

Peter Lor's 2nd library ABC, year 5: MNO

For background on the Library ABC, see [here](#). This year I indulge in a trip down Memory Lane, featuring libraries with which I was associated in various ways. It comes with my best wishes for 2023.

M is for [Muizenberg](#), a Cape Town suburb where we lived in the 1950s not long after my parents had emigrated to South Africa. This is where, at about eight years old, I was first exposed to a public library. I was an avid reader and a keen birdwatcher. The kind ladies who ran the library broke the rules to allow me to borrow Austin Roberts' *Birds of South Africa* (then the only comprehensive guide to southern African birds) and other items from the adult section.

The Muizenberg Public Library was one of twelve Carnegie public libraries built between 1906 and 1917 with funds donated by Scottish-born American industrialist and philanthropist, [Andrew Carnegie](#). It was opened in 1910. Of the twelve, only seven are still standing. Like the others, the Muizenberg library was later replaced by a more modern and functional building. In the early 1900s not much thought was given to access for persons with disabilities. A flight



Image: S.J. de Klerk,
<https://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/five-lost-seven-remain-carnegie-libraries-south-africa>

of stairs led from street level to the library.

The building, recently renovated, now accommodates a police museum.

N is for the [National Library of South Africa](#). It was created on 1 November 1999 through the merger of the South African Library (founded in 1818 and located in Cape Town) and the State Library (founded in 1887 and located in Pretoria).

When I became the NLSA's first Chief Executive in 1999, one of my tasks was to oversee the process of planning a new building for the Pretoria campus. Detailed planning was spear-headed by the Deputy National Librarian, Joan de Beer. My contract ended before the building was constructed, and I went to The Hague as IFLA Secretary General, but I was invited to the ground-breaking ceremony in 2005, and have subsequently been able to visit the impressive building of 33,000 square metres, designed to hold 5,5 million book and accommodate 1500 seated users.



Image courtesy of Jeremie Malan Architects,
<https://www.malanarchitects.co.za/national-library-of-south-africa>

O is for [Onderstepoort](#), where the University of Pretoria's [Veterinary Science Faculty](#) is located. In the mid-1970s I was briefly responsible for the University's four health sciences libraries, located in various parts of Pretoria. At that time the Faculty shared library facilities with the renowned government [Veterinary Institute](#) at Onderstepoort, the foremost such institute in sub-Saharan Africa. The Faculty's library was created later, as a separate facility for the school.

It is named after the first South African-born veterinary surgeon, [Jotello F. Soga](#) (1865-1906), who received his training in Edinburgh, Scotland. Back in South Africa, Soga pioneered a method of inoculation to combat the contagious lung-sickness of cattle, and contributed significantly to the fight against the

devastating [Rinderpest](#) disease in the 1890s. The library is located in the [Sir Arnold Theiler](#) building, which is named after the Institute's Founder.



Image courtesy of the University of Pretoria