

# Changes in the Storage and Dissemination of Information in a South African University Library: 1934 - 1996

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# **CHANCES IN THE STORAGE AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION IN A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: 1954 - 1996.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The idea of computerising the University of Natal Library in Durban, South Africa was first rooted in 1971 but it was not until 1984 that the idea became reality. Reasons for computerising were:

- streamlining of the library routines such as acquisitions, cataloging, periodicals, circulation and information retrieval
- improvement in services to users
- release of library staff from labour intensive manual routines to provide more personal reader services
- enhancement of library co-operation

Since 1954 the Library has moved from a cumbersome mainframe system (which was quite troublesome) to an integrated library system running on a Sunsparc 20 which handles most routine library operations and a LAN which has facilitated electronic ordering of library materials, online interlibrary loans, access to the national union catalogue and a score of other databases worldwide. All has not, however, been plain sailing. Hardware problems such as unavailability of parts (due to sanctions), lack of expertise and networking difficulties have had to be overcome. Coupled with this has been the ongoing necessity to train library staff who have never used a computer before and users who have never even seen a typewriter, let alone a computer.