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# 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

10 – 13 OCTOBER 2023

LORD CHARLES HOTEL, SOMERSET WEST, CAPE TOWN

**THEME: LIBRARIES - WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER**

Report by Bongsi Mphuti

# Conference Theme

## Libraries: Writing the Next Chapter



THE CONFERENCE  
CHALLENGED DELEGATES  
TO REFLECT ON THE  
QUESTION:



**"WHAT ARE THE STORIES  
WE WILL TELL ABOUT  
LIBRARIES IN THE  
FUTURE?"**



THE PRESENTATIONS CONSISTENTLY  
DEMONSTRATED THAT LIBRARIES  
ARE EVOLVING FROM TRADITIONAL  
INFORMATION PROVIDERS INTO  
STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN  
TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH,  
INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT.

# Conference Purpose

The conference brought together academic, public, school and special library professionals to explore how libraries can remain relevant and impactful in an era of rapid technological change. Twenty-six speakers shared innovative practices, research findings and future-focused strategies.

## Key Focus Areas

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Libraries
- Research Support Services
- Information Literacy
- Library Spaces and Digital Transformation
- Open Educational Resources (OER)
- Research Data and Open Science
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Community Engagement
- Social Justice
- Wikipedia and Knowledge Creation
- Leadership and Innovation



# Conference Messages - What I learned

Change is inevitable.

Libraries must embrace innovation.

AI **will** transform library services.

Librarians must continuously reskill.

Ethical information practices remain fundamental.

Collaboration is the future of librarianship.

# Major Emerging Trends Then – Now a Reality



The conference identified several significant trends shaping the future of libraries.



## Artificial Intelligence:

- Generative AI and ChatGPT;
- Prompt engineering;
- AI-assisted searching;
- AI-supported reference services;
- AI ethics;
- Academic integrity



## Digital Transformation :

- Virtual library tours;
- Online information literacy;
- Asynchronous learning;
- Digital library services;
- Technology-enabled engagement



## Research Support:

- Evidence synthesis;
- Research visibility;
- Institutional repositories;
- Research data services;
- Bibliometrics;
- Open scholarship



## Open Knowledge:

- Wikipedia editing;
- Wikidata;
- Open Educational Resources;
- Open Access;
- Research discoverability



## Community Impact:

- Public library partnerships;
- School library collaboration;
- Student wellbeing;
- Community engagement;
- Social justice

**Wits. For Good.**



# Day 1 Highlights - Leveraging AI and Digital Learning

## Artificial Intelligence

The presentations explored the rapid emergence of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and their implications for libraries.

## Key Insights

- AI responds to prompts and learns from human interactions.
- Librarians need prompt engineering skills.
- Students should verify AI-generated information.
- AI should support—not replace—critical thinking.
- Libraries should establish AI support hubs.
- AI can improve service delivery and productivity.
- Ethical use of AI must remain a priority.

## Academic Integrity

### Key discussions focused on:

- Proper referencing
- Evaluating AI-generated content
- Preventing plagiarism
- Information verification
- Responsible AI use

## Digital Learning

### Presentations demonstrated innovative approaches including:

- Virtual library tours
- Blackboard-based information literacy
- Online quizzes
- Interactive learning
- Asynchronous learning

## Key Lesson

Flexible online learning increases student participation and engagement.



# Day 2 Highlights - Innovation, Open Knowledge and Community Impact



## Information Literacy

Important discussions included:

- Curriculum integration
- Embedded librarianship
- Student research skills
- Evidence synthesis
- Open Educational Resources
- Institutional repositories



## Keynote Address

Professor Arthur G. O. Mutambara discussed:

- AI revolution
- Future jobs
- Continuous reskilling
- Multidisciplinary education
- AI governance
- Higher education transformation



## Community Partnerships

Examples included:

- Public library collaboration
- School library partnerships
- Book delivery services
- Youth development
- Reading promotion



## Sustainable Development Goals

Presenters highlighted the role of libraries in:

- National Development Plan
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Digital inclusion
- Community development



## Wikipedia and Knowledge Creation

Key discussions included:

- Editing Wikipedia
- Improving South African content
- Referencing and verification
- Wikidata
- Open peer review
- Library participation in open knowledge



## Key Message

Libraries should become leaders in responsible AI adoption.



# Day 3 Reflections

## Personal Observations – My Improved Ability to Support Researchers and Enhanced Library Services

Collaboration remains one of the greatest strengths of the library profession.

Sharing best practices accelerates innovation.

Informal networking creates future partnerships.

Conferences provide valuable opportunities for professional growth.

Although Day 3 focused mainly on networking and meetings, several important reflections emerged



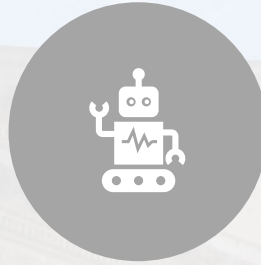
# Day 3: Meetings



# Application of what was learned



POSITION WITS  
LIBRARIES AS A  
NATIONAL LEADER IN  
OPEN SCHOLARSHIP.



ESTABLISH AI-  
ENABLED RESEARCH  
SUPPORT SERVICES.



EXPAND RESEARCH  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
SERVICES.



BUILD STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIPS  
ACROSS THE  
UNIVERSITY.



FOSTER A CULTURE  
OF CONTINUOUS  
INNOVATION AND  
LIFELONG LEARNING.

# Day 2: The Best Evening Ever



5 course dinner with the courtesy of Dr.  
Selematsela & Chef Selematsela

# Day 3 – The Gala Dinner



Thank you LET who made it possible for us to attend



# THANK YOU

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