

Peter Lor's library ABC, part 4

J is for **Johannesburg**, South Africa's largest city and its financial and industrial hub. The Johannesburg Public Library (JPL), founded in 1893, acquired its impressive central library building in 1934. During 2009-2011 it was renovated and extended, and its systems were updated with the assistance of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. JPL is said to have been the first public library in South Africa to open up to all races (in 1974). The square in front of the library, known as the Library Gardens (later renamed Beyers Naudé Square in honour of the famous Afrikaner opponent of apartheid) was the scene of notable



Image: © City of Johannesburg

anti-apartheid demonstrations and protest activities. The building houses over a million books, including the renowned Harold Strange Africana collection.

K is for the **Koninklijke Bibliotheek**, the National Library of the Netherlands, in The Hague. The KB, as it is generally known, is one of the world's leading national libraries and is engaged in many innovative activities, i.a. in the areas of digitization and digital preservation. It's located next to the Central Station. This rear view is not the most imposing view, but I chose it because it shows the tram line that passes underneath the building. I travelled on this tram daily when I worked at IFLA, which has its headquarters in the KB building. The blue sky (infrequent in The Hague) is a bonus.



L is for the **Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana**. Named after Lorenzo dei Medici, it is housed in the centre of Florence in a cloister adjacent to the Duomo. The library was built during the years 1523-1571 to a design by Michelangelo. The innovative proportions and use of space were seen in Michelangelo's time as revolutionary. The collection contains over 11,000 manuscripts and 4,500 early printed books which belonged to the Medici family. Pictured here is the reading room. On either side of the central aisle are rows of seats. The back-rests of the seats serve as desks for the seats behind them.

