

BOOKS FOR LESOTHO INC.

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Mountains in Lesotho under snow. Rudi Botha. Used with permission.

NEWSLETTER No. 17, MARCH 2020

THE BARN HAS CLOSED FOR A COVID-19 BREAK - we will reopen ASAP!

If you are in South Australia and have books to donate, please contact David on 0418 877 112

YOUR DONATION, PLEASE!

B4L is struggling, like most charities, to raise funds following other recent appeals such as for bushfire victims and now the effects of COVID-19. As you will see below, Lesotho has a great need for our library books and what you have sent are being used in many schools to effect significant changes in children. However, we need \$13,604 by 30 June 2020 to meet this year's costs. Donations to date = \$8,100

To help B4L raise \$5,500 in less than 2.5 months,
CLICK on the LINK and make a tax-deductible donation



Make a Donation



Using the secure engine
of GiveNow.com.au

Thank you Lions Club of Blackwood and Rotary Club of St Peters;
both made significant donations in response to a recent appeal to local service clubs.

VISIT TO LESOTHO - MARCH 2020

Founders of B4L, David and Liz Linn (we) visited Lesotho just prior to the COVID-19 shut down but catching the 14-day isolation period on return. We report that the trip was very important to the development of B4L for 3 main reasons; 2 related to our regular partners, [Transformation Resource Centre \(TRC\)](#) and [Rotary Club of Maloti \(RCoMa\)](#) while third was the Summit by [African Library Project \(ALP\)](#).



Meeting with the originator of the book project: We met with 'Me Mosa Muso who, as the then librarian at TRC, conceived the idea on which B4L has built, was a lovely event. Mosa (left) lives with her husband in Welcom in South Africa.

Meeting with TRC and subsequent visit to 2 schools: History repeating; when we arrived at TRC in 2008 we found the first shipment in the TRC foyer. This time the latest shipment of 105 boxes of books was prominently standing in the foyer and awaiting distribution to schools .

In the past few months there have been staff changes at TRC (although key people have only changed positions) so the meeting provide an opportunity to bring us all up-to-date. TRC remains committed to

distributing the annual shipment, but increasing budget pressure means that the schools are in more populated and accessible areas rather than the remote mountain areas. The latter can only be serviced if more funds are available. Ongoing support to schools and auditing of use of the book resources are also limited due to the lack of funds.



Together with the 3 key members of TRC staff, we visited 2 schools in metropolitan Maseru:



Left: Teacher-librarian, TRC's Nthatua and Liz at the library at Maseru LECSA Primary School
Right: Liz and Nthatua enter Mabathoane Secondary School



The Maseru LECS PS library has good shelving in a dedicated room with tables and chairs. The library looks well-stocked, but the school has had only one B4L shipment. The next B4L/TRC donation will transform the library. Books are set out on shelves in the same way B4L packed them at The Barn. The timetable for use of the library is shown below left.

Reading Timetable		
12:20 - 1:00		
Grades	day	dates
1	Fridays	28.02.2020
2	Fridays	6.03.2020
3	Fridays	13.03.2020
4	Fridays	20.03.2020
5	Fridays	27.03.2020
6	Fridays	03.04.2020
7	Fridays	28.02.2020



Mabathoane Secondary School has a huge light-filled library. It has lots of books on strong shelving and is well-furnished with large tables and many chairs. Books are catalogued using the Dewey System. With 2 staff managing the library, and programmed use of the library, students are benefitting. Many of the books showed publishing dates from yesteryear; staff stated books will be discarded as new ones arrive. Therefore they were eagerly awaiting their share of the books currently sitting in the TRC foyer.



Meeting with RCoMa: It was a pleasure to meet with Rotary members who are key contacts in the supply of books to their community service projects and nearby schools. As with all Rotarians, they are dedicated to their community. The meeting consolidated the relationship and provided an opportunity to discuss future actions, including co-operation between the various groups donating books for school libraries in Lesotho.

The images below show the working group meeting at Kick-4-Life which provides excellent accommodation with its profits supporting soccer development. The soccer pitch is right there!



Attendance at African Library Project (ALP) Summit and related visits to 4 schools in and around Maseru: The prime reason we travelled to Lesotho at this time (was it “essential travel”?) was to attend the ALP Summit held at [Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village](#) about 30 minutes drive from [Maseru](#) CBD and situated below [Thaba-Bosiu](#) (means: mountain at night) - a National Monument.

As you will see from the [African Library Project](#) website, and the [Lesotho Facebook page](#), ALP is an amazing organisation. Here the 2 Founders of B4L met the Founder of ALP, Chris Bradshaw, and learned that ALP was founded at about the same time as B4L started. The development of ALP is amazing; over 3,000,000 books to over 3,000 school libraries (about 1,000 to 1,500 books in each) in 12 African countries.

The African Library Project motto speaks to anyone establishing libraries: *Changing Lives, Book by Book*.

The original programme for the Summit over 5 days was modified when COVID-19 prevented all but one delegate from participating African countries outside of Lesotho were forced to cancel, as did some people due to come from USA. The revised programme concentrated on ALP operations in Lesotho with a strong focus on future co-operation between the various entities trying to achieve the same result in Lesotho, including B4L and its partners TRC and RCoMa. The programme included more than 80 teacher-librarians joining for 2 days of seminar sessions and in-school work on how to establish a library. ALP representatives and volunteers worked very, very hard to achieve a highly successful Summit out of a sea of challenges.

Through a special appeal to B4L donors, sufficient funds were raised to allow B4L to sponsor the cost of catering for the teacher-librarians over the 2 days.

We trust we represented B4L well in this international forum, but we can confess to not doing too well when delegates were, as part of a cultural evening, invited to present something that represented their country (how does one depict meat pies, AFL, flies, vegemite, koalas, etc., and an “easy-going” multicultural society?). We did try to sing, “We are one, but we are many...”

From the report we made to B4L Board, the standouts were:

- The presence of the founders of 2 long-standing organisations both sending books used to establish libraries in schools in Lesotho
- The spirit in which we were welcomed
- One theme was, “Teamwork makes the Dream work”
- Sharing between the many parties represented with everyone trying to make the Summit worthwhile (which in our view was achieved), learning from each other (also achieved), fostering cooperation between the parties (developed further over the days) and working to improve in-school care and use of libraries (an on-going task)
- Visits to schools to view the different standards of libraries, the rooms (spaces) in which the libraries exist, the effort made by many teachers and schools to make the best of their library resource, the various methods schools have used to make shelving
- Visits to schools that highlighted the inadequacy in most cases of spaces used as a library, shelving, desks and seats to allow students to read in comfort let alone heating/cooling, for teacher training and dedication to a library, and a larger inventory of books
- Visit to school highlighted the reading ability of students selected to read to the visiting party. Some were able to read a book fluently, and with no inhibitions
- Being joined for 2 days by some 80+ teacher-librarians from Lesotho schools
- Sorting the un-loaded shipping container of boxes of books into the many schools assigned to receive them - joining some 40 people in a confined space to achieve this huge task in about 2 hours was amazing. We are pleased that B4L handles more manageable standard-sized boxes on pallets, and not by the container load!
- The Thursday evening dinner and “cultural celebration”. Yes, there was an attempt at an Australian presentation (what does one do to “represent” our culture?) which was nothing compared with any African offering. I won’t comment on the US effort other than to say they had a lot of people joining in! For all that, Oz and USA have great bonds of friendship) It was an hilarious and memorable evening
- Linking with key people for future developments, and linking them with the B4L partners.

ALP worked hard to make an impact in the community during the Summit, including media coverage. One newspaper report is reproduced below on page 6.



Left:
Thaba-Bosiu
Cultural Village



[Click here for a video of the main Summit gathering](#)



Above: ALP Founder, Chris Bradshaw, and
ALP Board Chair, Julie Freeman

Below: Teacher-Librarian group session



Above: Delegates queue for morning tea

Below: All in for the official photograph



Above: MOET storage warehouse; “Official opening” ready to start; Sorting into schools from the container load (MOET is the Ministry of Education and Training)

Visit with ALP Summit to Mosalalla Primary School



[Click here for video of image above](#)



[Click here for video of image above](#)

Visit with ALP Summit to Sekete Primary School



[Click here for video of image above](#)



[Click here for video of image above](#)

[Click here for video of image above](#)

Visit with ALP Summit to LECSA Lithabaneng Primary School (between 1,400 and 1,500 students)



[Click here for video image of above](#)



[Click here for a panoramic view of school assembly \(left\)](#)



[Click here \(left image\)](#)



[Click here \(right image\)](#)

We found books in this amazing library (LithabanengPS) from 3 donors, including Books for Lesotho



[Click here for brilliant reading!](#)

Last school visited as part of the ALP Summit was Tikoe Primary School



[Click here to access the above images and videos and many more insights into our fabulous visit to Lesotho](#)

NEWS 4 INFORMATIVE Tuesday 17 - 23 March 2020

ALP holds teacher-librarian training

Mosa Mojonothoane
MASERU

African Library Project (ALP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and Peace Corps, held a workshop and training for teachers and librarians on how to run a school library in commemoration of its 15th year anniversary.

ALP was founded by Chris Bradshaw in 2005, with her first library at Malealea, Mafeteng. Giving the background of the project, she says the idea was triggered by her son who wanted to read from the horse back while on a family trip at Malealea in 2004.

This then imposed research on how many people need to read at any place, but fail due to absence of books or close libraries. "A library is a lot more than just a book, we need space, shelves, books, a librarian and maybe a group of people dedicated to read," she said. She then went back to the United States (US), leaving one herd boy from Malealea with the assignment to create space with shelves. "This was the very first library of the project and this is what we have been doing all around the world, turn vacant spaces to small libraries," Bradshaw said.

According to her report, ALP currently has a total of 3035 libraries in 13 countries, with 535 in Lesotho alone. It has shipped about 3 billion books, reaching almost 3.5 million readers and has the

greatest record of 433 libraries built just in 2019. In an effort to encourage the gathered teacher-librarians, she shared stories of several volunteers who work tirelessly to collect books and raise funds for shipping to South Saharan countries, "behind these numbers, there's a couple of helplessness hours of meetings, phone calls, collecting books, selling of cookies and lemonades for raising funds for shipping to Africa".

Meanwhile, the review of progress and development of libraries in Lesotho is very promising according to Bradshaw. She mentioned that Lesotho launched the cultural library where there is a display of the traditional clothing, food, handicrafts and accessories in a small museum for promotion of culture. "You know that your culture is fading, so putting a culture corner somewhere in your library makes the children to have an understanding of their identity," Bradshaw said.

ALP Executive Director Robyn Speed, stipulated that for the past 15 years, ALP has been working hard to 'change lives, book by book'.

"we do that by starting and improving libraries all over Africa, and we have a special connection to Lesotho. Our work is to invest into the potential of our children and helping them to become live long readers, not only to transform their lives, but also the community". Speed urged the teachers to dedicatedly run their school libraries to also inspire their children. She highlighted that for the time spent at the training they should take important notes to go and improve their library skills.

Giving special thanks to ALP, from the Moet, Jobo Matsora who has been personally involved with the project since 2009 indicated that the books do change the lives of Basotho, making it need to extend the libraries across the country. He indicated that the ministry has trained about 200 teachers on running the library and is dedicated to continue supporting the project in any way possible.

One of the teachers from Linakaneng Primary in Mokhotlong "Maseala Seala, complemented the development of mini libraries in primary schools, which she said brings a great difference to the performance of pupils. "Before we had libraries, children were lazy to read or even listen, but currently, bit by bit, there is interest in some of them," she said, making a recommendation that for primary students, at least smaller books would motivate them to develop their reading skills. She pointed that readership has to be inspired also from the households, by parents to refine the foundation in education. The theme for the day was: "Together we can do more".

Conclusion from the ALP Summit: This was time well spent in meeting others especially people from Lesotho, learning that B4L and its partners do not work in Lesotho alone, that we share common objectives and the same problems, and that most of the books that are delivered are welcomed, highly prized and put to very good use.

Conclusion from our visit to Lesotho:

This was a very timely visit in many ways; meeting the B4L partners, TRC and RCoMa, attending the ALP Summit, visiting schools with TRC and ALP, unpacking the ALP container of boxes of books, meeting (as we always seem to do) amazing local people who are doing everything they can to better themselves and the people of Lesotho and usually both of these at the same time. Providing books to establish libraries in schools, institutions and communities continues to be a way in which Australia can support them and the students who will follow with the same ideals - ideals which we hope to see become reality for each person. Thank you for your support of the wonderful project - now in its 14th year and packing the 17th shipment.

David Linn, Chairman, Books for Lesotho Inc.

