University of KwaZulu-Natal Library

South African Government Publications: an introduction

A small selection of South African government publications is held in respective campus libraries within UKZN. Please check the iLink catalogue. Many online resources are available via the SA Government website (www.gov.za/) and the subscription databases Sabinet online all legal products, Juta e publications and LexisNexis (http://library.ukzn.ac.za – Electronic resources – Databases A-Z). A selective list of UKZN holdings is provided in this guide.

Origin and function

Government publications are those official publications emanating from any government body or contractee commissioned by government. In South Africa there are publications from central government which includes parliament and all ministries and departments. There are also provincial and local government publications, thus collectively producing a huge amount of documentation. The purpose of all these publications is to place on record the workings of government and to assist government with policy making for distribution of resources; good governance and planning.

They reflect the three functions of government namely :
- legislative: to make laws (Parliament);
- executive: carry out the laws (Cabinet assisted by the civil service);
- judicial: ensure citizens abide by the law (Courts). Many court reports are published by commercial companies.

A government is usually by far the largest publisher of information within a country. This is because there are so many facets to government. A government needs a large amount of information to undertake its duties of governance and, a government is often the only body with sufficient resources at its disposal to undertake particular work. For example, the population census requires a large amount of resources, particularly personnel, to undertake the census and collate the responses and of course this all costs vast sums of money which most organizations could not afford.

To provide an example of the varied nature of government publications, from parliamentary activity alone are published rules of conduct, agendas and minutes of meetings/sessions, debates from sittings of parliament, legislation in draft (bill) and final form (act), memoranda to departments, lists of members of the houses of parliament, the official government gazette, reports of committees and commissions of inquiry and so on. Many of these publications are mirrored at provincial level, all nine of them!!

Why are government publications important?
- They provide a record of official activity and rationale for such activity
- They reflect policy making and changes in governance
- They provide information that might not be possible unless undertaken by government eg population census

- They provide valuable statistical information on a wide range of activities eg trade, welfare, education
- The government is also a major producer of maps, both geological and topographical
- They tend to collect information on an ongoing basis in order to inform their activities so information is fairly up to date and continuous
- They are important sources of primary information.

Government publications have become particularly important and more visible since the 1994 election because the whole system of government and participation in government has changed with the new dispensation and the new Constitution includes a Bill of Rights for the first time. All existing and new legislation and activity must be in harmony with the principles of the Constitution. The Constitutional Court may decide on the constitutionality of matters and the interpretation of the Constitution. Since 1994 a whole series of *White papers* (policy documents) have been published which have examined the current situations in all spheres of life such as education, land, population, sport, tourism and the like, and, after public consultation, provided a new way forward in the form of policy proposals. The first of these was the RDP or reconstruction and development white paper. Annual reports of government departments indicate how departments are carrying out government policy and often have useful statistical information (RPs).

Problems associated with government publications
- Quantity
- Often poorly indexed
- Poor distribution channels and marketing
- Frequent name changes of government departments and bodies
- Numbering sequences change and are hard to follow
- Changing formats
- Not all government information is accessible

Examples of key central government publications

1. Legislation – bills and statutes
- Legislation comprises laws that have been written down. A law is also known as an act or a statute. The highest law making body is the national parliament. The Constitution is the supreme law and contains a Bill of Rights. While in draft form and before approval by Parliament, an Act is known as a Bill.
- Every act has a name and number, re-commencing at one (1) each year. An act is cited thus: Second -hand Goods Act 6 of 2009. The purpose of legislation is to provide guidance about, boundaries to and acceptability as regards behaviours in almost every facet of life. Legislation may also provide penalties for non adherence to rules. Many post 1994 laws of South Africa include a preamble which serves to indicate the rationale for or constitutional context of a law.
- The authoritative version of any act is initially published in the Government Gazette. The commercial publishers Juta and LexisNexis have print (looseleaf so updated 4 times per year) and electronic full text versions of legislation. Post 1994 legislation is also available from the SA government's website.
- An act cannot provide all the necessary detail so the relevant Minister may when necessary publish regulations (delegated legislation). An example is professions that are governed by acts of parliament such as engineers, psychologists, lawyers and so on. The relevant acts stipulate fee structures that practitioners may charge. As fees have to change over time due to inflation etc, an act cannot prescribe in advance what fees might have to be charged. At

intervals, new fees will be negotiated in the profession and then published as regulations. These regulations are published in the Government gazette.

2. **Debates of Parliament (Hansard)**
   Readings of proposed legislation, questions and answers and other matters discussed in Parliament are reported verbatim in 'Hansard'. These are in print form only. The name 'Hansard derives from the Englishman who first started recording parliamentary debates in the UK. The debates have their own indexes.

3. **Government Gazettes incl. Regulation Gazettes**
   - The Gazette is the official source by which the government communicates with its citizens concerning its activities, specifically those of government departments such as legislation, general and legal notices, for example, permit applications for liquor licenses and name changes; tenders to name but a few
   - Each Gazette is identified by its unique number within a volume and the date of issue.
   - The official version of a statute is that which appears in the Gazette. Each statute is published in a separate gazette
   - Regulation Gazettes, which form part of the gazette sequence, also have their own numbers in addition to the Gazette number. They reflect the detail for implementing a statute for example a statute regarding a professional body will stipulate a fee structure. Such actual fees will be published in a regulation gazette and as fees are amended new regulations will be published
   - The Library receives printed copies of the Government Gazette and it is available electronically via *Sabinet online all legal products* since 1910. Selected regulations are now starting to appear online in databases such as Juta e Publications.

4. **White papers**
   These include reports on proposed water schemes; explanatory memoranda on bills and topical reports. Since 1994 white papers have reflected policy proposals starting with the RDP. They are often preceded by a draft white paper or a green paper. Since 1994, white papers that are policy papers that have been received by the Library, have been treated like books and are reflected in the Library's catalogue. They are available electronically since 1994 from the Government's website.

5. **RPs** - annual reports of departments and commissions of inquiry reports. Most departments now have their own websites and most publish their specialist reports full text. Between 1910 and 1961 RPs were known as UGs. These are only available in print.

6. **Specialist departmental activities and associated reports**
   a) Statistics SA - produce the census; specialized statistical reports and a bulletin. In print and electronic. The Library has a few print publications. The Public library in Pietermaritzburg holds copies of all official publications.
   b) Patents, trademarks etc
   c) Surveyor general – maps
   d) National Treasury: budget and fiscal reviews
   e) Government Communication and Information System – *SA Yearbook*; tenders and so on

Government publications held by UKZN library

LEGISLATION (Bills and Acts)
   Print:

- *Union statutes: classified and annotated reprint, 1910 – 1947*
- *Statute law of SA (annual bound volumes), 1910 - 1967*
     Law and Main libraries (Pmb)
- *Statutes of the Republic of South Africa, classified and annotated* (looseleaf), 1910 +
     Law library (Pmb) and EG Malherbe
- Government gazette
     Main library (P) and EG Malherbe – dates vary
   Electronic:
- SA Government Online: www.gov.za. (1994+) Choose Documents and then Acts or Bills (original versions, not amended).
- *Government Gazette*
     Sabinet online all legal products (access via the Library's databases collection)
- LexisNexis and Jutastat databases. 1910+ (provide the most recent versions of legislation).
- **Library's website: Databases**

DEBATES OF PARLIAMENT (Hansard) (Print only)
   Print only:
- *Debates of the Houses of Parliament, 1910 – 1994* **(Pmb; W/ville; EG Malherbe)**
- *Debates of the Constitutional Assembly, 1994 – 1996* **(Pmb)**
- *Debates of the Senate 19190 – 1965; 1994 – 1996*
     Law and Main libraries (Pmb); EG Malherbe
- *Debates of the National Assembly 1994 +*
     Law and Main libraries (P); Law (HC) and W/ville
- *Debates of the National Council of Provinces 1997 +*
     Law library (P)
   Electronic:
- Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2008+; **www.pmg.org.za**

GOVERNMENT GAZETTES incl. regulation gazettes

   Print:
- 1910 +   **Main and Law libraries (P); EG Malherbe**
   Electronic:
- **1910 +** Provincial and national gazettes.
     SA Gazettes on SABINET online all legal products
- **2004 +**   LexisNexis database.
     Library website: databases

RPs / UGs (Print and electronic)
   Print:
- 1910 +   **Main library (P)**
   Electronic (selected RPs):
- 1996 +   **SA Government Online: ww.gov.za for annual reports.** See list at end of guide for access details.

WHITE PAPERS (including policy documents) (Print and electronic)
   Print:
- 1980 +   **Main library (P)** (incomplete); see also Library's catalogue for post 1994.
   Electronic:

- 1994 +   **SA Government Online: www.gov.za.** See list at end of guide for access details

SPECIALIST DOCUMENTS
A wide range of specialist documents are published by various government departments.
The most well known are:

- *Population census* **(P; EG Malherbe; W/ville)**
- *Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics* **(P; EG Malherbe)**
- *SA Statistics* **(P; EG Malherbe; W/ville)**
- *South Africa 1: 50 000 Topographical Survey maps*
- *South Africa Official Yearbook* **(P)**

Many departments commission special investigations which can often be found full text via the individual departmental websites from the main government website.

PARLIAMENTARY MONITORING GROUP: www.pmg.org.za

A range of parliamentary documents such as committee reports, bills, Hansard, gazetted information etc is available from the site of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group for the period 2006+

GOVERNMENT WEBSITE : www.gov.za/

'Documents' option provides access to acts, bills, white papers etc

ACCESSING SABINET
- Go to the UKZN Library's website: http://library.ukzn.ac.za
- From the Electronic resources option choose Databases A-Z
- From the alphabetical list choose: Sabinet online all legal products
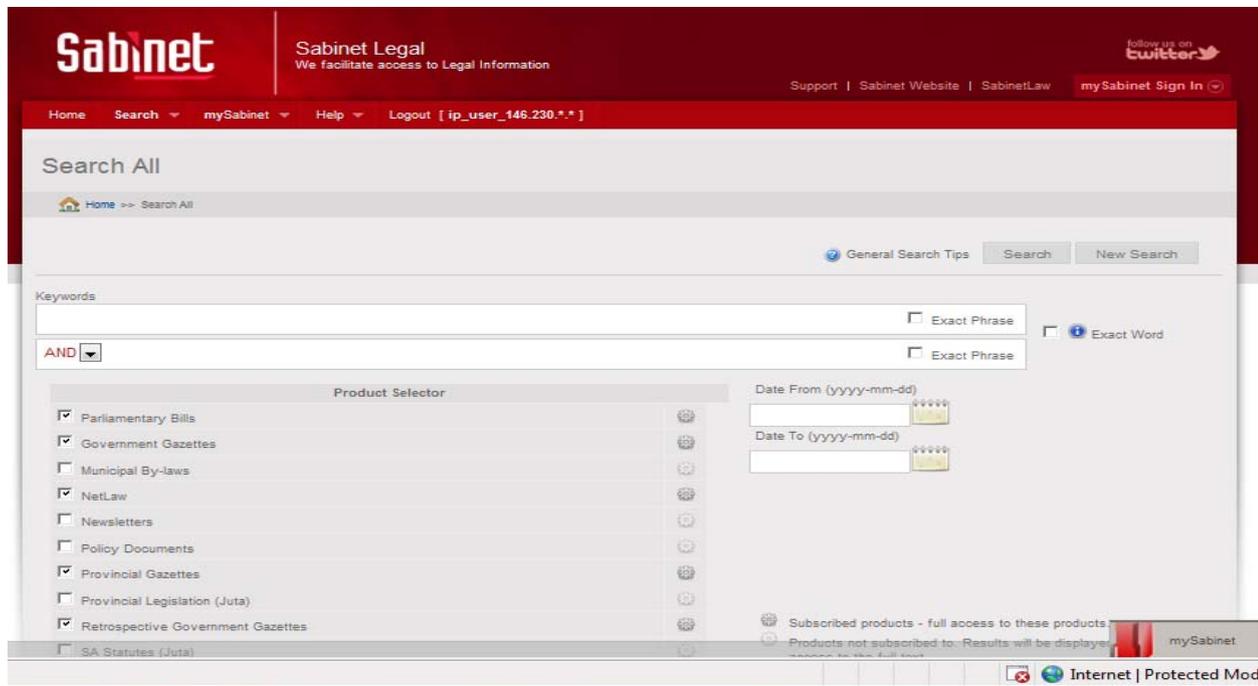
Once at the Sabinet online all legal products home page, tick in the box / s next to the name of the database / s. Type in keywords, numbers etc and refine by date if needed. Results are in pdf format.

Or, from the toolbar, click on Search, then the product you want and a screen of appropriate search options will open up. Results page
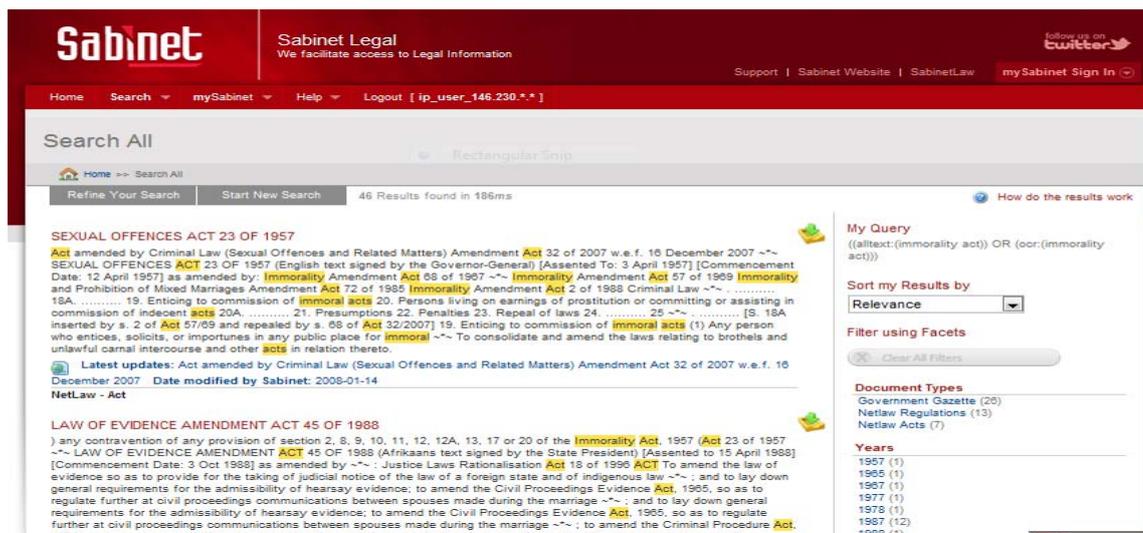
	PRINT HOLDINGS	ELECTRONIC HOLDINGS

Legislation
 	
Acts
	• *Union statutes: classified and annotated reprint, 1910 – 1947*
	• *Statute law of SA (annual bound volumes), 1910 - 1967*
	    Law and Main (Periodicals) libraries
	• *Statutes of the Republic of South Africa, classified and annotated*
	(looseleaf), **1910** + Index in vol 1.
	    Law library
	• Government gazette
	    Main library – full set
	Individual, monthly, quarterly, separate annual (1979+) indexes; Juta's index/Windex 1910-1989. – Main library
		• *Government Gazettes*
		SA Gazettes on Sabinet online all legal products (1910+)
		• **Government Online**:
		www.gov.za. (1994+). Choose documents then Acts.
		• **LexisNexis and Jutastat** databases

Bills		• **SA Government Online**: www.gov.za. (1994+). Choose Documents and then Bills • **www.pmg.org.za** • **Sabinet online all legal products**
Regulations	• Government Gazettes (see Government Gazettes below) Indexed in *Statutes of the Republic of South Africa, classified and annotated* (looseleaf), 1910 + at the end of every group of statutes - Main library	• Government Gazettes SA Gazettes on **Sabinet** online all legal products (1910+) • **LexisNexis and Jutastat** Selective regulations included

Debates (Hansard)	• *Debates of the Houses of Parliament, 1910 - 1994*
	• *Debates of the Constitutional Assembly, 1994 – 1996*
	• Debates of the Senate 19190 – 1965; 1994 – 1996
	    Law and Main (Periodicals) libraries
	• *Debates of the National Assembly 1994 +*
	    Law (current issues) and Main library (bound annual volumes)
	• *Debates of the National Council of Provinces 1997 +*
	    Law library
	Annual indexes kept with the set
		• Parliamentary Monitoring Group **www.pmg.org.za/** (2008 +)

Government Gazettes	• 1910+ Main library periodicals. Last two years worth at Law Library Weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual indexes – annual since 1979. Windex a cumulative index: 1910 – 1989 – Main library and law library.	• **1994 +** Provincial and national gazettes. **SA Gazettes on Sabinet online all legal products** (1910+) • 2004 + LexisNexis Butterworths database
RP's	• 1910 + Main library (1st floor) 1. In house index 1984+ 2. *Bibliography of South African Government Publications: Dept of Statistics 1910 – 1968* 3. *Index to the Manuscript Annexures and Printed Papers of the House of Assembly…1910 – 1990* - Main library	• **SA Government Online**: www.gov.za . For annual reports – go to the relevant department on the above site
White papers	• 1980+ housed in Main library periodicals. • 1994+ treated as books. 1. In house index 1984+ 2. *Index to the Manuscript Annexures and Printed Papers of the House of Assembly…1910 – 1990 – Main library*	• **SA Government Online:** **www.gov.za** (1994+). Choose documents then White papers.
Parliamentary committees		• Parliamentary Monitoring Group **www.pmg.org.za/** (2008 +)