



*Graduate School of Education  
Department of Library and Information Studies*

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South Africa

**Librarians and readers in South Africa's liberation struggle**

***Abstract***

It is more challenging to uncover how and why people read than what they read, or when and where they read. Times of political crisis and social change are productive contexts for examining these elusive features of reading, and South Africa during the apartheid era is a useful locale for investigating these features. In this paper I analyse the roles of professional and non-professional librarians who sourced, circulated, hid, and sometimes helped to produce banned reading materials, and who used their libraries as 'safe' spaces for readers to debate liberation strategies. I also explain how readers used these materials in clandestine reading networks. I conclude with a critical reflection on the range of methods I used to tell the stories of ordinary South Africans who confronted an authoritarian and racist regime.

***Biographical***

Archie Dick is a Full Professor in the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria. He previously taught at the University of the Western Cape, and the University of South Africa where he was also a Deputy Dean. From 2009 to 2011 he was Deputy Chairperson of the IFLA committee of Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression. From 2012 to 2014 he was the Chairperson of the National Council of Library and Information Services (NCLIS) in South Africa. His interest is the history of reading, and his most recent book is *The Hidden History of South Africa's Book and Reading Cultures* (University of Toronto Press, 2012). He has been a Visiting Professor at Wayne State University and the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Centre for the History of Print and Digital Culture.

**Monday, September 21, 2015, at 1:45 in 200G Baldy Hall**