

Ethnic Identity and Library Development in Apartheid South Africa: The Cape Library Association, 1960–1975

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In June 1960, the Cape Library Association (CLA) was founded with the aim to establish library services and pro-mote librarianship among Coloureds in South Africa, especially in the rural areas of the Cape Province. This article asks why the CLA had felt the need to operate along ethnic lines, and examines its relationships with the South African Library Association (SALA), the Cape Provincial Library Service (CPLS), and rural municipal authorities. It draws on interviews with former office holders, newsletters, tour reports, annual

reports, issues of its own bulletin, and secondary sources to shed light on debates about an ethnic focus and social uplift. An analysis of contemporary historical circumstances offers insights into how a small library association dealt with the challenges of inclusion and exclusion, and of belonging to the South African library community. Ultimately, two Coloureds served as presidents of the new unified Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), which was launched in 1997.

Introduction

In November 1962 the South African Library Association (SALA, later the South African Institute for Library and Information Science – SAILIS) decided to restrict its membership to white librarians only. This was the culmination of more than a decade of agitation and discussion regarding its relations with black librarians and the development of library services for black South Africans. The Population Registration Act, no. 30 of 1950 divided all South Africans into “races”, and in this article “blacks” refers to people who were then classified as “Coloureds, Asians, and Natives”. “Coloureds”, as the special ethnic focus here, refer to persons of mixed descent in South Africa. Coloured identity remains a topic of ongoing discussion and debate (Adhikari 2005; Du Pre 1994; Erasmus 2001; Wilmot 1996).

At an annual conference in Cape Town in 1947, the SALA had already tasked a committee to consider the feasibility of establishing a “Non-European” section of the SALA, and the necessary constitutional changes that this implied (Report

1948; Dick 2001). By 1962 the SALA preferred not to wait for the response by other South African scientific bodies to proposed legislation to establish multiracial professional associations. The few black members in SALA were therefore unsurprised by the decision to expel them and to establish separate library associations along ethnic lines.

On 5 and 6 October 1964, a Central Bantu Library Association was established, which later became the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA). This association eventually disbanded in June 1998, soon after the launch of the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) on 10 July 1997. A South African Indian Library Association was also launched on 15 August 1967, but not much is known about its activities and its dissolution.

What is more interesting is that a group of Coloured teachers in the Cape Province founded a library association for Coloureds two years before the SALA decision itself was taken. The Cape Library Association (CLA) was established in June 1960 and was active until about September 1975 when it disbanded and allowed its members to

join the SALA, which then began admitting qualified Coloured librarians.

This article analyses the contemporary contexts for the origins, role and ideological shifts of the CLA as a small library association in a period of grand apartheid when racial legislation was enforced and a system of 'homelands' or Bantustans were created for black Africans. The CLA started with about 40 members in 1960, and had 60 members when it disbanded in 1975. The fortunes and fate of small ethnically-organized associations in South Africa's past often reflect what was and what was not politically possible. In the case of a small Coloured library association, it is possible to explain how belonging and not belonging, inclusion and exclusion, were negotiated through acts of accommodation, compromise and resistance. These moves will be explored in the contradictions and ambiguities among some officials and the rank and file members of the CLA.

Mohamed Adhikari (2005, 6) argues that Coloured identity is primarily a product of Coloured people themselves contrary to the conservative views that it is inherent, and the liberal and radical views that it is imposed by the white ruling class. This identity, in his view, has been stable across time but it is also pliable instead of fixed. Coloureds have traditionally occupied an intermediate status in South Africa's racial hierarchy, numbering about 8–10% of the total population. The generally heard saying that they have been "not white enough, not black enough" is probably incomplete. This aphorism has a negative reference and emphasizes exclusion.

The deliberate use of their identity could also make Coloureds *white enough and black enough*. As this article will show, the CLA members were black enough to establish a separate library association in 1960 and white enough to join the SALA in 1975. In this way, the CLA was able to include itself and its members in the South African library community by adopting different strategies based on its own ethnic composition and contemporary political developments and opportunities.

Library services for Coloureds in the Cape Province

In order to understand why and how the CLA came into existence and how it saw its role in library development, it is necessary to explain the

circumstances in the Cape Province affecting library services for blacks by the end of the 1950s. During the 1930s and 1940s there were a number of initiatives to provide library services and reading material to blacks in the urban and rural areas of the Cape Province, and elsewhere in South Africa. These initiatives were fragmented and informal, and usually bore the features of race and class that characterized the general development of public library services in South Africa (Cobley 1997; Rochester 1999). Reading societies that emerged among the wealthier inhabitants of small country towns in the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century, for example, usually restricted access to their books, magazines and newspapers to subscribers only.

When some of these reading societies, however, started seeking a state subsidy and became subscription libraries, they were compelled to provide free public access as a condition of the government's aim of "diffusing intelligence through the great body of the people" (Van der Walt 1972, 93). Typical examples were the Swellendam Reading Society that became the Swellendam Public library and the Grahamstown Public library that ensued from several initiatives that included a Reading Society (Rothmann 1947; Wiles 1948). By 1874 there were 39, by 1894 there were 98 and by 1930 there were 173 such subscription libraries in the Cape Province, where free public access to reading material in non-subscriber's rooms was possible (Immelmann 1970).

Non-subscribers who made use of these opportunities in several country towns included Coloureds who could often read and write in English and Dutch-Afrikaans. But typically the decision by subscription libraries to open the non-subscribers' room containing newspaper and magazines freely to the public was accompanied by snide commentary. When the Queenstown Subscription Library Committee (established in 1859) opened its non-subscriber's room, for example, it was said to have led to crowds of "Coloured readers turning up merely to look at the pictures" (Van der Walt 1972, 61). This kind of access, moreover, led to a decrease in the number of subscribers and a consequent drop in the state subsidy, which operated on a pound-for-pound basis.

Subsequent changes in state subsidy legislation in 1892 gave library committees the right to prevent access to newspapers and periodicals, which were popular among Coloureds. They could still

use all works of reference and books but could not borrow them. There were only a few Coloureds that could afford the subscription fee, and even then access was not guaranteed and depended on local circumstances and prejudice (Kennedy 1970, 500–504; Kruger 1973, 31–38). There are several examples in the early decades of the twentieth century of subscription fees paid by blacks either refused or returned to them by subscription libraries (Peters 1975, 22–26). In this way, class and race increasingly combined to limit reading opportunities for Coloureds.

In 1937, an *Interdepartmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa* found that one in four “non-white” schools had a book collection – often just a handful of books. The Committee recommended that the Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) should make “some provision for library service to the large coloured population of the Province” (South Africa 1937, 24). By the early 1940s the Cape Coloured Carnegie Committee, the Hyman Liberman Institute, the Cape Libraries Extension Association (CLEA – formerly the Cape Non-European Libraries Association), and to a lesser extent the Society for Book Distribution were involved in providing books and library services to Coloureds as the poorer section of the population.

In 1942, the CLEA applied to the CPA for a grant of £200 in order to serve areas outside of Cape Town’s municipal boundaries (Varley 1942). In response, the CPA provided an annual grant to the CLEA, which grew so rapidly that by 1944 it asked the CPA to take over its book box service to about 12 rural centres for Coloureds. These centres were in Wellington, Bergriviermond, Bellville, Sarepta, Somerset-West, Vasco, Voëlvelei (Mosselbay) and Stellenbosch, and requests were received from Lamberts Bay, Groot Drakenstein and Worcester (Friis 1958).

According to Patricia Clark (2004, 27), these institutions were characterized by an “ambivalent liberalism” that developed “separate library services for Whites and Blacks even before the advent of apartheid legislation”. Several of the individuals who were active in these institutions, for example, were also members of a Provincial Advisory Committee for free rural library services. In 1940 they conducted a library survey of the existing situation in the Cape Province. Among the many questions asked, they sought only the

number of the “European population” of towns and districts. In spite of nearly a million potential Coloured readers, this committee’s survey report made no mention of library facilities for them (Varley 1957a, 1957b).

Coloureds especially in the larger towns, however, were beginning to demand equal library services. In 1944 for example, Dr Dietrich, a Coloured member of the Port Elizabeth City Council argued in a motion that was rejected by sixteen votes to three that Coloured rate-payers’ money was used to subsidize the Port Elizabeth public library. He threatened before the vote that if necessary he would start a petition to force the council to withdraw the library’s subsidy unless it would extend the same membership privileges to “Non-Europeans” (*South African Libraries* 1944). Dr Dietrich was aware of the more liberal situation in Cape Town where many suburban Coloured rate-payers were members of local subscription libraries. The CLEA, moreover, provided free library services on the principle that the working class should be exempted from subscription fees. According to Vincent Kolbe (2006), a Coloured librarian who worked in the Cape Town City Library Service from the 1950s to the 1980s, even poor whites used the CLEA libraries.

Building “identical services” for Coloureds

The survey report of the Provincial Advisory Committee framed a “beginning scheme” for free rural library services, which was promoted in six trips to towns around the province by S. J. Kritzinger who was appointed in 1945 as Library Organizer for the Cape Provincial Library Services (CPLS). Kritzinger’s tours and public meetings were intended to introduce and discuss the proposed scheme. He encountered several concerns and objections in the provincial towns relating to finance and autonomy, but most significant was the concern about separate library services for whites and non-whites.

Article 13 of the draft ordinance, however, which later became Library ordinance, no. 10 of 1949, already stipulated that “Under both the Service and any free municipal library service in an urban area separate facilities shall be provided for Europeans and non-Europeans” (Friis 1962, 288). When, under the guidance of the new CPLS Director, Theo Friis, that ordinance was sub-

sequently replaced by Library ordinance no. 4 of 1955 to deal with technical concerns and objections, the racial stipulation remained unchanged and became Article 12.

This new ordinance for free rural library services would not have been passed without this condition. Douglas Varley, who was associated with some of these institutions and who was praised as the prime mover and "leading light" in getting the Cape Town City Library Service (CTCLS) off the ground in 1952 (Quinton 1988, 31), later lamented his support for this racist ordinance, which he believed was doing a disservice to library development. On the eve of his departure from South Africa Varley said (1961, 17): "In doing so I trod the moral morass in which so many of us in South Africa are struggling".

With the implementation of the Group Areas Act, no. 41 of 1950, the CTCLS cynically introduced a mobile library service for the few Coloureds still residing in "white areas". A survey by the CTCLS in June 1959 showed that in 25 libraries there was less than 1% Coloured membership and in six other libraries it was between 1% and 12%. In Sea Point, for example, less than 0.5% of the readers was Coloured (*CLA News* 1961b). In spite of these insignificant numbers, mobile library vans parked within a few metres of libraries in areas such as Sea Point and Mowbray, and they served Coloured readers who were forbidden from entering the "white" libraries (Kolbe 2006).

Under the library ordinance of 1955 subscription libraries became the joint responsibility of the local authority and the CPA. In terms of this ordinance, the local authority would: establish a new department called the municipal library department under the control of the Town Clerk; provide suitable accommodation within five years; and pay the salary of the library staff and other expenses for the running of the library. The Cape Provincial Library Service would: reorganize the existing subscription library; offer professional advice; train local librarians; and provide all library materials (Friis 1957).

From 1955 to 1960 the old subscription libraries in the Cape Province started affiliating to the CPLS. This was a mixed blessing for many of these rural libraries. While the quality of services improved and the provision of free library service led to a significant growth in membership of both young and old, control in areas such as book selection

passed from local library committees to the CPLS Head Office. Centralized book purchasing raised rural librarians' suspicions about censorship by an external body (*What We May Read* 1959). A system of annual grants to libraries to buy books locally was introduced to deal with this concern, but it was withdrawn again in 1964.

The new ordinance also anticipated that the CPLS would expand its "Non-European library services". Friis (1958, 11) claimed that "identical services" were being developed. This was in line with the "parallel service" and separate bookstock for Coloured communities that had been maintained since the CPA had taken over the rural centres from the CLEA in 1944. Friis hardly noticed the costly racial separation of the bookstock and its irrational duplication when he observed that in general Coloureds read the same material as whites in the Cape because they are also part of Western civilization.

This comparison of the reading tastes of Coloureds to that of whites, and their connection with Western civilization was typical of white library commentators from the late 1950s to the 1970s (Peters 1958, 85; Zaaiman 1958, 97–98; Du Preez 1974, 239, 244–45). Kolbe (1972), however, simply argued that the quality of Coloured reading tastes improved when better books were supplied to libraries.

When the first Vanrhynsdorp library region was organized at the end of 1950, the CPLS established 26 depots for Coloureds (Gertz 1981, 45). A depot was the smallest library unit after a public library, a regional library and the Head Office. Only a few actual formal libraries were established for Coloureds. Other library regions started operating in quick succession and 18 regions were established by 1957, with head offices at Vanrhynsdorp, Calvinia, Malmesbury, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Robertson, Mossel Bay, George, Beaufort West, Grahamstown, Graaff-Reinet, Port Elizabeth, East London, Aliwal North, De Aar, Upington, Kimberley and Vryburg.

Whenever a new library region was established, the existing rural centres were integrated into the CPLS as Coloured library depots. These depots were usually located in schools or church buildings. By 1955 there were 66 library depots for Coloureds compared with 43 libraries and 60 library depots for whites, and by 1959 there were 126 library depots for Coloureds compared with 152 li-

braries and 242 library depots for whites (Gertz 1981, 53).

There was little provision for library services to black Africans in the Cape Province at the time. The central government had made this the responsibility of the Department of Native Affairs, which concentrated on re-stocking school libraries especially after the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953. The provision of new libraries for black Africans was postponed until the "primary elements of the State's Bantu education policies had been satisfied" (Varley 1961, 17). Many existing mission school libraries were purged or closed. The William Cuthbert Library of Lovedale Institution, an established black college whose collection was developed painstakingly over a century, for example, disappeared after it was put up for public auction (Tabata 1960, 59). And the Langa Library in Cape Town, which had been burned down during the unrest in 1960, could not be re-built until long afterwards.

Many black school libraries were supplied with books befitting preparation for low-level employment in the apartheid South African economy. In the light of these circumstances for black Africans, there was a subsequent arrangement in some instances that Coloured library depots would supply them with textbooks for study purposes. This was allowed, however, only if they could not find them anywhere else, and if they had the permission of both the library committee and the written recommendation of an employer (*Cape Librarian* 1966).

Usually, local municipalities had to be persuaded even to establish library services for Coloureds as a "moral duty". A few library depots were started by Coloureds themselves, sometimes with assistance from whites in the community. The Grabouw Coloured community, for example, erected their own library and named it the Molteno Library – in honour of Sir John Molteno who had introduced a regulation in 1874 to provide a state subsidy on a pound-for-pound basis to libraries in the Cape Province (*Cape Librarian* 1959). There were similar examples at Swellendam, Sarepta and Bredasdorp where Coloureds hired a room, built and painted the bookshelves themselves (Friis 1958, 11). Prominent persons in Coloured communities also became members of library committees and promoted the value of libraries (Williams 1959).

The SALA's first "Non-European counterpart"

A general lack of qualified librarians had been acknowledged in all the earlier reports and library ordinances, and the CPLS saw it as an urgent task to train its library staff. In keeping with its racial outlook, separate vacation schools were arranged for whites and Coloureds (Holt 1960; Vacation School 1960). The CPLS also offered bursaries and loans for the training of Coloured librarians on condition that they work for the CPLS for two years.

It was at the second vacation school for Coloureds in Zonnebloem in Cape Town in June 1960 that the CLA was established. The idea had been mooted at the first vacation school in 1959. An action committee was appointed to investigate its feasibility with a view to consolidate the enthusiasm and dedication of attendees, and it reported in favour of founding an association. A founding member, Mr P. Plaatjies, indicates (2004) that this decision was taken because it was impossible for Coloureds at the vacation schools to join SALA. The CLA saw its purpose as assisting the CPLS with advice on library services for Coloureds, and raising the Coloured community's cultural, intellectual and educational levels. It committed itself to working closely with the SALA and the CPLS to promote library service in the Cape Province (Williams 1960, 10).

In an editorial in its own organ, *Cape Librarian*, the CPLS noted that the CLA as the "Non-European counterpart" of the SALA would "work under the guidance and direction of the Provincial Library Service until it is able to stand on its own feet" (*Cape Librarian* 1960a, 3). This claim of the CLA's junior and dependent status would gradually come under severe strain but it may well have been the result of genuine surprise at this innovative move by the Coloured vacation school attendees, and an attempt by the CPLS to keep a hand in its affairs. There appeared to be some apprehension at this bold and risky move.

The insinuation that the CLA was started at its own initiative because it wanted to be separate is, however, a disingenuous effort to ascribe a purely racial motivation to this development and to justify an inevitably racial path for library associations (Kruger 1973, 36–37). It fails to recognize

that Coloureds were well aware of the doors that had already closed for them, as well as the stipulations of the Library ordinance of 1955 that could now be acted on to improve library services to Coloureds. An opportunity for direct involvement in the legal obligation of the CPLS to provide library services to Coloureds had been seized at the vacation school, and this could well have astonished the CPLS.

There is no indication or evidence, moreover, to show that the CPLS had planned this initiative, nor that the CPLS was not behind its inception. There is, for example, no mention of the CLA's establishment in the CPLS Annual Reports of 1960 or 1961. But according to Russell Pfeiffer and John Andrea (2004) who were members of the first CLA committee, CPLS Director Theo Friis was probably responsible for the CLA's constitution, and CLA members were prepared to live with it. Membership of the CLA, according to its constitution, was restricted to Coloureds (understood as Cape Coloureds, Malays and Asians) working in libraries, or as members of a library committee or interested in the aims of the library, and Coloured organizations such as libraries, schools, churches and cultural organizations interested in the aims of libraries.

Clause 14 (a) of the CLA Constitution stipulated that the CLA stood under the guardianship of the CPLS and that it would do nothing contrary to its aims and principles. It stated further that if there were any doubt about interpreting that section of the clause, then the decision of the CPLS Director would be final (*Cape Librarian* 1960b). The early relationship between the CPLS and the CLA was therefore unambiguous. But the CLA had nevertheless used its ethnic identity to provide a way for Coloured library workers to belong to a library association, which itself belonged to the larger South African library community in its own special way. It also placed itself in a powerful position to develop library services for Coloureds.

The CLA started with about 40 members and elected A. Bailey as chairman and H. H. Solomon as secretary. Teachers were in the majority and were prominent in the CLA executive for a number of years. This was unsurprising given that many library depots were located at schools and run by library committees usually headed by teachers, and that there were few qualified Coloured librarians in the early 1960s. The CLA ex-

ecutive management, however, encouraged the education of librarians and their participation in the CLA activities and structures from the outset (*CLA Quarterly* 1962e).

These teachers were often also members of the Teachers' Educational and Professional Association (TEPA). TEPA was established in the 1940s as a result of a breakaway from the powerful, older and more strident Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA). The Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) was established in June 1913, and it was affiliated to the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). The TLSA branded colleagues who cooperated with the government as "traitors" and "quislings" (Adhikari 1993). TEPA, like the TLSA, aimed "to study the theory and practice of education generally, but more particularly in relation to the Cape Coloured population throughout South Africa," and "to raise the status and promote the best interest of all teachers" (Van der Ross 1986, 189). The TLSA, which had a more socio-economic outlook, became defunct as a result of state repression in the early 1960s.

The principal difference between the two bodies was that TEPA did not associate itself with the policy of non-collaboration with educational authorities or with persons of a different political viewpoint. This was in line with the general mood among some Coloured leaders by the beginning of the 1960s, which was one of frustration with the spent radical forces of the 1940s such as the NEUM, and the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD) movement. The NEUM opposed the proposal of a Coloured Affairs Department and advocated a program of non-collaboration and boycotts. It remained ideologically aloof from other liberation movements and adhered to strict Trotskyite principles (Drew 2000, 151, 244–45).

Instead of open confrontation, the 1960s was seen as a time for compromise in the face of political, economic and military superiority of whites. In a time of suppression, bannings, threatened imprisonment and growing authoritarianism, Coloureds could exploit their so-called Western or white values to take advantage of opportunities provided by the apartheid state (Van der Ross 1963). The TEPA members in the CLA brought this spirit of compromise and accommodation to the association's outlook and activities. Teachers in the rural areas were generally more familiar with TEPA than with the TLSA, which probably

accounted for the early political perspective of the CLA (Williams 2006).

Editorials in the first couple of issues in 1961 of its own periodical, *CLA News*, committed the CLA to an uplift and educational task, and expressed cautious optimism of better things to come. The CLA saw the problem in the country as being more social than political, and that in the end what counts most is one's ability. Protagonists of the struggle for political rights, it claimed, had often lost sight of this, and the more pressing need was to exploit the government's alleged efforts "to open new avenues for the Coloured man", and to get the Republic of South Africa, newly created on 31 May 1961, to make good on promises such as "better housing conditions and improved racial relations" (*CLA News* 1961c, 1-2; 1961d, 1;).

The editorials also identified some of the problems at the 160 Coloured library depots, namely: most depots were tiny; they were open for only three hours per week; they were often without shelves and trained librarians; their bookstock was renewed irregularly with books transported in special CPLS book vans operating from regional libraries; and the public was still unaware of the value of libraries.

Sowing the library seed

The CLA was determined to correct this pitiful situation, especially in outlying rural areas of the province. A central plank in its strategy to achieve this would be to remind neglectful local authorities of their duty to implement the Library ordinance of 1955, which required the provision of library facilities for Coloureds in their municipal districts. Racial prejudice and the weak financial position of most local authorities throughout the 1960s generally resulted in negligence to implement the ordinance, resulting in poor service to the Coloured sections of their communities. It was, in fact, only with the Provincial Estimates and a 25% subsidy to local authorities in 1972 that there was significant progress (Gertz 1981, 62).

The CLA's own financial situation made it possible for its executive management to undertake a number of tours to different regions of the province in order to ascertain the conditions at depots, to offer advice and assistance, and to visit local authorities when and where it was deemed necessary. The annual individual membership fee

of 5 shillings (50 cents) was supplemented by a handsome annual subsidy of R 500-00 from the CPLS, which the CLA executive management had applied for in 1960. This subsidy was provided regularly from June 1961 until November 1975 in steadily increasing amounts.

The grants were entered in its Cash Book as "CPLS donations" during the first five years. There were also two donations from *Banier Publishers*, one donation from the SALA, and smaller amounts from unknown sources that kept the association financially sound throughout its lifespan (Cape Library Association 1960-75). Members were allowed to reclaim 50% of their transport costs to attend conferences. The CLA's books were audited free of charge by Theron, Humphrey & Fick Chartered Accountants. When it disbanded, the CLA had a healthy balance of R1,769-81.

The CLA executive management acknowledged that the 160 or so library depots constituted only about one-third of the possible total. It indicated that there were many towns and villages in the 18 regions still without library services, and that it would assist community leaders who wished to establish a library depot. The CLA saw its role as expanding services to Coloureds and accelerating the tempo of development (*CLA Quarterly* 1962d, 3). With this in view, it visited the South Western districts in 1961 that included the Robertson, Mossel Bay and George regions. From 14 to 21 January 1962, a visit to the Northern Districts included the Beaufort West, De Aar and Kimberley regions (*CLA Quarterly* 1962c). In 1963, it visited the Eastern and Border districts and included the Port Elizabeth, East London, Aliwal North, Grahams-town and Graaff-Reinet regions. With its fourth tour from 5 to 19 January 1964 it visited the Calvinia, Upington, Vryburg and Kimberley regions (Cape Library Association 1964).

These were difficult tours, usually undertaken in January, sometimes just a few days after the New Year holiday in order to accommodate teachers in the executive. The touring party adhered to a gruelling timetable, travelling many miles to several depots in one day. On the fourth tour, they visited more than 24 depots and regional libraries in the space of about 14 days. On 9 January 1964, at Upington, for example, they visited several community leaders to discuss the viability of an available room as a depot and the poor salaries of librarians, and then travelled to and inspected

the proposed room. They then travelled to the Uptington regional library for more talks with the regional librarian about Coloured library depots in that region (Cape Library Association 1964, 10–12). Some of these depots were too far away to visit and others were inaccessible by road.

Their published reports included general impressions, findings, statistics and recommendations. The tours usually included visits to local authorities and library committees about the difficulties identified in that region. They spent much time listening to the problems at depots, informed librarians and committees about the CLA, and identified young people for education in librarianship at university or at the vacation schools. Their efforts were rewarded with a spurt of growth, and by 1966 there were 181 library depots and 4 public libraries, and library membership for Coloureds had risen to 57 457 from 34 181 in 1960 (Gertz 1981, 356).

The CLA executive was concerned about the low number of non-fiction books being read and encouraged the use of displays and anything possible to increase the circulation of non-fiction books (CLA News 1961a, 6). In its tour reports the executive also recommended that librarians should use the CPLS “special request service” in order to assist readers to obtain books not available at a depot. It suggested that lists of new books that appeared in the *Cape Librarian* should be used for special requests and that no reader should be limited only to the depot’s book stock.

There were instances of new depots that acknowledged the influence of a CLA visit. At Victoria-West, for example, a Reverend Sieberhagen led the community initiative to build its own library after a brief visit from the CLA executive (CLA Quarterly 1962b, 18). Following a visit to the George region, a librarian wrote to congratulate the CLA executive on its praiseworthy campaign in the Coloured’s advancement in Western Civilization (Schuman 1961, 8). Such examples convinced the CLA executive that the library seed had been sown.

Serving the Coloured “volk”

When the SALA decision on separate library associations was announced in 1962, a CLA editorial affirmed its original position that the implication would be an improvement in library services for

“Non-Whites” and a general levelling up of all South Africans. In line with a need to assimilate itself to mainstream society, it believed in particular that the social uplift consequence would raise the respectability of Coloureds and improve their acceptance as equals and as belonging to the South African nation. The SALA decision would, “In short, ...ensure sound intellectual, cultural and social development of the nation which in turn will bring about better relations between the different ethnic groups” (CLA Quarterly 1962a, 1–2).

The CLA promoted the view that it could belong to a larger political whole as an independent yet included unit – separate but still a part. In this vein, the second chairman J.K. Zingu argued in 1966 that Coloureds constituted a non-homogeneous people (“volk”) but that unity was imperative. He explained (Zingu 1966, 2) that: “The [Coloured] nation must become one; this is a necessity because we are identified and recognized as one ethnic group, and not according to individual background and appearance” (author’s translation from Afrikaans). He urged CLA members to serve their “volk” while they still had the chance to do so. In the same year, the CLA was granted official recognition by the Department of Coloured Affairs (Cape Provincial Administration Library Service 1966).

As a library association, the CLA was separate yet it was included in the wider development of library services in South Africa, and by implication, included as part of the Western world. The editorial board of its official organ sent copies to all the universities in the country and the five legal deposit libraries at the time. It also sent copies to Great Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands (Williams & Pfeiffer 1962). In his second annual report, the CLA secretary, H.H. Solomon (1962, 6) added that he often received requests for the journal from libraries and universities abroad.

In order to consolidate this international connection and to allow its members to keep in touch with developments in the profession, the CLA later subscribed to foreign journals such as *Library Journal*, *Assistant Librarian*, *School Librarian*, and *Library Association Record*. The CLA journal was bilingual (Afrikaans and English), which underscored an inclusive outlook. The CLA’s position was, however, peculiar in the sense that while it sought to belong to the rest of the South

African and international library community as a separate and autonomous entity, it operated with ambiguous links to openly racist structures and could not yet claim a separate but equal status.

In its efforts to use the Library ordinance to improve services to Coloureds, the CLA had to negotiate its way through the difficulties of representing a racially oppressed minority and belonging to the more powerful and racially prejudiced CPLS, as its junior partner and with subordinate links to the SALA. Although it noted that library associations, as proposed by the SALA in 1962, should be "autonomous [and] ...free from any state influence and pressures" (*CLA Quarterly* 1962a, 1), the CLA itself remained constitutionally and financially bound to the CPLS. Its autonomy was further strained by the appointment of the SALA's advisors, who with the best intentions failed to convince some CLA members that they were not there "to keep them in line" (Pfeiffer & Andrea 2004). SALA advisors were expected to guide the CLA in its development. This emphasized the paternalist relations between the two library associations.

The CLA argued that the few Coloured librarians who belonged to the SALA before 1962 had had no effective say and could not achieve "much in the way of library services for their own communities" (*CLA Bulletin* 1965, 1). With their establishment as an independent association, it believed that Coloured librarians could achieve more for their own communities and maintain a "cordial relationship" with the SALA. The hopes of equal relations as library professionals, however, were undermined by the patronizing actions of the SALA leadership.

In 1967, for example, the CLA reported that the President of the SALA, S.I. Malan, had explained that the SALA would liaise with the other library associations through advisors. He added that A.P. Duvenhage, formerly with the CPLS and who had become an inspector of special subjects and libraries with the Department of Coloured Affairs, had been co-opted onto the SALA Council and would be its advisor to the CLA (*Cape Library Association* 1967, 5). The CLA itself had no representation on the SALA Council, and more importantly it had no representation on the CPLS Board despite its original intention to assist with advice on library service to Coloureds. Instead, Coloureds were represented on the CPLS Council

and Board by whites such as I. D. du Plessis and officers of the Department of Coloured Affairs such as W. G. le Roux.

But relations with the SALA remained cordial, and CLA conference and training programmes often included speakers or representatives from the SALA and the Department of Coloured Affairs. The CLA saw its relationship with the SALA as "working in harmony with... our seniors" (Abrahams 1968, 16). The SALA, in its turn, saw the CPLS as "the father that had the association [CLA] under its care and guardianship" (author's translation from Afrikaans – *South African Library Association Newsletter* 1966, 93). By the early 1970s, however, there was a shift in outlook regarding the SALA's overseeing role and the status of the CLA.

Contesting a "separate and equal" identity

The idea of being separate and equal in a larger, more representative and effective Coloured association had already emerged as a strategy in the mid-1960s. When Mr Solomon, for example, visited the Transvaal in 1962 with three colleagues to attend the 5th Non-European Library Services Annual Congress in Benoni, he read a paper on the aims and work of the CLA (*Non-European Library Services* 1962). At its annual meeting in 1966, the CLA consequently decided to amend its constitution in order to admit individuals from other provinces as members, and on 27 March 1967, members of a special committee of the CLA left Cape Town to investigate the possibility of establishing a branch in Transvaal (*Verslag van 'n Spesiale Kommittee* 1968).

In his Chairman's report at the annual conference later that year in Kimberley, the third CLA chairman Owen Abrahams was able to welcome the "first batch of members from the Transvaal." In order to emphasize this new broader national outlook, he also noted the statistics for Coloured library services in the Cape, Transvaal and Natal provinces published in 1965 in the *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee of Investigation of Library Services for Non-Whites*.

There were subsequent problems, however, with the establishment of a branch in Transvaal and with efforts to establish a branch in Cape Town, which dragged on for a number of years. Librarians who were employed by the CTCLS had re-

fused to join the CLA voluntarily, and the presence of a small delegation at the tenth CLA annual conference in Bellville in 1970 was reported as “a very heart warming feature” (Cape Library Association 1970b, 12). Their attendance was interpreted as a blow against prejudice and misgivings, and a step towards unity and progress.

Kolbe, a prominent member of the CTCLS delegation, was quoted in the *CLA Bulletin* as acknowledging the benefits of sharing ideas and discussing common problems with colleagues at the conference. But there had never been any intention by Kolbe and the CTCLS librarians to join forces with the CLA. He recalled a strong drive at CTCLS among Coloured librarians to join the CLA, and that the prominent SALA member R.F.M. Immelman had tried to persuade them to join at a special meeting. Kolbe believed that whereas the CPLS librarians were obliged to join the CLA, the CTCLS librarians had a choice and they refused to join in spite of bursaries and other benefits (Kolbe 2003).

Kolbe (2006) told Immelman “We are not prepared to sell our souls for 30 pieces of silver”. The audience carefully stamped their feet in support because they did not want to be seen clapping their hands. The influence of qualified TLSA teachers who had refused to work for the Coloured Affairs Department and joined CTCLIS as library assistants was probably a key factor in rejecting the CLA (Zaaiman 1958, 97). Efforts to keep the CLA Western Cape branch active and growing therefore met with little success. It was reported as a disappointing failure in 1974 (Library League of South Africa 1974a).

A more fundamental development was the fourth CLA chairman S.J. Williams’ announcement at the tenth annual conference in 1970 that the time had come for Coloured librarians to assume leadership positions. It had always been the aim of the CLA, he maintained, to become a fully professional association with professional status (Cape Library Association 1970a). To this end, the CLA had published and re-printed a special pamphlet, “Librarianship as a career”, that introduced library work, advertised the CLA, and identified library courses and bursaries.

In line with this development, Marie Musson became the first qualified librarian and the fifth and final chairman of the CLA, and she spearheaded the implementation of significant changes.

Musson was more independent and defiant than her predecessors. At her first conference as chairperson at Kimberley in 1971 she located public library services within the socio-educational structure of the country and argued that they are social forces within communities. This provided the basis, she argued, for a broader professional outlook that called for “forward-thinking, intelligent” librarians prepared to demand equal pay for equal work and qualifications. She called (Musson 1971, 4) for a new name for the CLA to remedy the ongoing but unsuccessful efforts at building a national association.

At the 12th annual conference in Cape Town in 1972 the CLA met for the first time under its new name as the Library League of South Africa (LLSA). It also had a new non-racial constitution without any references to Coloureds, and allowed membership to any individual and any organization (Library League of South Africa 1971). This may have been in line with an emerging Coloured rejectionist attitude that was strengthened by the Black Consciousness movement in the early 1970s.

In her LLSA Presidential address in 1972 in Cape Town, Marie Musson, stated (1972, 4) that the LLSA no longer approved the SALA’s appointment of advisors and that it was no longer its policy to send a report of its activities to the SALA. The LLSA would only meet the SALA on cordial and equal terms but not on the parent-child relationship. It began instead to seek links with other library associations like the African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA), and to become more representative of Coloured librarians in the country as a whole. In other words, it saw in a numerically stronger and nationally representative association the possibility of meeting other library professionals as equals, and a more powerful way of belonging to the South African library profession as a whole.

The LLSA did, however, seek legal advice on whether it could admit individuals from other ethnic groups (Library League of South Africa 1974b, 3). But at the formation of the Western Cape branch of the LLSA at Elsies River Library Hall on 13 May 1972, a black African woman, Ms. Setlogelo, had in fact been elected as an additional member (*Cape Librarian* 1972, 36). Musson told LLSA members not to accept inferior library services for Coloureds from the local authorities who

complained that they could not provide services that met the standards prescribed for whites. The official argument, that "reasonable" premises and someone to care for the library depot for a few hours a week was considered good enough, was unacceptable (Peters 1968, 132). This, she said, made a mockery of the CPLS claim of identical or parallel services and confirmed the view that separate could never be equal.

Musson stated (1972, 2): "We want equality in the service given to us by any of the authorities. And we must emphatically reject anything that is second-rate. In the case of quality of service, half a loaf is not better than nothing. If a book is not good for one library, it is not good for any other within that service". Musson was effectively calling for equal services for Coloured communities. The contradiction between a new non-racial outlook and appeals for equal service for Coloureds indicates the difficulties facing the LLSA's ethnic identity. It was rejecting an exclusive Coloured association on the one hand and calling for equal services for Coloureds on the other. The LLSA was still a *de facto* Coloured library association, and its non-racial appeal was limited by the political realities in South Africa at the time.

Musson also demanded equal opportunities for library staff in the CPLS. There soon followed a CLA motion calling on the CPLS Director G. L. Morrison to open posts in all sections for all qualified staff (Library League of South Africa 1974a, 2). Musson still emphasized the need to agitate for library services where none existed and described this in the same way that the early CLA executive had done, namely that the "library seed should be sown." By the 1970s there were still many communities with a population in excess of 3,000 persons without a library service. A motion adopted at the 13th annual conference in Bellville South in 1973 therefore called for written appeals to Management committees and Municipalities to provide public libraries in Coloured areas where none existed (Library League of South Africa 1974c, 2).

As the librarian-led LLSA executive was beginning to forge a new direction for the association, larger forces at work in the South African library community would overtake its moves. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) had been putting pressure on the SALA to change its membership policy or face

expulsion. As a result, SALA leaders began to woo qualified Coloured librarians to become members. In 1974, Peter Lor of the SALA argued that there were "no language or cultural barriers separating White and Coloured librarians and they shared the same academic qualifications" (Coloured can join 1974).

Some Coloured librarians refused to join the SALA because African and Indian librarians were still barred. They saw this as "window dressing" and claimed that the SALA remained a racist body, which resulted in a mixed response from LLSA members. While there was no rush, a few did join almost immediately. It was eventually left to members to decide for themselves. Further discussions between senior SALA and LLSA members followed, and at the 15th annual conference in Port Elizabeth in 1975 the LLSA disbanded.

Conclusion

The CLA, like the LLSA, had hoped to widen its outlook beyond the Cape Province and beyond its ethnic composition. The intention to become a national and non-racial library association had been to allow it to relate to the SALA on equal and progressive terms. Musson (1972, 4) had explained its existence as an unavoidable situation in 1972 as follows: "Membership of the South African Library Association is closed to us as Coloured persons through no fault of ours, so the best we can do at present is to join the Library League". Yet three years later some of its members joined the SALA because this had then become possible, and the LLSA and CLA subsequently faded away. Those who joined remained ambivalent about the SALA and none rose to senior positions in its structures. In the first unified Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) that was launched on 10 July 1997, two Coloureds – Ellen Tise and Tommy Matthee served as presidents in the new association.

Almost as a tribute to the defunct association, the CPLS in an article in January 1976 surveyed the progress in library services to Coloureds since 1960 (*Cape Librarian* 1976a). There was no mention of the CLA or the LLSA but the article could not avoid noting impressive improvements in services around the regions of the Cape Province. In a postscript to the survey, the CPLS Director ironically responded to one of the LLSA's last

motions that called on municipalities to establish public libraries in Coloured areas when he pledged to put a library within reach of every resident in the Cape Province within the next decade (Cape Librarian 1976b, 10).

From about 160 depots in 1960 only 97 remained in 1975 – as proof that the tiny libraries in classrooms and unfit buildings had been replaced with purpose-built public libraries. The number of CPLS public libraries for Coloureds for the same period had increased from one to thirty four, and membership had increased from 34,181 to 100,077, although this was still less than 10% of the potential Coloured readership (Gertz 1981, 356). Many CLA and LLSA members qualified as librarians and subsequently occupied senior positions at public and university libraries. The CLA and LLSA had achieved much in respect of encouraging the establishment and growth of library services for Coloureds in the Cape Province, and it provided a professional base for teachers and librarians seeking to belong to an association with common interests.

It is difficult to assess how members responded to the short-lived non-racial LLSA and to speculate on whether or not it would have become a successful library association. The President, for example, expressed concern about the poor attendance at the 1974 annual conference and noted that none of the CPLS members were present (Library League of South Africa 1974d). Its inability, moreover, to become a national association with branches throughout the country may have been because this would have been financially unsustainable. Its main source of income was the CPLS annual subsidy, and its final financial report noted that membership fees for 33 of its 60 members were outstanding for 1974 (Cape Library Association 1960-75). Moreover, teacher members who belonged also to the TEPA would probably have had to pay membership fees to two associations.

In spite of these practical and ideological difficulties, the CLA and LLSA helped to lift the status of Coloured library services from that of afterthoughts and postscripts in “notes and news” sections and “special issues” in library literature, and from “extension libraries” to their eventual incorporation into the ordinary CPLS plans for library development. It also broadened its own outlook to become a non-racial association to

whom anyone could belong. In summary, the CLA and LLSA successfully negotiated the challenges of ethnic identity and prevailing circumstances to produce different ways of belonging to the South African library community, and to improve rural library services for the working classes of the Cape Province.

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