

Peter Lor's 2nd library ABC, year 8: V and W

For background on the Library ABC, see [here](#). This year I have material for only two letters of the alphabet.

V is for [Vught](#), a city in the Netherlands province of North Brabant. Its history goes back to the 11th century. The city was fought over during the [Eighty Years War](#) between protestant rebels and the catholic forces aligned with the king of Spain. In the Second World War it was the site of a notorious Nazi transit camp. For librarians, it offers a fine example of a successful “second-hand” library building. The splendid interior of the former Catholic St Peters church (De Petrus) was repurposed as a library and community centre and meeting place, which includes a museum, an eatery, and other shops. [Bibliotheek Vught](#) was featured in a post-conference tour focussing on two such buildings in 2023, when the IFLA World Library and Information Congress was held in Rotterdam.



Interior of Bibliotheek Vught

W is for [Willowmore](#), a small town (around 8000 inhabitants) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, about 140 km north-east of Knysna – but longer by road, which takes us over four mountain passes. We stopped for coffee, then decided to look for the public library, which we found in the “[township](#)” some distance from the town centre. This location brings the library closer to the less affluent people of the town, especially the children. The initial impression of the library’s exterior is rather grim. As in many other small-town libraries, there are unsightly burglar bars all round. Libraries are a soft target. Thieves are not after the books, but are attracted to the laptops and IT equipment. The interior is quite spacious and tidy. It offers all the facilities of a properly run small rural library.

It is a bit unfair to sandwich Willowmore’s library between pictures those of richer countries, but I use the pictures I have, and this is the reality on the ground...



Willowmore Public Library



W is also for [Whitefish Bay](#), where we lived for a few years when I taught at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2009-2011). This photo of the Whitefish Bay Public Library is about 15 years old now, but it brings back memories! Especially at this time, when we in South Africa are sweltering. The current population of Whitefish Bay is around 14,000. The library is spacious and well-staffed. It has an informative [website](#), with information about a wide range of services and activities.

Whitefish Bay Public Library

