

## **The Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr Ntopile Kganyago, MP, marks the start of the Library Week in DPW**

- Senior Management
- Library Staff
- All employees of the Department
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Perhaps one of the most important institutions we often take for granted in our communities, is the library. Modern technology including home based computer and internet are threatening one of the oldest past times, which is a walk down the road to the nearest library, to get intimate with books and knowledge.

So valuable is the library that the Romans at the peak of their civilization, established the first modern library at Alexandria in Egypt. As Africans, we can lay claim to be the first purveyors and peddlers of packaged information and knowledge centres. Today we know that the continent is a host to the Timbuktu Ancient Knowledge Centre in Mali which houses priceless manuscripts on African Science, technology, medicine, arts and culture.

This is not surprising considering that as Africans we had, by the time of the Roman Civilization already bequeathed history with magnificent structures in the form of Egyptian Pyramids which took an advanced form of science and technology to build. Therefore, not only did we consume the products in the library, we also helped to produce information and thereby contributed to knowledge generation, distribution, packaging and popularization.

As a developing nation, this is apart of our history and heritage that we need to reclaim, so that we can confidentially inspire our children and help them know that in the knowledge environment, we are the masters, not the slaves. Sadly over the centuries, history has been written and rewritten to distance Africa and its people from the many creations they helped to invent. We believe that the momentum brought by the initiatives such as the Library Week, will re-ignite enthusiasm in the love for books, knowledge, information and new discoveries.

Books have always provided us with all that we lack and need: knowledge. I am delighted to join with you this afternoon in order to celebrate this important occasion. For any person to grow, both spiritually and mentally, knowledge is imperative. So the spirit of nurturing the love for knowledge and books is highly appreciated.

Today we start a week of discovery on how the library can be our source of knowledge and how it could assist the department to be more productive.

The librarians here tell me that they have committed themselves to provide up to date information to support the department in its quest for more knowledge and better ways of doing its business. Well-researched information forms an excellent basis for good decision making and makes it easy to carry out the tasks at hand.

I am honoured to officially launch this library week in the Department. Libraries have always played an important role as reservoirs of knowledge where people could always go to fill up on their thirst for knowledge. They are an important aspect of disseminating and maintaining our cultures as people can always read up on the rituals and happenings of days gone by. They are also a source of knowledge as we have said. Libraries can also be a great source of just pleasurable reading, for both adults and youngsters. They play an important role in the education and development of the nation. So it gives me great pleasure to see the diligence of the librarians to stock up on all learning materials and books. It is indeed heartening to see that our own Department actually has a functioning library.

Library week is a time to share, celebrate and remind all of us of the various programmes, services, technologies and VALUE that our libraries offer.

I am happy to see that all of us have taken the invitation to join the librarians here in this celebration and have come to see what is new and exciting in our Library.

I believe that the Library Week slogan “From local to Global at our Library” is apt. Libraries are changing and dynamic, they are places of opportunity and achievement, and they connect you to a world of ideas. Even though in our own younger days, libraries were far and few in between, we always appreciated the opportunities which came with a visit to one’s local library. It always pains me to see that the youngsters are not keen to read books. They would rather play computer games, chat on the internet and cellphones rather than spend some

time with a good quality book to broaden their horizons. Even university students are becoming dangerously dependent on the internet for their school work and research projects. Hence the rising problem of plagiarism whereby people are unable to come up with original ideas. Some university graduates battle to express themselves clearly in any language, including their own mother tongue. Why? Because of lack of reading on their part. Reading a book gives you a firm grasp of anything that you may be reading, including your own language.

Libraries are more than having access to information; it is about what one does with that information and where it can take one.

Imagine

- a young boy discovering books about sailing;
- a university student doing research;
- an academic finding the latest research through resources made available by the library;

Libraries offer reading space and encourage a culture of reading, enabling one to explore the world and to broaden one's horizons ... "going from local to global".

Libraries are indeed places which allow people to go beyond themselves; that bridge the world and provide opportunities to access a world of information and other cultures.

Our department has invested resources to ensure that this library is well resourced, so as to ensure that our staff know where to get good information, in order to help them perform effectively based on reliable information.

We seek partners, who are willing to roll up their sleeves and work alongside us to develop the mandate of this Department, while reaping the individual benefits that sharing and growing knowledge are bound to afford us.

This week's programme has been compiled to ensure that you will have ample opportunity to interact with the Library staff

This is also the time for you to suggest how your library should look into the future. Our current library will be revamped, to make it more welcoming, so that you feel good to be here. We look forward to seeing a newly revamped library in the near future.

So today colleagues use this opportunity to contribute ideas, network, let the librarians show you around. Use your library for your benefit, it is here for your use. This current library will be changing into a Knowledge Centre. I am told that it will be the best in Pretoria as it will include an Internet Café and a Walk in Centre. The Knowledge Centre proposal is in your library pack that has been distributed.

I would like to encourage the Knowledge Management Directorate to continue working hard at harnessing all the knowledge resources of this Department, with the comfort of knowing that management and leadership are here to support them.

Finally I want to thank Mandisa and her team, the communications people for their commitment and dedication in pulling together this launch.

I wish to thank all of you, and I hope you will have a fruitful day and week.

I want to encourage each of you to utilize this library, and I want to stress that we also have the Library team who are willing to do their best in keeping you abreast of new information.

I leave you with this quote from Kahlil Gibran, "A little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle." And remember a library is like a hospital for the mind.

I thank you.

