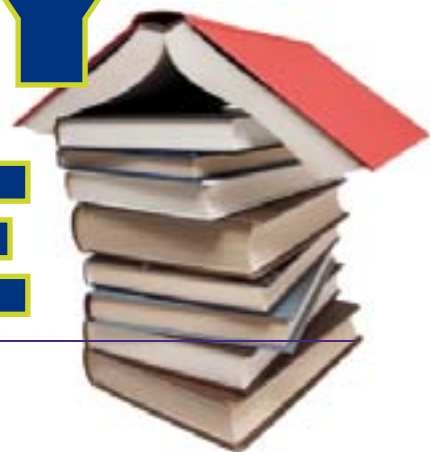


OUR LIBRARY SERVICE

Metropole Control Area



PIETER HUGO

Assistant Director, Metropole

Most regional librarians sooner or later experience some variation on the following conversation: 'Oh, you're a librarian! In which library do you work?' 'I don't work in a library. I work for the Provincial Library Service. I'm a regional librarian.' 'OK, but is it open to the public?' 'No, we're not a public library, but we supply books to all the public libraries.' Then, invariably, you see a puzzled look on the person's face. In these situations I found that the easiest way to explain our job is to compare a regional library to a wholesaler. The public libraries would then be like the corner shops who get their stock from the wholesalers and sell to the public.

In the previous two articles we have followed the route of the book through the Western Cape Provincial Library Service's selection, acquisition, cataloguing and preparation processes.

In this article we focus on the role of the regional libraries, more specifically those of the Metropole Control Area. The Library Service has 15 regional offices serving the 330 public libraries in the province. Five of the regional offices are in Metro, serving the 105 public libraries in the greater Cape Town metropole. The regions are Blaauwberg, Cape Town, False Bay, Southern and Tygerberg. The regions typically consist of a regional librarian, two or three library assistants, a driver and a general assistant. Apart from the regional staff, Metro Control Area also has an assistant director and a chief library assistant.



◀ Monday morning meetings in Metro may sound like a madhouse to the rest of the fifth floor staff, as we do tend to get rather raucous, but it is actually our weekly kickstart for pure productivity. (Ltr): Thurrah Behardien

(Metro chief library assistant), Edwina Africa (Tygerberg regional librarian), Nkosinathi Mahala (Cape Town regional librarian), Pieter Hugo (Metro assistant director), Bronwen Abrahams (Southern regional librarian), Sophia Rickett (False Bay regional librarian) and Ethney Waters (Blaauwberg regional librarian)

Once the new books have been through all the preparation processes, they are allocated to the regions. All Metro regions get a trolley or two full of new books every week (and, sometimes, some CDs and DVDs). Yes, it feels like Christmas every week! The library



▲ Shirley Dubois (Southern Region library assistant) working on the weekly trolleys of new books

assistants check the books against the list and discharge them on PALS.

Special requests, series books, study guides, et cetera, are then identified and prepared for dispatch to the appropriate libraries. The books mentioned above, inter-library loans, as well as posters and other promotional material are delivered on the Combi runs. The Combi runs take place on a fixed weekly route to Metro libraries.



The rest of the new books are interfiled in the different categories on the regions' New Books shelves, waiting for the next tour. Touring in Metro means that several times per year all the libraries in a region are invited to visit the regional offices to select new books according to a specific allocation.

◀ Chris Gonyela (False Bay general assistant) preparing for a Combi run

▶ Librarians of Durbanville Library, Maryna Steenkamp and Mariëtte Wilbers selecting new books, with Edwina Africa (Tygerberg regional librarian) looking on



◀ Alta Oosthuizen of Bellville Public Library was so excited by the prospect of selecting new books that we found her early one morning waiting in front of Tygerberg's offices for the regional staff to arrive!

After all the libraries have had their turn to select books, the region goes on tour to deliver all the books. But libraries cannot get new books all the time without weeding their stock from time to time. During the tours the regional staff have to process and return all

those books to the regional offices.

▶ Blaauwberg Region processing the returns at Avondale Library in Atlantis. (Ltr): Ethney Waters (Blaauwberg regional librarian), Silas Marule (library assistant), Phadiel Mitchell (driver) and Attie van Neel (general assistant)



◀ During a library visit Ethney Waters discusses stock matters with André Davids, librarian of Avondale Library

▶ Touring is not always plain sailing. On this occasion there just was not a bigger vehicle available to deliver the books to the library. In case you were wondering, all those boxes did actually fit into the little Citi Golf! The heroes who made it possible are Randall Pretorius (Tygerberg general assistant) and Phadiel Mitchell (Blaauwberg driver)



Once the returns are back at the region they can land up in one of three places: the general stacks, repairs or Room G05 (the so-called Graveyard Room). Books that are still in a good or fair condition that can be used to fill stock gaps in other libraries, are processed on the database and interfiled in the general stacks. As the name implies, these are the shared book stacks for all the head office regions. It is a veritable treasure trove of nearly 300 000 wonderful books, a large portion of them still 'as new', that can be used to enhance libraries' collections.



◀ *Teamwork in the general stacks*

Books that have reached the end of their useful life in the Library Service are processed and taken down to Room G05, the room for discarded books. When Room G05 is filled up and

the official processes of getting the books written off have been completed, community organisations are invited to select books as donations. The remaining scraps are sold for paper recycling.

winning team we know we can overcome all obstacles, even if it means we have to do it on the run.



◀ *Shamieg Tejada (Southern library assistant) and Sidwell Sifuku (Southern driver) making sure the delivery is on time*



◀ *Metro staff filling up the shelves in Room G05. From front to back: Sidwell Sifuku (Southern driver), Lindani Ntantiso (Stellenbosch general assistant) and Mahwethu Saunders (Cape Town driver)*

Another major function of the regional libraries is stocktaking. Between the five regions stocktakes must be done in all of the 105 libraries in the Metro area in a four-year cycle. Although the concentrated action of a few days' incessant scanning of all the books at a library is the visual part of a stocktake, the real work is done behind the scenes in the following year until the final account is sent out.



◀ *Clarette Pypers (Cape Town chief library assistant) rushing up the stairs on urgent business*

▶ *Denise Petersen (False Bay library assistant) scanning books during a stocktake*



Apart from the above-mentioned regional activities, there are many more tasks that keep us busy and productive, but most of it is not visually interesting enough for a photo article (how many photos of people sitting at a computer do you want to see?) We would much rather show you some real action for the closing scenes. Things can sometimes get quite hectic, but with Metro's



▶ *Everything we do is summed up by this photograph. We are constantly trying to balance the books, but we enjoy every moment of it! (Ltr): Shirley du Plessis (Southern library assistant), Frans Bede (Southern general assistant), Shamieg Tejada (Southern library assistant), Clarette Pypers (Cape Town chief library assistant), Shirley Du Bois (Southern library assistant) and Sidwell Sifuku (Southern driver)*

