

**Building a context for self-development and learning through  
the provision of free access to the internet in public libraries  
in South Africa**

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Association for Progressive Communications (APC)  
on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

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## 1. Introduction

This report focuses on the provision of free internet access to communities in public libraries in South Africa. It has been prepared in response to a United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) review of the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Plan of Action commitments, with the aim of gauging the extent to which South Africa has met those commitments ten years after the second WSIS summit in Tunis in 2005.

Section C7 of the World Summit on the Plan of Action states that “ICT [information and communication technology] applications can support sustainable development, in the fields of public administration, business, education and training, health, employment, environment, agriculture and science within the framework of national e-strategies”.<sup>1</sup> Section C7 (17) on e-learning references section C4, which states: “Everyone should have the necessary skills to benefit fully from the Information Society. Therefore capacity building and ICT literacy are essential. ICTs can contribute to achieving universal education worldwide, through delivery of education and training of teachers, *and offering improved conditions for lifelong learning, encompassing people that are outside the formal education process, and improving professional skills. [our italics]*” Amongst several points in the section, it highlights the need to “[d]esign programmes to train users to develop self-learning and self-development capacities.”<sup>2</sup>

In this regard, an assessment of the extent to which free internet access at public libraries is available, suggests the extent to which there are “improved conditions” that enable lifelong learning and self-development.

While this report focuses on internet access points in public libraries (i.e. excluding school libraries), it is important to point out that public libraries are only one venue where public internet access is offered to communities. Numerous other projects have, or have attempted to provide public access to the internet since the 2003 WSIS Plan of Action was agreed. These include government-led Thusong centres (originally multi-purpose community centres), The Digital Doorway project, the BB4all initiative, Universal Service and Access Agency of South Africa (USAASA) telecentres, as well as numerous other localised and scaled public access initiatives (digital villages, community access points, internet access offered by NGOs, some public access at schools etc.). Moreover, the proliferation of mobile phones in previously neglected communities has created an unprecedented level of access to technology in those communities, and at least the potential of accessing the internet through them.

A 2012 study, *The New Wave*,<sup>3</sup> showed that while access to mobile technology is high amongst the South African population, access to internet at home is significantly lower. It found that:

- 1 in 3 people are internet users in South Africa (or 12,3-million people). This is expected to rise to 2 in 3 by 2016.
- 84% of adults own a mobile phone, compared to 18% who own a computer.
- 62% of the population spends more than R1 a day on a mobile phone.
- 22% use the internet daily, compared to 17% who read a newspaper daily.
- 24% have a computer at home
- Only 20% have the internet at home.

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1 World Summit on the Information Society. 2003. *Plan of Action*. Document WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E. United Nations, International Telecommunication Union, <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html>

2 Ibid.

3 De Lanerolle I. et al. 2012. *The New Wave: Who connects to the internet, how they connect to the internet, and what they do when they connect to the internet*. University of Witwatersrand Journalism Programme, Johannesburg.

It is in this context, of the overwhelming majority of South Africans not having ready access to the internet, that the provision of free internet to previously neglected communities becomes a national priority for development.

It needs to be pointed out that governments are not alone responsible for the provision of public internet access – although they are the policy drivers, and can play a critical part in infrastructure roll-out. The initiatives mentioned below are a blend of government-led (e.g. the government Conditional Grant system) and what effectively amount to public-private partnerships (e.g. the Cape Access project with the Shuttleworth Foundation, or contributions from the Gates Foundation or Carnegie Corporation). Creating the conditions for innovation and access cannot occur without the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including the active participation of the public in these initiatives (i.e. in terms of use, and a sense of “ownership” of these initiatives). The extent to which this occurs has bearing on the extent to which the WSIS targets are met.

Available data on public libraries, and on public internet access in these libraries, is at best unstable. On the one hand, public reporting on numbers, such as those available in the National Library of South Africa's (NLSA) Yearbook, is either insufficient (e.g. statistics on Gauteng and Limpopo), or appears not to keep proper distinctions to allow comparable analysis. This includes the definition of a “library” (as in a structure with books), and “library service points” (which may include mobile libraries, amongst others). At the same time, there does not always appear to be a clear distinction between an e-enabled library (that has computers, and perhaps internet access for librarians), and libraries that offer free public internet access. This makes building accurate data on the number of public libraries, and the number of those offering public internet access a matter of uncertain forensics. While the general trend is towards a noticeable and important increase in public internet access in libraries since 2003, this challenge needs to be born in mind while reading this report.

Similarly, few studies on the impact of public internet access in libraries appear to have been conducted. A 2003 study by Informatics South Africa in the Western Cape serves as a benchmark,<sup>4</sup> and the province of KwaZulu-Natal suggests it has conducted impact assessments, but these are not readily available.

This report is the result of a survey of available literature on public libraries and internet access in South Africa. It draws on a 2010 report conducted by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) on behalf of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,<sup>5</sup> complementing this with more recent data offered by the NLSA, amongst other sources. The report provides an overview of the policy and legislative context for the provision of internet access in public libraries in South Africa, as well as a summary of the extent of this access in the country's provinces. While considering access at the NLSA campuses, it focuses on two provinces in particular, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, both of which suggest an energetic and concerted effort to bring information services to communities. Finally, it ends with some lessons learned, and offers guidelines for the road ahead.

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4 Informatics South Africa. 2003. *Evaluation of the Smart Cape Access Pilot Project: A City of Cape Town digital divide initiative*. City of Cape Town Directorate: Information Technology

5 Three reports are relevant here: Association for Progressive Communications (APC). September 2011. *GLSA-Explore. Regarding the development of a country programme to expand free internet access in community libraries in South Africa*. Final Recommendations. Gates Foundation; Vushe, E. James T. Esterhuysen A. and Magome K. September 2011. *GLSA-Explore. Taking Stock: An assessment of current initiatives in libraries and public ICT access points in South Africa*. Gates Foundation; and Kgobati M. Radloff J. and James T. GLSA-Explore. September 2011. *The Stakeholder Consultations: The views and insights of key stakeholders regarding a potential Global Libraries programme in South Africa*. Gates Foundation. These are referenced throughout this report as APC Gates Foundation reports.

## 2. Summary of key findings

- Around one third (30%) of the public libraries in South Africa now offer free internet access to the public. Although statistics are difficult to come but, it is reasonable to suggest that this figure was around the 5% mark in 2003.
- The government's Conditional Grants to libraries has been critical in extending ICT services in libraries, particularly in rural areas. This together with funds made available from donors such as the Carnegie Corporation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has contributed to the rapid upscaling of public internet access at libraries.
- Both the Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal have been exemplary in the provision of public internet access in libraries. In the Western Cape, 100 libraries began offering public internet access from the early 2000s onwards.
- Content services at libraries can be innovative and creative: in Kwa-Zulu Natal, gaming is being used to attract the province's youth to libraries, and to offer them a constructive way to spend their free time. Similarly, both mobile libraries and ICT services for the disabled peoples help build a context where adult self-learning and development can occur.
- Kwazulu-Natal's Cyber Cadet initiative shows that ICT access at libraries can be used to create employment and opportunities for unemployed youth. In this way libraries are brought closer to, and become more integrated, in communities.
- The passing of SA Connect, the national broadband strategy, with the vision of providing free internet access previously neglected communities, offers the potential for libraries that are not connected to the internet to leap-frog the digital divide.

## 3. Overview of demographics in South Africa



- Provinces: 9
- Population: 54-million (2014)
- Population growth: -0.051% (July 2010 estimate)
- Urban population: 61% (2008), with 1.4% rate of change
- Literacy: 87% (Male) 85.7% (Female) – defined as those over 15 who can read and write
- Poverty rates: Differ significantly across the nine provinces. 2005/06 data show poverty rates ranging from 24.9% in Gauteng (the wealthiest province) and 28.8% in the Western Cape to 57.6% in the Eastern Cape and 64.6% in Limpopo. The highest poverty rates are found in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo with 60.1% of poor individuals living in these three provinces. Over half (59.3%) of poor individuals live in rural areas. The

incidence of poverty remains highest among the black and coloured (mixed race) parts of the population.

## **4. Policy and legislative landscape**

### **4.1. Overview of funding structure for public libraries**

All libraries form part of the national library system, which is administered at the provincial level but implemented at the local or municipal level. The National Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) provides oversight.

The primary source of revenue - about 85% - for provinces is the National Treasury, followed by some of their own funding raised from road traffic fees, hospital patient fees, horse racing and gambling fees for example, and conditional grants.<sup>6</sup> The funding from the National Treasury is provided according to the Constitution which specifies that national revenue be equitably divided and allocated to the national, provincial and local spheres of government, to enable them to fulfil the functions assigned to them. The equitable share of each province is calculated according to a formula which takes factors such as the population of a province as well as its poverty levels into account. This results in varying amounts allocated to each province. This equitable share does not have specific conditions attached to it, allowing each province to distribute the fund according to its own priorities but starting with the provision of basic services such as education, health, housing, and social development. The equitable share pays for salaries, infrastructure, provincial services and operations, maintenance, as well as all other priorities identified by the province, some of which may be different from those identified by national government. So, while National Government has identified provision of library and information services as a priority, libraries still have to compete with other services for funding at provincial level.

In addition to the equitable share, the national government provides Conditional Grants to provinces and municipalities in order to achieve specific redistribution and equity objectives such as addressing illiteracy; or to revitalise a service such as the current library Conditional Grant. Conditional Grants are issued for specific periods, for a specific purpose.

The original grant, for R1-billion, was allocated for a three-year period, from 2007-2009. This was extended for a further three years till 2013/2014 with an additional amount of about R500-million allocated for this period, after which provincial governments are supposed to take over the maintenance funding for libraries.

The provinces have used the Conditional Grant to revitalise library and information services: building new libraries or refurbishing old ones, sourcing library material, establishing internet infrastructure and access, as well as employing staff. There are ongoing efforts at National Treasury level to ensure that provincial governments allocate funding for libraries from their equitable share in expectation of the end of the Conditional Grant in 2014. The NLSA stated in its 2014 annual report that it has signed a further conditional grant agreement to the value of R11.6-million.<sup>7</sup>

The above are clear indications of the significant role that government sees for libraries in providing information to its citizens, and for the need to improve ICT access and connectivity.

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<sup>6</sup> The Library Funding Model Report, Department of Arts and Culture, 2007

<sup>7</sup> National Library of South Africa. *Annual Report*. 2013/2014

## 4.2. Policy and legislative context

South Africa is a constitutional democracy with a three-tier system of government: National Government is responsible for setting policies, norms and standards; Provincial Government: is responsible for implementing policies set at national level in South African's nine provinces; and Local Government is responsible for delivering services at local level such as towns and cities. The national, provincial and local levels of government all have legislative and executive authority in their own spheres, and are defined as "distinctive, interdependent and interrelated" in the Constitution. Under this system, the implementation of library and information services is a responsibility of provincial governments, further devolved to local government and municipalities as the primary institutions of local government.

There are numerous policies and strategies which apply to library information services. These are comprehensively documented in the Library and Information Services Transformation Charter<sup>8</sup> and are therefore quoted directly below.

### *The Library Information Services Transformation Charter*

The Transformation Charter was commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) and the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS)<sup>9</sup> in April 2008. Its objective is to "define the challenges facing the library and information services sector, and to provide a clear framework of principles and mechanisms needed to transform the sector into one that is able to contribute to the elimination of illiteracy and inequality and build an informed and reading nation".<sup>10</sup> The document, which has been approved by Parliament, is regarded as the framework within which all future library and information services activities will be undertaken. It spells out the historical background, needs and priorities of the various subsectors of library and information services in South Africa, including public/community libraries. It also covers cross-cutting issues such as human resource development; access to library and information services; developing a culture of reading; archiving of materials; minimum national norms and standards; as well as implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Charter includes recommendations which, judging from interviews with key stakeholders done as part of the APC Gates Foundation study,<sup>11</sup> have been received differently by the different provinces. The more resourced provinces with advanced library and information services feel that the recommendations are not sufficiently ambitious and the suggested strategies not innovative. Under-resourced provinces with less advanced library and information services on the other hand, felt stretched by the recommendations. The varying reactions of the provinces indicate the differences in their resources and capacities. Provinces with libraries that are well-resourced with computers have the freedom to think about how to expand to cellphones, while the others are still concerned with sourcing computers for their libraries.

### *The Draft Library and Information Services Bill*

Following the approval of the Charter by the South African Parliament, a process to draft legislation was initiated to make the recommendations in the Charter enforceable. This led to the development of the Draft Library and Information Services Bill, which will become law once ratified by Parliament in 2011. The Bill aims "to provide for essential national norms and standards in order to maintain consistency for the delivery of community library and information services; to provide for

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8 [http://www.sac.fs.gov.za/mw/images/3/30/Library\\_Transformation\\_Charter.pdf](http://www.sac.fs.gov.za/mw/images/3/30/Library_Transformation_Charter.pdf)

9 A statutory body established in terms of the National Council for Library and Information Services Act (South Africa, 2001), which was inaugurated on 11 March 2004 in Cape Town. It is responsible for coordinating transformation and redress in the LIS sector and reports to the Ministers of Education and Arts and Culture.

10 [http://www.sac.fs.gov.za/mw/images/3/30/Library\\_Transformation\\_Charter.pdf](http://www.sac.fs.gov.za/mw/images/3/30/Library_Transformation_Charter.pdf)

11 APC Gates Foundation reports.

measures to redress the inequality of the provision of community library and information services and resources; to provide for community library and information services principles; to promote co-operative governance and coordination of responsibility for community library and information services; to establish the National Community Library and Information Services Committee; to provide for the composition, functions, meetings and decisions of the Committee; to empower the Minister to make national policy and regulations for community library and information services; and to provide for matters connected therewith.”<sup>15</sup> The development of the Bill was led by the Department of Arts and Culture and the Draft Bill was taken through a consultation process involving each of the nine provinces during early 2010. The Draft Bill was presented to Parliament in October 2010, but Parliament recommended that further consultations be conducted, particularly with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) which represents all municipalities. As indicated earlier, the budget and implementation of LIS in South Africa resides with the municipalities, thus rendering their buy-in essential. It was also felt by some stakeholders that the current version contains confusion related to the roles and responsibilities of local and provincial government. This will be addressed in the next version.

### **4.3. Relevant legislation relating to library and information services**

Below follows some text extracted from the library and information services Transformation Charter (pp 2 – 4) which provides a summary of legislation which is relevant to library and information services in South Africa.

#### ***The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996)*<sup>12</sup>**

The Charter aims to align the library and information services sector with the national strategic imperatives that are inspired by the Constitution. The right of access to information, which is enshrined in the Constitution and in its Bill of Rights, links to responsibilities libraries have in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of access to information.

Section 32 of the Bill of Rights deals with Access to information and states that:

- i. Everyone has the right of access to: (a) any information held by the state; and (b) any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.
- ii. National legislation must be enacted to give effect to this right, and may provide for reasonable measures to alleviate the administrative and financial burden on the state.

An anomaly in Part A of Schedule 5 of the Constitution has resulted in confusion about the responsibility for delivering public library services, with unfortunate consequences. The Charter expects, however, that forthcoming community library legislation will correct this anomaly and establish certainty on the matter.

#### ***The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, 1996.***

The literature section refers to the absence of an entrenched reading culture and to the DAC’s aim to promote, develop, and make accessible the rich and diverse traditions of all South African literatures in written and oral forms. The section on library and information services affirms the role of libraries in development, and in the promotion of a culture of reading and learning.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://invigorations/documents/constitution/1996/a108-96.pdf>



***The National Library of South Africa Act, No 2 of 1998.***

The aims of collecting, recording, preserving, and giving access to the national documentary heritage and the world's information resources resonate with the Charter's aims. The amalgamation of the South African Library in Cape Town and the State Library in Pretoria to form the National Library of South Africa supports the achievement of these objectives.

***The South African Library for the Blind Act, No 91 of 1998.***

The focus of this Act is on blind and print-handicapped readers and on improving access to library and information services by South African people with disabilities.

***The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.***

South Africa ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocol, which became an International Law on 3 May 2008. South Africa's commitment to modify or amend existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities will add force to the Charter's transformation agenda.

***The Legal Deposit Act, No 54 of 1997***

This requires publishers in the country to supply copies of each new publication to places of legal deposit, guarantees the preservation of the national documentary heritage, and its availability across the country. Suppliers of library and information resources are key library and information services stakeholders and important participants in the preparation of the Charter.

***The Copyright Act, No 98 of 1978.***

This Act still requires amendment regarding copying and access to information. Copyright laws must be fair, and must balance the interests of commercial and non-commercial publishers with the public interest. Special provisions in the Act for libraries, education, literacy training, inter-library lending, preservation, and access by persons with sensory disabilities will assist transformation of the library and information services sector.

***The National Council for Library and Information Services Act, No 6 of 2001.***

The functions of the Council include the provision of information and advice to the Ministers of Arts and Culture, and of Education on the deficiencies of library and information resources in African languages, and on the promotion of basic and functional literacy, information literacy, and a culture of reading.

***The Education Laws Amendment Act, No 31 of 2007 (that amends the South African Schools Act of 1996)***

This lists the availability of a library as a minimum uniform norm and standard for school infrastructure. The legislation listed above has a strong and direct impact on the library and information services sector, but there are many other laws and policy documents that are implicated in the delivery of library and information services. They include:

- The White Paper on Education and Training, 1995
- The National Archives and Records Service Act, No 43 of 1996
- National Educational Policy Act, No 27 of 1996

- The White Paper on Education, 1997
- The White Paper on Higher Education, 1997
- The Higher Education Act, 1997
- The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997
- The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997
- The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, No 177 of 1998
- The National Heritage Council Act, No 11 of 1999
- Public Finance Management Act, No 1 of 1999
- The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, No 32 of 2000
- Provincial Library and Information Services Act, No 7 of 2001
- The Promotion of Access to Information Act, No 2 of 2002

It should be noted that in general in post-apartheid transformation in South Africa the strong and evolving policy environment has frequently been rendered ineffective by limited implementation of these policies.

### ***Batho Pele***<sup>13</sup>

The Batho Pele principle, a Sotho translation for 'People First', is an initiative that will need to guide any library and information services activity in South Africa. Due to the lack of government service delivery to its citizens, Batho Pele was introduced as a way of getting public servants to deliver services by putting citizens at the centre of public service planning and operations. The government stipulated that service delivery must be transformed in order to create satisfied customers. The eight Batho Pele principles, which will apply to the provision of public library services, are: consultation; service standards; access; courtesy; information; openness and transparency; redress; and value for money.

### ***Broadband Policy***

A positive move is that 2013 Cabinet approved a broadband policy for South Africa, SA Connect. The vision is that universal access to broadband will be achieved by 2019. It proposes centralised infrastructure development, controlled by government, which will also invest in this infrastructure. The policy mentions the need to stimulate usage at national, provincial and municipal levels. It calls for the setting up of an inter-governmental implementation committee that will be responsible for ensuring that there is coordination of broadband initiatives among the three spheres of government. Amongst other things, the policy also aims to provide free public Wifi in previously neglected communities. While the policy has been criticised by sectors, it does demonstrate the government's commitment to facilitating the provision of affordable, accessible, universal access to broadband infrastructure throughout the country. Phase one of the policy is to begin in April 2015.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Open Source Policy***

A policy for free and open source software use for the South African Government was approved by Cabinet in February 2007.<sup>15</sup> Minimum Interoperability Standards (MIOS)<sup>16</sup> for information systems in government were also stipulated, which include a set of standards for information sharing within government departments as well as between government and citizens. These include formats such as text, OpenDocument Format, XHTML and CSV for document sharing but does not include

13 <http://www.dpsa.gov.za/batho-pele/Definition.asp>

14 [http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=141863:Phase-one-of-SA-Connect-to-begin-in-April&catid=260](http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=141863:Phase-one-of-SA-Connect-to-begin-in-April&catid=260)

15 [http://www.sita.co.za/FOSS/foss\\_policy\\_2007.pdf](http://www.sita.co.za/FOSS/foss_policy_2007.pdf)

16 [http://www.oss.gov.za/docs/mios\\_v41\\_final.pdf](http://www.oss.gov.za/docs/mios_v41_final.pdf)

Microsoft's Word format. There has however been inconsistent implementation of the policy, and there are cases where government departments have specifically stipulated the need for Microsoft products. For example, the Department of Education has recently launched a scheme to provide subsidised laptops to teachers – the specifications require Microsoft products. In the case of libraries, the Department of Arts and Culture stipulated that the recently-introduced library management system has to be open source. The decision was made to install the Brocade system – six of the nine provinces will participate – Gauteng will continue with its own (non-open source) system and Free State and the Western Cape have opted for another open-source system. The Government will however only provide financial support for open source systems.

## **5. Access to free internet in South African public libraries**

There are reported to be 1800 public libraries in South Africa.<sup>17</sup> Although data is unstable in accounting for the number that offer public internet access, this is likely to be between 500<sup>18</sup> and 750 libraries. A mean would suggest that around 625 libraries, or just over a third, offer internet access to the public. While this largely indicative of the impact of the government Conditional Grant in upgrading existing library infrastructures and building new structures, it needs to be borne in mind that this access is unevenly spread throughout South Africa. The location of new libraries has been influenced by former apartheid spatial planning with the result that many areas such as former townships, informal settlements and rural areas are under-served. There are a number of municipalities where there are no libraries at all, a situation affecting more than two million people in Gauteng alone.

Amongst the provinces and libraries in South Africa, the NLSA and access initiatives in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal serve as positive case examples of the provision of public internet access in libraries.

### **5.1. The National Library of South Africa (NLSA)**

The NLSA is the legal repository for all documentation, books and knowledge produced in South Africa. It has three sites in South Africa: Pretoria (where the head-office is based), Cape Town (which houses heritage collections and serves as a research hub), and the Centre for the Book, also in Cape Town. The NLSA offers free internet access to the public, and about 2,000 people visit the NLSA campuses daily.<sup>19</sup>

According to the NLSA's 2014 Board Report, Wifi has been installed in facilities in Cape Town, as well as the reference section in its Pretoria library. This means that the public can access its services at these venues through a variety of mobile devices. The NLSA serves as a surrogate to the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) in its efforts to provide internet access to public libraries, and it has connected over 500 libraries in five provinces to the internet.<sup>20</sup>

The NLSA manages a substantial portion of the Conditional Grant on behalf of the DAC, and has been a the recipient of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. The grant from the latter allowed the NLSA to buy 500 computers that were used for public internet access, as well as to offer training in the use of computers. According to Carnegie “the public demand is so huge that the library was

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17 APC Gates Foundation reports

18 National Library of South Africa. *Annual Report. 2013/2014*

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

forced to put time limits on individuals' use of the computers.”<sup>21</sup>

In 2010 the NLSA was spearheading the pilot roll-out of internet to provincial libraries to enable the move from the PALS to the Brocade library system. This included upgrading from 128kbps bandwidth for provincial community libraries to 1024 kbps, as part of the Conditional Grant, although the upgraded bandwidth was seen as still insufficient to meet requirements.

The NLSA's public internet resources – and those of select public libraries – have been significantly boosted by the awarding of a R32-million Grant by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2014, as part of the Gates Foundation Global Libraries Project. A two-year pilot project was launched on 18 March 2014. According to the NLSA, the project has specific objectives such increasing access to technology in public libraries and measuring the impact of libraries and public access on communities.<sup>22</sup> These are in line with the overall goals of the Gates Libraries Project that include installing new technologies, training in ICTs used for accessing information, identifying services necessary for community development, and, importantly, “ensur[ing] that all people, especially in disadvantaged communities around the world, have access to information through technology in Public Libraries”.<sup>23</sup>

Select libraries in all nine provinces are beneficiaries to the grant, including the NLSA and the Information Association of South Africa (LIASA). The pilot involves 27 libraries, three in each province.<sup>24</sup> According to the NLSA, each library will receive 20 computers, 10 e-readers, 10 tablets, free software from Microsoft, as well as licences.<sup>25</sup>

As the NLSA points out, the objectives of the grant are aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) which include:

- Promoting a culture of reading
- Ensuring that high-speed broadband is available to communities
- Making libraries “empowering spaces” for the youth
- Facilitating “educational opportunities, cultural awareness and understanding”, and
- Creating an environment for learning and development, and supporting “positive socializ[ation]” for marginalised groups and unemployed youth.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the grant money from the Gates Foundation will be spent in the 2014/2015 financial year.<sup>27</sup>

## **5.2. The Cape Access Project in the Western Cape**

### **5.2.1. Western Cape Province**

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21 <http://carnegie.org/publications/carnegie-reporter/single/view/article/item/288/>

22 [www.nlsa.ac.za/index.php/nlsa-news/236-gates-library-project](http://www.nlsa.ac.za/index.php/nlsa-news/236-gates-library-project)

23 <http://www.nlsa.ac.za/nlsanews/2014/Qtr1/gates.html>

24 These are: Gauteng: Sharpeville, Wedela and Suurman; North West: Rustenberg, Delareyville and Reivilo; Mpumalanga: Siyabuswa, Secunda and Emjindini; Western Cape: CJ Langenhoven, D’Almeida and Paarl; Limpopo: Ga-Phaahla, Mogalakwena and Thulamela; Eastern Cape: Mdantsane, Queenstown and Mount Fletcher; Free State: Zamdela, Mangaung and Edenville; Northern Cape: Rietfontein, Mapoteng and Galeshewe; Kwa-Zulu Natal: Mtubatuba, Osizweni and Kwandwalane.

25 <http://www.nlsa.ac.za/nlsanews/2014/Qtr1/gates.html>

26 Ibid.

27 National Library of South Africa. *Annual Report*. 2013/2014

More than 5.3-million people live in the Western Cape on 129 370km<sup>2</sup> of land.<sup>28</sup> The Labour Force Survey of 2009 showed that the province has the lowest rate of unemployment namely 19.7% compared to the national average of 23.2%.<sup>29</sup> The highly urbanised Western Cape population is relatively well off compared to the rest of South Africa, and the average per capita income is significantly<sup>30</sup> higher than the national average.<sup>31</sup> According to South Africa Institute of Race Relations, Western Cape Province is the most highly educated province with a relatively skilled workforce. With the exception of 2010 the high school graduation (matriculation) rate has been the highest in South Africa (around 80%).<sup>32</sup> However, in a provincial survey by Bridges.org found that of the survey respondents, 67% had never used a computer.

### 5.2.2. Overview of public libraries in the Western Cape

The Western Cape Library Service provides library services in partnership with municipalities at 355 service points throughout the province. In 2010, the Department receive R40 976-million as a Conditional Grant for the enhancement of library services in the province. About 74% of the grant funding was to be transferred to municipalities to employ additional staff at libraries.<sup>33</sup> This was increased to R56,129-million in 2012, and R67-million in 2013.<sup>34</sup> Also in 2013, the department reached the milestone of 100 libraries being provided with an internet connection through its Rural ICT-Project.<sup>35</sup> Rural access to library services is also boosted by the provinces Wheelie Wagon project. By 2014, 42 communities had benefited from this service.<sup>36</sup> According to the NLSA's 2014 Yearbook, 1,278,953 registered library users borrowed 20,898,075 items from provincial libraries.<sup>37</sup>

The table below shows the growth in the number of libraries in the province since 1994.

	1994	Early 2000s	2014
Number of libraries	256	280	355

### 5.2.3. Summary of key milestones in the use and provision of ICTs in Western Cape libraries

The table below indicates the increase in the availability of computer and internet access at public libraries in the province. As can be seen, there has been a dramatic increase in the level of public internet access offered at libraries since the WSIS targets were set.

	1994	Early 2000s	2014
Number of libraries	256	280	355
Number of libraries with public internet access	0	6	100

28 Mid-year population estimates 2009 available on [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)

29 <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/statsdownload.asp?PPN=P0211&SCH=4503>

30 Informatics South Africa. 2003. *Evaluation of the Smart Cape Access Pilot Project: A City of Cape Town digital divide initiative*. City of Cape Town Directorate: Information Technology

31 Provincial and Economic Outlook, 2010. Report of the Provincial Government Western Cape Provincial Treasury. [http://www.capecapeway.gov.za/Text/2010/11/2010\\_per&o.pdf](http://www.capecapeway.gov.za/Text/2010/11/2010_per&o.pdf)

32 <http://www.sairr.org.za/profile/annual-report/SAIRR%20-%202078th%20Annual%20Report.pdf/view>

33 [http://www.family-history.co.za/national\\_archive\\_week.html](http://www.family-history.co.za/national_archive_week.html)

34 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

Below is a summary of key ICT milestones in the province:<sup>38</sup>

- 2000: The Cape Librarian, the library service's in-house magazine, was published on the internet.
- 2002: Smart Cape Access project launched, providing free internet access to six public libraries.
- 2007: Four rural public libraries are connected to the internet using 3G-cards.
- 2009: The first rural ICT-project with multiple workstations connected to the internet went live at Cloetesville Library in Stellenbosch. The intention is to expand this service to 20 new sites a year.
- 2009/2010: ICT projects are rolled out in 14 rural areas. Each site includes access to a computerised library system as well as public internet access.
- 2010/2011: A highlight in 2010 is the long-awaited migration to a new computerised library system. The outdated DOS-based PALS system is replaced with the new web-based Brocade system. The scope of this project is huge, as more than six million items and all current processes and procedures will have to be migrated to the new system by January 2011.
- 2013: 100 libraries in the province now have an internet connection.
- 2013: A broadband project is announced by the province. This will provide high-speed internet to government buildings, schools and public libraries. R6,8 million is set aside to connect rural public libraries that do not have ICTs.

#### **5.2.4. The Smart Cape Access Project**

The Smart Cape Access Project was launched in July 2002 with the aim of providing free computer and internet access to the public. The project is aligned with the Smart City Initiative, which aims to improve e-government services, bridge the digital divide, empower the public in the knowledge economy, and engage citizens in e-governance.<sup>39</sup> It provides computers with internet access in public libraries, schools, multipurpose centres and other access points for use by anyone who needs them. It was awarded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Access to Learning Award in 2003.<sup>40</sup>

Six public libraries in previously neglected areas across the city, namely Lwandle, Delft, Grassy Park, Atlantis Wesfleur, Guguletu, and Brooklyn, were targeted for the pilot.<sup>41</sup> Each access point has six computers connected to the internet using open source and a thin-client architecture. Five of these computers are used for public access and one for administration and library staff.<sup>42</sup> Registered users must be library members, and access is provided on a time-limited basis.<sup>43</sup>

e-Community Forums were also established in the six pilot communities,<sup>44</sup> where ICT activists are mobilised to promote access to existing ICT infrastructure. The project also offers training to

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38 APC Gates Foundation reports; *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

39 Informatics South Africa. 2003. *Evaluation of the Smart Cape Access Pilot Project: A City of Cape Town digital divide initiative*. City of Cape Town Directorate: Information Technology

40 <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/atla/Pages/2003-smart-cape-access-project-south-africa.aspx>

41 Coetzee, L. 2007. *World Wide Webs: Crossing the Digital Divide through Promotion of Public Access*. Presented at the 3rd International Conference on Communities and Technologies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, June 28-30, 2007. Published in Steinfield, Pentland, Ackerman, and Contractor (eds.), *Communities and Technologies 2007: Proceedings of the Third Communities and Technologies Conference*, Michigan State University, 2007, London: Springer, 531-544.

42 Informatics South Africa. 2003. *Evaluation of the Smart Cape Access Pilot Project: A City of Cape Town digital divide initiative*. City of Cape Town Directorate: Information Technology

43 Ibid.

44 Wesfleur, Brooklyn, Delft, Grassy Park, Guguletu and Lwandle

information seekers so that they can use the facilities effectively.

Given the success of the pilot phase, scaling was substantial. By 2006 the project was extended to 98 libraries across Cape Town with funds obtained by winning the Bill & Melinda Gates Access to Learning Award.<sup>45</sup> By then there were 114 public access points in the province, most of these (82%) located in the Cape Town municipality.<sup>46</sup> 71% of all public access points in the province were part of the Smart Cape Access Project.<sup>47</sup> The project has resulted in a significant increase in library membership. In December 2002, 4,398 users were registered,<sup>48</sup> a number which spiked to more than 100,000 users in 2010.<sup>49</sup> A 2003 Informatics South Africa evaluation of the project found that the majority of users were young (75% under 25) and male (79%). 63% of interviewees said they used computers at the centres more than two or more times a week. Of the face-to-face interviews conducted, 467 were learners or students, and “288 were employed, seeking employment or out of the employment market (e.g. housewives or pensioners)”.<sup>50</sup> These figures – and others offered by the evaluation - can be taken as a benchmark. However, given the rapid adoption of technology amongst all sectors of society since then, it is likely that they can only be taken as suggestive of current trends.

By 2015, the project offered free internet access in 100 libraries to registered users.<sup>51</sup> This phenomenal growth in the registration of new users suggests both a growing need for free public access to the internet in the province and that the project has played a significant part in meeting the demand.

### **5.3. ICTs in public libraries in KwaZulu-Natal**

#### **5.3.1. KwaZulu-Natal Province**

KwaZulu-Natal is South Africa's second most populous province, and is home to more than 10 million people.<sup>52</sup> The manufacturing sector makes the largest contribution to the province's GDP. According to the 2001 census, 22.9% of KwaZulu-Natal's population of 20 years or older had received no formal education and only 4.8% had received some form of higher education. The community survey conducted in 2007 by Statistics SA indicated that only 5.5% of total households in KwaZulu-Natal had access to internet facilities.

#### **5.3.2. Overview of public libraries in KwaZulu-Natal**

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45 Coetzee, L. 2007. *World Wide Webs: Crossing the Digital Divide through Promotion of Public Access*. Presented at the 3rd International Conference on Communities and Technologies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, June 28-30, 2007. Published in Steinfield, Pentland, Ackerman, and Contractor (eds.), *Communities and Technologies 2007: Proceedings of the Third Communities and Technologies Conference*, Michigan State University, 2007, London: Springer, 531-544.

46 Directory of free public internet access points in the Western Cape – a Cape Gateway information resource. 2006. Report compiled by Glen Thompson for the Centre for e-Innovation Provincial Government of the Western Cape

47 Ibid.

48 Informatics South Africa. 2003. *Evaluation of the Smart Cape Access Pilot Project: A City of Cape Town digital divide initiative*. City of Cape Town Directorate: Information Technology

49 APC Gates Foundation reports.

50 Informatics South Africa. 2003. *Evaluation of the Smart Cape Access Pilot Project: A City of Cape Town digital divide initiative*. City of Cape Town Directorate: Information Technology

51 <http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/labour/2015/01/27/smart-cape-aims-to-help-people-study-find-jobs-and-business-opportunities>

52 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KwaZulu-Natal>

The KwaZulu-Natal Arts and Culture Department's Library and Archives programme has sub-programmes focused on library services, archives, and the recapitalisation of community libraries (supported by the Conditional Grant). The department's infrastructure programmes – i.e. building of both libraries and arts centres - are designed to embrace the principles of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) which in the main entail provision of job opportunities and skilling of workers. The department was also commencing with a greening strategy in libraries with regard to use of energy and library materials. According to the department, “[l]ibraries [in the province] have transformed over the last 20 years, moving away from the traditional usage of circulation of books to encompass new demands such as access to study space, educational resources and internet access.”<sup>53</sup>

62 “state-of-the-art”<sup>54</sup> libraries have been built in previously neglected areas since 1994. By 2014 there were seven libraries either under construction or planned. Many other libraries were renovated or extended during the period.<sup>55</sup> Between 2009 and October 2013 alone, 10 new libraries – or two a year – were built or under construction. Seven had extensive renovations.<sup>56</sup> The department funds the entire cost of the new libraries, which includes furnishings, equipment and computers.

Collections in the province were expected to increase to 70,000 new items in the 2010/11 financial year. The department was to support 173 affiliated libraries with the purchase of books, magazines, audio-visual material, and training and on an annual basis. Funding made available for library services by the provincial treasury has grown from R11-million in 2010 to over 234-million in 2014.<sup>57</sup>

The table below shows the growth in the number of libraries in the province since 1994. As it suggests, the number of libraries in the province has nearly doubled.

	1994	Approx. 2010	2014
Number of libraries	68	120	130

### 5.3.3. Summary of key milestones in the use and provision of ICTs in KwaZulu-Natal libraries

The table below indicates the increase in the availability of public computer and internet access at these libraries. It shows that 17 libraries were connected to ICTs since the WSIS targets were set.

	1994	Approx 2005	2014
Number of libraries	68	120	130
Number of libraries with public internet access	0	57	74

The following are key milestones in the use of ICTs in libraries in the province:<sup>58</sup>

53 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Nzimande E. 2013. *State of public library services in SA: KZN example, government perspective*. Powerpoint presented in Cape Town on 8 October 2013. Department of Arts and Culture, Kwazulu-Natal

57 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

58 APC Gates Foundation reports; Nzimande E. 2013. *State of public library services in SA: KZN example, government perspective*. Powerpoint presented in Cape Town on 8 October 2013. Department of Arts and Culture, Kwazulu-Natal; *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA



- 2001-2007: Cyber-cadet scheme launched in 57 of its 120 libraries.
- 2007/2008: The Provincial Department of Education's Curriculum Redress Programme initiated construction of 13 school libraries. The Education Centres programme is part of a broad initiative in partnership with the Royal Netherlands Embassy and several other funding partners which started in May 2005. The initiative intends to develop 120 education centres which consist of computer laboratories, libraries, science laboratories, internet and email facilities to serve teachers and learners of schools without such facilities.
- 2010: Four mobile library trucks purchased for R4.8-million. Besides books, these offer ICT services such as internet access and photocopying.
- 2010/2011: Collections in the province were expected to increase to 70,000 new items in the 2010/11 financial year. The department will support 173 affiliated libraries with the purchase of books, magazines, audio-visual material, training and support on an annual basis.
- Between 2011 and 2013 gaming facilities are set up at 20 sites – Wii sports and gaming consoles that aim to encourage the youth to spend their leisure time constructively using technology.
- By 2013, 62 libraries in the province had public internet access. These included uncapped internet connectivity using satellite and ADSL.
- 2013: 107 public libraries have automated library systems, allowing access to 3.5-million books and documents in other formats.
- By 2014 Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to support inventory management, security and control had been introduced in six libraries: Ballito, Bessie Head [Pietermaritzburg City Library], Richards Bay, Ladysmith and Newcastle.
- In the same year (2014) 56 libraries – predominantly in rural areas - had installed head count systems which provide user statistics. According to the 2014 yearbook, the data shows a clear increase in the use of library facilities in the province.

#### ***5.3.4. The use of ICTs in public libraries in KwaZulu-Natal***

According to the 2014 yearbook, the province has identified free public internet access and ICT training as the provinces “imperative need”.<sup>59</sup> Several inter-related but disparate initiatives that encourage public access to ICTs in the province are worth highlighting. Together these provide a substantial “basket” of services to previously neglected communities, and go a long way to create conditions for self-learning and development in these communities in the province.

##### *Internet@yourlibrary*<sup>60</sup>

The Internet@yourlibrary project was initiated through the Kwazulu-Natal provincial libraries department, with funding from the first tranche of the three-year Conditional Grant (2007-2009). To date it provides internet connectivity to over 95% of the libraries in the province. Uncapped internet access is offered to the public in 74 libraries – with the aim of offering this in all libraries by 2015.<sup>61</sup> Each internet café has eight computers linked to a printers.<sup>62</sup> Where available, DSL is used or alternatively VSAT in more remote areas. As part of this initiative, the Cyber-Cadet scheme was launched with a cadre of local enthusiastic youth with IT skills trained to run the cybercafés in the libraries and who would form the frontline for assisting library users to access the internet, use e-

59 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

60 <http://www.systemslibrarian.co.za/Internet@yourlibrary.html>

61 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

62 Ibid.

mail and look for online information. To date there are 69 Cyber Cadets – all previously unemployed youth - one at each of the major KZN libraries.<sup>63</sup> All are employed on a contract basis, but are paid a monthly salary. Each cybercafé has five networked computers linked to the Cyber Cadet's computer and is also provided with scanners and printers. Users are given the choice of using Microsoft or OpenOffice software. All services are provided free of charge, but time management software is used to allow for bookings and fair use of the equipment. Impact evaluations have suggested that the interne café are used for self-learning, looking for employment, and for social networking.<sup>64</sup>

### *Mobile library trucks*

The province operates for mobile library trucks, with the aim of promoting a culture of reading and access to library services. These are used for outreach programmes, such as public educational activities and department and library events, and offer access to government information. Besides, books, the department lists the ICT facilities in each truck as consisting of:

- Audio-visual material
- Laptops with internet access
- A TV and DVD player
- Photocopy, faxing and printing facilities.<sup>65</sup>

### *Mini libraries for the blind*

In 2014, seven mini libraries for the blind had been established in the province, with the intention to add an additional seven each year. The purpose of these libraries is to provide access to information for people with visual disabilities. This includes access to specialized computers, and reading and audio equipment.<sup>66</sup> Recorded books (using DAISY machines) are offered. This initiative is in collaboration with the South African Library for the Blind.

### *Gaming @ your library*

As an innovative response to stimulate a culture of self-learning and development in communities, gaming facilities have been set up at a number of libraries targeting the youth. The department believes this increases computer literacy, and “serves as a source of positive and constructive entertainment”. It records high usage of these services during school vacations.<sup>67</sup>

As the above suggests, the province has made concerted – and innovative – efforts to provide opportunities for self-learning and education in the province using ICTs. While offering free internet access to previously neglected communities, it has also paid attention to marginalised groups (such as those with disabilities), and the provinces youth.

## **5.4. The use of ICTS in libraries in other provinces**

The tables below indicates the number of libraries, and available data on the number of these libraries with internet access (some of which is offered free to the public) in the remaining seven

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63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

provinces in South Africa. As suggested in the introduction, this data is unstable, and the numbers below have been pieced together from multiple sources. The totals for the number of libraries in each province should be taken as under-reported, given that the NLSA states that 1,800 libraries exist in the country. Similarly, the number of libraries with “ICTs/access” does not imply that public internet access is available at these libraries.

	<b>No. of libraries</b>	<b>No. of libraries with ICTs/access</b>
Western Cape	355	100
KZN	130	74
OFS	172	169
Gauteng	235	235
Mpumalanga	108	105
North West	97	97
Northern Cape	140	80
Eastern cape	163	116
Limpopo	No exact figures available	More than 15
<b>Total</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>976</b>

The table below summarises key milestones in the use of ICTs in public library service points in these provinces.<sup>68</sup> As it suggests, besides the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State stands out as demonstrating a concerted effort to bring technology to communities.

<b>Province</b>	<b>Recent progress in implementing ICTs</b>
Gauteng	<p>In 2010, there were 235 public libraries in Gauteng. The focus of the Libraries and Information Systems Directorate in the province has been to support local governments' direct service delivery, with particular reference to the Library Outreach and Reading Development programme and the purchasing of ICT equipment and information resources. Scant data from 2014 is available the 2014 yearbook on the state of internet access in Gauteng's libraries.</p> <p>2009/2010: R45.5-million was to be transferred to municipalities for the upgrading of ICT and internet services.</p> <p>2010/2011: In 2010 the department was to receive R51.619-million from the Department of Arts and Culture for the recapitalisation of libraries. A further R8.826-million was identified for transfer to municipalities specifically for the purchasing of information resources to keep library collections relevant and up-to-date, to improve public access to internet services, to subscribe to periodicals and newspapers for community libraries and to implement reading and library programmes in all community libraries.</p> <p>2010/2011: The infrastructure, networks and services were to be upgraded and maintained in Tshwane, Midvaal, Lesedi, and Randfontein.</p> <p>2010/2011: For the first time, funds were also to be transferred to the West Rand district municipality for the maintenance and support of the network and electronic library system for libraries in the West Rand. A new</p>

68 APC Gates Foundation reports; *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

	<p>electronic library management system was to be implemented in the Merafong libraries.</p>
North West	<p>There are 97 public libraries in the North West.</p> <p>2014: By 2014, the conditional grant had enabled the province to provide free internet access in of these libraries. Each library has three computers set aside for public access. According to the Yearbook,<sup>69</sup> public access has increased the number of library users.</p> <p>2014: Also by 2014, technology had been used to make libraries accessible to people with visual disabilities. These included magnifiers, braille printers, and talking typing teachers.<sup>70</sup> The grant also enabled the purchase of software to help partially or completely blind people access the internet.</p>
Mpumalanga	<p>There are 108 public libraries in Mpumalanga province.</p> <p>2009/2010: The department allocated R4.3-million to 16 municipalities in the province for ICT projects. They were, in the Gert Sibande region: Albert Luthuli, Msukaligwa, Mkhondo, Pixley KaSeme, Lekwa, Dipaleseng and Govan Mbeki; in the Nkangala region: eMalahleni, Steve Tshwete, Emakhazeni, Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka, and in the Ehlanzeni Region: Thaba Chweu, Mbombela, Umjindi and Nkomazi.</p>
Limpopo	<p>There are no exact figures on the number of public libraries in Limpopo readily available.</p> <p>2008/2009: In this financial year the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture's budget allocation was R186,929-million. The department spent R2 598-million to supply 15 libraries with network cabling, a further R1 018-million on materials, R3,011-million on furniture and R596,000 on ICT equipment.</p>
Eastern Cape	<p>There are 163 public libraries in the Eastern Cape. Ensuring that ICTs are used in libraries is described as a major focus of the provincial department.</p> <p>In 2008/2009 the department worked in partnership with South African Library for the Blind to provide services to partially sighted and blind people. A sum of R1-million was committed to assist this project. The following libraries were to benefit: Cedarville (Alfred Nzo District); Stutterheim (Amathole District); Mlungisi (Chris Hani District); Graaff Reinet &amp; Humansdorp (Cacadu District); Mthatha Reference (O.R. Tambo District) and Aliwal North (uKhahlamba District).</p> <p>2014: By 2014 116 out of its 163 libraries have public internet and e-mail services.</p>
Northern Cape	<p>There are 140 public libraries in the Northern Cape.</p> <p>In the 2006/2007 period about 80 targeted libraries were equipped with PC's and internet access and the province aims to expand this service to the remaining libraries. The ICT services to the libraries were established and</p>

69 *The South African Libraries: 20 Year Review*. September 2014. Department of Arts and Culture, National Library of South Africa, National Council Library Information Services, LiASA

70 Ibid.

	<p>monitored through donor funding, and the ICT service is used as a research tool to supplement the current lack of reference material in community libraries.</p> <p>2014: The Library Automation project was set to offer internet access to the communities, and Sita Library Management System (SLIMS) technology was being rolled out. 140 libraries in the province were earmarked for these initiatives.</p>
Free state	<p>There are 172 public libraries in the Free State province.</p> <p>2008/2009: 55 libraries were provided with computers and online connectivity bringing the total number of libraries with ICT infrastructure to 120. This project serves to bridge the digital divide by bringing modern technologies to even the remotest rural areas, such as Oppermansdorp, Thaba Patchoa, Cornelia and rural areas in QwaQwa. Facilities like online internet access and e-mail communication are now available at community libraries. Sixty-one libraries were provided with photocopiers.</p> <p>2008/2009: A number of training programmes was presented to improve staff capacity and 20 bursaries for study in library science and information technology were awarded. The bursary programme will contribute to alleviating the shortage of professionally qualified librarians.</p> <p>2009/2010: During the 2009/2010 financial year the three year roll-out programme to provide all libraries with ICT infrastructure continued and was to be maintained and expanded in the new financial year. ICT provides internet connectivity in even the remotest communities and the traditional print collection of books and periodicals were expanded through access to electronic publications. The provision of electronic readers was to be investigated in the coming year. According to the NLSA, community libraries were provided with photocopiers, bringing the number of libraries with photocopiers to 106. Audiovisual equipment was provided to 10 libraries.<sup>71</sup></p> <p>2010/2011: The ICT infrastructure at 170 libraries was to be maintained to ensure continued access to electronic information and learning resources for all communities. This infrastructure is budgeted at R10-million. Subscriptions to periodicals, newspapers and electronic publications were maintained.</p> <p>2010/2011: Ten libraries were to receive audiovisual equipment. Special services for visually handicapped persons were to be established at 15 libraries (digital audio readers and computers with special software).</p> <p>2012: An e-book lending service has been rolled out to 25 public libraries – a total of 50 e-readers.</p> <p>2014: By 2014, all libraries in the province were connected to the internet. Computers are described as being used for e-mailing and wordprocessing.<sup>72</sup></p>

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

	Training is also offered to librarians on a weekly basis.
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	2014: In 2014, 169 libraries are described as fully computerised. Internet and computers are also available for public access. 100 tablets are also available at 50 libraries. 78.4% of libraries have photocopying facilities.
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## 6. Lessons learned

The following are key lessons learned from the roll-out of free internet access in public libraries:

- There is an obvious and incremental need for free public internet access amongst previously neglected communities. Availability creates and nurtures demand. Locating this access in libraries stimulates the possibility of discovery, self-learning and growth in communities.
- The effectiveness of implementation is frequently influenced by the huge disparities in resources and capacities between different parts of the country. Those that were consciously overlooked by apartheid policies face the greatest challenges.
- There are many ongoing activities in the library and information services community, with increased government commitment as evidenced through the Conditional Grant allocations and the building and refurbishing of libraries. At the same time, research has shown that there is a lack of confidence within this community in the capacity of government to deliver on its commitments.<sup>73</sup>
- The building of stakeholder relationships is a critical component. However, stakeholders who have attempted to engage the sector have encountered a degree of politicisation and fragmentation of the library and information services community.<sup>74</sup> Lack of synergy between government initiatives (e.g. schools, community libraries and public ICT access efforts by national government) makes this a very difficult and complex environment in which to work.
- Research suggests<sup>75</sup> that the library and information services community is generally demoralised and has a low profile in the community as well as outside of it, despite good work that has been achieved. There appears to be a desperate need to market achievements and to find a very visible political champion to promote library and information services in the country.
- Important lessons can be learned from the sustainability struggles of existing initiatives. Many public access initiatives are flagging because of insufficient access to computers and other essential equipment, as well as to adequate connectivity and bandwidth. Another major challenge is the lack of knowledge of project management around how to make appropriate ICT choices which stimulate the increased use of community libraries. It is important for any new programme to leverage what already exists, and build on the lessons from these initiatives.

## 7. Way forward beyond 2015

Key considerations for moving beyond 2015 are:

- The Conditional Grant is critical for the roll-out of public internet access initiatives in libraries in South Africa, and should be continued.

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<sup>73</sup> APC Gates Foundation reports

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

- The experiences in provinces that have successfully implemented community access initiatives should be modelled, and, if appropriate, replicated in other provinces.
- The success of the Connect South Africa broadband initiative is critical, and all stakeholders should ensure that its implementation is kept on track.
- The introduction of mobile technologies for library services is promising, and this could be expanded on for general public access to libraries and information through the internet.
- The need for ICT innovation in community libraries is evident,<sup>76</sup> and any future access initiative should ensure that ICT leaders in innovation are brought into the programme.
- The lack of affordable bandwidth in libraries needs to be addressed. Research<sup>77</sup> suggests that present capacity cannot cope with the requirements. This will be a particular issue in rural locations.
- Further research is needed in several areas, including: appropriate technology choices for libraries; intellectual property in the library environment; the potential of leveraging community libraries for a range of government strategies; and internet access for rural and deep rural communities.

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76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.