

Theresa de Young works for South African Astronomical Observatory, a facility of the National Research Foundation, funded by the Department of Science and Technology. It is a special library that provides astronomers, engineers, technicians, students and other staff with a library service to support cutting edge scientific research.

Astronomers have always valued libraries and the library developed at the Observatory alongside that of astronomical research about 200 years ago. Theresa finds working for the SAAO fascinating, and is intrigued with the historical significance of the Observatory for scientific development as well as for Cape Town.

She is currently registered for a Masters in Philosophy (by dissertation only) at UCT, with her research interest being the development of the library alongside that of astronomy in South Africa.

Working for the SAAO is clearly a highlight in her career in terms of job satisfaction and personal interest.

Theresa's 20 plus year old career as a librarian started with at Valhalla Park Library as a library assistant followed by librarian in charge at Bonteheuwel and Nazeema Isaacs Library.

For Theresa, the highlight of her career working for the City of Cape Town was the 6 years she spent LIC, under the supervision of District Manager Dorothy Bothman, at Nazeema Isaacs Library in Makhaza, Khayelitsha.

It was here where she was instrumental in the establishment of [IkamvaYouth](#), an NGO for youth, started by youth. They assist learners with homework and studies after school in the library with the aim of opening up post-school opportunities for these learners. They worked very hard at establishing this NGO, even going as far as a fundraising trip to Singapore. Ikamva Youth is now a national NGO with branches in 5 provinces with over 1800 learners from grades 8-12 across 14 branches. The tutoring programme worked very well, and so they established other programmes to help the youth e.g. Mentoring, career guidance, e-literacy, HIV and Media, Image and Expression.

It was hugely due to this educational partnership that the Nazeema Isaacs Library won the Age of Hope Trophy from the Department of Arts, Culture and Sport for best community library in 2007 as well as Theresa receiving the LIASA Western Cape Branch Award for diligence and outstanding contribution to library services within the Western Cape also in 2007 and the IkamvaYouth Certificate of Excellence in Leadership.

And, although she enjoyed her time working as a public librarian, she changed focus, and moved from public librarianship to school librarianship, having been trained as a teacher as well as a librarian.

In 2007 she started working for the Western Cape Education Department as Coordinator: School Library Services, part of the EDULIS management team.

This was an extremely demanding and busy job, but offered very good support in terms of career development and she was given the opportunity to attend two IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) congresses in the 9 years that she worked there: Durban and Quebec. She also attended the LIASA conference every year.

One of her duties as school library coordinator was to join LIASA and revive the dying School Library and Youth Services Interest Group (SLYSIG) in the Western Cape. This ultimately led her to becoming chair of the national SLYSIG in 2012 and she was able to not only resurrect SLYSIG in the Western Cape, but also nationally. SLYSIG National has evolved into a very active Interest Group, with 3 national school library conferences under its belt between 2014 and 2018.

The IkamvaYouth project and the revival of SLYSIG had a direct influence on her receiving the prestigious National Librarian of the Year Award in 2013

Her current activities:

She is a member of its Board of Trustees of an Educational NGO, [The Bookery](#). The Bookery aims to start functional school libraries and is doing so very successfully.

She is also a member of the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS) since 2014. NCLIS is a statutory body that advises the ministers of Arts & Culture and the two ministers of Education on library related issues. NCLIS is currently working on the National Library Policy.

Theresa is still active on the LIASA structures as Treasurer for the Western Cape Branch and of SLYSIG National.

She is also a member of the LIASA Professional Body Board.

