



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**The Southern African Interlending Scheme (SAIS) as
Resource Sharing Network Between Libraries.**

To All Members of the Southern Inter-lending Scheme (SAIS)

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1. Introduction

Interlibrary Loans is a method of sharing resources among libraries. It enables libraries to borrow materials from other libraries on behalf of the patrons. If a library does not have a particular item, that library can request the item from another library that has the item. The requested item is then loaned to the patron through their local library.

2. What is resource sharing?

Resource sharing is a well-established and fundamental concept in the field of Library and Information Science. It is closely associated with library networking, which involves the interconnection of libraries to facilitate the efficient exchange of information, services, and resources among participating institutions. Through such networks, libraries can collaborate systematically to maximise access to information while minimising duplication of resources.

In the library context, resource sharing refers to the cooperative use, exchange, and provision of information resources and services, including books, journals, digital content, and expertise across different libraries. This collaboration may take various forms, such as interlibrary loans, shared catalogues, consortia agreements, and cooperative collection development. The primary objective is to ensure that users have access to information beyond the physical and digital holdings of their home library.

Resource sharing significantly enhances the capacity of libraries to meet user needs by extending the reach of their collections and improving service delivery. By enabling patrons to access a wider range of materials that may not be available locally, resource sharing promotes equity of access to information, supports research and lifelong learning, and strengthens the overall effectiveness and relevance of libraries in a knowledge-driven society.

3. Benefits of resource sharing among libraries

Resource sharing is essential for promoting equitable access to information, particularly for users served by smaller, rural, or under-resourced libraries that have limited collections or lack specialised materials. In the South African context, disparities in funding and infrastructure among public, school, and community libraries make resource sharing a vital mechanism for reducing information inequality and ensuring all users, regardless of location, can access relevant information for education, research, and personal development.

One of the primary benefits of resource sharing is the expanded access to information and resources available to library users. Through interlibrary loan (ILL) services, libraries can request and supply books, journals, theses, and other materials on behalf of their users. For example, a public library user in a rural province can access academic or specialised materials through ILL arrangements facilitated by provincial library services, the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), or nearby university libraries such as the University of South Africa (UNISA), the University of Pretoria, or Stellenbosch University. This significantly improves users' chances of finding the information they need, even when it is not held locally.

Resource sharing also contributes to significant cost savings for libraries. Rather than purchasing every requested item, many of which may be expensive or infrequently used, libraries can rely on borrowing through ILL networks. In South Africa, cooperative arrangements between the NLSA, academic libraries, and public library systems enable institutions to share resources efficiently, reducing duplication and maximising the use of existing collections. These cost-saving measures allow libraries to allocate limited budgets more strategically while still maintaining high-quality information services for their users.

4. SAIS as a resource-sharing network between libraries

The Southern African Interlending Scheme (SAIS) is the resource-sharing network between libraries in Southern Africa. NLSA and SABINET collaborate in this process of resource sharing between libraries. The NLSA is the national centre for interlending, being the administrator and coordinator of the interlending Scheme, with SABINET

providing the electronic platforms for interlending through OCLC WorldShare ILL and Tipasa.

Members of SAIS have access to the wealth of information resources of all participating libraries, including those from the rest of Africa, and resources from international suppliers. A library needs to be an active member of the scheme to do Inter-library loans with other SAIS member libraries. SAIS membership is also required when subscribing to SABINET OCLC WorldShare ILL.

SAIS membership entitles an institution to request and supply library material to and from other SAIS members, e.g., books and articles from newspapers, journals, etc. The requesting library is responsible for payment of items requested based on the standard national interlending tariffs issued by the National Library. There is an annual subscription fee for SAIS membership and for the Gauteng Regional Courier membership.

4.1. SAIS Administration

The National Library of South Africa, as the administrator, is responsible for the following: -

- a. SAIS registration and Library Code allocation.
- b. Administration of SAIS membership.
- c. Maintains an online database of SAIS members' contact details for effective resource sharing.

4.2. Gauteng Regional Courier Service

It is the courier service between two depots, the National Library of South Africa, Pretoria Campus, and the University of Witwatersrand, Wartenweiler Library.

Parcels are collected and delivered once a week on a Thursday between the two depots. Each participating library is allocated a parcel compartment in the courier room at both depots. Payment for the annual courier service subscription by participating libraries is required; if not paid, the service will be suspended.

4.3. Update details on SAIS online database

SAIS Online is an address list database with all the contact details that libraries normally receive in their annual address list updates. Each library can view the full data content of SAIS member records and edit its own record online. Access to the database is facilitated by a secure password. If the library does not have a password, a request must be made through an e-mail: docdel@nlsa.ac.za

The URL to access the SAIS online database is:

<http://databases.nlsa.ac.za/dbtw-wpd/textbase/SAISWEB/search.html>

It is important for libraries to update their contact details regularly to improve communication between participating libraries. Libraries are encouraged to update their details to ensure that parcels are delivered to the correct addresses and to reduce the amount of undelivered mail.

5. Reference

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