The Making of Masiphumelele Library

Innovation usually happens when individuals step outside and beyond the everyday expectations of their designated role or function. Masiphumelele Library seems to be a magnet for innovators, and its birth is the story of a good many of them who came from inside and outside this community, who dreamed a little beyond expectation, and worked a little harder to achieve it.

Jean Williams was the first of these – working in the mid-1990s as Librarian-in-charge of Ocean View Library, who extended the idea of outreach beyond her library's remit, to the growing community across Kommetjie Road. It was then an informal settlement called Site 5.

Planting the seed

In 1990, about 8000 residents lived in the area, mostly in shacks, but by 2005, over 26 000 people lived there, many in brick homes. In 2010, the population was estimated at 38 000. Many are from the region formerly known as the Ciskei Bantustan, an apartheid-created enclave in the Eastern Cape.

Born in the boot of a silver Peugeot, Masiphumelele Library was by then a sorely needed educational resource for a community which was to expand from 8000 residents in 1990 to 26 000 a mere 15 years later. Jean recalls, "I packed my car with books and parked every Wednesday afternoon from 2-4pm near the taxi rank. I often had to turn back because of [civil] unrest and taxi strikes."

Interest in the service came from a local tutor, Mveleli Somtsewu, who was teaching conversational English for USWE (Using Spoken and Written English) and through him a second outlet for her books was established at the Pink House, run by the Catholic Welfare and Development Agency.



Jean Williams, Librarian-in-charge at Ocean View

The library service's reach was extended further when Jean Williams collaborated with the principal of the local school, Ukhanyo Primary, to adopt the services of the Library. Working tirelessly from a small room at the school, Jean recalls a steady stream of children who would line up to borrow a book every week.

By 1997 she had successfully negotiated two rooms for the Library in an old farmhouse owned by the local government (municipality); the rest of the house was occupied by the City of Cape Town's Housing Department. The original small Library was established with the help of a volunteer from The Netherlands, Paula van Vijfeiken, who at the time worked with the Ocean View Library. In the same year, Lyn Steyn and Sue Alexander from Fish Hoek Library came on board to support this initiative and were joined by Noluntu Jezile, who still works at Fish Hoek Library, and Litha Cwayi, the first library volunteers who were residents of Masiphumelele.

The original Masiphumelele Library opened on 16 April 1997. Jean remembers it to be: “unique in many ways ... I will never forget our official opening ... so much joy and happiness.” A procession of children from the school led the way up Pokela Road to the Library, carrying posters promoting reading. Virginia Kasana, Librarian-in-Charge of Gugulethu Library, gave the keynote address. Jean had planted the seed that would nurture a love of reading in a growing community still struggling with minimal resources.



In the late 1990s severe flooding affected the area, and former President Nelson Mandela and his entourage visited to commiserate with the community. To the delight of everyone, he did a “meet and greet” right outside the Library.

Sadly, trouble struck in 1999, when the farmhouse that housed the library, was set alight by angry residents because the local government body, with which the library shared the building, had tried to prevent the community from erecting dwellings close to the greenbelt. The building was razed to the ground and the community library went with it.

However, the following year, talks about establishing a library resumed with the School Board of Ukhanyo Primary School. After unsuccessful negotiations with the Western Cape Education Department, John and Carol Thompson, founders of Masiphumelele Corporation (Masicorp) joined the discussion. It was John Thompson who made the first commitment to a partnership in 2001, saying:
“I will build you a library if you make it work”.



John Thompson

Jean Williams had by this time moved to a new position at Biblionef, an organisation that donates children’s books to deserving libraries, schools and establishments. They focus on books in the children’s mother tongue to help them perform better at school.

Building the Masiphumelele Library: 2003 - 2021

By this stage, Sue Alexander and Lyn Steyn of Fish Hoek Library were committed to the project, and in 2003 Masiphumelele Corporation began building. A single storey Library was erected on an empty site between Motapeng and Skina Streets, a space where children played in the sand, jumping on abandoned mattresses and enjoying games in a disintegrating sand-filled boat. Masicorp sourced and managed donations for the construction, which came from private American donors and the Pick n Pay Foundation. The building team was project-managed by Marc Johnson who was ably assisted by site foreman Daniel Tshabalala and a collection of volunteers, many of them friends of the Thompsons.









Children playing on an old mattress and with a tyre tube on the site of the current Masiphumelele Library. Jane Phillippi

The ground breaking ceremony was recorded in the False Bay Echo in February 2003, heralding the start of a brand new Library in the place where it stands today. The building comprised of a large space with high windows, a storeroom and toilets. The Library opened its doors for the first time on Monday 1 September 2003.



New chapter opens for Masiphumelele library

Bunty West

A ground breaking venture in which the community, business and the South Peninsula Administration is involved was initiated when the first shovelfuls of earth were removed before building began on Masiphumelele library.

In Motopeng Road, behind the community hall, building started last week on the library which will serve the needs of the community.

Strategically placed close to both the high and primary schools, this much needed asset will further unify the community. Although only a small satellite library (130sq/m), it is hoped that the shelves of the building will literally bulge from the donated books.

Built as a joint venture with Fish Hoek library and the Masiphumelele Corporation, funding was provided by several American individuals, the Pick 'n Pay Foundation and other donors.

The Masiphumelele Coporation, which is already building one house a month in the community, will also put up the library under a team of workers led by Daniel Tshabalala and the building operations manager Marc Johnson.

Volunteers from the Sosebenza Youth Group prepared the site in readiness for the builders last week and a team of local women have already been trained by Fish Hoek's chief librarian Sue Alexander, to take over the job of running the library.

More than 5 250 books have already been donated by the Buffalo (New York) State Teachers College and more are being held at several venues in readiness for the library's completion.

On Monday March 3 overseas volunteers, in the shape of senior executives and teachers, will arrive in Cape Town for a conference – Beyond the Bleeding edge 2003 – the proceeds of which will go to the library. It is expected that many of the delegates will help with the building work on site.

Shelving is needed for the library otherwise the books cannot be stacked properly. If you can help contact Sue Alexander at 782 5159.

■ Digging the dirt ... Sue Alexander, Carmen Fowkes, Veronica Mashiyi, Tantaswa Zondani, Zanyiwe Mahlati, Noluthando Melamane, Tandiswa Mazwana get stuck into the new Masiphumelele library foundations while project manager Marc Johnson and site foreman Daniel Tshabalala take a break.

False Bay Echo 23 February 2003

At that point, there was no shelving, few resources and very little furniture. The librarians worked out of boxes with books which were mostly donations, many sent to the Library by Masicorp donors in America.

Sue Alexander recalls: "Our thinking was that if we wait, we might wait forever so let's seize the day and open. Before the City of Cape Town stepped in to provide shelves, the Library opened with Fish Hoek Library's unused furniture, an old counter donated by the clinic and Biblionef's cardboard shelves. We were on our way. This was a significant commitment, a head-start from Masicorp, enabling the Library to take root in the community."




The new Library in action with shelves provided by the City of Cape Town

Very soon, children were using the Library regularly, taking out books and doing homework; by December of that year, a holiday programme was in action, organised by volunteers, a first outreach initiative into the community. A photocopier was donated and a fax line provided the community with crucial additional services.



Two years later in 2005, the Library was "bursting at the seams": seeing this, John and Carol Thompson shifted gear and invited their friends, Bob and Sara Rothschild, to South Africa; having seen the Library in action, they offered to fund the building of a Library extension.



Bob and Sara Rothchild

Carol Thompson

Bob and Sara were innovators in their own right and had by then remade themselves several times. By 2005, they had founded a philanthropic foundation, the Robert and Sara Rothchild Family Foundation. Bob, an engineer and Sara, a nurse, had farmed raspberries in Ohio in the 1970s and then went on to build up a berry and speciality food business. By the time they came to South Africa, they were retired and living in New Hampshire.

"Bob the builder" as he was affectionately known, was on site daily to supervise the building of the first Library extension plus a first-floor study and outreach area. He has since gone on to build at least 16 libraries in Botswana, based on a similar model to the Masiphumelele Library.

The double storey extension opened with a memorable celebration in March 2005, giving the Library the opportunity to extend its impact in the community of Masiphumelele.



Building in progress



Water divining for the borehole



Opening with a marimba band

2009 saw yet another extension to the building. The computer facility was growing and there was no space for the Library to offer any additional programmes for the community. This extension was an Outreach Centre, made up of a hall, a kitchen, 2 tutoring rooms, a cinema room, an office and toilets around a central courtyard. This project was funded by Exclusive Books Reading Trust and Peninsula Beverages (Penbev) in collaboration with Masicorp and Wendy Ackerman. The building project was managed by the Rotary Club of Newlands with architect Graham Finlayson as the on-site project manager and architect. In March 2010 the new Library Outreach Centre Extension was opened with a grand celebration sponsored by Peninsula Beverages.



Speeches at the opening



Ray Steel, Doreen Zanyiwe and Jill Stirrup



A “grand” celebration

Most recently, in 2019, Ben and Mary Turok met with the Librarian-in-Charge of Masiphumelele Library, Vuyo Tatana Somlata, and retired librarian Sue Alexander. The Turoks offered to build an adult study area and reading room. A beautiful upper floor was added to the original Library area and completed in June 2021. The project was again seamlessly project managed by Graham Finlayson from Rotary Newlands and his very competent team, Y R Construction, headed by Abdul Mouti Rasdien. Sadly, Ben did not see the completion of the project although he gave plenty of input during the planning; his passion for education lives on in the realisation of this project.

Penbev again sponsored an opening - appropriately “social distanced” - with all the main role players invited as well as community members, who really value a space set aside for adults. Special guest Mary Turok was accompanied by her son Ivan who hopes that the new centre will be “a safe space for reflection, learning and lively debate during these challenging times.”



The new entrance



Furniture purchased from Hokisa’s grant



Ikamva Youth Teenage reading group

Across an 18-year period, the Library that was birthed in the boot of a silver Peugeot has grown to a 702 square metre asset to Masiphumelele, run by the City of Cape Town and supported by Masicorp and their donors, Peninsula Beverages, Rotary Newlands, Exclusive Books Reading Trust, Wendy Ackerman and Ben and Mary Turok, all of whom have served as strong partners in the pursuit of education within the community of Masiphumelele.

Over the years, the Thompsons continued to visit annually, and with every visit, they could see that the structure they had built had been put to work. However, making it work took team effort and strong partnerships, which have added value and extended the range of programmes to meet the needs of the community served by the Library.

Making the Library Work

The Masiphumelele Library offered standard conventional library services, considered critical in educational support in both developing and established communities. In addition, the mission was to initiate and develop a range of outreach programmes for all age groups, thereby drawing the community into the Library. Each was designed to aid the social development of the individual and thereby to strengthen the social cohesion of a relatively recently established community.

In a paper called "Moving Beyond *Outreach*: Reflections on two case studies of community library services in South Africa" Professor Genevieve Hart writes,

> "The World Bank points to the increasing evidence that social capital is crucial for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable."

In her vision on how to make this happen, she points to the importance of partnerships, and Masiphumelele Library took this strategy very seriously:

> "Networks of relationships among persons, companies, institutions and civic organisations enable a society to function effectively and to move beyond poverty, … given the present underuse of libraries by South African adults, it is only by outreach that libraries can join and build these networks."

The ubuntu philosophy *umntu ngumntu ngabantu - I am because we are*, the belief in a bond of sharing that connects us all and the sense of community that it engenders, has been inherent in the Library from the start. In its commitment to this philosophy, Masiphumelele Library has developed valued partnerships within the local community, in part aimed at encouraging community members to make use of the Library's resources; these in turn have enabled the Library to become responsive to local needs and extend its role beyond the parameters of the conventional library.

However, a firm commitment to partnerships from beyond the community, often with volunteers, local and international, has increased the Library's capacity to offer a diverse range of outreach activities. These partnerships with volunteers have become a major asset to the Library.

The *headstart* from the Library's core partner, Masicorp included committed funding for operational costs. This was a critical element in making the Library work, and enabled the staff of two to be increased to four and thereby the services and hours of opening to be expanded. Community volunteers were now able to earn a stipend, and Assistant Librarian, Thando Melamane was the first to be employed on this basis.

As the Library grew as a community resource, Masicorp established a park next door to the Library (2006), which was to become a hub of activity for the local children. Jill Stirrup, from Masicorp, who was always there to support the Library, was instrumental in its establishment and upkeep, planting trees and working hard to keep the place clean and functional.

In 2014, the condition of the park had deteriorated. Ray Steel, a long-term volunteer from the UK teaching in the computer room, and Paul Garwi, who worked in the park and the computer room helped with revamping the park. They took on the mammoth task of designing and building 10 strong and protective "tree guards" for the fever trees and the coastal silver oaks scattered around the park. (The fever trees may have been a problematic choice, as they provided thorns for the children to fashion small weapons with lollipop sticks!)



Beautiful mosaics were created on tables and benches in the park in 2015 but unfortunately they were vandalised as a result of the lack of supervision in the area. The park continues to provide a space for recreation and games especially soccer, but sadly is also a space where community members including youngsters smoke marijuana, vandalise the park equipment and drink alcohol. Until local government pledges to providing committed supervision, these challenges will continue.



Tree guards



Newly established Eyethu park



Youngsters enjoying the space

Individual volunteers as partners

"The heart of a volunteer is not measured in size, but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others." DeAnn Hollis

The Library became a magnet for volunteers and visitors, local and from abroad. They made the Library part of their Masiphumelele experience from its earliest beginnings. In almost all cases, they have become partners in the true sense of the word, bringing with it commitment, consistency of contribution and ubuntu.

The Masiphumelele Library embraced a volunteer programme from the start, as fulltime staff were few. A volunteer programme was an investment that needed to be nurtured and developed all the time. The rewards that were provided were many – the people, the talents and the enrichment they gave the community.

For many, John and Carol Thompson were the link to the Library through their networks. Local newspapers were used to recruit local volunteers and voluntourism often brought enthusiastic volunteers from elsewhere in the world.

Community volunteers came on board seeking work experience and often joined a programme where they received a stipend for their services. Networks formed in Masiphumelele and in neighbouring communities to promote the Library.

During that time Mary and Rich Nodar came from the United States on a mission project from St Pauls, Ohio. They devoted three months for 10 years to their mission in Masiphumelele, becoming skills development volunteers in 2004. Mary, a committed teacher, focused on reading to young children and teaching them to read, and was joined in 2005 by Kath Gillett who supported the afternoon reading programmes. Carol Pearce from the UK also volunteered.

Rich Nodar (known as Dr Rich) started expanding young minds through teaching children chess. Thando Melamane recollects: "It was happy time for the kids because Dr Rich played chess with them and he also organised the press to come and take pictures of them while they are playing chess, so that they can be known by other people in the Western Cape."



Dr Rich Nodar engaged in a chess game



Mary Nodar busy with the reading group



The Nodars' farewell: they demonstrated the waltz 😊

Year after year, a committed stream of volunteers was also drawn to the Library from local communities. In 2004, Milli Firth, a local teacher, made her innovative debut at Masiphumelele Library, starting weekly English literacy classes where mothers were encouraged to attend with their children. While the mothers learned basic English, the children were entertained with stories and activities.

This *English for Life* programme provided the space for adults to become familiar with spoken English. Milli was joined by Lynn Kloot and Belinda Blaine in later years while Masiphumelele volunteer, Nosakhe Mabula, played an important role in keeping the children entertained with stories and activities while their mothers attended a class.



Milli Firth engaged in introductions at the English for Life class



Children enjoying activities organised by Nosakhe Mabula



Graduation day: Christmas hampers to be handed out after the ceremony

Another of the more socially orientated innovations at this time was initiated by volunteers Vince and Jane Green who in 2006 started the Friendship Club. Children from outside Masiphumelele came to the Library to spend an afternoon of fun with the local children, especially in the newly established park. Friendship Club took place once a month and continued until 2012.



Sharing treats



Father Christmas arrives



Games in the hall

Weekly story hours were held and also sessions at the Library for local nursery schools. Amongst the storytelling volunteers were Sue Weekes, Mrs Faraday, and Joyce and Ronelle from Fish Hoek who took turns reading to the children every afternoon during the week, an indication of their commitment and enthusiasm during the early years.

Some instances of the outreach activities were developed to directly impact school going learners. Afternoon tutoring classes to improve learners' subject knowledge began in 2005, focusing on Grades 11 and 12; these were headed by retired teacher Cynthia Smetheram, with a group of volunteers. Lorraine Johnstone, Jo Collett and Linda Bisset also tutored high school learners.

From 2009, innovative facilitator Polly Saul and her volunteers were running "Thinking Skills" programmes with different groups of learners, to improve their English but more importantly to nurture a critical thinking capacity. Caroline Brawner, a volunteer from America, has helped Polly for many years supporting her in various thinking skills initiatives in Masiphumelele and beyond, at False Bay College and Simonstown school.

.



Grade 7s from Ukhanyo Primary



Polly discussing "concepts" with the high school group



High school philosophy class

Quotes from the Thinking Skills classes:

- *I think the philosophy has helped me a lot with my school work and much more when thinking. It has also helped me build more words in my vocabulary and for that I am grateful. I actually like philosophy, I really don't know why, but part of me just likes the group. {Grade 7}*
- *The philosophy sessions have been amazing. They have taught me how to analyse things and think brighter. I felt my thoughts were pressurised but it taught me how to think on my feet. Thank you Polly. {Grade 11}*

Some quotations created by the class*:*

- *"A life that is not analysed is one that is paralysed"*
- *"Your ears work better with your mouth closed"*

A number of volunteers brought their organisational expertise to the Library. Rachel Bray was one of them, and had been conducting research in Masiphumelele and with the Library from 2007. Rachel is a social anthropologist whose work focuses on understanding poverty, family and inter-generational relationships. Her research which led to a book called *Growing up in the New South Africa,* was instrumental in guiding the Masiphumlele Library into what outreach programmes would best benefit the community.

She ran art classes in the Library and in 2008 she also facilitated the production of *Yazi* (Know Yourself) along with the Library and volunteers from the World Teach programme. This 100-page booklet written in English was designed as a resource for young people on further education, career choices and social/health services. The resulting booklet was also made available online for students to read.



Girls' group met weekly to give support to girls of all ages with discussion groups, activities and outings. The group was facilitated by Sue Alexander and Zintle Mtakati plus many different volunteers. "At Girls' group we get to meet new people, share jokes and special moments, dance, chill together as girls and have fun."



Baking



Dancing



Mosaic workshop

Claire Robertson, a local author, also volunteered her woodworking skills creating extra bookshelves and helping with handyman tasks.

Charlotte Swartbooi from Masiphumelele was a local tour operator in the community. She would arrange walking tours through the area, and the Library would always be featured on her route. The Library benefitted as she was always there to promote their services.





Keith and Rachael Bohannon, husband and wife team, became very significant friends of the Library. Keith, aside from his role in Masicorp, volunteered extensively in the Library, in particular tutoring in the Ikamva Youth programme. They have continued to support the community in different ways over the years.

Another individual who has made a difference to the Masiphumelele Library is Andy Sudermann, a history and language teacher, who volunteered at the Library for five years in a row, becoming a good friend of the Library by facilitating a grant for special programmes via the Afrika Klub at the Karolinen-Gymnasium, Frankenthal, Germany.

Andy recalls the Library as “a special place for gathering, learning and personal growth: The young people talk, they laugh, they read, they study, they create art, they discuss life, they prepare for their future. Masi Library brings people together. One feels welcome, makes friends, and keeps coming back.” When Andy returned to Germany, another teacher, Kyra Schilling, from the Karolinen-Gymnasium continued to facilitate the grant support over the following years.

Celeste Helm was a World Teach volunteer in 2014, another volunteer who returned year after year. She volunteered as manager at the neighbouring Pink House in 2015. She assisted IkamvaYouth with soft skills workshops and Masicorp with her excellent writing and organisational skills expertise. She also started sponsoring a young girl from primary school and is now part of the Masicorp U.S. Board of Trustees.



Andy helping at Heritage Day celebrations



Andy, Nosakhe Mabula and Kyra Schilling



Celeste Helm

Over the years, the Library has held a special magnetism for individuals from Masiphumelele and beyond, wanting to be part of educational and social change in South Africa. Alan Penny, Thommy, Rudolph, Matumelo Wilkin, Henk Greiwe, Keith Illiffe, Alexandra Elza are among many other donors and volunteers. Without their dedication and commitment, far less could have been achieved over the first 24 years.

Partnerships with NGOs, local and abroad

As important as individual partnerships were, those with local organisations were as crucial, inasmuch as they served to cement the Library within the diversity of the community of Masiphumelele.



NGO Masicorp has been integral to the Masiphumelele Library and its development, from John and Carol Thompson, Jane Phillippi, Jill Stirrup, Elize Taylor, Penny Ramahloko, Fiona Maitland, Milli Firth, Carol Hanks, Al and Marjan Ritchie, Andrew and Susan Smith, Susan De Vaux to the many others who have supported the Library over the years.
Jill Stirrup was a champion of the Masi Library, always ready to help and support in whatever way possible.

2005 was the start of a long-term relationship and partnership with Hokisa, which stands for Homes for Kids in South Africa, and is home for up to 20 children infected and affected by HIV/Aids. Over the years, a weekly visit to the Library has become a priority for Hokisa, giving the children from the home an opportunity to enjoy stories and activities, while some of the Hokisa staff attended the English literacy classes.

Lutz van Dijk, (also known as Tamkhulu), one of the founder members of Hokisa, has facilitated regular donations to the Library so that additional items could be bought to promote the programmes run at the Library. Recently Hokisa has been the first to use the new Adult Study Centre to run a strategic planning session for compliance with the Department of Social Development.



"Tamkhulu"



Strategic planning



Hokisa weekly visit

Another long-term partnership with the Library began in 2006, with Wordworks, an NGO started by Shelley O'Carroll. Its mission is to strengthen early literacy and language development and to enable children to fulfil their learning potential. Masicorp gave a donation towards the Wordworks programme for many years.



Wordworks started reading and literacy classes in English for Grade 1 and 2, run by committed local volunteers from Masiphumelele and the surrounds. Among them were Jane Futter, Jennifer Hearn, Andiswa Mhlakaza, Kunjulwa Nombunga, Olwethu Dodo, Neziswa Tetana, Nothemba Tetana, Joy Snooke, Faith Madikane,

Dorri Tarr, Nontsikelelo Sigcu, Betty January, Thobeka Silimela, Mirriam Horrocks, Wendy Ryan, Nosiviwe September, Nomha Feni, Nompumelelo Norushu, Nolubabalo Dlulane, Lungiswa Nomfenge, Roger Cresswell, Heleen Bron, Siphokazi Katamzi and Belinda Blaine. All volunteers attended training, which gave those from Masiphumelele the skills to pursue teaching in preschools and, in some cases, teaching as a career and they received a stipend for running their weekly classes.



Zandile Melamane learning to read



Wordworks prize giving



Faith Madikane and Joy Snooke

"I started to come to the library at the age of nine with Joy. I always looked forward to every Tuesday to learn something new. I was shy – the library is where I built confidence and learned different things". Mcferson Nthache (now 14)



Wordworks also started workshops to help parents to prepare their young children for school - Kyoko Kimura and Jenny Birkett worked on these, and a special programme for school entry level or Grade R. Their long-term commitment to the programme continued until early 2020, and even with the Covid pandemic, Wordworks produced material for children and parents to use at home.



Shelley O'Carroll and Grade R





Parent workshops

It was not only organisations working with entry level learners that thrived in partnership with Masiphumelele Library. The need for support to local high school learners was recognised early on, and in 2009, through the on-site presence of IkamvaYouth, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), young people have been given a greater chance of success.

Their extensive youth programme has been offered ever since, operating three times a week for about 100 high school students, enabling them, via tutoring, mentoring, outings and career guidance, to access tertiary opportunities. Career days are held where graduates from the programme share their experiences with the high school students, Ziyanda Mwanda, Sanele Bani and Zintle Magazi come to mind amongst the many others.



Ziyanda Mwanda

Volunteers from the surrounding area were recruited to tutor the participants, amongst them Bruce Hendry, Louise Elliott, Dennis Clarke, Meg Wilding, a geography tutor, who helped many students to achieve better marks, while Daniel Tshibanda did the same with Mathematics and Science as did Farai Mudi. Timothée and Anna Senot from France spent 2 holidays expanding the horizons of the young people with tutoring, French lessons and a lecture on dentistry as a career.



Daniel Tshibanda and Timothée Senot

Clemence Bourcet and Emmanuel Bovari from France also worked with the IkamvaYouth programme as did Isabel Malone from the U.S.A. Young friends Kelly Bucas and Tracey Drew spent every Saturday morning coaching the students. and also organised outings. “Familyonthego” brothers Alex and Jordan Abrahams and their parents Tony and Kate spent many hours tutoring.

Many learners paid forward their experience at Ikamva by tutoring when they were in tertiary – amongst them Phumza Kibi, Okuhle Beyaphi (Bachelor of Applied Social Science) now working as the Branch Assistant at Ikamva), Avile Mabengu, Lwando Melamane (3rd year UCT student), Neli Ntshinka (3rd year Stellenbosch student) and Yolanda Sigodi (Masters in Biotechnology at UWC)

By 2011, the IkamvaYouth programme had grown from strength to strength, with leaders Nico Commeignes and Zoe Mann. The graduation party for the students was a highlight of that year, and a Grade 12 learner is recorded as saying: “Ikamva is one of the places I can call home.”



Problem solving with Zoe and Nico



Graduation party



Outing to bird sanctuary Rondevlei



“Familyonthego”



Holiday camp in the Cederberg



Beach clean-up with Tracey Drew and Kelly Bucas

In spite of the pandemic, IkamvaYouth Branch manager Lungile Simakade reports: “Our 2021 matric cohort achieved a stellar 84% pass rate, with 46% of the learners achieving Bachelor’s pass and 75% of the learners achieved tertiary eligibility. It is important to note that over 95% of our matric cohort was coming from our main feeder school, Masiphumelele High School, which achieved a pass rate of 64.2%. While the school’s performance was poor, we can see that our intervention had a direct impact on the school’s performance, as most learners who passed were receiving support from our branch.”

The Ikamvanites Book Club run by Vidie Lutuli is an ongoing programme. “We read teenage books chosen by the kids and we talk about them and how they relate to them. We also screen movies. The kids also come up with topics that they want to talk about, like the following: peer pressure, teenage pregnancy, gangsterism, drug abuse, importance of education, puberty, poverty, unhealthy sexual behaviour, violence and friendship.” Guests are invited to teach the young people different skills, for example yoga.

In the October holidays of 2017, 15 students from the Ikamvanites Book Club were privileged to attend the Funda Mzantsi Competition. It took place during the October school holidays in the George Civic Centre, Western Cape. The competition consisted of reading, debating, spelling and book reviews, providing a learning experience for the group. Friends were made, new skills were revealed and the importance of teamwork was realized.
The book club was one of the first programmes to start up again after the pandemic when the strict lockdowns had eased.

Culture and the arts have also had a place in Masiphumelele Library’s outreach activities alongside language learning, reading and high school support.

Lalela Project, an NGO providing educational arts to youth affected by extreme poverty, with the aim of “sparking creative thinking and awakening the entrepreneurial spirit”, embarked on a partnership with the Library in 2011. On Human Rights Day in 2011 the Lalela Art Group organised the painting of murals on the westward entrance wall, an event that was hugely enjoyed by all.

In addition, artists and art teachers from Lalela project, at present Nwabisa Ndongeni plus Loyiso Skoti, Tony Mhayi, Siyolisi Bani and Naz Salduker, were significant role players over the years – all dedicated to promoting art in the Masiphumelele community. Siyolisi Bani reflects: “I am always humbled and delighted to make a difference in my community.”



Human Rights Day



Loyiso Skoti starting class



Creative projects in progress

A number of other NGOs have made a significant contribution by partnering with the Library: Nal'ibali, led by Thulisa Mayekiso, worked to encourage storytelling and reading groups.

Nosakhe Mabula, volunteer and later staff member, worked with NGO African Impact, a voluntourism organisation which referred volunteers from abroad to help with afternoon outreach activities for young children. The activities included story-telling, puzzles, films and games so that young children had something to engage in every afternoon after school when their parents were at work. The volunteers were coordinated by African Impact staff, Sandiso Namlela and Thulani Dyushu, and previously Theo Moletsane, Dan Lovelock and Amanda Conradie played significant roles.



Nosakhe working with volunteers from African Impact



Sharing stories

World Teach from the U.S.A, an organisation promoting volunteering in other countries ran the holiday programmes in 2007, including the Hero Book Programme where children learn through writing and drawing that they are the heroes of their own lives. Ilse Appelt started this initiative also with local volunteers, Nosakhe Mabula, Katherine Smith, Ndileka Biyo, Bridget Stoddart, Seni Nqindi, Clare O'Connnel and Nosindiso Mqalu.



Hero book workshops with World Teach



In the July holidays in 2008 the first very successful Careers Indaba was held for 48 high school learners. It was a joint partnership between Masiphumelele Library and World Teach volunteers, coordinated by Rachel Bray, Sue Alexander, Seni Nqindi, Ndileka Biyo and Linda Bisset. World Teach coordinators Roddy Bray and Peter Fenton managed the yearly groups of committed volunteers who made such an impact on the Library and the learners.

Career indabas and later similar Winter Schools were held every year and provided a way forward for committed young people to access tertiary education. The participants spent two weeks learning about different careers and attending tutoring, workshops and outings.

During this time the teenagers experienced an interactive and informative programme helping them chose a career by getting to know what is out there and available for their career paths. Role models were invited to share their experiences and what came through again and again was the importance of aligning career choice with personal passions. Fish Hoek supermarket, Pick n Pay Family Store, provided lunch for the whole group every day.

Jo Smetherham reporting on the Indaba reflects: “It is rare to see a large crowd of teenagers paying attention to every word a speaker says, then to see hands flying up in enthusiasm, during question time. This was what happened after almost every address at the recent two-week Careers Indaba at the Masiphumelele library which, learners said, ‘took me from dark to light’.”



Julian Hobson from Pick n Pay Family Store



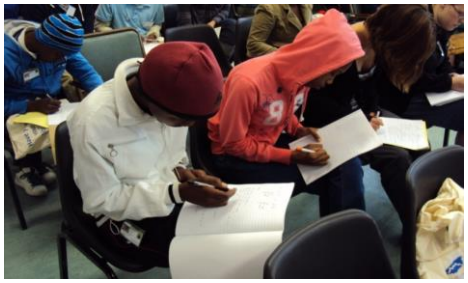
“I enjoyed everything about Career Indaba. It is such a wonderful project. We learn most suitable stuff which we didn't know about.”



“Guys, you are the best ‘cos not just anyone gives us money and time to spend with total strangers. You have really made a difference and hope you'll doing so. Lastly thanks for pointing out my strength and weaknesses.”

“Thank you for helping us speak openly about what we feel in our heart.”





“I spent my wonderful time on something which builds me up."

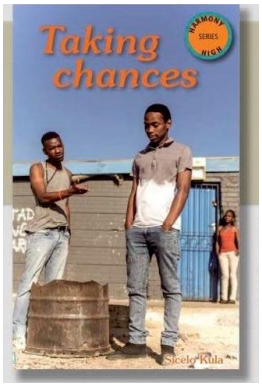
Another NGO that came on board was Fundza, believing as they do that literacy changes lives. The idea was the brainchild of teacher Dorothy Dyer and a group of like-minded friends. Reading books and stories influences choices, it gives value to lives, it enhances critical and creative thinking and encourages personal growth.

They run workshops and have a popular mobile network "fundza mobi"- anyone with a mobile phone can read, write or learn through their phone. Readers can submit their own writing and register for courses to improve language and comprehension skills.

They provided the Library with a wonderful selection of books, notably the "Harmony High" series, hosted book launches and even film shoots for cover girls for their books.



Phumza Kibi, cover girl for Harmony High story "Sugar Daddy."



Sicelo Kula: author and now an attorney.
He calls the Fundza mobi site the "Netflix of Literature."



Long-term relationships with other NGOs in the community have provided opportunities for the Library to network. Valley Development Project (VDP) with Lynn Lamb and Zanele Bontshi, Youth with a mission (Ywam), Gap Year, Living Hope, Avril Thomas and Chantel del Carme coordinating the Masiphumelele NGO forum where groups from Masiphumelele could network, Dolphin Action Group and the Older Person's Forum in which Mary Turok played a significant role bringing seniors together from Ocean View, Fish Hoek and Masiphumelele.

Bridging the digital divide – a multipronged partnership

June 2005 was a turning point for the Library in terms of skills development: the City of Cape Town installed the Smartcape computer system, providing free internet access to Library users. This was a major drawcard for members of the community. In the same year, Ray Steel, a volunteer from the United Kingdom, started computer classes on the Smartcape computers, which quickly highlighted the need within the community for free tuition in using the internet. Ray was one of those long-termers as a volunteer and, over the years, the Computer Literacy curriculum was extended to provide Beginner and Intermediate classes combined with open access to the internet and on the spot assistance.



Ray Steel's first computer class



Creative project



Job readiness graduation

Ray recollects, "In my experience, the best, perhaps the only way to really engage students in learning computer skills from scratch was to work together on rolling creative projects
- items with a purpose which I would print off for students to take home."

Experiential learning was Ray's speciality and no student left empty handed at the end of a class, having completed a curriculum vitae, a brochure for visitors to the area, a music programme. Ray made it real and practical. He was soon joined by additional volunteers, amongst them Mary Mytting from the USA, Jean Strydom and Florentien Wijsenbeek from the Netherlands who added Job Readiness courses to the mix. For many years Margaret Kooy added valuable computer maintenance to the computer room.

Bridging the digital divide is essential to make the grade in the world today, as seen so significantly during the Covid pandemic. Many partner contributions made this happen: the dedication of skilled individuals, the Masicorp subsistence stipend which supported the volunteers working in the computer room and the internet line and the costs of the service provider. In addition, John Thompson's gift of four computers in 2010 and the construction of the upstairs Outreach Area with funding from Bob and Sara Rothchild provided a secure and dedicated training facility.

In 2012, the computer room received a grant from long- term partner NGO EIFL-PLIP (EIFL: Electronic information for libraries/ PLIP: Public Library Innovation Programme). Public Library Innovation Programme (PLIP) Manager, Ramune Petuchovaite and Ugne Lipeikaite coordinated activities.

EIFL-PLIP builds ICT capacity in libraries, inspiring them to use ICT to improve lives and rewarding those who do. The grant paid for six new, state of the art computers, a colour printer and professional network training for one of the teachers, Nyasha Sithole. NGO Edunova, whose core focus is the application of technologies into learning and teaching, coordinated the process.

Computer class in progress



In 2014 additional computers were donated by IkamvaYouth and TV station ETV for which “PD” from Masicorp built new lock up desks to house the computers. The generosity of partnerships has been a consistent driver of the digital facilities, and in 2017, through Masicorp, the Masiphumelele Library received new computers for the computer room from the company Shumani Mills.

The success of the digital project at Masiphumelele Library was the result of these contributions but also of the individuals who volunteered and managed the facility. Computer and internet skills have changed the lives of many individual Library users.

> Zimbini Dlala recollects, “It has really changed my life. I used to search the internet at the internet café or school. All has changed now that we have free internet at the library.”
> and
> Sikhumbuzo Tsobo reflects, “This library has changed my life because I am learning and I will get a certificate instead of just sitting home doing nothing.”

One exceptional student, Nyasha Sithole, was trained in computer skills by dedicated volunteer Jean Strydom from Fish Hoek. He excelled both as a teacher and subsequently as an ambassador for the Library. It was in 2011 that he stepped in to teach the well-attended Beginner Computer classes and established his own Intermediate classes for promising students.

Nyasha became manager of the computer room and the classes proved extremely popular. For example, in 2017 there were 781 beginners, 895 in the advanced class and 1267 children attending classes. 50 students graduated: 14 adults from the advanced class and 19 children. 17 graduated in the ICDL class which is accredited. 10575 people used the computer room for “45 minute” internet sessions. Help was always on hand during these open sessions. Classes were also held for the IkamvaYouth students and a Coding course was run by volunteers Karl Geggus and Mark Flagg.

With support from EIFL-PLIP, Nyasha became an ambassador for Masiphumelele Library. He travelled to many countries and made presentations on the Masiphumelele Library at a number of conferences and training workshops between 2012 -2018.



Nyasha the ambassador



Year	Sponsored by	Event
2012	EIFL-PLIP	**Benin**: E Learning conference: "Masiphumelele Library: E-learning in Action."
2012	EIFL-PLIP	**South Africa**: Johannesburg: African Public Libraries Summit: "Masiphumelele Community Library: Bridging the digital divide."
2013	EIFL-PLIP	**South Africa**: Cape Town: Peer Learning meeting: "Libraries for development: Masiphumelele Public Library."
2013	EIFL-PLIP	**South Africa**: Cape Town: Beyond Access Conference: "Developing space for the community: increasing opportunities"
2014	EIFL-PLIP	**Ghana**: Accra: "Implementing services in the library."
2014	EIFL-PLIP	**Tanzania**: Bagamoyo: "Workshop on ICT training for girls."
2015	EIFL-PLIP	**Ghana**: 3rd African Library Summit: "African Libraries Rising – Leadership and Innovation for Development."
2015	EIFL-PLIP	**Ethiopia**: Addis Ababa, University Library Cloud Computing Centre: "New skills to develop ICT-based services for children and youth."
2015	EIFL-PLIP	**Uganda**: Kampala, EIFL/PLIP/Maendeleo foundation Initiative: "Capacity building on initiating ICT, based in public libraries."
2016	EIFL-PLIP	**South Africa**: Durban:5th African Internet Governance Forum in 2016 hosted by the South African ministry of Telecommunications together with African union (AU).
2017	EIFL-PLIP	**Lithuania and Poland**: IFLA conference
2018	EIFL-PLIP	**Kenya**: Nakuru: part of EIFL's Kenyan National Library service initiative: "Reviewing of training curriculums on computer information literacy."
2018	EIFL-PLIP	**Indonesia**: Yogyakarta: guest speaker for young African librarians. "ICT skills training for public users."

Nyasha recalls: "All audiences seemed amazed on how Masiphumelele managed to organise and make all these programmes run at such a small Library. They were also eager to know how we manage to keep a good relationship with our partners and volunteers. Many librarians really appreciate the work we do and promised to replicate it somewhere."

Kafui Preb, the organiser of the workshop said, "Guys this is not a story, I visited Masiphumelele and saw them in action." Kafui was one of the members from the Beyond Access conference who visited Masiphumelele Library in December 2013.

In Bagamoyo, Tanzania Nyasha recollects: "I introduced myself by thanking them for their contribution during the pre-1994 black majority struggle when some training camps were established in some parts of their country. I once referred them as 'comrades' who stood strongly behind the birth of new democratic South Africa in 1994. They all welcomed my acknowledgement by a round of applause. I further reminded them about this most popular quote of Nelson Mandela 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'."



Nyasha was ably supported by fellow computer literacy trainers Nyameko Nzuzo, Paul Garwi and Xolani Mavi. Nyameko reflects: "I develop the community in computer skills that give me a chance to communicate and show my respect and patience with all the people I meet."

Masicorp has been a major partner in making computer literacy a priority at the Library and Ellen Harris from the U.S.A made a considerable contribution to the funding. In 2017 Masicorp generously took over the complete running and expenses of the computer room.

Partnerships with educational institutions

Getting schools in the community on board was a priority. Library membership for the learners offered them reading opportunities, assistance with projects and access to outreach activities provided by the Library. Ukhanyo Primary School had been on board from the start and very soon after the Library opened, children started visiting the Library regularly for orientation classes and reading sessions with volunteers Mandy Redcliffe, Stephen Norton from Canada and Nosakhe Mabula. The principal Michael Tyhali has always valued the Library just two blocks away from the school.



Reading classes



Masiphumelele High School lies on the outskirts of Masiphumelele but unfortunately did not make full use of what the Library had on offer. Simphiwe Nondwayi, the art teacher always supported the art initiatives at the Library. Some teachers brought classes to do their projects in the Library and career days run by IkamvaYouth and the Library were held at the high school and were well attended.

Eric Mqambeli and the ABET group that he coordinates also make use of the Library.

The Stay and Play group started with support from Sophie Billington from Masicorp, where a space was created at the Library for mothers and young children to meet, play and learn.



Homework club, run by volunteers provided homework help and workshops for primary school children. Volunteers, many teachers, helped with the three groups, grades 3, 4 and 5. They provided help with homework, but also additional activities and skills. These included craftwork, gardening, hero books, dancing and outings.

Among the many dedicated volunteers over the years were Hettie Martins, Jo Sharples, Sue Alexander and Sue Hull. Jos McMinn and Di Pletzer were devoted teachers while Katherine Donkin and Cynthia Smetheram taught recorder and Glen Dougal taught sewing.



Prize giving



Recorder lessons with Katherine Donkin



Covid handwashing workshop

Nursery schools brought their children for weekly story hours at the Library, in particular Doreen Zanyiwe's "Khaya Labantwana" and Zanele Bontshi's "Masakhane." Marian Collins provided stationery for the Library and the nursery schools on her yearly visit from the UK.

The Michaelis School of Fine Art programme, from the University of Cape Town, conceived by Professor Jane Alexander and assisted by Simphiwe Ndzube, partnered with the Library for the first time in 2008. The Library hosted the 3rd year students' exhibition and a workshop was held for the Masiphumelele High school learners at Michaelis. The community could identify with the art works and this yearly exhibition continued to be a highlight of the Library calendar until 2015.



Community chess
Nombuso Chiliza



Isigquma-buso soMvundla Wocingo
Wire Rabbit Mask/Sculpture
Lethamaga Richard Mabula

"This is the way to express oneself and to express the inner feelings of a person without saying a word. It expresses the real African!" Theo



Amabali abantwana base Masiphumelele/Children's Stories of Masiphumelele
Jessa Mockridge, assisted by Nosakhe Mabula, Mzie Dlulani and Nosiviwe. September



"Libraries are gateways to dreams"



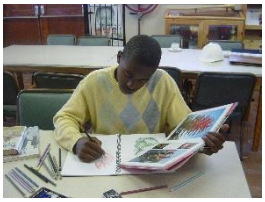
Weather Song
iNgoma yeMozulu
Emma Dee Padoa



Thando Melamane reflects: “Ever since Michaelis started to display their art work at the Masiphumelele library, I have noticed that children, have shown interest in different ways. Some try come to the library dressed like the sculptures they saw in the library, while others try to draw a sculpture or something similar to the one on display, using crayons, pencils and pens.”

The Masiphumelele Library was given many of the works of art which continue to enhance the ambience of the space.





Michaelis is also where Masiphumelele artist Simphiwe Ndzube completed his BA Fine Arts degree, majoring in sculpture. He joined the Masiphumelele Library as a teenager in 2007 when he attended the art club run on Saturdays by anthropologist Rachel Bray.

He would travel over 50km in each direction to attend Isilamela High School in Langa, as it was there that he could study art as a Matriculation subject. His artistic talent was nurtured under the guidance of his art teacher, Xoliswa Nkunzi. Simphiwe is now an international artist in his own right exhibiting all over the world and living in Los Angeles.



Sagas of the Mine Moon 2019



Died in Europe 2015 – found ties, Clothe



Raft 2015

“I’m interested in the work that landed up in the National Gallery…Raft. Because that work, past your life with it, like a raft has taken you on a journey in a way…”

Life Interrupted….

The Library is in the heart of the community, a place to transcend and transform reality, a reality that is often plagued by hardships and disruption on many levels. By 2013 a total of 18 programmes were well established and operated regularly to provide education, tuition, guidance and support to many people in the community.

Masiphumelele means “we shall succeed” and the Library is a success story. However, the community has been through many troubles along the way. Fire and flooding are regular occurrences. Lack of municipal services and unemployment have created tensions.

In 2015 the problems caused by drugs and drug dealing brought the community to breaking-point, when young Library user Amani Pula was raped and murdered. A young woman was also raped and the community were horrified. Collective anger resulted in mob justice against the alleged perpetrators of these horrendous crimes. There were further related murders and violence against alleged drug dealers who operated in the community.

Large demonstrations at times blocked entry to and exit from Masiphumelele, making a loud and continued call for a much needed and long overdue permanent police station in Masiphumelele. Those who attended, worked and volunteered at the Library had to deal sensitively with the volatile situation until Library services and activities could be fully restored.

Shortly after the enormous grief and disturbance arising from these events, a fierce fire swept through the “wetland” area of Masiphumelele killing three residents, destroying around 1000 homes and leaving 4500 people homeless. These events had a huge impact on the community and the Library. In recent years a mobile police station has been established on the grounds of the community hall in Masiphumelele and a Fire Station has also been built on the main Kommetjie Road bordering Masiphumelele.

In May 2017 the case against the murderer of Amani Pula finally closed and the perpetrator was handed two life sentences and 22 years for other crimes. A friend shared: “It was the first time in ages to see the smile on his mother’s face.”



Amani Pula



Mandisa Pula

The Library continued to focus on doing the best for the community while acknowledging the hardships and challenges faced by many.

Weaving the threads together….

The driving force behind the success of Masiphumelele Library are partners, volunteers, NGOs, educational institutions, the provincial and the municipal authorities. The provincial library assists with book-stock and magazine purchases. The City of Cape Town, the municipal authority, owns the Library buildings and park (providing maintenance and cleaning services, staff salaries, insurance, security and book-stock.)

Book-stock has always been an integral part of the Library's mission, from the donations shipped from America so there were books on the shelves in 2003, to the Provincial allocation of books soon after and the final buy in of the City of Cape Town. Books are carefully selected for the community's needs and isiXhosa books are bought wherever available. A gap in the book-stock are books in the Shona language for the many Zimbabweans who use the library.



Phumeza Masiza, librarian, explains: "The community love to read in a quiet space, mostly English fiction and magazines. Non-fiction is read primarily for study purposes and research. Books are read a lot by children."

Vidie Lutuli, librarian, adds: "When I read to them, you can see the hunger of wanting to learn more from their faces, learning new things about the people we read about. So we become a community of engaged and educated individuals, with the opportunity to make better families, better communities and a better world."



From the City, Donald Marchant started the process at the very beginning in 2002 with John Thompson. Maloun Mullim, Mervyn Stoffels, Zaine Abdurahman, Chris Bonthuys, Zwai Mlambisa, Khyyam Salie, Bennie Swart, Emma Bezuidenhout, Grant White, Ayesha Gaidien and Dinesh Isaacs are remembered for having made the journey with a municipal authority less challenging. Alderman Felicity Purchase, municipal councillor for many years, continues to support the Library initiatives. Fellow librarians also championed the Masiphumelele Library - in particular Lyn Steyn, Carmen Fowkes, Flippie van der Walt and Layla Swart.

Above all, the team is the core strength of the Library, the staff – their passion and their commitment. Without their passion there would be no one in the driver's seat. Teamwork was always paramount when addressing the highs and lows of the community and each other.

Thandiwe Msebenzi, a 3rd year art student in 2013 captured the concept in her photographs. Thandiwe explains: *"14 portraits:* These are 14 'Heroes' of the library who take on different roles in keeping the library alive. This art piece is inspired by the work that these individuals do, the love, care and knowledge that they bring to the Masiphumelele library, in enriching the community. They also participate in the library in different roles as librarians, cleaners, computer assistants, gardeners and security guards. The portraits celebrate and acknowledge the work that they do that goes beyond the books they offer, to teach, support and equip individuals with skills for the future."

Thandiwe photographed each staff member in a unique way, capturing something of the essence of each subject. No one is named. No designations are given. The finished work showed everyone as equal; equally human; equally dignified and equally part of a team working for the Library and the community.

The team built up over the years. Thando Melamane has been there from day one, a constant and devoted champion of the Library. Veronica Mlambisa joined her in 2003 heralding the foundation of the Masiphumelele team. Zukiswa Xalisa and Pam Mpame from Fish Hoek Library were also part of the team for a while.

Nosakhe Mabula a volunteer working with young children for years at the Library, eventually got a permanent position with the City of Cape Town in 2014. Sue Alexander was appointed Librarian-in-Charge in 2012 when the Library received Community Library status. Nosiviwe (Vidie) Lutuli joined the team in 2009.

The team extended from the volunteers in the computer room, Nyasha Sithole, Paul Garwi, Nyameko Nzuzo, Nosindiso Mqalu and Xolani Mavi, (who received Masicorp stipends), to the cleaning staff and security guards over the years, appointed on contracts by the local authority, cleaners Nomnikelo Mlambisa and Nonathi Dodo and security guards Nombini Mbethe, Joseph Ndylavan, Zilungile Dlova and Malibongwe Uhaweshe. The leaders of the various programmes that developed over the years were also part of the team.


Malibongwe Uhaweshe

The team even extended into a library exchange with Chelsea District Library in Michigan in 2015. Vidie Lutuli spent a month in America and Emily Meloche, librarian at Chelsea District Library came to spend time at Masiphumelele Library. The purpose of the swap was to share experiences and get a better understanding of the different library worlds. Bill Harmer, head of Chelsea Library managed to get support from his community to back this project.

As a team building exercise the Library staff showed Emily the sights of Cape Town. Each member of staff got a chance to research the place they were going to visit and then a small group would accompany her to Robben Island, Table Mountain and the penguin colony at Boulders. This exercise proved very successful and affirming for the group.





A note from Emily: “From joining in storytimes, to standing behind the checkout desk, to touring area libraries and the Masiphumelele community, I’ve had a truly wonderful experience spending four weeks at the Masi Library! This has been an amazing opportunity to see the universal mission of librarianship at work.”

A note from Vidie: “I believe I had a chance to have a taste of everything that every staff member is doing in the library. I really felt at home because of the warm welcoming hearts of Chelsea people. I so wish this exchange program to be something that happens continuously.”

To celebrate the team and to plan the way forward after the retirement of the Librarian-in-Charge Sue Alexander in 2016, a weekend was spent at Mont Fleur near Stellenbosch. Wilfred Reynolds from *isiBindi: facilitation and training,* ran a workshop and the group got a chance to voice their opinions and make suggestions on the way forward.



The Team

The time also afforded an excellent team building exercise where people could relate to each other on a personal level away from the pressure of the work environment.

The farewell to Sue Alexander was a memorable "Cultural Celebration" organized by the team. The staff made speeches as did Pumelisa Mabula from Girlz group, Pam Jako and Solomzi Mtengwane. Backstage Theatre productions, Okuhle Beyaphi produced a play for the occasion and Zinzi - AKA Dis mxaster - performed her poetry and rap. Also included in the programme was dancing and drumming by the Yonayethu and the Amaqhawesizwe groups. The seniors sang as they gave her their homemade gifts, a special cake was organised by the Library neighbour Simcelile Ngqakumbana and thereafter lunch was served.

Lyn Steyn, former librarian at Fish Hoek Library writes: "A truer depiction of the creator of Masi Library is the library itself. Solid, colourful and abuzz with life, hope and undiscovered potential, the library exists and persists to serve community needs. It welcomes and embraces; it is flexible, undaunted by challenges; and it engages in a complex network of partners to help it achieve its goals."

Sue closed the event with a vote of thanks:

"Ndiyanibulela zihlobo, bahlali baseMasi.
Ndiyabulela kubantwana baseMasi. Nengxolo yabo apheLibrary!
Ndibulela nababantu ndisebenze nabo kamnandi.
Ndibulela nabahlobo beLibrary yase Masiphumelele.
Ndithi "halala".
Sonke siyakhile le-Library.
Singabahlobo benkqubela."



Girls' Group

"Thank-you friends, residents of Masi.
Thank-you to the children of Masi. And for their noise here at the Library!
I also thank the people I have worked with so happily.
I also thank the friends of Masiphumelele Library.
I say 'congratulations'.
All of us, we have built this Library together.
We are friends of progress."

In 2017 Vuyokazi Tatana Somlata was welcomed to head the team with this vision: “I see Masiphumelele Library continue being the best Library, dynamic and moving forward with the times without losing the momentum.”



Her Master’s dissertation was “Knowledge sharing as a Knowledge Management tool in the City of Cape Town public libraries.” She looked at how knowledge is shared between staff to ensure a smooth work flow, curbing information hoarding among staff while ensuring staff development.



Lubabalo Peter joined the team when Veronica Mlambisa left in 2018. He came with excellent experience having worked in the municipal offices and has shown his skill with human relations.



Phumeza Masiza, a Librarian from Masiphumelele joined the team in 2020. She brings experience from the National Library and her artistic skills have enhanced the Library with beautiful displays.

Each member of the team brings their special expertise which adds up to the whole which is Masiphumelele Library.

Long standing librarian Veronica Mlambisa retired in 2018 and with her skills gained working in the Library and her passion for children and reading, is now teaching reading at the Dalibango school in Mcothamo village in the Eastern Cape. She reminisces: “working alongside Sue did not only help me grow but I also had a chance to help grow the library and the community of Masiphumelele.”

When Vuyo got a position closer to home, Jacqui Kwezi took the reins at Masiphumelele Library. She had to steer the Library through the first pandemic year of 2020. She joined the library service in 1997 and comes with experience of being Librarian-in-charge at Nyanga, Grassy Park and Tableview libraries and an Area manager.





The staff at the opening of the Adult Study Area and Reading room, 25 November 2021

Some Highlights over the Years

- A highlight of 2004 was the visit of musician Madosini as part of the Fish Hoek Library 50th birthday celebration. She told Xhosa stories and played traditional musical instruments. Thando Melamane remembers it being "really an unforgettable and enjoyable morning."

- 2005 ended on a high note when the Masiphumelele Library won "Best Community Library" from the Western Cape Department of Arts and Culture.



Staff members Veronica Mlambisa and Thando Melamane attending the ceremony

- In 2010 Masiphumelele Library won the Provincial Arts and Culture Award for the "Best Library in the Western Cape."

Thando Melamane and Nosakhe Mabula posing with the award



- Renowned singer Simphiwe Dana visited the Library on her "Black motivation reading tour" in 2011.





- In 2011 Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, visited Masiphumelele, including the Library, and a French band called “Les Doigts de L’Homme” visited and played a concert at the Library and even taught a little guitar!



- Celebrated artist Peter Clarke attended the Michaelis exhibition opening in 2011 where he also celebrated his birthday and discussed art with student Simphiwe Ndzube, over the years nurturing his passion for fine art and contributing to his success as an international artist.



Peter Clarke and Simphiwe Ndzube



- During the Indaba of 2012 Professor Jonathan Jansen, came to speak about the importance of tertiary education. In an article after his visit: “Politicians must stay out of it” in Timeslive in 2012 he describes the Library in Masiphumelele:



“Lying between the middle-class suburbs of Fish Hoek and the colourless flats of Ocean View, ‘Masi’ as some visitors call it, is a tough neighbourhood. Yet the library in the heart of the township is a hive of learning - of everything from mathematics to drama - for some of the smartest kids I've met.”

- Global Libraries Peer Learning Meeting and Beyond Access visited the Masiphumelele Library in 2013. It coincided with the graduation ceremony for the Intermediate Computer Class students and the presentation of certificates. It also gave an opportunity to present an overview of the Library programmes to more than 25 different countries.



- A group of ACapella singers, “Talisman” from Stanford University performed at the Library in 2013.

- International Children's Book Day was celebrated at the library on 2 April 2014 with stories and a beautiful cake made by Maud auf der Heyde.



- On 21 March, 2015 Human Rights Day, the Ukwanda puppet company in association with Handspring Trust and University of the Western Cape performed *Qhawe: hero of the people* – a visual spectacle full of music, laughter, adventure and courage. The audience grew to over 100 and all enjoyed the performance. All the staff from Masiphumelele Library came in on the public holiday in the spirit of the event to support, enjoy and help.



Luyanda Ngodlwana, Sipho Ngxola and Ncedile Daki, living in Masiphumelele and long-time supporters of the Library, were trained by Handspring Puppet Company.

- In 2015 Masiphumelele Library won the Provincial Award for Best medium sized Public Library in the Western Cape.



Thando Melamane and Vidie Lutuli receiving the award from Mr Swiegelaar



The team celebrates the award

- The IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) conference was held in Cape Town in August 2015. The City of Cape Town assisted with preparations as Masiphumelele Library was one of the libraries to be showcased. At the open session on Dynamic African Libraries for Young People the Library presented a paper "Masiphumelele Library: A holistic service to youth and children in the community." On the final day Nosiviwe Lutuli, the Masiphumelele Library representative at the IFLA conference, led the official delegates tour to Masiphumelele Library. Around 25 representatives from all over the world circulated around the Library to experience the services and the various partnership programmes that take place at there –





IkamvaYouth, the Computer room, Nal'ibali, Wordworks, Lalela Art Project, Masicorp, Ukwanda puppet company, African Impact and Fundza. Library staff and the Partner organisations excelled in their team-work and showed such passion for what they had achieved in the Library.



- The Heritage Day celebration at the Library in 2017 was attended by Grade 7 learners from Ukhanyo Primary school and their teachers and also the senior citizens of Masiphumelele. The Iziko Mobile Museum is an educational outreach project aimed at bringing the museum to communities. The primary aim of the Iziko Mobile Museum exhibition and their educational resources is to focus on the rich heritage of indigenous knowledge in Southern Africa. The staff and volunteers rose to the occasion and cooked traditional food.





- In 2016 Girl's Group wrote Portrait poems as an activity.

I am Kholisa talkative and caring
Who loves sport, the ocean, family and eating
Who fears the unknown, pain and failure
Who dreams of teaching maths and travelling the world
I am Kholisa I am Kholisa Ngcama.



Kholisa Ngcama is now a teacher!

- In 2017 Sindiwe Magona, celebrated author and storyteller, visited the Library and gave a special story hour to the children. They loved the interactive story as did the adults. Sindiwe had a wealth of experience, anecdotes and stories to share.





- IkamvaYouth, on 29 January 2022, celebrated a successful 2021 with prizegiving to mark the occasion.

- The Jungle theatre company performed "Dassie's Tale" to a delighted group of children at the Library on 31 March 2022.

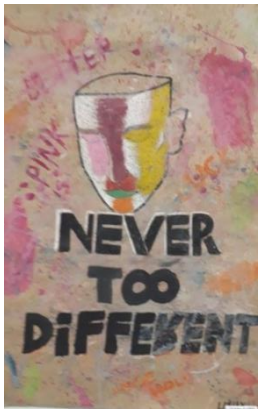




- Lalela Art Exhibition 2022: Nwabisa Ndongeni, teacher and “Chomi yam “(friend) of the group of teenage exhibitors facilitated a very moving opening of this exhibition at the Library. Learners and their parents attended and Nwabisa spoke life into them while relating her own difficult journey to where she is today.







- False Bay College visited the Library on 7 April 2022 to explain what the College has to offer and how to apply. Lubabalo Peter, Assistant Librarian, who studied there himself, assisted with the promotion in the new adult wing.





- Senior citizens from Noncedo’s Seniors club are again being visited in 2022. The librarian, Vidie Lutuli visits them on a weekly basis. She reads them a story which they discuss and they ask questions.

- Masiphumelele Library has been the subject for a number of researchers, Professor Genevieve Hart from UWC with her paper, “Moving beyond outreach”, Gabriel Smales who received a Churchill Fellowship to research global best practice in library service design, “Learning spaces for social mobility in Beirut, Cape Town, Marrakech” and most recently Matthew Keaney from Yale University who researched libraries and education in South Africa, talking about libraries in the post-apartheid era and a case study of Masiphumelele as an example of a successful community library effort.

Some personal reflections: young people who have used the library as a stepping stone to education and the opportunities it offers.







- Pumelisa Mabula gave a face to the Library learning to read and today she is a teacher.

"The library to me means a place of discovery. Masiphumelele library in particular means a place of growth to me. It has moulded me into the person I am today through all the services it has offered and provided to me. From my early childhood years with the Wordworks programme to Girls group during my teens and IkamvaYouth during High school, all programmes for which I am grateful. The library to me means endless possibilities and the belief that through knowledge, hard work and determination I can become whatever I want to be. The library to me means home."

- Benjamin Mumba reflects: "The library means a lot to me because it is a source for information to the public and the community....it acts as a knowledge partner."

- Okuhle Beyaphi reflects on what the Library means to her.

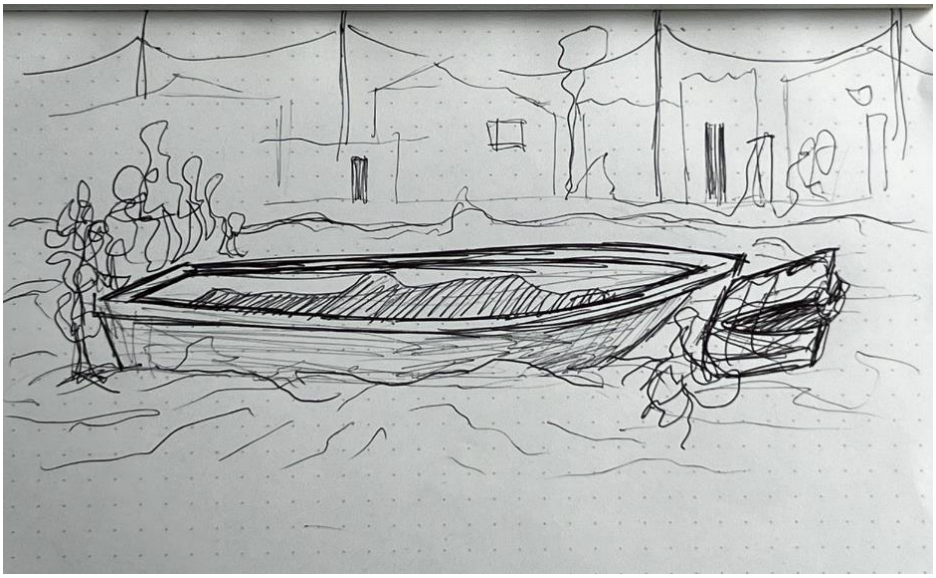


"Living in the township can limit one's imagination, perspective on life and dreams. The library had a major impact in my world view, it showed me places to dream of through books, a window into how other people live and meeting people from many other parts of the world who visited the library. It became my second home, a place of stillness when I needed one, my own little quiet "office", a place for me to think, research and complete my school/varsity work and to make friends. It introduced me to programmes available in my community like IkamvaYouth. I picked up many books from the library until I found my preference in non-fiction. Biographies and self-help books which brought me joy, sadness, laughter, tears but most of all many lessons from real people's lives. The lessons motivated, inspired and helped me dream bigger than Masiphumlelele. The library brought a completely different perspective of life and broadened my thinking. It gave me a reason to keep dreaming."

- Simphiwe Ndzube reminisces on what the Library means to him:



"My experiences with Masi library has been first witnessing the library grow. I lived in the same street and the kids used to go by the massive boat filled with sand which sat in the same area as the parking lot is now. I have fond memories of that sandy playground and then I witness the construction of the library. Wondering. Then it opened and because I was going to Ukhanyo school most of our homework involved use of the library big time. But when I went to high school in Langa, I could only be there on Saturday. Those 2 years before I went to High school I learnt so many great skills through the library, mostly chess. Art books and the Internet of course added so much value for me. Sue who just became a long-time friend since then really was a catalyst to a lot of my early becoming. She was at the library creating space for us kids and somehow we clicked and she always found ways to keep me around and busy. The Career's Indaba at the library, engaging with world teach volunteers, working at the library during school holidays – all those were formation years for me which wouldn't have happened had that sandy playground remained with that big boat full of potential but really nowhere to go."



Simphiwe Ndzube, 2022

And many people who visit the Library ask this question …. how did you get here? From a car boot to this?

The answer is in "a massive boat filled with sand…full of potential", with dreams, a loyal crew of workers, users, volunteers, partners and friends, and somewhere to go!

Susan Alexander, April 2022.