

Islamic Library

NATHLERA CROMBIE

Librarian

Islamic Library was founded sixteen years ago under the auspices of a reading group. Spearheaded by two individuals from the pharmaceutical profession, the Islamic Library opened its doors with a few books and videos. Looking back it has come a long way and at present it boasts the latest computerised system with a membership of over fifteen thousand.

This special library is the first public Islamic Library in South Africa. Currently the library has a collection of over fifteen thousand items, which deals with all aspects of Islam, that includes titles from art and geography to law and classical literature.

The library functions daily including weekends with three full-time librarians and three library assistants who assist on weekends.

The library's computer system is known as Stylis, an integrated database management system, which assists in the recording of our circulation. Situated in the Gatesville mosque complex, in the bustling area of Gatesville, it is accessible to many people and its membership hail from the Boland areas of Stellenbosch, Malmesbury and Worcester. The Gatesville mosque complex also known as Masjidul Quds, a replica of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Palestine, houses the Islamic college, which offers diploma degree courses, and an afternoon Islamic School for younger children. The library is inundated with users daily.

The library is open to all irrespective of

race or creed. Membership is free and anyone over the age of six can join. Members are divided into three categories, children, adults and students with specific loan privileges. The library is housed in the south wing of the mosque. It is divided into various sections, which incorporates a children's section with books ranging from stories to basic religions as well as an extensive video collection of six hundred titles which is very well used. The open section, which is the largest, covers subjects from Quran, Islamic history and Islamic jurisprudence to name a few. There is also a short loan section which is well-used by students from various institutions such as the University of South Africa (UNISA), University of the Western Cape (UWC) and University of Cape Town

(UCT) pursuing their studies in Islam.

The library also has a reference section with an Arabic collection obtained from abroad, which is used by religious scholars in the community. In addition an Urdu School in the area has a special collection at the library on loan for their students.

Besides the daily running of the library, regular programmes are held every month to empower and uplift the community.

These programmes have a monthly theme dealing with different issues important to the community. The library also offers block-loan books to libraries, from community libraries to municipal public libraries.

Islamic Library is a community-based organisation and receives no funding, thus it has to rely on donations and fundraising for its existence. The library has an executive committee which oversees the running of the library and is actively involved in fundraising. The annual 10km Big Walk, popularly known as the Foodworld 10km Big Walk is a brainchild of Islamic Library. This event has Islamic Library as its major beneficiary with the Red Cross Children's Hospital also receiving a substantial amount.

With the support of the community and the funds generated by the Big Walk the library received its long-awaited shelving this year. With more literature becoming available additional space is required and the aim is to acquire its own premises.

Islamic Library has become an integral part of the Muslim community and with continued support it can further facilitate research and information on Islam.

2004



Left: The children's section tucked into a corner

Below left: The video section of the library, with viewing facilities, stocks over 600 titles

Below: Librarian Nathlera Crombie at the counter





△ A general view of the bright and cheerful library showing well-stocked shelves

▽ A side view of the mosque and Minaarah (minaret). Note the symmetrical arches which are a major architectural feature. The mosque is a replica of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Palestine

Below centre: A lovely sun-filled atrium is part of the entrance to the main area of worship



△ The main entrance to the mosque, with a detail (above) of the golden dome and the Minaarah

◁ A detail of one of the roof-supporting pillars. Note the exquisite workmanship

▽ The interior of the mosque with the Mihrab pointing in the direction of the Qiblah (Mecca) and the Mimbar (pulpit) where the Imaam delivers his sermon. A soft blue, beautifully-designed carpet covers the entire floor area

