

# UP Veterinary Science Library

The history of the UP Veterinary Science Library of the University of Pretoria can be divided into two periods: The first dates from its inception in 1974 to 1986; the second dates from 1987 when the library moved into the Sir Arnold Theiler building and embarked on steady growth as a virtual library.

The Faculty Library developed as a branch library of the University of Pretoria's Department of Library Services (formerly known as the Academic Information Service). It dates back to 1974 when it opened its doors in the building which now houses the Department of Production Animal Studies, formerly the Ethology Section. The facility allocated to the library was formerly the students' tearoom, as recalled by the current Dean, G.E. Swan.

From 1920 when the Faculty of Veterinary Science was established until 1973 students and staff used the library of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI). A room in the Onderstepoort Students Hostel was also allocated for use as a library and some books and journals in veterinary medicine were purchased by the Merensky Library for their use. As explained in a 1974 report in the *Journal of the South African Veterinary Association*, the OVI then had a declining budget and did not buy books in some of the clinically important disciplines such as medicine and surgery.

The prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*, was one of the journals provided to the hostel library to ensure that students were exposed to the latest important research findings worldwide. It is interesting to note, however, that *Fair Lady* and *Huisgenoot* were also included, as the librarians at

the main library of the university felt that the students were isolated from the city and should, therefore, also have access to more relaxing types of literature! *Huisgenoot* is indeed still available.

The 1974 library accommodation was expanded towards the end of 1981 when an upper level was added to house the journal collection and provide some seating for users. This upper level was officially opened by the Rector, Prof. D.M. Joubert. The book collection and reference section were shelved on the lower level. There were no computers. Books

were issued using a card system, and literature searches were done manually by using the *Index Veterinarius* and the *Veterinary Bulletin*.

When computer searches for literature references became available in the mid-1980s the librarian had to travel to the Medical Library at the then H.F. Verwoerd Hospital, to do searches on the Dialog databases. Staff comprised the librarian, a library assistant and a messenger. The latter (Johannes Moropotli) is the longest serving member of the library personnel and is now the library assistant handling document delivery.

By 1986 the library had become very crammed as journal and book holdings increased and the need to provide computer facilities had grown. It was therefore a relief to be able to move into the new Sir Arnold

Theiler Building in April 1987. Although it was emphasized that there was only room for 10 years' growth, that seemed very far away! The move had to take place as cost-effectively as possible. With the part time assistance of two students

*"It is interesting to note, however, that Fair Lady and Huisgenoot were also included, as the librarians at the main library of the university felt that the students were isolated from the city and should, therefore, also have access to more relaxing types of literature! Huisgenoot is indeed still available."*



E.E. van der Westhuizen, head of the Jotello F. Soga Library (1981-2008)



Books on the move to the new library



and the Faculty's trucks, normally used to transport feed for the production animals, the collection was moved. Boxes of books and journals, neatly numbered, were transported from the old library to the new. It took three months to arrange them correctly on the shelves, but only three days closure to clients were allowed whereafter the library had to open, issuing books from a makeshift counter, while the huge and cumbersome lending desk was being assembled. This was only replaced with a more streamlined and functional desk in July 2007.

Until 2006 the budget for information sources, both paper and electronic, had been adequate, enabling this library to purchase all the relevant books and journals necessary to support the Faculty in its teaching and learning and research objectives. Unfortunately with annual increases in journal prices, especially electronic publications, and some depreciation of the South African currency, the future for acquisitions is less satisfactory. The library is unique in serving the only veterinary faculty in South Africa. It cannot rely on other libraries to share some of this load, as in the case of the health sciences libraries. It receives some support from the South African Veterinary Association in the form of journals that the Association receives in exchange for its own journal, but there are only about five titles that are of significance, so the impact on the budget is minimal.

A good relationship has always existed with the library of the OVI but the subject coverage of the two libraries differs as the former concentrates on research concerning diseases of production animals, diagnostics and the development of vaccines, whereas the faculty's library has to cover all subject areas presented in the veterinary curriculum, such as medicine, surgery, pharmacology, human-animal interaction, and animal nutrition, production, breeding and welfare. The amalgamation of the country's two veterinary faculties in 1999 led to an increase in the library's collection as books and journals that the Medunsa library no longer needed could be incorporated into the Faculty's collection which also included a well-used multimedia section. Videos are now being supplanted by CDs and DVDs and are very popular with students as visual material has a greater impact than written texts.

As this is a fairly new library, there are not many old books. However, an acquisition arranged by H.P.A. de Boom, former head of the Department of Anatomy, must be mentioned. This book is the *Anatomia del cavallo infermita* (Atlas of the horse) by Carlo Ruini. It was first published in Italy in 1598. The library purchased the 3rd edition (1602) when it was put on sale in the USA. This anatomical atlas is historically significant because it was the first such atlas to be devoted to a non-human species. As M.M.S. Smuts mentioned in her inaugural

address as head of the Department of Anatomy in 1982, this work was as significant for veterinary anatomy as Vesalius' *Fabrica* was for human anatomy. Apparently only three copies of this early publication are available in libraries worldwide.

## From paper to electronic

In 1999 a Virtual Veterinary Library, which is a one-stop information centre – also called 'The Library in your Office' – was introduced in support of the policy of the UP Library Services to create a virtual library environment. The decade starting in 2000 saw the implementation of various e-products and e-services by the Library Services.

InfoPortal was specially designed for lecturers and researchers – a personal starting point for all information management related activities. It is a one-stop electronic service, linking the lecturer to databases, e-journals, e-theses, websites and the library's online catalogues. The Virtual Groups facility enables a client to form online Communities of Practice (people working in the same research field, or sharing the same interests). Electronic books (e-books) became part of the library collection in 2002. An e-book is a written work that is readable on a computer screen, downloaded to a PC or digital assistant like SoftBook or Rocket eBook readers. E-books will not replace paper books. They just help librarians provide improved service to their users.

While most of the books now available in electronic format are older, more and more are being published online soon after publication in print. Links are provided in the library catalogue, UPEXplore, to the full-text book on the world-wide web. Tyds@Tuks,

the electronic journal gateway of the University of Pretoria, was developed in 1998 to promote easy access to e-journals. Through the library web page users can access almost 35 000 e-journals. A fraction of these are on veterinary topics, but the rate at which publishers are making their journals available in e-format is increasing rapidly.

The electronic library newsletter, *Infomania*, hit Faculty computer screens in April 1998, serving as an effective communication channel for the library and its clients. It features news about new products and services from the library world, specifically geared to the needs of the Faculty. A feature that has been included in recent issues is the 'Conversations with Sir Arnold' column in which the development of information products and the growth of the collections are highlighted. For example, the growth in the number of veterinary or animal health journals over the years since 1920 was featured in one issue. This was followed by one listing all the doctoral theses (97) that have been presented at the Faculty since 1920.

*"The information specialists of the Library developed several webportals for relevant topics during the past decade. These serve as gateways to approved websites on specific topics. They also contain information provided by researchers and lecturers at the Faculty, or by the information specialist."*

## Webportals and electronic repositories

The information specialists of the Library developed several webportals for relevant topics during the past decade. These serve as gateways to approved websites on specific topics. They also contain information provided by researchers and lecturers at the Faculty, or by the information specialist. Examples are the goat web developed by Amelia Breytenbach when she was information specialist for the Department of Production Animal Studies; the ostrich web, developed by Erica van der Westhuizen based on the bibliography she compiled in 1993 and updated in 1997 and 2000; a comprehensive website on dental formulas by Tertia Coetsee and Antoinette Lourens, which was a world first, covering dental formulas of all species, and a poultry web developed by Antoinette Lourens. The latter followed an increasing number of requests received for information on poultry farming. Poultry production is recognized as one of the tools for poverty reduction, contributing positively to the nutritional status of low-income farming communities in South Africa.

A poisonous plants web portal was created in 2006 following the model of the one at the Veterinary Medicine Library of the University of Illinois. Both libraries are collaborating on this topic so that the plants of the two different continents (North America and southern Africa) will be shown in their variations and uniqueness.

Disasters and emergencies is a web portal of importance in the 9/11 aftermath. Not only man-made disasters are covered, but also natural disasters such as floods and fires. Emerging diseases also feature. This web product resulted

from a satellite session on this theme of the 73rd International Conference of Library Associations held in Durban in 2007. All these web portals feature the following sections, with links to useful information sites: Associations, Books, Conferences, Diseases and Health Issues, Full Text Articles, List of Experts, Newsletters, Journals and Research Centres.

The Library was also actively involved in various initiatives to promote the establishment of electronic repositories of scientific information by the Library Services of the University of Pretoria. As a first step slides used by lecturers were digitized and to improve retrieval a template was developed by means of which the applicable metadata are linked to the images and stored on a server. UPSpace is the University's electronic institutional repository for collecting and preserving its intellectual output. It consists of a number of collections including OpenUP which is a collection of research articles produced by staff members in support of the international open access movement.

The UP Veterinary Science Library contributed a Theiler Collection, consisting of rare historical documents and photographs of Sir Arnold Theiler, the founder of the Veterinary Faculty. Other contributions are the Arnold Theiler Memorial Lectures and the Christine Seegers Biomedical Illustrations. A South African National Veterinary Repository is also planned as a joint endeavour with the OVI.

## Other Activities

In July 1995 the 1st Conference of African Animal Health Information Workers was organized by the UP Veterinary Science Library and held at the Faculty of Veterinary Science

*"The Library was actively involved in various initiatives to promote the establishment of electronic repositories of scientific information by the Library Services of the University of Pretoria."*

## THE VETERINARY BOOKS FOR AFRICA PROJECT

Our project Veterinary Books for Africa enlisted the help of the student community since 1993 when we started it. In that year two students took books and journals by bakkie (light commercial vehicle) to the veterinary school libraries in Zimbabwe and Zambia. In the past decade it has grown to become a full component of the students' outreach programme, with a trip undertaken every two years by a group of six to eight students. They raise the funds and are responsible for all the logistics. In this way we are helping to improve the information collections of other veterinary libraries in Africa.

*Presenting of books to the Veterinary School in Zambia*

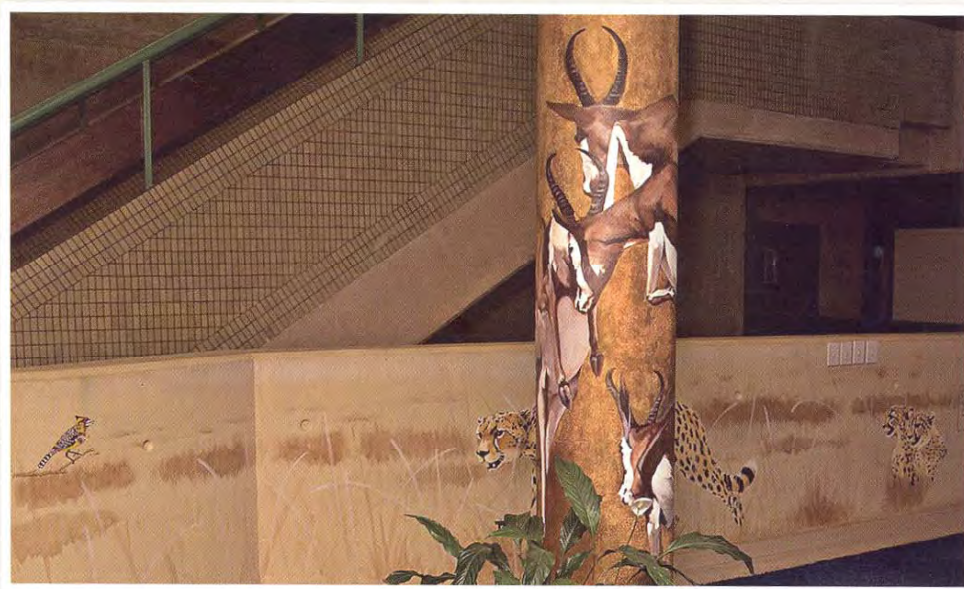




## TWO UNIQUE MURALS CREATED FOR THE LIBRARY

Special mention must be made of two unique murals created for the library by talented veterinary students. In 1995, to record the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Faculty, James Lockyear decorated the pillar at the entrance of the library with a scene of jumping springbok. A few years later the wall at the entrance was painted by Romain Pizzi with a picture of a cheetah and her cubs. It is interesting to note that the cheetah's gaze is determinedly fixed on the springbok!

Nicolene Swanepoel is another former veterinary student whose art features in the library. Other artists whose works are displayed on the library's walls are Marcella de Boom, Miriam Friedland, Jean Kotze Louw and Anna Vorster. A special wall hanging in the form of a quilt was designed by Barbara Kellermann, a staff member, to commemorate the past 20 years since the library's move to the Sir Arnold Theiler building. With the help of some of her colleagues, a beautiful scene depicting ostriches, a rhinoceros and antelope was created. It was unveiled by the Director of the UP Library Services, R. Moropa and the Dean of the Faculty, G. Swan, on 18 October 2007 during a special function.



at Onderstepoort. This was the first meeting of veterinary librarians to take place in Africa. It was inspired by the 1st International Conference of Animal Health Information Specialists which was held in Reading, UK in 1992. With funding received from the OIE Regional Collaborating Centre, seven librarians from veterinary libraries in other African coun-

tries were able to attend and present papers. In this way information provision of veterinary libraries in sub-Saharan Africa was promoted.

The 5th International Conference of Animal Health Information Specialists (5 ICAHIS) was hosted and organized by the Library from 4-7 July 2005 at the Faculty. It was attended



Conference participants in the computer laboratory

by 65 participants, most of them representing 30 veterinary libraries or institutions from Africa, Europe, Australia and the United States. Since this was the first time that this conference was taking place on the African continent (the former ones were held in the UK (at Reading and London), Denmark (Copenhagen) and Hungary (Budapest)), participation from other African nations was especially encouraged. Thanks to support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Wageningen, The Netherlands, seven information specialists representing Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe were able to attend and deliver papers at the conference.

Twenty-three papers were delivered during the course of the conference: 7 from other African countries, 7 from South Africa, 1 from Australia, 2 from the UK and 6 from the USA. The Poster Session comprised 13 posters (2 from South Africa, 1 from Mozambique, 3 from Scandinavia, 1 from the UK, 2 from the USA and 4 from Italy) on a variety of topics relevant to information and knowledge management.

Feedback received from participants showed that the eight-day programme, consisting of four spent on formal presentations, poster sessions and tours, and four devoted to pre-conference workshops, was very successful. The Veterinary Librarian of the University of Illinois, USA, *inter alia* said: 'Bridging the information gaps in animal health, along with establishing enduring contacts between information professionals in service to the profession, were the goals of the conference, and by all levels of expectation, they were met, setting the stage for future ICAHIS endeavors.'



Participants in the 5th International Conference of Veterinary Librarians (2005)

## Staff

The past 20 years have not only seen a growth in veterinary information sources but the staff component expanded too. A library planned for four staff members had to eventually accommodate eight people. This included the appointment of two cataloguers, when it was decided to decentralize certain tasks such as book and journal orders, cataloguing and classification. They could provide an on site service, sharing their expertise with existing staff and communicating directly with clients about their information needs. The library was thus enabled to face the challenges of providing more effective services to its clients and develop products for their specific needs, such as enhancing the use of their unique slide collections through metadata, helping lecturers with web-based course material and supporting their research output by means of reference collection management tools.

From 1974 to 1989 there was only one position for a qualified librarian which was filled consecutively by Rita Erasmus (1974-1975); Francina de Villiers (1976); Mathilda du Preez (1978-1981) and Erica van der Westhuizen (1981-2008). In September 1989 a second post was granted. Since that time it has been filled by Krista Verster, followed by Ansie Earle, and in 1997 by Tertia Coetsee. A third post for a qualified librarian was filled by Antoinette Lourens in later years. Library assistants since 1974 were: Johannes Moropotli, Rina Pelsler, Shirley Kingsley, Ida Thomson, Lourina de Beer, Hanneltjie Boshoff, Sanah Mphaga, and Barbara Kellermann.