TRIBUTE TO IRWIN POONSAMY

On Monday 3 March Irwin Poonsamy of the Pietermaritzburg Law Library passed away after a heart attack at the age of 45. Irwin had been with the Library since January 1977, spending many years in the Main Library before moving across to the Law Branch Library in 1995 where he spent almost 10 years. He was promoted to the senior post of Library Administrative Officer in 1999. In December of 2002 Irwin was presented with his long service award by our new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Makgoba, in recognition of his meritorious service to the University.

Irwin Michael Poonsamy was born on the 3 September 1957 in Pietermaritzburg. He matriculated in 1974 at Woodlands High School. He married Rogini and together they had three children Craig, Natasha and Nicole.

Irwin, who loved the acquisition of knowledge and learning, spent many years studying part-time, obtaining a degree in Social Science in 1996 and then progressing to an LLB which he received in 1999. At the time of his death he was enrolled in the Masters programme (LLM) with the Law Faculty. He used his knowledge of the law to the fullest extent to help all users, students in particular.

Irwin’s commitment to his colleagues, the Library and in particular the Law School staff and students was outstanding and the help he offered Law Library users went way beyond the call of duty. His relaxed, calm and quiet demeanour which was so characteristic of him, and his combined knowledge of the law and library skills, made him an ideal mentor and teacher to students who found his help indispensable. These skills he used to help initiate a research methodology course for second-year law students offered by the Library.

The numerous tributes that were received by the Library following his death, from as far as Johannesburg and Cape Town were unanimous: what a kind, helpful and knowledgeable person Irwin was, what a good teacher and what a help. Irwin was the Law Library. Such was his impact on the people he came into contact with over the years. His knowledge of the law, his management of the Law Library and his unstinting dedication to the users earned him the respect and friendship of everyone who knew him.

Irwin was always a gentleman, with a kind gentle word for everyone. He was always pleasant, and always offering advice in his unassuming way. His very manner often resulted in a relaxed, peaceful atmosphere for all those around him.

The Library acknowledges with gratitude and respect Irwin’s contribution and commitment to his colleagues and Library users.

Rosemary Kühn and Renee Damonse
**STAFF NEWS**

We welcome Sashni Chetty to the Library as a permanent staff member. She will take up the vacant Main Library post in processing and general duties on April 1st.

We bid farewell to Mandla Ntombela who leaves at the end of March to take up a permanent position at Natal Society Library, at their Lambert Wilson Children’s Project Library. We wish him well in his new job. Nokulunga Ziqubu will temporarily move into this post until the position at Law Library is normalised. Shadia Alli will continue working at Law Library until the vacancy created by Irwin’s death has been filled.

Jabu Sibisi has begun work at the Law Library assisting here until the vacant post created by Sma Ngubo’s resignation has been filled.

Margie Grey is working temporarily in the Acquisitions department until that post is filled.

On April 1st Emily Krige begins work in Interlibrary Loans helping out until the end of the year.

**Other Staff news:**

Congratulations to Jewel Koopman who has completed her Master of Information Studies degree. Her mini-thesis title is: Staff attitudes to access and outreach in KwaZulu-Natal archives.

**DATABASE NEWS**

*Library and information science abstracts (LISA)* 1969-2003/03 and *Psychological information (PsycINFO)* 1872-2003/03 are both now available online for staff and students. To gain access go to:

http://www.library.unp.ac.za

• E-Resources
• Online indexes

Please contact your Subject Librarian if you experience any difficulties or would like to learn how to use the new formats.

**SHORT LOAN REQUEST**

The Library is appealing to all lectures and tutors placing materials on Short Loan to submit their lists to the Library at least two weeks before students are informed of an assignment. The Library deals with these lists strictly in the order in which they are received.

**NEW JOURNALS**

*Communicatio: South African journal for communication theory and research*

Vol. 28, 1, 2002+
Main Library

*Marketing management*

Vol. 12, 1, 2003+
Main Library

*Mathematical digest*

No. 130, January 2003
Main Library

*Theological studies*

Main Library

**DISPLAYS**

March displays
• Library week
• Political Studies
• Alan Paton Centenary
• Reference display
• Fiction display

**BOOK BUDGETS**

All academic staff are requested to start sending orders for library material to their Subject Librarians. Some money has been released into most book funds for the purchase of material until the final budget has been approved.
ALAN PATON CENTRE NEWS

The Alan Paton Centenary: 1903-2003

Alan Paton, the world renowned author of *Cry, the beloved country*, was born in Pietermaritzburg a hundred years ago on 11 January 1903. He rose from the relative obscurity of his posts as Maths and Science teacher at Ixopo High School and then at Maritzburg College, to Principal of Diepkloof Reformatory, where he became known as an advocate of reform in the juvenile justice system, to the almost overnight fame of being the author of an internationally acclaimed novel. In 1953, he joined, as a founder member, the Liberal Party of South Africa, of which he was to become President until it disbanded in 1968, in the face of repressive new legislation which forbade multi-racial political organisations.

For the next twenty years, until his death on 12 April 1988, he remained politically active as an opponent of the apartheid government, and was in great demand as a powerful speaker, who made a lasting impression on all those who heard him. He also continued to write - two more novels, biographies, autobiographies, poetry and articles. But it is for his first novel, and his powerful stance against injustice that the world will remember him.

In celebration of the Centenary of his birth, the Alan Paton Centre (APC) has organised a programme of events to celebrate his life. The Centenary Programme was launched at the APC on 25 February 2003, with a function at which Mrs Anne Paton was the guest of honour, and an exhibition of photographs of Alan Paton’s life was on display. This exhibition will be on view at the APC until 30 March 2003, after which it can be seen in the foyer of the University Library until 11 April 2003.

There will be a Film Evening on 3 April 2003, at which *Cry, the beloved country* (1951) and *A drink in the passage* (2002) will be shown at one of the regular FilmClub evenings, at 18h00 at the Centre for Visual Arts.

The Alan Paton Lecture will be held on 15 May 2003, and a tour of Paton’s Pietermaritzburg will take place the next day.

For further details, please contact the Alan Paton Centre, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Jewel Koopman, tel (033) 260 5926 or Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen, tel/fax (033) 260 6143; e-mail: koopmanj@nu.ac.za or liebbe@nu.ac.za

JK
Fantu Cheru is a Professor at the School of International Service, The American University, Washington D.C. Ethiopian by birth, he is a specialist in policy analysis, rural development and urban and regional planning. He is the author of the following books:

- *The silent revolution in Africa: debt, development and democracy* (X338.96 CHE)
- *Ethiopia: options for rural development* (co-author)
- *Dependence, under-development and unemployment in Kenya: school leavers in a peripheral capitalist political economy*
- *From debt to development: alternatives to the international debt crisis* (co-author)
- *The not so brave new world!: problems and prospects of regional integration in post-apartheid southern Africa* (337.68 CHE)

He now turns his attention to, the main problem facing African countries, globalization. He discusses challenges of globalization in Africa, how African countries can escape from marginalization, deepening impoverishment and state disintegration. Renewal and rebuilding needs to happen in a number of spheres. African governments must renew democracy and improve governance; invest in education; revitalize agricultural production; reduce poverty; strengthen regional economic cooperation; manage fast growing cities and build foundations for peace.

“The basic premises of this book is that globalization, with its contradictory tendencies, is an irreversible process and that any vision of an ‘African Renaissance’ must, at the very least, provide a coherent strategy on how to navigate this complex process successfully”(viii).

The book is written in jargon-free style and is very easy to read. I think it therefore has a broader audience of academics, students and those interested in issues of development. The author has extensive knowledge about the subject of development in Africa.

Fantu Cheru attempts to shed new light on the topic of economic development in Africa. He roots his wide-ranging arguments firmly in the actual realities of what is going on in Africa. The practical lessons to be learned from both mistakes made and the initiatives which have born positive fruit are discussed. He argues for a middle way that goes beyond simple state-led versus market-driven approaches to Africa’s development. The author believes that there are no simple solutions for Africa’s economic and social crisis.

What Africa needs today are more ‘common sense’ approaches that open up new avenues for increased productivity. Conditions for development should be improved governance, increased investment in education and infrastructure, and improved access of the poor to information and productive assets. What becomes a prerequisite to eradicating poverty are political stability, independent judiciary, transparency, accountability and greater citizen participation.

Fantu Cheru draws on his experience of many different countries to argue for a way beyond the simple state-led versus market-driven approaches to Africa’s development. He is of the opinion that many governments in Africa respond to the globalization challenge in two ways. The first response is to embrace globalization uncritically. The second response has been to resist indiscriminately. The author advocates ‘a guided embrace of
globalization with a commitment to resist’.

Cheru concludes by saying for the African Renaissance to become a reality Africa needs to decolonize its mindset, scale up the technological ladder and become assertive in international negotiations.

Related Reading


Lindiwe Soyizwapi