The time of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (UNP) library has come to an end. The Merger between the University of Natal and the University of Durban Westville will take place on 1 January 2004, and the autonomy which we have enjoyed for all these years will fall away. A unitary library with new procedures will come into being with a view to improving services to users. This is an interesting and stimulating time to be working here. Our ideas are taken into account and we all have a chance to contribute to the library of the new “premier University of African scholarship”.

Over the past few months, with the threat of the valuable database, EBSCOHost, being far too expensive for the national consortium to purchase for 2004, we have been assessing and evaluating possible replacements. Wilson, Gale and Proquest were some of the possible contenders but fortunately EBSCOHost surprisingly lowered their price and we are continuing to subscribe to it for the next few years.

The advent of the new merged library is coinciding with the need to select a new Integrated Library System due to support for the existing one falling away. Since Pietermaritzburg library changed to an electronic catalogue in 1983, we have been using URICA (now produced by UKS). Unfortunately when URICA developed their web-based OPAC a few years ago, it presented so many problems and was so inaccurate when bringing up results, that we made the decision that we would continue to rely on and teach the telnet version, with all its limitations. Now the telnet version of URICA will no longer be sustained by the company and it will be improving its web-based version but the details are sketchy in the extreme.

Presently, and working together with all the esAL (eastern seaboard Association of Libraries) members, we are evaluating alternative options and are finding ourselves in good company with many of the world’s best known libraries changing to new generation of library systems. Among these products are Endeavor’s Voyager (Elsevier), Dynix’s Horizon, Sirsi’s Unicorn, Innovative’s Millenium and Ex-Libris’s Aleph system. One unfortunate aspect is the fact that we are changing from a local South African product, which we pay for in Rands, to an overseas (possibly American) one with all the nightmares of exchange rates coming into the picture.

This is an important decision, which needs to be made with plenty of research into the quirks and strengths of the varying competitors. The end result in the near future, possibly 2005, will be a new revamped multi-branched library of the University of KwaZulu-Natal using a new improved Integrated Library System, which has the diverse needs of the modern user as its focus.
ARCHIVES’S GREAT ASSET

Billy Farina will be retiring at the end of December this year. Billy has worked at the University for 15 years, most of this time having been spent in the University Archives. Billy began working as Clerical Assistant in Personnel, as it was then called, in January 1989. She was appointed to the position as part-time Clerical Assistant in the University Archives in mid-1990. Towards the end of 1996 she was promoted to the position as Administrative Assistant. Billy has assisted with the smooth-running of the Archives whilst Joicelyn Leslie-Smith, Ruth Hoskins, and Bronwyn Jenkins have been archivist, as well as ‘held the fort’ for a nine-month period in 1996-1997 whilst there was no archivist. Billy has admirably undertaken the legal depositing of University publications: it is no easy task ‘chasing’ people for publications nor replying to ‘demanding’ letters from the legal deposit libraries. Other duties she has ably carried-out include: recording and acknowledging receipt of material; card-indexing the frequently-consulted biographical collection and assisting with building and arranging this collection; serving users; and answering telephone and e-mail enquiries. Billy has also willingly ‘fetched-and-carried’ numerous ‘essentials’ between Archives, the Library, and University Press. However – and I’m sure Library and Press colleagues will agree with me – it is Billy’s friendly, cheerful and kind nature which have made her a great asset to the Archives and the University. We wish Billy an enjoyable retirement with time to pursue new interests.

FAREWELL TO GOOD FRIENDS

My first memory of Deo (Omraj Deopersad) was as a tall, imposing figure at the desk. Because of his size and the fact that he knew everything, I was slightly in awe of him, although he was always kind and helpful. Nothing was too much trouble.

Some of us will remember attending Deo’s wedding. It was a grand occasion. Deo was young, tall and handsome and his bride, in her rose red sari, was very beautiful. The Librarian was invited to speak and paid tribute to Deo’s amazing memory and knack at hunting down misshelved library books in the most unlikely places. If a book was not on the shelf, we would all ask Deo to find it for us. 10 minutes later, he would return with it. I used to ask him how he found it, and he would always give a logical explanation of how he’d traced it from the 150’s to the 900’s, but it wasn’t a formula that any of us could follow, and I’m convinced that he’s psychic. Latterly, his eye-sight deteriorated so much that he would go upstairs with his magnifying glass to read class numbers. He could probably still find lost books blind-folded.

I started in Inter-Library Loans in 1982, and in 1985, Deo joined me in that department. Because he’d worked in every department in the library, there wasn’t a lot that I could teach him, but I remember him sitting at his desk, pen behind his ear, gazing confused at a book or a document, and saying “Could you just give me a push start here?”

Deo started work at the library on 5 May 1968 as a shelver. From there he went to Post, Photocopy, Issue Desk, Short Loan, which was where the Reference section is now, back to the Issue Desk, and finally to Inter-Library Loans, where he remained until March last year, when ill health forced him into temporary retirement. He was a loving and sincere friend to a great number of people, always willing to make sacrifices to help. There was nothing he wouldn’t do for you. Another of Deo’s skills was that he had a mind like a computer when it came to converting to Roman Numerals. While most of us were struggling with L’s and XV’s, he could always give a instant answer. Deo enjoyed designing forms and was very creative about it. He had a paperknife with an elliptical hole on the handle, a shape which still appears on some of our forms today.

We will all miss him now that he is finally retiring, but we wish him improved health and happiness in the future.

R.M.

Fiz (Felicity) Wotherspoon, head of the library Acquisitions section, retires at the end of the year after 18 years of service. Aptly named, Fiz outstrips any other staff member with her boundless energy and continual flossing about on library business. She has set and maintained a high standard of efficiency. With her meticulous attention to detail and head for figures, Fiz has firmly and effectively balanced and managed the book and periodical budgets over the years. Her pragmatic and efficient approach to her work, coupled with a sound awareness of the academic process and empathy with complex information needs of academia, has made her an asset with regards to library budgeting and care of the collection. Her finely honed intuition and detective-like investigative skills have enabled her to see beyond the ‘bells and whistles’ and smooth sales talk of pushy booksellers in order to be able to secure the best deals for purchases, and to do forward planning. “Fiz’s funny” - her file of problems and misfits amongst the daily tasks that need to be sorted out - are legendary. Fiz has played a major role in rationalization exercises; has served on the merger task team and trained numerous staff in her time. Thank you for your friendship and support as a colleague Fiz, you will be sorely missed.

R.K.
SUBJECT LIBRARIAN UNIT FOR 2004

Main Library

Jenny Aitchison  5062
Centre for Visual Arts
Drama Studies
Information Studies

Margaret Bass  5062
Afrikaans and Nederlands
French
History

Renee Damonse  5056
Educational Psychology
Sociology

Rosemary Kuhn  5904
CENGOPO
Chemistry
Geography

Nthabiseng Mosala  5056
Adult Education
Education
Statistics and Biometry

Praversh Sukram  5060
Accountancy
Business Administration

To be appointed  5060
Ethics Centre
Religious Studies

Life Sciences Library

Sara Mitha  5161
Biochemistry
Botany
Entomology
Genetics
Zoology

Lindiwe Soyizwapi  5162
Agricultural Engineering
Applied Terrestrial Ecology
Geography
Grassland Science
Microbiology
Soil Science
Wildlife Science

To be appointed  5162
Agricultural Economics
Animal and Poultry Science
Centre for Rural Development Systems
Community Resources
Dietetics and Human Nutrition
Forestry
Plant Breeding

Vacation Hours of Opening

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg Libraries


Main Library:

Mon – Fri: 08h:00 – 16h:30
Saturday: Open in November
Hours: 09h00 – 12h00
Closed for December.
Open from 10th Jan. - 14th Feb.
2004 Hours: 09h00-12.00

Life Sciences and Law Library:

Mon – Fri: 08h00 – 16h30
Saturday: Closed

BRAIN-BUSTING WORK!

A survey of 5 210 adults conducted by the makers of pain reliever Excedrin, ranked professions whose members are most likely to get headaches on the job.

- Accountants
- Bus and truck drivers
- Librarians
- Nurses
- Waiters
- Homemakers


More Staff News

We welcome Jabu Sibisi, a familiar face to many, to the position of Senior Library Assistant (Part-time) in the Law Library as well as Nokulungu Ziqubu, who is our new permanent Library Assistant at the Cecil Renaud Library. We hope you both spend many happy years working here.

Congratulations to Jabu Nene whose bouncing son, Kwanale, was born on 9 November! May he bring you many years of pride and happiness.

Congratulations too to all of you who passed your various exams! Well done!
The Oxford encyclopedia of theatre and performance
Edited by Dennis Kennedy.
R 792 KEN.

The scope of this encyclopedia is wide and fully interrogates theatre and performance from its origins until the present. Accordingly, it covers all aspects of performance art including the more traditional such as television, radio and dance as well as many forms of non-dramatic performance such as public executions, circuses and sex shows. There are no entries on individual plays in these volumes; instead, these are simply indexed at the back of the book and guide the reader to other entries. In addition, technical coverage is not emphasized nor covered in depth.

The encyclopedia includes theatre and performance from all over the world and entries are comprehensive and informative. Concepts (such as post colonialism and modernism), theories and critical approaches are dealt with extensively. Biographical entries of all the major figures associated with theatre and performance from the past till the present are included.

The entry on ‘Africa’ is well cross-referenced and is divided by language as well as by geographical location and traces the main features of indigenous theatre and performance from its origins, all the while highlighting the complexity of these art forms. Of special interest and very welcome is the coverage of ‘alternative’ or ‘experimental’ types of performance which are often not included in more traditional encyclopedias.


Child labour is a controversial and complicated subject and this compact illustrated dictionary attempts to bring order to a difficult topic. Accompanying black and white photographs are interesting and in many cases downright chilling.

Historically, children have always worked. Unfortunately this has been taken for granted and was only raised as an issue when child labour became a matter of public concern and debate in the 18th century. As a result, the book documents occurrences of child labour since this time. This is a pity since child labour has a much longer history.

Another criticism rests with the book’s limited focus on certain countries. Less emphasis is placed on countries where resources are scarce or where there is a lack of awareness of the extent of the problem. Despite this, the authors emphasize that no country is free from this scourge.

This volume does not focus on any one aspect of child labour, but rather attempts to give a general guide to a difficult topic by using themes to highlight various aspects of child labour.

All aspects of child labour are addressed. For example, an entry on ‘Cinema’ discusses the problems that child actors face and their conditions of employment in this – one of the most glamorous of industries.

In some cases more questions are asked than are answered and as the focus seems to be on economic criteria, other forms of child exploitation are perhaps underplayed. Complex issues such as prostitution are treated quite superficially with no data or statistics to support claims. However, references are given at the end of each entry and one might well need to refer to these.

At the end of the book there is an index of web sites, a useful glossary, a list of acronyms used, an interesting chronology and a comprehensive bibliography.

Margaret Bass