Consolidating change

“Where do I begin?” is Nora Buchanan’s response to the question of what the biggest challenges are that face the UKZN Library in the immediate and long term future. This question was posed to Nora as the new Director of Library Services for UKZN. Nora took office in this capacity in December of 2006. Prior to this she was Campus Librarian of the Howard College library having acted in this capacity for more than three years. Nora’s library career at the then University of Natal began in 1982. She has completed postgraduate qualifications in librarianship to Masters level and is currently working towards a PhD.

The immediate task is to produce a unified vision and strategy for the UKZN library system. To this end, the campus librarians have already begun a series of workshops amongst themselves in the first instance. The first workshop was to consolidate their working relationship as a team and ‘fact finding’ as regards issues, strengths and weaknesses within the Library. The task involves determining the direction the Library will take in supporting an undergraduate, postgraduate and particularly, research intensive university. Importantly, the extent to which the Library should pursue the digital route needs to be investigated in a climate of space shortages and budget and staffing constraints. To support a growing research function, there will inevitably be changes in the way library staff work.

Part of the development of this research function is the UKZN Library’s involvement in the ‘Carnegie’ project. This is a collaborative project between the Universities of Kwazulu-Natal; Cape Town and Witwatersrand, funded by the Carnegie Foundation, a pilot project for the country. Initially the project involves the development of a portal for each University library that effectively facilitates access to electronic resources. Unlike the current system, users will be able to search across a range of databases simultaneously and enhanced search features will be available. A consolidated listing of all journal holdings and their format, print or electronic, will be available. The portal will also offer a link to the resources of the other participating institutions. It is hoped that the first phase of the project will see the portal functional by July of this year. Ultimately there will be rationalization of resource purchasing and cross university access to resources. Library staff will receive intensive training in research skills. The aim of the project is to help improve university research output.

Immediate challenges for Nora are a Council approved library structure that in reality reflects posts that are frozen or have no monies against them, particularly at management level such as the Westville Campus Librarian post and deputy posts in Pietermaritzburg and Howard College. There are no assurances that these posts will be able to be filled in the near future. This affects the capacity of the structure to function according to the needs and role of the Library and job descriptions will have to be revisited and renegotiated. Nora’s first task is to attempt to fill key positions so as to be able to move forward in this regard. Alongside this is the pressing matter of harmonization of like job descriptions across all the campus libraries and their regradings.
The perennial lack of funding and widening gap between monies allocated for books and periodicals is badly affecting book dependent departments in particular and the acquisition of a broad range of materials to support the teaching function of the University. Issues and problems within the University such as photocopying are impinging on the daily work of the Library.

Nora believes that the Library has a solid foundation in terms of staff and core resources to meet the demands of a diverse range of users and these need to be supported by the University community in a variety of ways in order for service delivery to grow.

**Academic Reserves**

The beginning of this year saw the introduction of the online ‘short loan’ system; another phase of the new computerized Library system. The Library’s new computerized system labels the Short Loan facility Academic Reserves and the ilink catalogue does likewise. Thus the Library is adopting the new vocabulary. Whilst all items placed on Reserve are reflected as such in the ilink catalogue; ilink also provides a separate view of Academic Reserve material via lecturer, course name and code (click on the Reserve Desk option on the grey bar below the University’s logo on the catalogue front page).

From the user’s point of view, material used in Academic Reserves is issued and returned on computer, the manual system of using material via a short loan pocket and filling in a card has now ceased. The system allows for one item at a time to be borrowed and for a two hour loan period. A concession has been made for law library materials because of the need to simultaneously use a text book and accompanying casebook. The new Academic Reserve system is in operation across all campus libraries. At this stage advanced booking of material by users is still being done manually.

**Cant find a book on the shelves?**

One of the problems associated with the move of materials between campus libraries has been some disorder on the shelves. This disorder is exacerbated by daily usage, users who reshelve material incorrectly, and library staff shortages. Each library has a team of shelvers and shelf readers who daily ensure order on the shelves. At peak times such as assignments, the shelf readers and staff spend much of their time simply reshelving to reduce the chaos. At Medical School and Howard College, the morning opening of the libraries was altered temporarily to enable all staff to participate in a major shelf reading exercise to restore order. Book cleaning has started at some libraries. Pietermaritzburg will shortly embark on a similar tidy up and shelf read by staff in an attempt to restore order and reduce the number of ‘missing’ books. Some 111 721 library items have been issued out on loan across all campus libraries between January and April 21 this year. This obviously does not include material browsed within the libraries but is one of the indications of the active use of the collection.

**Extensions to the Sweeney law library**

As a result of the merging of the Westville and Howard College campus law schools to Howard College, the law library at Howard College is to be upgraded in terms of an extension to the computer facilities available for legal research. The extension involves the installation of 31 more computer workstations in the main reading room. This upgrade should be completed by June.
IFLA conference attendance award won by UKZN library staff member

IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations, is holding its annual conference in Durban this year during the month of August. This is a wonderful opportunity for KZN librarians in particular to network with a range of information workers from other countries. IFLA ran an essay competition for potential attendees from Africa and Latin America in particular, who were required to write about the purpose of their attendance at the conference and the contribution their attendance at the conference could make in the future to their own professional development and the development of their institutions. The prizes for the best essays are full payment of the cost of registration at the conference for two winners from Africa and two from Latin America. Nthabiseng Mosala, subject librarian on the Pietermaritzburg entered the competition and is one of the lucky winners! Well done Nthabiseng!

Some UKZN library staff are involved in IFLA sub-committees and others will be volunteering to help with the many aspects of the conference and others will be attending.

Leaks in the Library

Earlier in the year the top floor and journals floor of the Pietermaritzburg main library experienced leaks. Every available dustbin was collecting water and a large number of volumes in the journals room had to be temporarily moved. The problem emanated on the roof and the layer of stone on the roof has had to be removed. The roof now needs to be sealed. The water within the building has still to finish running out. Once this has happened, material will be reshelved and the damage to volumes assessed.

Library book fair

Westville library held its annual book fair and exhibition from 3 – 5 April this year bringing it forward from its usual July slot. There were seven South African vendors displaying some 5000 titles across multiple subject areas. The fair was well attended by librarians and academic staff.

Move of resources between Howard College and Westville campuses

The move of much book and journal material between these two campuses is now almost complete. This was a mammoth task, the bulk of which was undertaken during November and December 2006. Some 12 000 shelves worth of material were moved. A library supply company with much experience in moving libraries was employed to undertake the move. Material was packed in labeled cartons and the move required numerous trips over approximately three weeks. The rearrangement of stock in the affected libraries was also necessary to accommodate the move. The move is not quite complete. Some geography material is still to be moved. After the move, Malherbe, Westville and Edgewood libraries had to be fumigated because of bookworm. Some of the Westville law and fine arts book stock will also be incorporated into the Pietermaritzburg and Howard College campus libraries.

New databases on trial

**Aluka digital library** is an ‘international collaborative initiative building a digital library of scholarly resources from and about Africa.’ Aluka’s content covers three areas: African plants (now available), African cultural heritage sites (available from March) and Struggles for freedom in Southern Africa (available from June). The African plants content covers digital materials on plant specimens, photographs, art and reference works. This project is part of the JSTOR family of digital full text collections. “Aluka” is derived from the Zulu word
meaning ‘to weave’, reflecting the project’s commitment to connecting and including African scholars and materials into the global mix. The free trial to Aluka is available from Library websites until 30th June 2007.

**New microform reader-printer**

Thanks to financial assistance from the office of the Campus Administrator, the Pietermaritzburg campus library has been able to purchase a replacement microfilm/fiche reader–printer. Improvements on the old equipment include being able to print A3 and A4 copies; enhance images; download (albeit page by page) on to a PC and save a file which can be printed or emailed. The machine is not designed for bulk printing or use over extensive periods of time. The equipment is locked in an office so users will need to make an appointment with a subject librarian during normal office hours to use the equipment. Copies cost R1 each to print.

**Off campus access to library databases: Ezproxy**

Off campus access is now available to registered staff and students for a limited range of library databases via the Ezproxy facility. A link can be found on each library’s website. Click on the link and you will be asked to enter your LAN username and password after which a list of databases will be presented. Currently the databases available are: American Chemical Society; Bibliolino; Butterworths legal Resources; Cochrane Library; Ebscohost; Institute of Physics; JSTOR; Jutastat; MD Consult Core Collection; Proquest; Royal Society of Chemistry; Sabinet; Science Direct; Swetswise and Web of Knowledge. More databases are to be added shortly. If you experience problems with any of the databases please contact Sagren Moodley: Moodlesr@ukzn.ac.za.

**Open Day**

EG Malherbe library will be mounting an exhibit around the theme “Where do I find information on...?” which will include promoting all the university library resources specifically humanities, engineering, medical and Killie Campbell collections. The exhibit will include a small internet café, a music booth, a competition and power point presentations. Edgewood and Pietermaritzburg will mount displays.

**Staffing news**

Now that Nora Buchanan has been appointed Director of Library Services, Reggie Raju is temporarily assisting with personnel matters on the Howard College campus and Catherine Dubbeld is assisting with budgeting matters.

**User education**

By this stage most library orientation is complete with libraries once again participating in Orientation Week by offering tours and a range of displays to advertise library facilities. EG Malherbe used a power point presentation during Orientation Week faculty mornings and offered tours. At Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses orientation tours for first years was undertaken during Orientation Week. Pietermaritzburg campus offered instruction in the new ilink catalogue several times a day over the first six weeks of the first term as well as subject based instruction at all levels of study for both part time and full time students. Much ongoing instruction at all academic levels is in the use of academic databases and the information research process. Database training sessions were offered for staff and postgraduate students during February and March at the Westville library. At Medical School basic compulsory orientation was provided at the beginning of the year for the new intake of some 200 first year students followed by ilink instruction.