

Peter Lor's 2nd library ABC, year 4: JKL

For background on the Library ABC, see [here](#).

J is for the **Joint Catalogue** (JC) of Monographs in Southern African Libraries. I chose it because, due to Covid and restricted travel, I could not muster a picture for the letter J. The JC, started in 1942, was a union catalogue on 3x5 inch cards housed in a large bank of catalogue cabinets. It covered holdings of libraries in six countries in southern Africa and was a key tool for inter-library lending. Way back in the mid-1980s when I worked at the South African State Library (which is now part of the [National Library of South Africa](#)), it had gone through several phases of computerisation and it was being absorbed (not without turf battles) into the database of [Sabinet](#). Today this pioneering chapter of South Africa's library history has been forgotten. Corporate memory fades rapidly..

Picture: State Library, Pretoria, South Africa



K is for the **Knysna** Public Library. [Knysna](#) is a town on the [Garden Route](#) of South Africa's Western Cape Province, where I live today. I wanted to take some pictures of Knysna's quite attractive public library there a few weeks ago, but when I went there, I found my way barred by a locked gate. The reason: a staff member had contracted Covid. I'm becoming somewhat impatient at the excessive caution displayed by public library authorities in South Africa. People are transported daily to work in overcrowded minibus taxis (in which limits on the number of passengers are visibly ignored). Supermarkets, bars and restaurants are operating with moderate restrictions. Bars open but libraries closed? Unfortunate.



L is for [Las Cruces](#), New Mexico, USA. My friend Charles Townley, who lives there, kindly sent me some pictures of the [Thomas Branigan Memorial Library](#), the public library of Las Cruces, a city of some 120,000 residents. The library is named after a local businessman who established a trust to fund it. Charles reports that the dedicated staff delivers a high quality of service. This interior photo shows a "mittens tree". Around Christmas library users (patrons in the US) are invited to knit mittens and other useful items, which are placed on the tree. After Christmas these items are donated to local agencies for distribution to the needy. This year (2021), 1515 items were collected.



Photos: National Library of SA, 2006; Peter Lor 2021; Las Cruces Sun-News 2021

To all my friends and colleagues – my best wishes for 2022!

Peter