

Good afternoon Everyone - All protocols observed.

Thank you very much, Rachel, for your kind introduction. I am absolutely delighted to be the recipient of the prestigious SALI TRUST - LIASA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD for this year. *(Showed the plaque and certificate here).*

It is indeed a wonderful honour to be here today, and to join the distinguished library giants who have received this award before me, namely, Prof. John Willemse, Prof. Seth Manaka, the late Ms Clare Walker, and Mr. John Tsebe.

I want to begin by thanking those responsible for establishing the SALI Trust in 1998 to develop librarianship and information services, and for creating this special award to acknowledge dedicated and long-serving librarians.

I want to thank the Awards Committee and Selection Team for considering me for this award, and for the generous monetary award, certificate and plaque that is part of this award.

I am extremely grateful to Shirlene Neerputh, Library Director at the University of the Western Cape, for nominating me for this award. Thank you so much.

I also want to thank Stephen Wyber from IFLA and Teresa Hackett from EIFL who kindly provided testimonials in support of the nomination. I have worked with Teresa and Stephen for many years, and really appreciate all the assistance and support they and their colleagues have given me in my long career, and in particular, with regard to the copyright reforms over the past 6 years.

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As I think about my library career, there are 6 aspects that stand out for me as key to my success as a professional and specialist librarian, but also in my personal development.

1. Institutional Support: I acknowledge and thank my employer for nearly 38 years, Wits University, one of the top universities in South Africa and Africa. Wits enabled me to use my initiative, and gave me the flexibility to grow and enhance the various posts that I held in the Wits Library. Wits enabled me to develop professionally in specialist positions and to make a positive contribution not only to the staff and students at Wits, but more widely in South Africa and further afield. From an extremely shy person when I started in 1983, I gained

confidence and became an extrovert and a public speaker. Believe it or not, when I was in matric, I was invited to do a Speech course but I declined, because I was too shy to speak in front of others. My first public presentation at Wits was about the copyright proposals in 1998. My audience was the Vice-Chancellors from all the public universities. I was thrown in the deep-end and had to grab my water-wings and swim fast!! This gave me the confidence and motivation to become pro-active, and an activist for access to knowledge, open access, and more balanced copyright laws.

2. Professional Support: I want to thank LIASA, my professional body, especially for recognising my passion and dedication as a librarian, and for first nominating me to become a member of the IFLA Committee on Copyright and Other Legal Matters (CLM) back in 2002. This opened the door to international copyright issues and enabled me to serve a number of terms on CLM, and to be a member of its Advisory Board, and currently, an expert advisor. This also gave me the opportunity to travel, present at conferences around the world and to meet the most amazing people.

LIASA provided the framework for me to become involved in international copyright work through IFLA, EIFL and more recently through AFLIA, as Chair of its newly established Copyright and Legal Matters Working Group. LIASA has also acknowledged my work in the past, through the Academic Librarian of the Year Award in 2001 and the Librarian of the Year Award in 2010, which gave me the incentive to work harder, and continue to make a difference.

I also want to acknowledge the support I received from CHELSEA over the years, especially around the Copyright Amendment Bill, and for making submissions to Parliament. Again, I want to thank Shirlene, as chair of CHELSA, for making it possible for me to receive this award today. Much appreciated.

3. - Spiritual Trust and Dedication: In 1998 and 2000 I led Copyright Task Teams, mandated by the SA Vice Chancellor's Association and the Committee of Technikon Principals at the time, which successfully stopped more restrictive copyright amendments being passed. I realised that it took spiritual trust, dedication, determination, and hard work to achieve goals in the legislative arena - - especially for a librarian without a law degree at that time. It was a difficult and often, a very lonely path. These Teams succeeded in stopping more restrictive copyright laws being passed. This also encouraged me to contact our Department of International Relations' Chief Negotiator, Mr. Xavier Carim, at the time, to challenge the TRIPS-Plus IP Chapter in the US Free Trade Agreement with SA and 4 other neighbouring countries in 2006. Thankfully, SA and the

other SACU countries declined to sign the US FTA. My passion for better access to knowledge and more balanced copyright laws kept me going. As author, Napoleon Hill said: ***“Victory Is always possible for the person who refuses to stop fighting”***.

I acknowledge all the people I worked with then and those who have assisted and encouraged me throughout my career. There are too many to mention but thanks to them all. There were times when I felt like throwing in the towel, but their support and encouragement gave me the strength to persevere.

I also acknowledge Prof. Tana Pistorius, formerly of Unisa Law Faculty, for encouraging me to study further. At the age of 57, I graduated with my Master of Laws from Wits - Better late than never!

4 - Collaborative Networking: What I learnt along my very interesting and challenging career is that the way to achieve goals is to engage in collaborative networking with positive people around the world. During my travels and attendances at conferences in many countries, and sponsored by many generous funders, I have met the most incredible people, many who have become friends today. As a result of my online information service which reached over 10 000 people by the time that I retired from Wits in 2020, I have contacts in so many countries in Africa and around the world. Many IFLA Conferences and three EIFL conferences also gave me the opportunity to meet up with many of them and to share experiences and learn from them.

5 - Professionalism and Service: What has been a guiding principle in my career is professionalism and service. My motto has always been ***“Do not let anyone walk away without providing some assistance to them. Even the slightest help is better than no help”***. I earned the reputation at Wits and beyond that if you want something done or a question answered, ***“try Denise first. She never says no”***.

I also believe that everyone deserves kindness and good service, no matter who they are or what their status is. I was truly humbled and touched by our library messenger’s farewell message to me on retiring from Wits last year. He said: ***“Denise, we are going to miss you very much. We are very proud of you. You are one of the few people who always greeted and cared for the lower ranked staff. We appreciate that very much. You were the Oxygen we breathed in the Library”***. Wow, this is the most heart-warming compliment I have ever received.

6 - Family Support: Last but by no means least, I owe very special thanks to my husband of nearly 35 years, Clive, and my son, Brendan, and daughter, Lauren. They have provided support to me throughout my career and have encouraged me in every step I took along the way. They tolerated the many hours into the night when I was working on copyright issues, or listened to me practising my presentations. Many a time, they got tired of hearing the word “copyright”. They kept the home going whilst I was attending conferences and meetings abroad to promote access to knowledge and balanced copyright laws. I love you guys!

In conclusion, I want to thank **all of you** for attending today’s award ceremony. For me, it is indeed a great honour and very humbling too. Without your support, encouragement, and friendship, I would not be receiving this award today. I am very grateful to you all and will treasure this experience and award for many years to come.

Thank you so much

(Denise Nicholson’s online acceptance speech on receipt of SALI-TRUST – LIASA Lifetime Achievement Award on 29 September 2021)