



**Sint Maarten Library**  
**Walter J.A. Nisbeth Road # 3**  
**Philipsburg Sint Maarten**

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## Introduction

Our esteemed users,

As we present the 2024 Annual Report, I reflect with deep gratitude on how far our community has come. Sint Maarten has weathered many storms—literal and figurative—but through it all, we remain anchored by hope, unity, and a belief in the power of learning. As former Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs once said after Hurricane Irma, “We stood together, united by a shared determination to rebuild.” That spirit continues to guide us.

Our library, long a symbol of resilience, has grown stronger through adversity. Though our building was seriously damaged in 2017, we never stopped serving. Thanks to volunteers, donors, and dedicated partners, we’ve brought books and learning directly into neighborhoods and schools.

This year, we launched the first-ever Reading Festival, hosted vibrant community story events, and expanded early literacy through Read-to-Me, now reaching 24 daycare centers. In a meaningful step forward, we also extended free library membership to all children and teens up to 18 years old—removing one more barrier to access, so every young mind has the chance to grow.

We embraced a new name—Sint Maarten Library—a reminder that this institution belongs to all of us. Together with the government, NGOs, educators, and citizens, we are shaping a future where learning is for everyone.

To our staff, partners, and every reader: thank you. Your belief in this library fuels everything we do. As the World Bank reminds us, investing in learning spaces strengthens a nation's human capital—and that’s exactly our mission.

With gratitude and hope,

Joseanne Peterson  
Chairlady, Sint Maarten Library

## Aims and objectives

The St. Maarten Library started operations in 1923 and was later established on September 27th, 1974, as a foundation. Under the articles of incorporation, some of its key aims and objectives are to:

- Provide a balanced and up-to-date collection of books and e-books.
- Build capacity for literacy, education, and technology.
- Maintain and preserve books, materials, and resources with historical, cultural, social, economic, and archival value and other related materials in an organized collection to provide members of the community with these materials and enrich their personal and professional lives.
- Provide materials that will stimulate student's acquisition of factual knowledge and the development of literary appreciation.
- Lead the community in impactful civic engagement and facilitate connections among diverse audiences.
- Contribute to the well-being and success of its staff.

## Vision and mission

### Vision

The St. Maarten Library's ultimate vision is to be a gateway for information in Sint Maarten and to be the welcoming heart of our community, where all come to learn, explore, discover, create, and connect by:

- promoting valuable customer service through a motivated, knowledgeable, and friendly staff,
- connecting with the needs of a growing and diverse community,
- developing strong community ties through programming and activities
- Offering training, workshops, and access to evolving technology.

### Mission

Sint Maarten Library's ultimate mission is to strive to promote a lifelong love for reading, learning, and literacy, through quality literature activities and by providing a safe environment for a cross-section of target groups in our society by:

- investing in book collections conducive to intellectual growth and creativity,
- facilitating access to information resources
- teaching the effective use of information resources and critical evaluation skills
- Offering research assistance.

The Sint Maarten Library Board and management's aim is to accomplish its mission and vision through core values such as:

- Exercising responsible stewardship in support of the library's goals and objectives.
- Being good stewards of the St. Maarten Library's assets, finances, and material resources.

- Employing a collaborative, creative, and positive staff focused on library users' interests and needs.
- Providing a warm and welcoming place for community members to gather.
- Actively participating and contributing to community life.
- Ensuring equal and equitable access to library materials.
- Protecting the confidentiality of library patron records

## Organizational structure

In the present constellation, the governance structure of the Sint Maarten Library consists of a managing board. In accordance with Article 5.1, the board manages the articles of incorporation and the foundation. As per January 1, 2024, the board consist of:

### **Board members per January 1, 2024**

- Ms. S. Leon, president;
- Ms. J. Peterson, Treasurer
- Ms. D. Richardson-Caprino, secretary
- Ms. E. Evans, Member

In the recruitment process, February 2024 the board appointed as a commissioner of the board:  
D. Richardson

### **Loss Announcement:**

As part of the recruitment process in February 2023, the board appointed Dorothy Richardson as a commissioner. Sadly, on March 31, 2024, the library board and staff received the heartbreaking news of the passing of Commissioner Dorothy Richardson. Dorothy was a dedicated and integral member of our organization. As a passionate advocate for education, she made invaluable contributions to the growth and development of our library. Her absence will be deeply felt by everyone whose lives she touched.

### **Governance**

From the above-mentioned date until December 31, 2024, this is the composition of the board

- Ms. S. Leon, president;
- Ms. J. Peterson, Treasurer
- Mrs. D. Richardson-Caprino, secretary
- Ms. E. Evans, Member

On December 31, 2024 Ms. S. Leon, President resigned from the board.

## **Management of Operations**

### **Restructuring Initiative and General Manager Appointment**

In alignment with the articles of incorporation, the Sint Maarten Library Board implemented a restructuring initiative, redefining the traditional role of library director into that of a general manager. This position is tasked with overseeing library operations in accordance with the board's directives.

In 2024, the Sint Maarten Library Board successfully recruited and appointed a general manager to fill this position:

- **Mr. Marc Marshall**, General Manager (effective March 1, 2024), has assumed responsibility for managing the operations of the Sint Maarten Library.

During the year under review, the composition of staff members remained unchanged.

### **Management and staff**

- Marc Marshall, General Manager per March 1, 2024.
- Mrs. I. Hughes, Manager of Information service, is an HR officer.
- Ms. S. Richardson, Secretary/Coordinator, Head of Acquisition/Circulation Desk Supervisor.
- Ms. J. Lambert, Finance officer, General Librarian
- Ms. M. Powell, PR Officer, & Activity Coordinator /Children & Youth Librarian,.
- Mrs. F. Housen, System Administrator/Media coach
- Ms. M. Spencer, Circulation Clerk.
- Mr. D. Helligar, Facility and IT Support.
- Mr. L. Chintaman, security officer.

## **General Services**

### **Services**

The regular services include borrowing and returning books, new membership applications and renewals, assistance with the digital library membership, provision of a facility to read local newspapers and magazines, computer use access, research services, workshops, and other literacy development-based events.

### **Opening hours**

*PJL-ARB Main Library (Philipsburg)*

Monday to Friday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Saturday: 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

*PJL-HSCS Satellite (Cay Hill)*

Monday to Friday: 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm

Thursday morning: 8:00 am to 12:00 am

*PJL-BELL Satellite (Belvedere)*

Monday to Friday: 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm

Wednesday morning: 8:00 am to 12:00 pm

Note: Accessibility to the digital library service is 24 hours per day (Libby App and Royal Library App).

### **Circulation Desk**

The service point for all branches of the Sint Maarten Library is to register to become new members, obtain materials, and return materials. The circulation desk clerks are readily available to assist patrons and visitors with renewals of materials, receiving payments of fines or other charges, and paying subscriptions for teens and adults.

The number of Checkouts for 2024 for the three locations are listed in the table below:

Location	Period: January 2024 – December 2024
ARB	6515
Belvedere	707
Cay Hill	1917
KB	302
Libby	360

#### **Incentives:**

##### **Grace period:**

In 2024, the library offered two grace periods for patrons. The first amnesty took place in April as a special initiative for Carnival, lasting one month. The second grace period, an annual tradition, was granted at the end of the school term in June and July, just before the summer vacation. As in previous years, no penalties were issued, and no questions were asked.

##### **Member & Visitors**

The recorded number of members for 2023 is 12,295. The recorded number of visitors in 2024 was 5,980. The most frequent visitors to the Sint Maarten Library that year were primary school children and Young Adults. Fortunately, through organizing and facilitating school visits, campaigns, and senior workshops, they contributed to an increase in library visits.

As of March 2025, the Sint Maarten Library is offering, “free membership for teenagers aged 13 to 18”, effective retroactively from March 1, 2024. Teenagers within this age range are no longer required to pay membership fees to borrow books and access library resources.

This initiative aims to promote literacy and foster a culture of reading by removing financial barriers, enhancing accessibility, and expanding the library's digital and physical offerings.

There are key features of “Free Membership for Teenagers”:

- **Eligibility:** All individuals under the age of 18 are eligible for free library membership. This initiative eliminates financial obstacles that might otherwise limit access to essential reading materials.
- **Streamlined Enrollment Process:** Teenagers can easily enroll for a complimentary membership card by visiting any library location. The card provides full borrowing privileges across all collections.
- **Access to Comprehensive Resources:** Members can explore physical materials at three convenient library locations: Philipsburg, Cay Hill, and Belvedere. Additionally, they gain access to expanded digital resources, including the OverDrive Libby App and the Royal Library of the Netherlands (KB), which offer a diverse selection of multilingual eBooks to cater to varied reading preferences.

The Sint Maarten Library is committed to creating a positive, inclusive reading environment that inspires exploration, learning, and personal growth through the power of literature.

### **Information Desk**

The Sint Maarten Library's multi-functional Information Desk serves as a central hub for patrons and visitors, offering assistance with the library's full range of services. These include access to *Libby* and the Royal Online Library, support for research and school assignments, and special book requests. To enhance accessibility, the Sint Maarten Library has also extended its services to handle informational inquiries via email.

Functioning as a reference service counter, the Information Desk is staffed by professional librarians who provide guidance, direct users to relevant materials within the library's collection, and facilitate access to a variety of information resources tailored to individual needs.

The Sint Maarten Library employs the SISO Classification System, formerly used in the Netherlands, which is based on the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) concept widely utilized in libraries worldwide. Each resource is assigned a call number that indicates its specific location within the system. Additionally, librarians provide explanations and guidance on accessing e-books through the Libby/KB (Koninklijke Bibliotheek) platform, encouraging library patrons to explore digital resources.

To ensure the collection remains current and up-to-date, the library continually acquires new materials while welcoming specific inquiries from patrons. Users can reserve materials either through a librarian or via our online reservation service available on our website. Furthermore, documentation files and newspaper clippings provide valuable insights into Sint Maarten's historical and contemporary landscape, supplementing information that may not always be found in books.

### **Cataloging**

Expanding Access, One Book at a Time: 2024 Library Cataloging Milestone. In a year marked by growth and dedication, the library team achieved a significant milestone in 2024. From January through December, nine hundred seventy two books. The librarians meticulously cataloged the aforementioned books with official classification codes and placed them into circulation.

Behind each cataloged title is a team of committed librarians working diligently to ensure that new knowledge and diverse stories are made accessible to the community. Whether it is a newly published novel, a research-worthy academic text, or a long-awaited addition to a favorite series, every book added strengthens the library's mission of lifelong learning and literacy.

This effort reflects more than just numbers—it is a testament to the library's evolving role as a dynamic hub for information, inspiration, and connection. As we look ahead, the library remains committed to expanding its collection, embracing innovation, and serving readers of all ages and interests. Here is to another year of growth, discovery, and the joy of reading.

### **Sint Maarten Collection:**

The Sint Maarten collection is a unique collection consisting of books about St. Maarten and books written by Sint Maarteners. The oldest books date from 1,865. A collection of historical documentaries about our island is also part of the collection. After the destruction of the library building, the Government temporarily housed the St. Maarten collection in the historical archive at the Administration Building in November 2017.

### Training and support

The library has also offered specific services, such as training and support, to the sister libraries of Saba and Sint Eustatius since 2014, which comprise annual assistance with statistics and reporting. In addition, our collection includes the Sint Maarten National Heritage Foundation (the museum), St. Martin University, Gertude Judson Bicennial Public Library – St. Eustatius, and Queen Wilhelmina Library in Saba.

### Books

#### *Books at ARB-HCS-BELSAT*

The number of books at the three locations in 2024

Location	Period	Period
ARB	Per January 1, 2024 <b>9.101</b>	Per December 31, 2024 <b>9.306</b>
HSCS	Per February 1, 2024 <b>4.616</b>	Per December 31, 2024 <b>4.958</b>
BELSAT	Per July - 2024 <b>3.156</b>	Per December 31, 2024 <b>3.452</b>

### Statistics

#### *E-book status*

In January 2025, there were about 3.130 e-books available, including books for toddlers, exams, and adults. On December 31, 2024, there were 3200+ e-books available on Libby.

### Public computers and Wi-Fi services

Similar to past years, the library provides public computers and complimentary Wi-Fi access for all visitors. The library's technical team manages these computers, and library staff members are on hand to aid users with any computer-related inquiries. Currently, there are four desktop computers accessible for use by the public.

### Caribbean author's collection

This collection is displayed with subject classification labels featuring a palm tree symbol and the abbreviation for the Caribbean, such as CAR. Users utilize the Caribbean books found throughout various collections on a daily basis.

### African diaspora collection

Since 2014, Mary Romney-Schaab has provided books for the collection named after her parents, ***The Lionel and Alice Romney African Diaspora Collection***. This developing collection highlights the experiences, identity, culture, and journey of the African diaspora, emphasizing its hardships, contributions, and accomplishments, both past and present.

## Library Services and Community Engagement Activities

### 1. **Core Library Services**

Activities and initiatives within the library's primary scope aimed at serving and benefiting the community.

### 2. **Themed Community Programs**

Specialized events and activities organized by library staff, designed around specific themes or topics to engage and educate the community.

### 3. **Collaborative Special Events**

Exclusive events hosted by the library in partnership with external NGOs and organizations, aimed at enhancing community involvement and collaboration.

### 4. **Condolences and Tributes for Library Services**

A service that lets community members honor loved ones by donating books or making contributions, with options for memorial displays or personalized acknowledgments.

### **Core Library Services:**

Virtual Story Time on Facebook:

In 2024, the library continued its virtual storytime program, *It's Time for a Story*, which features pre-recorded sessions aired on various days. The program is divided into two categories.

**"Raising Readers"** for children ages 0-5, broadcast on Wednesdays, and **"Creating Readers"** for children ages 6-12, including teenagers, aired on Saturdays. Each month, there are two segments per category, totaling four sessions each.

This year's **"Creating Readers"** segment features special guest appearances from distinguished authors and community readers from local, regional, and international locations, including New York (USA), the Netherlands, and Sint Maarten. Some of the featured guests include:

- **D'Chano Helligar** (Sint Maarten – Netherlands)
- **Kiron Nicholson** (Antigua)
- **Heddrick McBride** (New York, USA)
- **Skylar McBride** (New York, USA)
- **Ange Jessurun** (Curaçao, Suriname – Netherlands)
- **Robert Romney** (St. Martin – Guadeloupe)

In 2024, the "Raising Readers" program recorded 1.475 views, while "Creating Readers" reached 1.941 views. Under the leadership of Ms. M. Spencer and Librarian Ms. M. Powell, these virtual storytime initiatives have operated year-round since their launch in 2020. Designed to inspire young minds, the programs offer age-appropriate, educational storytelling experiences that foster imagination, encourage active reading, and broaden children's understanding.

### **Themed Community Programs; Calendar of Events & Activities**

Since 2020, we have organized our programs and events around four key themes: *Literacy Development*, *Cultural Enrichment*, *Personal Growth*, and *Social Engagement*. Most theme-related activities are scheduled to run for a month, while the library also may extend some themes over two or more months.

Depending on the themes selected, either specific groups or the entire staff may participate in executing these programs or projects.

To ensure effective leadership and accountability, a designated coordinator oversees each themed activity. Every participating group must compile a project file outlining the proposed monthly activities, including a budget projection, for approval by the project manager, director, and ultimately the board. Upon final approval, the program or project proceeds as planned. Since 2023, the organization has centralized activities instead of executing them in clusters. However, in 2024, all staff members successfully implemented and carried out only two of the aforementioned activities.

### Activity overview 2024

**Activity:** Black History Month

**Objective:** To heighten awareness of Local, Caribbean, and African legacies and accomplishments over the centuries.

**Timeline:** February 2024.

The "Legacy Reads" program, part of Sint Maarten's Black History Month Observance 2024, celebrated local literary achievements while fostering cultural appreciation. By emphasizing storytelling, it aimed to inspire the younger generations and highlight local writers' contributions beyond traditional narratives of oppression. The Sint Maarten Library reinforced its role in preserving the island's heritage through this initiative. Held virtually, the event reached 172,231 individuals and recorded 176,266 views. From February 16 to 29, 2024, ten local authors shared daily readings on social media, offering a literary tribute to Black history and cultural identity under the theme "Legacy Reads."

Drs. Linda A. Richardson – *Trilingual Terminology in Criminal Proceedings: Dutch/English/Spanish*

Leon Antoine Noel – *The Old House* from *Rhythm 'n' Sparks: A Collection of Poems* (2018)

Tamara Groeneveldt – *Love, Peace, and Hair Grease & After the Storm*

Joycelyn R. Hanley – *It's Who I Am* from *Beneath the Surface* (2019)

Fabian A. Badejo – *We Are Here, Still!* from *Season of Storms* (2018)

Clara Reyes – *Songs* from *Spitfire, the Lohkay Story* (2023), celebrating Sint Maarten's emancipation

Tamara Leonard – *My Fruits of the Spirit Coloring Book*

Louie Laveist – *Scene 4* from *The House That Jack Built*

Lysanne Charles – *Then Let Me Be Brave!* from *HER(E)*

Roland M. Joe (Ras Bushman) – *Edification Time*

Special recognition was given to Sint Maarten Vocational Training School (SMVTS) **students** for their contributions: Aramik Milton (promotional materials), Syesha Alicunmes (exhibition setup), and Joshua Paul (appreciation certificates).

The event also featured a musical tribute by Quon Gordon, who performed *One Love* (Bob Marley) and *Can You Stand the Rain* (New Edition), adding an emotional touch to the celebration.

The Sint Maarten Library's Black History Month 2024: "Passing on Our Legacy... LEGACY READS" successfully promoted the island's cultural heritage through literature, strengthening community ties and preserving traditions.

**Activity: Cyber Seniors**

**Objective:** Bridging the technological gap and connecting generations through technology.

**Period:** February – November

The Sint Maarten Library’s Cyber Senior Program, “*Tech-Savvy Seniors: Transforming Lives Through Digital Empowerment*”, ran from February to December 2024, providing personalized technology training for seniors aged 60 and above. Held at the Belvedere Library, the program catered to both beginners and advanced users, bridging the digital divide, empowering seniors to adapt to the digital age, and reducing social isolation. Media coaches Ms. F. Housen, Ms. J. Lambert, Mr. D. Helligar, and Ms. M. Spencer led the initiative. The program offered free training while encouraging participants to consider library membership for access to additional resources.

**Key Learning Outcomes**

Participants received personalized training on a range of essential digital skills, including:

- Computer Basics – Navigation, troubleshooting, and system familiarity.
- Online Safety – Strategies for secure internet usage.
- E-Banking & Online Transactions – Conducted in partnership with Windward Islands Bank (WIB) to facilitate secure banking practices.
- SZV Social Health Insurances: Online Appointments & Portal – Training on SZV’s self-service portal, including AOV benefits, pension updates, and health and wellness resources.
- St. Maarten Laboratory Services (SLS) – Guidance on navigating patient health records through SLS portals.
- Special Tax-Filing Workshop – Led by a former Cyber Senior graduate with expertise from the Sint Maarten Tax Administration Office.
- E-Books & Digital Collections – Instructions on accessing over 3,000 digital books via the Overdrive Libby App and the National Library of the Netherlands.
- WhatsApp Messenger App – Introduction to messaging and video calling, with a focus on security and safe usage.
- Online Government Services – Public Service Center – Training on booking online government appointments.

At the conclusion of the program, 20 senior participants received certificates of achievement, presented by their instructors. The program was recognized for its transformative impact, equipping seniors with essential digital skills to enhance their independence and engagement in an increasingly online world.

The Cyber Senior Program 2024 successfully empowered 20 seniors, equipping them with essential technological skills to improve their independence, connectivity, and confidence in using digital tools. Looking ahead, the Sint Maarten Library remains committed to expanding its senior-focused digital literacy initiatives, fostering lifelong learning and promoting safe and effective technology use.

As technology evolves, the library continues to educate senior citizens on its benefits while ensuring safe and informed usage. The Cyber Seniors program is held every Tuesday and Friday, providing ongoing support for seniors on their digital journey.



### Themed Community Programs

#### Book Distribution:

Objective: Commemorating and reflecting on World War II.

Period: April 2024

#### Annual Circulation of the Caribbean Think Book for 4 and 5 May/Caribisch Denkboek voor 4 en 5 mei

The Sint Maarten Library annually circulates the *Caribbean Think Books* on May 4 and 5 in preparation for Memorial and Liberation Day, on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean countries. These books are designed to commemorate and reflect on the impact of World War II. In 2024, the library received two batches of books to be distributed over the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school terms. However, this will be the final year of distribution, as funding for printing is no longer available.

The latest edition, *Caribbean Thinking Book 2024*, has been specifically tailored for students aged 10–12. Carolien Keun translated the book into English, allowing students on Sint Maarten to engage with the content in their language of choice—English or Dutch. The book is also suitable for first- and second-year secondary education students. Featuring compelling stories and captivating photographs, this educational resource encourages students to reflect on the significance of peace and freedom in contemporary society.

Since 2018, the *Nationale Comité* has individually provided educational materials to students each January, ensuring that every student receives a personal copy of the book. Additionally, workshops have been conducted for instructors, equipping them with the necessary tools to introduce local history and highlight the Dutch Caribbean's role during World War II.

Assigned staff members, Mr. D. Helligar and librarian Ms. M. Powell, facilitated the distribution of over 1700 copies of the new edition to schools. This initiative serves as both a precursor and a preparation for the National Observance commemorating the liberation from Nazi occupation.



### Career Fair:

#### Sint Maarten Library Participates in the 2024 Sint Maarten Vocational Training School Career Fair – "Build Bridges and Benefit"

Objective: Giving back to the community.

Period: February

Each year in February, the Sint Maarten Library actively participates in the Sint Maarten Vocational Training School's Career Fair. In 2024, under the theme *"Build Bridges and Benefit,"* the library once again engaged with students, highlighting the importance of literacy and lifelong learning in shaping their future careers. Librarian Ms. M. Powell attended the event and provided students with valuable insights into pursuing a career in library science. Her presentation focused on the necessary academic path and steps required to become a librarian, offering guidance to those considering this profession.

The career fair aimed to expose students to various career paths and educational opportunities. As part of this initiative, the presentation emphasized the educational journey required for a career in library science, including the importance of obtaining a high school diploma, pursuing tertiary education, and exploring regional and international institutions that offer library science programs. This information was delivered through an engaging PowerPoint presentation, followed by an interactive Q&A session. Additionally, students were informed about the benefits of pursuing a career as a librarian, the vital role libraries play in serving the community, and the numerous programs and services libraries offer to enhance societal development. The session also highlighted how librarians contribute to community engagement and national progress through their work.

The Sint Maarten Library's participation in the career fair successfully raised awareness about the librarian profession, inspiring students to consider it as a potential career path.

## Summer Program

Objective: Facilitates Educational Excursions - Giving back to the community.

Period: July

The Sint Maarten Library organized an educational excursion as part of the Creative Learning Disney Camp, focusing on the theme "Anything Disney" to teach children (ages 2-10) about sharing. The event combined literacy promotion with interactive activities which fosters literacy and providing educational experiences for the community

Twenty – six youngsters received an age appropriate personalized brief introduction based on library services followed by a guided tour. A Sesame Street video clip (YouTube) featuring Cookie Monster to learn about proper library behavior. In addition, it combines storytelling, creativity, and multimedia to teach the importance of sharing while promoting literacy and library engagement. watched *All Dogs Go to Heaven: What's Yours is Mine* to reinforce the theme of sharing and participated in related coloring activities.

In keeping with the aforementioned theme, the group were engaged in a reading promotional session featuring books focused on the theme. The following literary material was used and read to the youngsters based on their age levels, followed by complementary activities of teaching teamwork and unity worked together to achieve their goals by writing poems, quotes that indicated the true meaning of sharing.

- **Ages 2-6:** Read *Me Too!* by Mercer Mayer and created a shared painting.
- **Ages 7-8:** Read *The Enormous Turnip* by Katie Daynes and made artwork symbolizing teamwork.
- **Ages 9-10:** Read *I CAN: Make A Difference* by Mariam Laundry, then decorated a poster with poems and quotes about sharing.

This educational excursion emphasized the Sint Maarten Library's dedication to fostering literacy and providing enriching experiences for children. By incorporating storytelling, art, and multimedia elements, the program successfully engaged young learners and reinforced the importance of sharing in an enjoyable and meaningful way. Through such initiatives, the library continues to play a vital role in promoting literacy and lifelong learning within the community.

## School-Based Assignment - Internship and Community – Based Learning

- Work Experience Program
- Community Based Learning Experience

Period: January – December

Each year, the Sint Maarten Library provides students with valuable hands-on work experience and community-based learning opportunities, bridging the gap between classroom education and real-world skills. In 2024, interns received personalized training from dedicated staff, gaining essential library-related expertise along with professional work ethics in administration, customer service, and reception. This practical experience actively prepares students for future career opportunities and reinforces skills that textbooks alone cannot fully develop.

As part of the continuation of the 2023–2024 school term, three students from the Sint Maarten Vocational Training School participated in a six-month internship at the Sint Maarten Library. These students—Aramik Milton, Syesha Alicunmes, and Joshua Paul—interned one day per week (Wednesdays) for eight hours each day and successfully completed their internship by April 2024.

Milton Peters College (MPC) Work Experience Program (WEP) : VSBO PKL/PBL student RyAngel Bryson interned for one month during April 2024, successfully completing the Work Experience Program (WEP).

As part of St. Dominic High School - Community Based Learning Program (CBLP)'s third-year program, the following students participated in the Community-Based Learning Program:

Jada Benfield – Completed 60 hours; Jaden Gumbes, Ruixin Nie, Weihao Wu, and Dhriti Ramani – Successfully completed 20 hours each.

The Sint Maarten Library's core focus is books, and its internship program provides students with practical experience in library science. Interns gain an in-depth understanding of the day-to-day functions of a library, including: The journey of books before they arrive on the shelf (ordering, cataloging, labeling, laminating, and shelving) Administrative tasks and customer service ;Assisting patrons with inquiries and research support.

This comprehensive training equips interns with the knowledge and skills necessary to enhance their professional development and prepare them for future employment opportunities.

## Special events and celebrations

**Period: January**

**Celebrating 25 Years of Service**

**A Reflection on the Milestones and Contributions of Mariland Powell**

On Thursday, January 11, 2024, the Sint Maarten Library proudly celebrated a remarkable milestone—25 years of dedicated service by Ms. Mariland Powell, Youth Librarian, Public Relations Officer, and Activity Coordinator. Her career reflects unwavering commitment, innovation, and passion for library service and community engagement. Since joining the Sint Maarten Library—formerly the Philipsburg Jubilee Library Foundation—in 1999, Mariland has played a pivotal role in shaping the institution's public image and expanding its services. Over the past two and a half decades, she has served the community in multiple capacities, including as a librarian with a focus on youth and children, as well as adults, and as the library's Public Relations Officer and Activity Coordinator.

**Career Milestones**

Mariland's professional journey has been marked by continuous growth and impactful contributions. From 2006 to 2008, she pursued further education at the GO-Opleiding School for Information in the Netherlands, where she earned her diploma as an *Informatiedienstverlener*. During this time, she also gained valuable experience at the Central Library in The Hague.



From 2009 to 2011, she served as the library’s Public Relations Officer, expanding her role to include media relations, event planning, and the promotion of library programs. In 2015, her responsibilities broadened further, encompassing activity coordination, storytelling, and reading consultancy—solidifying her as a vital pillar of the library’s mission.

Mariland’s role in enhancing the visibility of the Sint Maarten Library and fostering community engagement has remained at the heart of her service. Her efforts have helped strengthen ties between the library and the public, including both local residents and international visitors.

### Key Contributions

As Public Relations Officer, Mariland has successfully led initiatives to promote library resources and activities through press releases, media tours, and social media outreach. She has also been instrumental in organizing numerous outreach events that bring the library closer to the community.

In her role as librarian, she has curated age-appropriate materials, improved customer service, and provided research support to patrons. Her expertise in cataloging is bolstered by specialized training in systems such as Koha, the SISO classification system for public libraries, and the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) for educational settings.

Notably, in 2014–2015, she earned certification through an advanced cataloging course offered by the Sint Maarten Library in collaboration with the American Library Association, hosted by the San Jose State University School of Information. Her training played a vital role in helping set up the library at the University of Sint Maarten.

Mariland has been a champion for literacy and lifelong learning, leading programs across age groups including:

- *SXM Reads* (for functional readers)
- *Readers Are Leaders* and *Reading Freaks Me Out* (for teenagers)
- *Story Time* (for young children)
- *The Power of Knowledge* (a town hall series for adults)

Since 2010, she has also spearheaded the *Read to Me: Babies and Toddlers Campaign*, a community outreach initiative promoting early literacy, which has been met with enthusiastic support from families across the island.

Mariland Powell's 25-year journey stands as a testament to her enduring dedication, professional excellence, and heartfelt commitment to the Sint Maarten Library and its patrons. Her multifaceted roles have helped the library grow into a dynamic cultural and educational hub, and her influence is felt in every corner of its operations.

To honor her achievements, the Sint Maarten Library Board and staff held a celebratory luncheon at Emilio's Restaurant, joined by Ms. Powell's family, library management, and colleagues. The heartfelt event commemorated her accomplishments and expressed deep gratitude for her devoted service. The Sint Maarten Library is immensely proud of Mariland Powell and looks forward to her continued contributions in shaping a vibrant, informed, and literate community.

## Collaborative Events and Projects

### Celebrating International Literacy Month

#### Period: September

In celebration of Literacy Month 2024, the Sint Maarten Library embraced the theme "*Read Anytime, Read Anywhere, Anyplace.*" The library reaffirmed its commitment to fostering literacy through diverse book collections, enriching programs, and free library cards for children. A brochure offering tips for educators and parents was introduced, and the library encouraged community engagement through its facilities, website, and social media platforms.

To promote and support educational literacy within the community, library staff member Ms. M. Spencer and librarian Ms. M. Powell were invited to read stories to students from Oranje Primary School's Group 3 and Group 6. Additionally, the library clerk Mr. D. Helligar, welcomed the Inspired Me Academy After-School Program for a guided tour of its facilities, located on the Asha Stevens Campus compound. These initiatives highlight the library's essential role in fostering literacy and lifelong learning within the community.

### Reading Festival, Sint Maarten Edition

#### Period: October

#### Sint Maarten Reading Festival 2024 – A Resounding Success

The inaugural Sint Maarten Reading Festival, held on October 18 and 19, 2024, was a monumental success, bringing together over 1,000 young participants and their families to celebrate literacy and the transformative power of books. Organized by the Sint Maarten Library in collaboration with the Netherlands Letterenfonds, Stichting Biblionef Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, the University of St. Martin, and the Help Our Children Foundation, the festival embraced the theme "Discover the Joy of Reading" and sparked enthusiasm across the island.

**Event Overview:** The festival commenced on Friday, October 18, with an inspiring formal opening ceremony attended by students from 22 Cycle 1 Group 3 primary schools, representing both subsidized and unsubsidized institutions. The second day, Saturday, October 19, evolved into a vibrant Family Day filled with an array of interactive reading, cultural, and recreational activities designed to foster a lifelong love of reading for all ages.

**Featured Authors and Storytellers:** A major highlight of the event was the participation of celebrated local authors and storytellers. Among the distinguished authors were Ruby Bute, Ralph Cantave, Jacky Rom, Collin Bootman, Roy Marlin, and Mark Yokoyama, who captivated audiences with their literary contributions. Additionally, oral storytelling sessions brought to life engaging tales, with performances by Dorita Ward, Linda Moise, Jamie Nyenhuis-Morillion, and Sherriliza Peterson.

A group of community readers, including educators, firefighters, social workers, youth advocates, and entrepreneurs, also took part in reading to children, creating memorable moments for the young audience. Notable readers included Glenderlin Holiday, Monika Kluis, Sherritza Peterson, Peggy Coasaque, Marvio Cooks, Nelly Blaise, Tamara Groeneveldt, Francine de Polo, Shanell James, and Michel Peterson.



**Activity Highlights:** The festival offered a rich variety of activities, all designed to engage attendees and nurture a love for books. Among the most popular activities were:

- **Puppet Show** by Patricia Maier-Illidge
- **Parental Reading Workshop** conducted by Claudia Conner
- **Drama Performance** by student teachers from the University of St. Martin
- **Face Painting** provided by Funtopia and La Belle Arts
- **Character Appearances** featuring beloved mascots such as Elmo, Hello Kitty, Dora, Diego, Minnie, and Mickey Mouse

Cultural and interactive contributions from the Sint Maarten National Heritage Foundation, the National Institute of the Arts (NIA), and Amuseum Naturalis added valuable insights and hands-on activities, including book presentations, games, and explorations of Sint Maarten's heritage. Young participants especially enjoyed the Book Dance and Book Tasting activities, which led to the creation of 64 new library memberships, each of which came with a complimentary book from Biblioneef Netherlands.

### **Virtual Raffle and Prize Distribution**

The Sint Maarten Reading Festival 2024 concluded with a virtual raffle, which was broadcast on the Sint Maarten Library's Facebook page. The raffle was conducted in collaboration with the University of St. Martin's student teachers from the "Creative Art Class for Teachers" and featured characters such as Anansi, Sly Mongoose, and Monkey. A total of 40 students, ranging in age from 1 to 16, were selected in a lively and entertaining manner, with the raffle pre-recorded at the University of St. Martin on Friday, November 22, 2024, and aired on Saturday, November 30, 2024.

The Sint Maarten Library, in partnership with Stichting Biblioneef Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, the University of St. Martin, and the Help Our Children Foundation, issued a press release on November 29, 2024, titled "Reading Festival Winners: It's Time to Claim Your Prize!" Parents of the selected students were contacted to collect their prizes at the Philipsburg Library, ensuring that the excitement of the event continued long after the festival's conclusion.

The Sint Maarten Reading Festival 2024 successfully achieved its goal of fostering a love for reading and encouraging community participation in educational and cultural activities. The event's diverse range of authors, storytellers, and activities created an unforgettable experience for all involved, with the support of local institutions and passionate community members. The festival exemplified the power of literature in bringing people together and inspiring future generations to embrace the joy of reading.

### **Period: November**

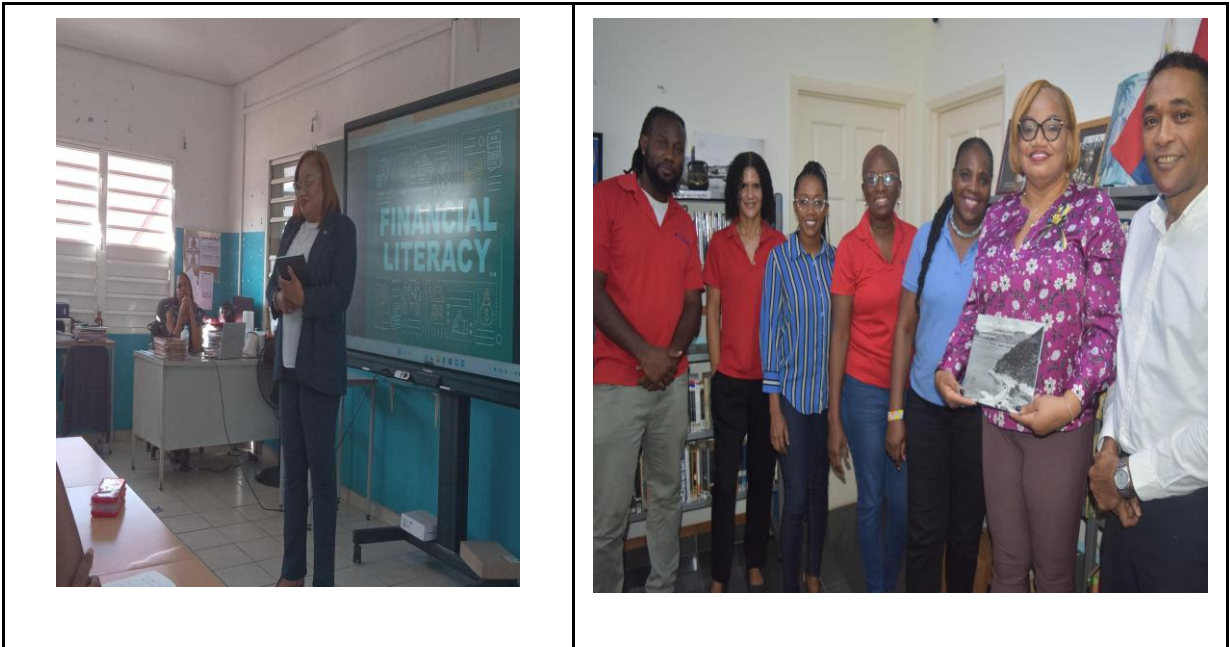
#### **Sint Maarten Government department of Finance - Ministry of Finance "Financial Literacy Month"**

Sint Maarten Library Supports Financial Literacy Month with Youth-Focused Activities in November 2024, proudly participated in *Financial Literacy Month*, a special initiative organized by the Ministry of Finance. This initiative included targeted sessions for youth, underscoring the importance of building financial awareness from an early age.

As part of this effort, the Honorable Minister Marinka Gumbs conducted an engaging, hands-on financial literacy introduction for Group 8 students at the Orange School. On November 28, 2024, the Library facilitated a series of interactive activities designed to teach financial concepts in a fun and accessible way. These included educational games such as *Managing My Allowance* by Learning Advantage and *GoVenture Entrepreneur*, which helped students explore real-world money management scenarios. Minister Gumbs under the Ministry of Finance's Financial Literacy Month Project, coordinated by General Manager Marc Marshall, spearheaded the youth initiative. Children, Youth Librarian Mariland Powell, and Librarian Assistant Daniel Helligar supported the program.

Our goal is to establish a strong financial foundation among young people, nurturing a generation that is well-equipped to make informed financial decisions throughout their lives.

**About Financial Literacy Month :** Financial Literacy Month is a comprehensive series of educational workshops aimed at equipping the public with essential financial knowledge. The sessions cover a wide range of topics, including personal and business finance management, developments in the Caribbean monetary system, corporate governance, and taxation.



### Acknowledgement of Gift and Donations

Period: February–December

In 2024, the Sint Maarten Library received book donations from local, regional, international authors, visitors, and foundations. The authors personally delivered their works. Both fiction and non-fiction meaningful storylines aim to enrich the reading experience of the enthusiastic Sint Maarten community. The library gratefully acknowledges these contributions, now available for borrowing, as they enhance the collection and support the community's educational growth.

### Author & Titles include:

In June Author **Heddrick, McBride** and his daughter **Skylar McBride** donated the following below mentioned books, which featured diverse characters.

- *I Know My Rights: Bill of Rights*
- *Parkville High Class of 2021*
- *St. Maarten Strong*
- *Respecting My Boundaries*
- *Raising Kings: 10 Principles of Manhood*

In August, **Keron Nicholson** & long –time visitors to Sint Maarten, the Belinsky family

- *A life Changing Summer.*
- *Flowers in color.*

In October, a special donation was received from Stichting Biblionef in connection with the Reading Festival Sint Maarten Edition!

- *Raf* written by Anke de Vries & Charlotte Dematons
- *I feel a foot* written by Maranke Rinck & Martijn van der Linden
- *The cheer-Up bird* written by Edward van de Vendel
- *Uh- Oh Octopus!* Written by Elle van Lieshout & Erik van Os
- *There is a crocodile under my bed!* Written by Ingrid & Dieter Schubert
- *The day the sun did not rise and shine* written by Mirjam Enzerink & Peter-Paul Rauwerda
- *Come and dance, wicked witch* written by Hanna Kraan & Annemarie van Haeringen
- *Monster Book* written by Alice Hoogstad
- *Who has the biggest Bottom?* Written by Marijke ten Cate
- *How much does the gray in an elephant weigh?* Written by Elle van Lieshout & Erik van Os
- *The umbrella doodle book* written by Ingrid & Dieter Schubert
- *Playground* written by Mies van Hout.

In December, two authors presented their books and held a book-signing event at the library. The authors and their respective books were:

- **Ange Jessurun** – *Faya Lobi: 200 Jaar Vurige Liefde in de Diaspora*
- **Robert Romney** – *Big Rock: Lie Down in Darkness (Part Two)*

#### **Literary and Cultural Event:**

##### **Successful Book Signing Event Featuring Mary Romney-Schaab and Linda Richardson**

**Date:** Tuesday, June 6, 2024

The Sint Maarten Library hosted a highly successful book-signing event featuring two esteemed authors, Mary Romney-Schaab, Ed.M, and Drs. Linda Richardson. Despite limited space and short notice, the event drew an enthusiastic crowd of over 25 attendees, filling the intimate library setting to capacity and creating a warm, engaging atmosphere for literary celebration and cultural dialogue.

The event featured presentations by both authors, who offered personal insights into the motivations and historical research behind their books.

- **Mary Romney-Schaab** presented *“An Afro-Caribbean in the Nazi Era: From Papiamentu to German”*, a powerful nonfiction account of her father, Lionel Romney—a Sint Maartener and Afro-Caribbean merchant sailor who survived imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps during World War II.
- **Drs. Linda Richardson** introduced *“Trilingual Terminology in Criminal Proceedings: Dutch, English, and Spanish”*, a trilingual legal terminology resource praised for bridging language gaps in the Dutch Caribbean judicial system.

Following the authors' talks, attendees engaged in a dynamic and thought-provoking discussion about Caribbean contributions to global history. The dialogue emphasized the importance of incorporating works such as Romney-Schaab's, Mulberry Egstorf – Pantophlet's *"A Different Stick O' Fire"*, and the *Caribbean Think Book Series for 4 and 5 May* into school curricula to enhance students' understanding of their cultural heritage.

The event succeeded in creating an intimate space for reflection, learning, and shared stories. Guests left with a renewed appreciation for Sint Maarten's rich and often underrepresented historical narratives. Both books were available for purchase, and many attendees brought their own copies for signing. A brief Q&A session allowed readers to connect directly with the authors.

Mary Romney-Schaab and Linda Richardson expressed their gratitude to the Sint Maarten Library for the opportunity to share their work and to the community for its warm reception. The event concluded with a unified call to celebrate and incorporate Sint Maarten's diverse narratives into mainstream education and cultural consciousness.

### **Book Launch: Faya Lobi – 200 Years of Fiery Love in the Diaspora**

**Date of Event:** Wednesday, December 4, 2023

**Author & Presenter:** Ange Jessurun

**Language of Presentation:** Dutch (with bilingual engagement)

**Attendance:** Well-attended; community members, library patrons, literary enthusiasts

On December 4, 2024, the Sint Maarten Library hosted a compelling literary event featuring Curaçaoan author Ange Jessurun and her novel *Faya Lobi: 200 Years of Fiery Love in the Diaspora*. The presentation marked a significant moment in our cultural programming calendar, drawing an engaged audience and offering a meaningful space to reflect on themes of legacy, identity, and Caribbean heritage.

Published in 2022, *Faya Lobi* is a powerful, historically grounded novel that follows the multi-generational story of Jessurun's family, beginning with her great-grandfather—a Chinese immigrant who arrived in Suriname in 1865—and Emelia, a formerly enslaved woman freed in 1859. Their descendants traverse Suriname, Curaçao, and beyond, bringing to life stories of love, resilience, and cultural intersection.

Through a rich tapestry of personal anecdotes, historical documents, and true accounts, Jessurun offers a profound exploration of Caribbean identity and the enduring power of storytelling.



## Event Highlights

- **Author Presentation & Discussion:** Ange Jessurun captivated the audience with personal reflections on her family's journey and the research behind *Faya Lobi*. The author emphasized the importance of preserving personal histories and cultural roots in the face of modernity and migration.
- **Community Engagement:** The event fostered thoughtful dialogue among attendees, encouraging individuals to explore and document their own ancestral stories.
- **Book Donation:** Library General Manager Marc Marshall accepted three copies of *Faya Lobi* donated by the author. The library added these to its permanent collection and made them accessible to the community.
- **Virtual Story Time:** As a follow-up, Jessurun hosted a virtual reading of the book's introduction during a special story time segment, which aired on December 7, 2024, via the library's social media platforms, further extending the event's reach.

### Author Spotlight: Ange Jessurun

Born in Curaçao in 1954, Ange Jessurun is an educator, cultural advocate, and author with a long-standing commitment to promoting native languages and Caribbean heritage. Her career spans microbiology, language education, and cultural programming. She has taught Papiamentu at Peter Stuyvesant College, co-authored several teaching methods, and founded the prestigious *Arte di Palabra* literary contest.

### Impact & Community Feedback

The presentation of *Faya Lobi* resonated deeply with the Sint Maarten community. Attendees praised the event for its emotional depth, historical insight, and inspirational message. The novel has since sparked conversations about personal ancestry and the preservation of intergenerational stories within the diaspora.

The Sint Maarten Library remains committed to supporting literary voices that celebrate our shared Caribbean heritage, and *Faya Lobi* stands as a testament to the power of storytelling in fostering cultural continuity and pride.

## Book Launch & Signing with Robert Romney: *Big Rock Part Two: Lie Down in Darkness*

**Date: Friday, December 13, 2024**

The Sint Maarten Library proudly hosted a vibrant literary celebration featuring acclaimed local author Robert Romney to mark the release of his latest novel, *Big Rock II: Lie Down in Darkness* (2023). This significant cultural event served as both a book launch and a signing session, engaging the public in the preservation and appreciation of Sint Maarten's rich heritage.

Robert Romney, born in Dutch Sint Maarten, is a distinguished academic and author with a deep commitment to cultural preservation. A Knight of the National Order of Merit and Officer of the Academic Palms, Romney has served as Representative of the Rector for Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy and held positions such as Associate Professor and Inspector of Honorary Academy. This event celebrated the conclusion of Romney's powerful literary trilogy:

1. **St. Martin Talk** (2011)
2. **From St. Martin Talk to Standard English** (2015)
3. **Big Rock I: King of the Rock** (2019)
4. **Big Rock II: Lie Down in Darkness** (2023)

The series is a profound literary contribution documenting the island's cultural and linguistic transformation from the 1960s to today.

### Highlights of the Event

- **Book Signing & Q&A Session:** Attendees had the opportunity to engage directly with Romney, who shared insights into his creative process and the historical inspiration behind his writing.
- **Presentation of Signed Copies:** Activity Coordinator Mariland Powell received three signed copies on behalf of General Manager Marc Marshall. These are now available for borrowing at the library.
- **Virtual Reading:** Romney concluded the event with a virtual reading of excerpts from *Big Rock II: Lie Down in Darkness* later made available on the Library's social media platforms (Facebook & YouTube).

*Big Rock II: Lie Down in Darkness* is a literary reflection on the cultural soul of Saint-Martin, contrasting the idyllic past with contemporary challenges. It draws from literary influences while remaining firmly rooted in local identity.

Romney's work celebrates the community spirit and resilience of islanders who contributed to global industries—like the Panama Canal and sugarcane fields of the Dominican Republic—and promotes a vision of a welcoming yet proudly traditional Sint Maarten.

**Impact:** This event exemplified the Library's mission to promote literacy, celebrate local authors, and safeguard cultural memory. It sparked meaningful conversation around heritage, identity, and the transformative power of storytelling.

**Looking Forward:** With high community engagement and strong media interest, this event sets a benchmark for future literary programming. The Sint Maarten Library remains committed to highlighting local voices and continuing the dialogue around our shared legacy.

## Condolences and Tributes

### A Tribute to the Life and Legacy of Dame Stella Elstak-Simmons and Mr. Frank Elstak

On behalf of the Sint Maarten Library Board and staff, we extend our deepest condolences to the Elstak-Simmons family and their loved ones on the passing of Mrs. Stella Elstak-Simmons and her husband, Mr. Frank Elstak. Their loss is profoundly felt, not only by those closest to them, but by the wider Sint Maarten community to which they both contributed so generously.

Today, we pause to honor the remarkable legacy of Mrs. Stella Elstak-Simmons—a beloved author, educator, volunteer, and cultural advocate whose enduring impact on literacy and learning in Sint Maarten will never be forgotten. Her passionate commitment to nurturing young minds and cultivating a love for reading among children was evident in every endeavor she embraced.

A dedicated supporter of the Sint Maarten Library, Mrs. Elstak-Simmons played a pivotal role in key educational programs such as Story Time and the Summer Reading Program, often volunteering her time to read to and mentor young readers. As a published children's and young adult novelist, she not only inspired others with her words but also generously donated her literary works to the library collection—an enduring gift to future generations.

In 2013, during the Philipsburg Jubilee Library Foundation's 90th Anniversary celebration, Mrs. Elstak-Simmons was awarded the Literacy Award at the "Appreciation Awarded Ceremony: A Literacy & Cultural Evening." This recognition highlighted her instrumental role in literacy development, particularly through her support of the "Reach Out and Read" Saturday morning program in partnership with the Reach Out and Touch Foundation. Her contributions helped countless children strengthen their reading and comprehension skills, shaping brighter futures through the power of literacy.

Mrs. Elstak-Simmons was not only a stalwart of our educational and literary community but also a beacon of kindness, grace, and selfless dedication. Alongside her husband, Mr. Frank Elstak—himself a respected and active community member—they stood as symbols of service and resilience. Their partnership in life and community service leaves a legacy that will continue to inspire.

As we join the broader community in mourning, we also celebrate the lives of Stella and Frank Elstak. We remember the stories they shared, the values they instilled, and the many lives they touched with warmth and wisdom. Their contributions will echo through our library halls, our bookshelves, and in the hearts of every child who turned a page because of their dedication.

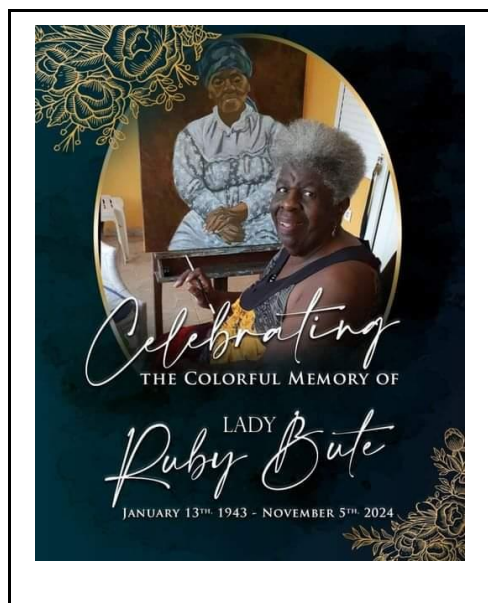
May their souls rest in peace, and may their legacy live on through the continued pursuit of knowledge, compassion, and community.

### **In Beloved Memory of Dame Ruby Bute: Honoring a Cultural Icon and Literary Legacy**

The Sint Maarten Library Board and staff extended their deepest condolences to the family and friends of Dame Ruby Bute—a cherished cultural icon, beloved storyteller, and national treasure of Sint Maarten. Affectionately known as "Ms. Ruby," she was a gifted painter, prolific writer, and a vibrant pillar of our community whose spirit touched the hearts of generations.

Dame Ruby Bute's unwavering dedication to preserving and celebrating the island's rich cultural and literary heritage left an indelible mark on all who knew her. Her legacy lives on through the countless lives she inspired, the stories she shared, and the community she so lovingly uplifted.

As an accomplished author, Dame Ruby generously donated several of her treasured works to the Sint Maarten Library, enriching its collection and inspiring future generations. Her iconic phrase, "Ma child," spoken with poetic and maternal warmth, remains etched in our hearts—symbolic of the care, wisdom, and passion she gave so freely to all.



Throughout the years, Dame Ruby was an active participant in numerous library programs, from Storytime sessions and Summer Reading Programs to Art & Craft workshops and storytelling festivals. One particularly memorable moment was her Art Workshop held in July 2017 at her beloved gallery, Ruby Bute's Silk Cotton Grove, just months before Hurricane Irma. Her commitment was honored in 2018 during the Library's 90th Anniversary "Appreciation Awarded Ceremony," where she received the 2013 Literacy Award in recognition of her immense contributions to literacy and the arts.

In recent years, her legacy continued to shine brightly. In 2022, she gifted two powerful poems and reflected on her earliest storytelling experiences at the library, marking the unveiling of the institution's new name, card, logo, and website during its 99th Anniversary. Her final act of generosity came in October 2024, when she lent her voice once more during the Sint Maarten Reading Festival, themed "Discover the Joy of Reading."

A heartfelt tribute honoring her literary and community impact was released on November 15, 2024, as a Facebook Reel. Presented during a virtual storytime session, the video featured Dame Ruby's beloved tale, *The Great Silk Cotton Tree*. This tribute was part of the Reading Festival, organized by the Sint Maarten Library in collaboration with Stichting Biblionef Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, the University of St. Martin, and the Help Our Children Foundation.

To further commemorate her legacy, a press release titled "*Honoring the Legacy of Dame Ruby Bute: A Tribute of Love and Condolence*" was issued to all media outlets on November 28, 2024, highlighting her enduring contributions throughout the year.

Dame Ruby Bute's relationship with the Philipsburg Jubilee Library Foundation was one of passion and purpose. Her contributions were both profound and enduring—nurturing a deep appreciation for literacy, storytelling, and cultural expression among young and old alike. The Sint Maarten Library joins the wider community in mourning this significant loss and in celebrating the life of a remarkable woman whose legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

As we reflect on the rich and vibrant life of Dame Ruby Bute, let us honor her memory not with sorrow, but with gratitude—for every book she gifted, every story she told, and every life she touched. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

## HR professional development activities and events

### ACURIL 2024 Conference

The General Manager and Mrs. Irmin Hughes attended the 2024 ACURIL conference in Guyana, themed Innovation: Opportunities and Challenges in Libraries, Museums, and Archives of the Caribbean. The conference was held in Guyana from May 12th to -16th, which provided a platform for professionals in the aforementioned fields to engage in knowledge sharing, discuss practices, and explore innovative approaches and technologies. The 2024 ACURIL conference covered a broad spectrum of topics, including the integration of new technologies, preservation strategies, and community engagement initiatives.

Participants gained insights into the latest trends and challenges in their respective fields, proving invaluable for their professional development. The conference served as a platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and forward-thinking discussions. It is our responsibility to harness the momentum generated by the conference and actively contribute to the positive transformation of libraries, museums, and archives.

#### **Virtual Exchange Program Cont'd Texas.**

Two staff members, FH and DH, participated in a virtual Exchange program where they engaged with librarians and library professionals from various countries. This exchange provided a platform for sharing practices, ideas, and discussing challenges faced by libraries, as well as insights on how libraries can adapt and thrive in diverse communities.



NPower Training – designed to unite Non- Profit Organizations (NPO's).

Several staff members utilized the training opportunities provided by NPower and, when possible, shared the acquired information with their colleagues.

#### Regional and international cooperation

As in previous years, the library will remain an active member of the Dutch Caribbean Library Association. ACURIL, the Dutch Kingdom, and the Dutch Caribbean Libraries. Where and when possible, library staff will participate in local and online conferences, training sessions, and workshops of the ALA (American Library Association), UNESCO, or the DCLA.

## Regional and International Collaborations

### Rijnbrink

As of May 2024, the library started a collaboration with the Rijnbrink organization to support the library in the development of the library into a library of the future. Starting with an internal scan with participation of staff and board members, the collaboration evaluated into an intense relationship that went from realizing a vision and mission plan, creating an organizational plan and the plan is to continue in 2025 further grasping areas of human development, collections, finance and marketing. The goal is to invest in a robust library that is resilient and is able to adapt to changes of the future.



The monthly meetings with the Kingdom Library and the other Dutch Caribbean Libraries since June of 2020 have continued. The partnership is a great platform to exchange ideas and share knowledge and experiences. The use of the Sint Maarten Library and the Kingdom Library online service is still not to a satisfactory level; however, the Management and staff continue to promote this service to the patrons and, in particular, to the high school students. This online service offers all users the opportunity to access over 50,000 e-books or more.

## Closing Remarks

As the Sint Maarten Library looks to the future, it does so with unwavering dedication to its mission of fostering knowledge, creativity, and community connection. While challenges such as space limitations remain, the library continues to adapt, innovate, and expand its reach through satellite locations and digital platforms. The vision of a new, modern library building is still alive and getting closer with support from partners and the community. Even though space is limited right now, the library continues to offer valuable services through its main location, satellites, and online platforms. This all as we steadily work towards our purpose-built facility that promises to further enhance the library's role as an essential pillar of education and cultural development in Sint Maarten. With the continued support of community partners, stakeholders, and the public, the Sint Maarten Library is not only preserving the past and serving the present but also building a stronger, smarter future for all.