

# School Library Handbook



*Franschhoek Literary Festival  
School Library Project*

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook is the product of the Franschhoek Literary Festival School Library Project.

Many lessons were learned during the establishment of the libraries in this project and this is an attempt to document that experience and the lessons learnt, for the benefit of anyone involved in establishing or running a library in an under-resourced school.

It is by no means a definitive handbook, but rather an attempt to explain the process of the project, and to give practical advice to anyone involved in a similar exercise.

Libraries are such a vital and yet sorely neglected element in South Africa's school system and the hope is that this handbook will be of some use in improving this situation.

*Margie Cunnama*  
*FLF Schools Project Librarian*



## BACKGROUND

The Franschhoek Literary Festival School Library Project began in October 2012 when the festival organisers made the decision to invest in and develop the inadequate libraries in the disadvantaged and under-resourced schools in the Franschhoek Valley.

The project has been generously funded by the FLF Library Fund.

A qualified librarian was appointed to the project in 2012 with the mandate to encourage and promote a love of books and reading among the children in the local schools. From the outset the focus was on fiction, and reading for pleasure and fun, rather than on the educational and research functions of the libraries. Each library does have a limited collection of non-fiction books supplied by the Western Cape Education Department.

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*"It is my wish that the voice of the storyteller will never die in Africa, that all children in the world may experience the wonder of books, and that they will never lose the capacity to enlarge their earthly dwelling place with the magic of stories."*

*– Nelson Mandela*

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## Schools Chosen for the project

Four local primary schools and two local high schools were approached:

- Dalubuhle Primary School
- Groendal Primary School
- Wes-Eind Primary School
- Wemmershoek Primary School
- Groendal High School
- Franschhoek High School

In addition, assistance was offered to the local public library in the form of book purchases for the container children's library which they operate in Groendal village.

Of these schools only Franschhoek High had a functioning library and a librarian to manage it. They were offered support in the form of contributions to their fiction collection. The project continues to assist them in building their fiction book stock.

Groendal High School chose not to participate in the project as they did not see a way of incorporating a library and library lessons into their full teaching programme.

The four primary schools became the main area of focus.

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

### *Trust Relationships*

It is important from the start to gain the support and trust of all stakeholders:

**Teacher-in-charge of the library:** In most cases this teacher has a full load with very little time to spare to look after the library. In some cases a level of library in-service training has taken place, but this is generally inadequate for the task. It is important that this incumbent willingly accepts outside help, and does not feel criticized.

**Principal and teachers:** To establish a culture of reading it is really important that learners visit the library regularly each week. The principal and teachers need to see the educational value of “reading for pleasure” so that they commit to library periods in the timetable.

**The School Governing Body:** There is a library allocation in the school budget. Once the value of the library is established, the SGB is usually willing to spend this allocation on the library rather than on other needs in the school.

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*“The most important asset of a library  
goes home at night -  
the library staff.”*

*– Timothy Healy*

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### *Funding*

It is important that the libraries are sustainable in the long term without permanent dependence on outside financial support. Once a school has a well-stocked library and a trained part-time assistant looking after the book stock it should be able to sustain this by careful spending of the library allocation.

### *Staffing*

In an ideal world school libraries are staffed by qualified teacher-librarians with the dual role of supporting the teaching curriculum and encouraging reading enjoyment. Unfortunately education department budgets do not stretch that far so, unless a school can pay a teacher-librarian from additional sources such as school fees or fundraising, libraries remain unstaffed. The compromise is to staff the library with an unqualified part-time library assistant who is then mentored and managed by a qualified person, and possibly sent for some training. This model is used both in the FLF libraries, and by The Bookery, an NGO doing excellent work putting libraries into under resourced schools in the Cape Town area.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- *Reading and book promotion*

A key role of libraries should be the promotion of books and reading. The focus is on making the library a happy place where learners can enjoy the reading experience.

- *Learning outcomes:*

Reading literacy is a key learning outcome and should be the most important aspect of the work in school libraries. The main purpose of the library is therefore to encourage reading by making books available that are appealing to the learners, by reading aloud, and by offering interactive book-related activities, and in this way to engender a love of books and reading among learners.

Information literacy and support for research projects are important functions of a school library and require co-operation and input from management and educators. Library staff should provide support and assistance where possible.

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*"A book can change your life.  
You can read yourself  
out of poverty."*

*– Annari van der Merwe*

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- *Library use and skills development:*

It is important to teach learners respect for the library space, the books, the library staff and the rules of the library.

Information retrieval skills and effective and ethical use of information requires input from educators with the support of the library staff.

- *Library orientation for learners and teachers*

At the beginning of each year library orientation should take place to teach learners about the library, its use and its rules.

Library staff should also meet with management and educators at the beginning of each year to explain about library periods and their importance, the role and responsibilities of library staff, and the support role that should be played by educators.

- *Teacher and curriculum liaison*

Library staff should familiarise themselves with the teaching curriculum so that they can make appropriate decisions regarding collection development. Throughout the year they should keep up to date with educators about themes, projects, etc., which may require input from the library.

# MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The following are generalised guidelines for library management which can be fine-tuned in collaboration with school management.

- *Library vision and mission statements*

A school library should be driven by a vision to develop an excellent library in order to nurture a culture of reading among learners. Reading is the most important basic building block for future achievement both academically and in the workplace.

The mission of the school library is to develop a love of reading among learners by exposing them to vivid storytelling and by giving them the opportunity to borrow and read exciting books. To achieve this the library must operate efficiently and effectively and be given appropriate status within the school environment.

- *Guiding principles of library management*

- Excellent service to learners and teachers
- Confidence in imposing rules and discipline
- Enthusiastic reading aloud and storytelling
- Knowledge and enthusiasm about the collection
- Collection development and maintenance
- Care and maintenance of the library space

- *Objectives*

- Weekly library periods for every class in the school
- Reading aloud to Grades R to 3 in the library
- Book borrowing on a regular basis by all learners
- Based on their reading experience, fun follow up activities for Grades 4 to 7
- Responsible library usage – follow up on late returns, damaged or lost books, etc.
- Access to the library during breaks and/or after school, with suitable activities

- *Budget*

The library needs to operate within a budget for the maintenance and development of the library space and collection. This requires planning and careful selection of resources to ensure the best use of available funds. According to the Department of Education National Norms and Standards for School Funding, 10% of a school's allocation should be spent on the library.

- *Reporting*

The library staff should report to the teacher in charge of the library and to school management. Specific reporting requirements should be agreed on by library staff and school management.

# PRACTICAL MATTERS

## *Physical*

- Use clear signage to indicate different areas
- Display an alphabet to help learners familiarise themselves with alphabetical order,
- Display a simple Dewey outline near the non-fiction section.
- Use a section of the library for displays. Create interesting and relevant displays which are changed regularly

## *Acquisition and Processing*

Acquire new resources according to the needs of the library and the budget available and process materials according to library policy:

- Sort into fiction and non-fiction, and into age appropriate sections
- Classify non-fiction according to Dewey system
- Catalogue on the computer, or manually, attaching issue cards etc.
- Label – barcodes, spine labels, colour codes
- Apply protective covering
- Identify as school property – e.g. school stamp

## *Hours*

- Display library hours on the door
- Make the library lesson timetable available to management, teachers and learners.

## *Library use*

- Operate an effective lending process, either computerised or manual, to ensure proper control of borrowed materials.
- Ensure learner supervision in the library, both during library lessons and at other times.
- Ensure adherence to library rules at all times.

## *Maintenance*

- Keep library shelves tidy and in order
- Stocktake annually to determine lost items
- Weed out damaged or out of date resources
- Clean and repair library materials as required

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*“Books are the quietest  
and most constant of friends”*

*– Charles Eliot*

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## Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is a great joy. It can be a bit daunting at first, but children make wonderful audiences because they love being read to.

Tips to get you started:

- Choose a great book
- Relax and take it slowly
- Create a comfortable and attractive space
- Read with enthusiasm
- Use your voice, eyes and expression to create drama and moods
- Use different voices for different characters

**“The more that you  
READ, the more things  
you will KNOW.  
The more that you LEARN,  
the more places  
you’ll GO.”**

– Dr. Seuss, *I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!*

## A Short and Very Subjective List of Read Aloud Favourites

- Hi! Zoleka – Gcina Mhlope
- Where’s Jamela? – Niki Daly
- Fly, Eagle, Fly! – Christopher Gregorowski
- Charlie’s Superhero Underpants – Paul Bright
- Mama Sebona’s shopping – Sheila Mac
- How Loud is a Lion? – Stella Blackstone
- Dear Zoo – Rod Campbell
- Winnie the Witch – Valerie Thomas
- Shopping with Dad – Matt Harvey
- Ants in your pants – Julia Jarman
- Delivery man Stan – Diane Fox
- Giraffes can’t dance – Giles Andreae
- Library lion – Michelle Knudsen
- Monkey and Me – Emily Gravett
- Room on the broom – Julia Donaldson
- Beware of the frog – William Bee
- The Gruffalo – Julia Donaldson
- Catch that goat! – Polly Alakija

*Note: Most of these are available in other languages too*

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*“We have an obligation to read aloud to our children. To read them things they enjoy. To read to them stories we are already tired of. To do the voices, to make it interesting, and not to stop reading to them just because they learn to read to themselves.”*

– Neil Gaiman

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## **PUBLISHERS & BOOKSELLERS**

The following are useful suppliers of books for school libraries. Most of them are generous with discounts for schools, so remember to ask! A visit to the webpages will give you an idea of what they have on offer.

### ***African Penguin***

A delightful, locally published series with an environmental theme

Children's books by Lulu & Tee

Linda Fellowes/Theresa Acker

Tel: +27 (0)21 783 4920

[linda@africanpenguin.co.za](mailto:linda@africanpenguin.co.za)

[www.africanpenguin.co.za](http://www.africanpenguin.co.za)

### ***Bibionef***

Specialise in stocking school libraries, book trunks for creches and reading support materials. A wide selection in all languages, at very good prices. Worth a visit.

Jean Williams

Tel: +27 (0)21 531 0447

4 Central Square, Pinelands, Cape Town.

[info@biblionefsa.org.za](mailto:info@biblionefsa.org.za)

[www.biblionefsa.org.za](http://www.biblionefsa.org.za)

### ***Jacana Media***

Publish children's books in all official languages. Easily sourced through Biblionef (see above)

[www.jacana.co.za](http://www.jacana.co.za)

### ***LAPA***

Usually sourced via Protea Boekwinkel (see below)

[www.lapa.co.za](http://www.lapa.co.za)

### ***NB Publishers***

A good selection in English and Afrikaans.

Shamala Stoffels

Tel: +27 (0)21 406 2862

[shamala.stoffels@nb.co.za](mailto:shamala.stoffels@nb.co.za)

[www.nb.co.za](http://www.nb.co.za)

### ***PanMacmillan***

English books, many imported, including classic literature for children

Rochelle Samuels

Tel: +27 (0)11 731 3460

[rochelle@panmacmillan.co.za](mailto:rochelle@panmacmillan.co.za)

### ***Protea Boekwinkel (Stellenbosch)***

Mainly Afrikaans

Louise Swanepoel

Tel: +27 (0)21 882 9100

[louise@proteaboekwinkel.com](mailto:louise@proteaboekwinkel.com)

[www.proteaboekwinkel.com](http://www.proteaboekwinkel.com)

*Note: The schools in this project are mainly Afrikaans medium, with one isiXhosa/English medium primary school. The focus of the books is therefore either Afrikaans or isiXhosa as the mother tongue, with English as the second language.*

## EDUCATIONAL TOYS, PUZZLES, GAMES

Some of the libraries are kept open during break and after school, as a quiet place for learners to come and read or study. In these libraries we provide educational toys, puzzles and games as well as books. The following are useful sources of these items:

### *Flash & Learn*

Ian du Plessis

Tel: +27 (0)51 430 2880

ian@flashandlearn.co.za

www.flashandlearn.co.za

### *Truly Toys*

Liz Findlay

Tel: +27 (0)11 618 1337

shop@trulytoys.co.za

www.educationaltoys.co.za

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*“We are never more fully alive, more completely ourselves, or more deeply engrossed in anything than when we are playing.”*

*– Charles Schaefer*

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## USEFUL CONTACTS

### *Library Management System (LMS)*

The Western Cape Education Department uses the Libwin LMS, which seems to be the most widely used library programme in schools. It is a computerised system to manage library stock and the issuing and returning of material. It is an uncomplicated and efficient system with excellent support.

Tel: +27 (0)11 622 3431

Email: info@libwin.com

Contact person: Robert Basson robert@libwin.com

www.libwin.com

### *Library Equipment and Stationery*

Don Gresswell Library Products cc specialise in library equipment and stationery. They have a comprehensive online catalogue, and offer excellent service.

Tel: +27 (0)31 312 4025

Email: dongresswell@icon.co.za

www.dongresswell.co.za

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*“Women are the best storytellers.  
Women are more intelligent than men.”*

*– Mazisi Kunene*

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literary festival  
A CELEBRATION OF BOOKS & WRITERS

School Library Project  
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