprised by the number of books we still must convert into audio. During the remainder of the two weeks, they were exposed and trained in the more intricate details of producing an audio book. They were expected to do the table of contents of new books which were received from LIS (library services) too doing the mandatory voice tests we have our narrators do before becoming a volunteer.

The girls assisted with doing recopies of a lot of Afrikaans titles that either went missing in the post or was too badly damaged to be used again. They were fascinated with the equipment we use for producing CDs and the Victor Reader Stratus (playback device) we provide our members with and use in-house to check the quality of our CDs.



Photo: Amy and Caden doing Labelling & checking

Mila Mandongana was brave enough to do a voice test for 3 of our 11 official languages, English, Afrikaans & isiXhosa.

As much as she was nervous at first, she quickly got the hang of it and enjoyed the process, and she showed a keen interest in becoming a fully-fledged narrator soon. During the final week of the community service between the four girls 130 recopies were made and were handed to LIS ready for circulation again.

As much as the learners were interested in the production of an audio book, they also had a few questions about visually impaired people and how they use cellphones and get around on their own. Our very own Ms. Nomsa Mukwevho was very helpful in this aspect and was happy to help and explain these things to them. She took three of the four girls, Amy Arends, Cayden Daniels and Sue-Ann Swanepoel on a short field trip outside the library



Photo: Mila copying and printing CDs

Top right: Ms N Mukwevho reading braille.

Middle Photo: Amy & Cayden packing books on shelves.

Bottom right: Mila doing a voice test



It was a pleasure to host the girls and share our inner workings with them. I hope they learned a lot and that they are more informed about the library as a whole and the services we render to our blind and visually impaired members.

SALB CELEBRATES LONG SERVICE OF EXCELLENCE FOR ITS MEMBERS IN THE ORGANISATION

By Vusumzi Mkhetsane

Working in an organisation for more than 40 years is absolutely a remarkable milestone and achievement for any employee in their careers. This kind of a milestone usually comes with mixed emotions and moreover, some excitement as the working world across the industries have different dynamics as one advances to the finishing line which is possibly their retirement years.



Photo: Mr A Brooks, Mr T Gxekwa and Colleagues

This is a case for Mr Andrew Brooks as he celebrates his 40-year anniversary as a loyal employee of the South African Library for the Blind.

The 58-year-old Brooks joined the organisation way back in 1983 and worked as a general worker with no formal portfolio back then. He is currently working in the Production and Standards Unit in Audio Production as a Digital Technical Assistant. Prior to 1994 as the country was facing political instability, the workplace was also met with challenges that employees had to face on daily basis including transformation and equality issues. Against all odds, Mr Brooks persevered and remained a loyal employee to the SALB. His characters of being trustworthy, hardworking and goal driven has contributed to his lifetime achievement of being a well-respected and experienced member of the library whos' work and people's skills are appreciated by the organisation and by SALB's management.

"I started working with different forms of media including reel to reel, mark 4 tapes, cassette tapes then we moved to CDs. My first flight on a plane was due to a working trip when I went to Durban Westville Prison to provide Audio Training to prisoners as part of a project to grow the library's collection Audio collection as well as our contribution of the rehabilitation of prisoners to a larger society at the time. Some of my highlights at the SALB are being able to be afforded an opportunity to transfer the skills to the new generation who recently joins the organisation. Being in the forefront assisting in the change of

occupational policies and inclusion for all workers of the library is also one of the biggest achievements that I treasure in my working experience. I am forever thankful to the SALB for granting me an employment opportunity and I am proud to be associated with this growing organisation,” said Mr Brooks.

The SALB management team is pleased to have worked with “Mr B” as he is affectionately known by his colleagues and is looking forward to Mr Brooks further contributions to the SALB vision and mission as he counts few years to his retirement years.



Photo: Mr Xola Kila (Library Dispatch Assistant), Ms Nomsa Mukwevho (Braille Quality Control Officer), Mr Andrew Brooks (Digital Technical Assistant).

In celebration of this auspicious event, the CEO of SALB, Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya, handed over a certificate of Long Service of Excellence Award to Mr Brooks in recognition of his contribution to the mandate of the Library on Friday, 29 September 2023. Also receiving the award for ten-year service of Excellence was his colleague, Mr Xola Kila.

SALB HAS A NEW MINI-LIBRARY LOCATED AT DR RUTH MOMPATI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, SOUTHEY VILLAGE

By Vusumzi Mkhetsane



Photo: Mr Oliphant engaging inside the Mini-Lib



Photo: The View inside the Mini-Lib

The South African Library for the Blind (SALB) is excited to announce its new Mini-Library space that is located at Dr Ruth Mompoti District Municipality in Southey Village, North West Province.

The Mini-Library forms part of the Dr Ruth Mompoti Community Library structure which was recently unveiled and launched by the MEC for North West Department of Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation (ACSR) MEC Kanetswe Mosenogi accompanied by the Mayor of Kagisano Molopo Local Municipality. The inclusion of this Mini-Library will serve the needs of blind and visually impaired members of this community and will assist in the promotion of access to relevant information as well as rendering library services for the blind

SALB RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

By Vusumzi Mkhetsane



Photo: Staff Members hard at work

Risk management is the process of determining the workplace hazards that are most likely to occur and then developing mitigation plans for those hazards. On Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature in Makanda (Grahamstown), the management and staff of the South African Library for the Blind (SALB) attended a Risk Assessment Workshop hosted by Lunika Chartered Accountants and Auditors to raise knowledge of risk management within the South African Library for the Blind.

THE OMASA CONFERENCE PROVES TO BE A LEARNING CURVE FOR SALB DELEGATES

By Vusumzi Mkhetsane

The SALB delegation felt empowered by the Orientation and Mobility Association of South Africa (OMASA) conference which took place in Sandton, Gauteng Province from 23rd to 25th August 2023.

The OMASA conference represents, promotes and protects the orientation and mobility practitioners who are serving in South Africa. This year's conference was well attended by professionals who are working in this

space including optometrists and ophthalmologists. Ms Nomsa Mukwevho, and Ms Nombasa Kate from the South African Library for the Blind were among the conference delegates representing the library. Also attending the conference were colleagues from Guide Dogs South Africa.

This was a good opportunity for the conference delegation as they were offered an opportunity to mingle, meet and greet on the first day of the conference ahead of the actual conference's three-day proceedings.



During the conference, important topics were discussed by different speakers, and these include among others the issues of HPCSA, the legal perspective on Gender Based Violence, Autism as a sensory-motor disability, counseling as well as the IMC18. Advocate Gugulethu Nkosi also shared her presentation on the international practices that are employed in the USA including a map and board equipment that is used in the states by children who are visually impaired. This equipment is valued at about R 7 000 South African rands. Borrowing best practices and expertise from international member states may shape and improve how South Africans do things and ensure growth and development in many aspects including how the blind sector operates using modern technology and equipment.

“The conference was a learning curve for us, attending such a conference is eye-opening. As we engaged with our colleagues during the conference it’s exciting to see how many people showed interest in the SALB and the work that we do. We would love to partner with Orientation and Mobility when we do our outreach programs in the future” concluded Mukwevho.



The SALB delegation is looking forward to attending a similar conference of this nature so that they can remain empowered with new information to apply to their daily operations in serving the blind and visually impaired community.



SALB AUDIO PRODUCTION STAFF MEMBERS, CELEBRATE NARRATOR’S 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

By Charlene Prince

One of SALB’s valued home narrator, Jennie Haswell, celebrated her 80th birthday today, 10 August 2023. The Audio Production Supervisor, Ms Charlene Prince and the Head of Audio Production, Mr Melton Kivitts were invited to this momentous occasion.



Photo: SALB Audio Production Supervisor: Ms Charlene Prince, Ms Jennie Haswell and SALB Head of Audio Production: Mr Melton Kivitts.

A surprise birthday party was organised by Jenny’s friends at the new club house of the retirement village & frail care centre, Somerset Place, where she is currently staying. The surprise birthday party was a huge success, as Jenny knew nothing about it and was really surprised to see all the people who came to celebrate with her. The residents and friends of Jenny raised R3000 and got her a gas heater as a gift, as she does not have a heater. Jenny’s daughter (Karen) and son (Neil) came all the way from Durban and Johannesburg to celebrate this special day with her. Tears of joy were running down her face, when she entered the club house, and everyone yelled “surprise!”

Jenny Haswell, who has been a narrator (reader) of English books for SALB, has been narrating since 2010. She has narrated a total number of 321 books for our blind and print-handicapped readers thus far. This is by far the most books one person has narrated in English for SALB to date. We commend her for this achievement.



Also in attendance at the party were two of SALB's former narrators (Jane Osborne and Anne Eales), one ex SALB staff member (Ria Greaves) and two current SALB narrators (Mary Schudel and Jenny Emslie).



On behalf of SALB management and staff, we wish Jenny the best of birthdays and may this year bring her all the success she deserves. Thank you for being a valuable member of our SALB Audio Production narration team. God Bless

LITERACY DAY CELEBRATIONS AND FUNDA MZANTSI PREPARATORY PROGRAMME

By Vuyokazi Mandongana

International Literacy Day is observed internationally and is celebrated each year on 8 September. It was declared by UNESCO on 26 October 1966 at the 14th session of UNESCO's General Conference. It was celebrated for the first time in 1967. DSRAC used this opportunity to officially open the Wyngaard Public Library at Mlungisi Township, in Komani. This library has been closed for about 5 years and has been recently renovated into a beautiful Library.

The programme was also used as an opportunity to prepare Eastern Cape Funda Mzantsi Championship (FMC) participants.

When doing the purpose of the day, the Library and Archives Services' Director, Ms Ndzunzo emphasized the importance of the role of parents in creating a reading nation. In her speech she said "children do not listen to what we say but imitate what we do". This means children will not read if the parents do not read. She further said, parents need to be very strict about reading, saying there must be days where television is switched off and the family read and share stories they have read.

South African Library for the Blind (SALB) had 5 members who participated in the programme.

As one of the Mini-Libs objectives is to ensure the inclusiveness of blind and visually impaired library members in the library programs, this programme addressed that. The 5 members were from different districts in the province, and they participated as follows:

- Pausha Joubert from Buffalo City Metro participated in the Book Review in English.
- Nomakhaya Bukashe from Buffalo City Metro participated in the Book Review isiXhosa.
- Judy Wessels from Sarah Baartman participated in the Book Review and Spelling Bee in Afrikaans.
- Lubabalo Soxujwa from Sarah Baartman participated in the Debate in English.
- Sinesipho Meji from OR Tambo District participated in Debate in English.

Judy Wessels got a third prize in spelling bee and book discussion. All SALB members showed competitiveness as they were confident when competing with sighted participants. After the programme, all participants went home with participation prizes of a tablet.



Photo: EC Project Assistant, Mr Thembelani Dzedze with SALB members at the Literacy Day Celebrations in Mlungisi Township in Komani.



Photo: Ms Judy Wessels being assisted on stage while doing a book review.



Photo: Senior Librarian: Outreach and Member Liaison, Ms Vuyokazi Mandongana flanked by library members at the Literacy Day Celebrations in Mlungisi Township, Komani.

These are the programmes where the impact of Mini-Libs is clearly visible. People are beginning to understand that there is nothing a blind person cannot do, and being blind does not mean you cannot mingle with other people.

