



Sint Maarten
Library
Centenary Year

Annual Report 2023

St. Maarten Library
Walter J.A. Nisbeth Road # 3, Philipsburg
Sint Maarten, Dutch West Indies

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Introduction

The Sint Maarten Library is focusing on further development and improvement, with plans for a new library in 2025. In 2022, efforts were made to establish a new brand identity, logo, library card, and service-oriented website. The social media presence was also adjusted. In 2023, leading up to the 100th anniversary, the focus was on promoting the library through enhanced website content, social media marketing, and hosting more events to attract visitors and increase cardholders. Additionally, the library is seeking a new main location to accommodate more activities until the new library is built.

In 2023, the Sint Maarten Library celebrated its centennial, marking 100 years of service to the community despite not yet being housed in its permanent location. Currently, the library operates from a temporary site located on the Pondfill, above the Adolphus Richardson Office Supplies and Machines store, continuing to serve the people of Sint Maarten. Moreover, two additional branches are available for public access: Cay Hill and Belvedere. For more information about the library, including the resources, support services, news updates, and organized activities, patrons and customers can visit our website at www.library.sx.

The Sint Maarten Library preserves and provides access to an enduring source of knowledge to inform, inspire, and engage its patrons in their intellectual and creative endeavors. In addition to providing materials, the library also provides the services of librarians, who are trained experts in finding, selecting, circulating, and organizing information while interpreting information needs. E-book services are accessible through various online platforms, including Overdrive, the Libby App (dLOC), the Digital Library of the Caribbean, and the Royal Library of the Netherlands (KB).

Study areas are available at all library locations, serving as a central hub for the community where diverse programs are offered, fostering lifelong learning initiatives. Furthermore, the library extends its reach beyond physical confines by providing digital resources through its e-book offerings online.

Some programs focus on specific age categories, such as our virtual reading program for early childhood development and primary school or our seniors program. Other programs are concentrated around a theme, event, or occasion. All programs for 2023 were centered on our countdown on November 23th, 2023. The Sint Maarten library continues to play a crucial role in providing resources, programs, and events that enrich the lives of its community.

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. Maartens 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.
- Being actively engaged in the life of the community.
- 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, 2018, the board consist of:

Board members per April 20, 2023

- Ms. S. Leon, president;
- Ms. J. Peterson, Treasurer
- Ms. E. Evans, Member

Between April 20, 2023, and December 31, 2023, the following board members resigned:

- Mrs. S. Pantophlet-Gregoria, president
- Ms. J. Dupersoy, Secretary and Vice chairlady

In the recruitment process, the board appoints a newly appointed member:

- Ms. D. Richardson-Caprino, secretary

Governance

From the above mentioned date until December 31, 2023, this is the composition of the board

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

Management of Operations

Based on the articles of incorporation, the Sint Maarten Library Board implemented a restructuring initiative, transitioning the traditional role of the library director to that of a general manager responsible for overseeing library management in accordance with the board's directives.

In 2023, an interim general manager temporarily filled this position.

- Mr. P. Lucas, Interim General Manager per January 1, 2020 to March 15, 2023. Mr. P. Lucas, the interim general manager, stepped down, leaving the position vacant. The Sint Maarten Library Board has temporarily assumed the responsibility of managing the operations of the Sint Maarten Library until they recruit a general manager. This arrangement is effective from March 15, 2023, to December 31, 2023. In the year under review, the composition of staff members remained unchanged, with the exception of Interim General Manager Mr. P. Lucas

Staff

- Drs. P. D. Lucas, MCM, Project Manager. January 1, 2018 to March 2023.
- Mrs. I. Hughes, Manager of Information service, is an HR officer.
- Mrs. F. Housen, System Administrator/Media coach
- Ms. J. Lambert, Finance officer, General Librarian
- Ms. M. Powell, Children & Youth Librarian, PR Officer, & Activity Coordinator.
- Ms. M. Spencer, Circulation Clerk.
- Mr. D. Helligar, Facility and IT Support.
- Ms. S. Richardson, Secretary/Coordinator, Head of Acquisition/Circulation Desk Supervisor.
- 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).

Member & Visitors

The recorded number of members for 2023 is 11,867. The recorded number of visitors in 2023 was 6,398. The most frequent visitors to the Sint Maarten Library that year were toddlers, primary school children, and seniors. Fortunately, through organizing and facilitating school visits, campaigns, and senior workshops, they contributed to an increase in library visits.

Information Desk

The Sint Maarten Library's established multi-functional information help desk allows patrons and visitors to be assisted with questions about the full-service package of the Sint Maarten Library, such as Libby access, the Royal online library access, research, school assignments, and special book demands. The PJL has also extended its service to handle informational questions via email.

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.

Some of the staff made use of the training opportunities offered by NPower. Where possible, some of the staff shared their upgraded knowledge with colleagues.

Books

Books at ARB-HCS-BEL

The number of books at the three locations in 2023

Location	Period	Period
ARB	Per January 1, 2023 7,748	Per December 31, 2023 9101
HSCS	Per February 1, 2023 4,268	Per December 31, 2023 4616
Bel Sat	Per July - 2023 2,947	Per December 31, 2023 3156

Statistics

E-book status

In January 2023, there were about 2,500 e-books available, including books for toddlers, exams, and adults. On December 31, 2023, 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.

Circulation desk & Information 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 Sint Maarten Library announced the marking of its centennial, commemorating its 100th anniversary on November 23, 2023, as a cornerstone of the local community. Over the past century, the library has evolved into an educational hub, catering to the needs of learning institutions and the wider community.

The centennial celebration was a momentous occasion, drawing people from Sint Maarten to honor the rich history of the Sint Maarten Library. The festivities commence with a "Customer Appreciation Day," where patrons were invited to return their overdue materials free of charge at all three locations. Additionally, library staff were treated to lunch. As part of the celebration, the library engaged in highlighting its rich history, resources, and significance by releasing "100 Years—100 Facts" about the Sint Maarten Library. All staff members contributed facts that encapsulated the legacy of the Sint Maarten Library's journey throughout its history.

The number of Checkouts for 2023 for the three locations is listed in the table below:

The information desk is a reference service-oriented department that empowers patrons and visitors by assisting them with their inquiries about the use of the library and placement of information resources.

Location	Period: January 2023 – December 2023
ARB	6830
Belvedere	532
Cay Hill	6444
KB	166
Libby	456

Librarians collaborate with patrons and visitors to provide the most relevant information tailored to their needs. Patrons and visitors are directed to library materials at a call number given by the Sint Maarten Library, which uses the SISO classification system. An explanation and encouragement are also provided about the Libby/KB (Koninklijke Bibliotheek) e-book access for library patrons.

The librarians responsible for acquisitions ensure that the collection remains current and up-to-date, welcoming specific inquiries. Patrons can place reservations with the librarian or through our online service provided on our website. Documentation files and newspaper clippings contain much of Sint Maarten's historical and contemporary information, as books may not always include it.

Virtual story time on Facebook

Raising Readers Program, 0–5 5 years and Creating Readers Program, 6 – 12 years

In 2020, in the time that we were all living in, the pandemic state of social distancing protocols moved us more toward a technological state of mind. The focus changed on how to serve and reach primary-level youngsters from behind the scenes. Most essential during these times for the library was to meet them on virtual platforms where they would be safe. The continuation in 2023 was no different as the virtual story time entitled “It’s Time for a Story” under the heading presented by two staff members on Wednesday at 10 am and Saturday at 11 am took flight. The program stimulates children’s imagination and expands their understanding of the world around them. These programs offer enthusiastic experiences and contribute to their imaginative world while being educated.

Calendar of Events & Activities

Themed Activities Schedule

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 activities have no longer been executed in clusters; instead, they have become more centralized.

Activity overview 2023

Activity: **Black History Month**

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

Timeline: February 2023.

Coordinator: MP

Focal Group: DH - IH

Team Assistance: FH - AE

The Sint Maarten Library's annual observance of Black History Month (BHM) commemorates and celebrates the events and history of the African Diaspora, focusing on the contributions of individuals from Sint Maarten and the region, promoting equality, and preserving their legacy.

Under the annual theme "Passing on Our Legacy," we recognize the educational significance and cultural awareness of this subject, highlighting the role of our local heroes in raising community awareness.

In 2023, our featured activity served as a precursor to the ten-month countdown to the library's centennial celebration. Ten featured literalists were part of the library's quest to promote literacy. These published writers provided insights into reading and shared their testimonies about reading habits, thereby passing on their legacy to the community.

The literalists included Julian Rollocks, Loeki Morales, Rochelle Ward, Beverly Mae Nisbeth, Timothy Dowlings, Tashira Richardson, Judith Arndell, and Terrance Rey.

The Black History Month Observance 2023 took place virtually, attracting 1.2 thousand views and garnering impressions from 1.5 thousand individuals. Telem Group and TVCARiB, who also aired it on their platforms, sponsored the program.

Activity: **Cyber Seniors**

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

Timeline: February – November

Coordinator: FH

Since 2015, the Sint Maarten Cyber Seniors program has been running, targeting seniors aged 60 and above. A dynamic team has developed an eight-month program catering to both beginner and advanced learners. The program empowers and equips seniors with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the world of technology.

The technology mentors actively engage seniors, providing hands-on experience to familiarize them with computer usage, social media, online research, online banking and payments, scheduling appointments, and online safety. Moreover, the library introduces seniors to its online E-book services, including access to digital library services such as Overdrive (Libby), the Royal Library of the Netherlands (KB), and Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC). Upon completion, senior students receive a completion certificate.



Event: **Book Start Campaign**

Objective: The objective of the project is to meet the needs of early developers and create a supportive environment for their educational journey. While developing literacy skills, fostering a love for reading, promoting respect for books and stories, igniting imagination, and stimulating curiosity. These efforts aim to motivate children to engage in library activities, which will ultimately lead to increased patronage and membership.

Timeline: August–September

Coordinator: MP

Team Assistance: IH ; SR ; MS

The Bookstart Campaign for Babies and Toddlers "Read to Me" 2023, under that year's theme "Introducing little minds to the enchanting world of books," began in 2009 and was hosted in celebration of International Literacy Month in September. It joined the global effort to empower parents and caregivers to engage in their children's early literacy education and strengthen community commitment to reading.

In 2023, the program, after a period of dormancy, continued with the assistance of the National Library of the Netherlands (Royal Library) and Biblionef, who provided Bookstart kits with age-appropriate books

and educational tools. Twenty-four registered daycares of the SXM Early Childhood Development Association (SECDA) received one Book Start Kit, intended for caregivers to inform parents to register their babies or toddlers aged 0 to 3 at the library to receive a kit and participate in ongoing activities for the target group.



Additionally, the Sint Maarten Library encouraged early literacy by gifting the Sint Maarten Medical Center (SMMC) Obstetrician-Gynecologist Ward (OBGYNE) with ten kits for the newly delivered parents at the very beginning of life. The SMMC collaborated with the library to inspire the young minds of tomorrow to dream big and achieve even bigger.

The Parental Reading Workshop, led by presenter and educator Patricia Illidge-Maier, drew a large crowd. Patricia Illidge educated parents and caregivers on the importance of reading and effective techniques for reading to young children. During the workshop, reader Teacher Jessica McKenzie-Setz held a storytime session, reading the story titled "*Het Ochtend Koor*", written by Suzanne Barton, while babysitter Shakirah Cornett cared for the children.

The celebration continued as five daycare centers received five readers from diverse backgrounds. These readers, including educators and community members passionate about literature and early childhood development, engaged enthusiastic children in interactive and captivating reading sessions in both languages of instruction, English and Dutch:

- Marilyn Clark-Waterfort, reader at Ideal Preschool, reading the story titled "*Waar zijn Joko's vriendjes?*" written by Ruth Brown;
- Remi Prinsen, reader at Brighter Child, reading the story titled "*Welterusten Sam*" written by Marie-Louie Gay;

- Sabrina Vratal, reader at Ingrid's Home Care, reading the story titled "*Kleine Huppel Groot versjesboek*" written by Suelens Clara;
 - Jennifer Oduber, reader at Children's World, reading the story titled "*Een goed idee*" written by Peta Coplans;
 - Merlyn Joseph, reader at Kids World, reading "*Belle Beer: een hart voor mama*," written by An Melis.
- The program concluded with over 70 parents and their children, ages 0 to 8, attending the Sint Maarten Library's Dutch is Fun Puppet Show held at the University of Sint Martin. Peggy Nibte, teacher, performer, and storyteller, served as the puppeteer, delivering a bilingual English and Dutch version based on the book "*Enormuis/Enormouse*." The event also featured free face painting by Bernica Michel and snacks and drinks by Unicorn Flavored Popcorn Treats & More. The University of Sint Maarten and Tuckspro N.V. sponsored the event.

Event: 100-Year Anniversary

Objective: Celebration of Sint Maarten Library centenary

Timeline: November 23, 2023

Coordinator: Sint Maarten Library Board and Staff.

The Sint Maarten Library announced the marking of its centennial, commemorating its 100th anniversary on November 23, 2023, as a cornerstone of the local community. Over the past century, the library has evolved into an educational hub, catering to the needs of learning institutions and the wider community.

The centennial celebration was a momentous occasion, drawing people from Sint Maarten to honor the rich history of the Sint Maarten Library. The festivities commenced with a "Customer Appreciation Day," where patrons were invited to return their overdue materials free of charge at all three locations.

The staff celebrated to commemorate the library's founding on November 23, 1923, along with its goals that we have sought to accomplish together and will continue to pursue for the community of Sint Maarten. The Sint Maarten Library Board gifted the library staff, as an incentive, a lunch at Sugar Mills restaurant.

As part of the celebration, the library engaged in highlighting its rich history, resources, and significance by releasing "100 Years—100 Facts" about the Sint Maarten Library. All staff members contributed facts that encapsulated the legacy of the Sint Maarten Library's journey throughout its history.

Activity: Virtual Story Time 2023

Description: To stimulate and cultivate avid interest in reading.

Period: January 2023–December 2023

Assigned staff: MS & MP

Since 2020, we have planned and broadcasted virtual storytime programs throughout the calendar year. Story readers present age-appropriate stories tailored to specific age groups. "Begin Readers" is designed for ages 0 to 5, including kindergarteners. "Creating Readers" targets ages 6–12, encompassing primary school-aged children. The virtual program aims to stimulate, encourage, and promote active reading in the digital realm. In 2023, "Raising Readers" garnered 2094 views, while "Creating Readers" garnered 2051 views.

Activity: Outreach Program – Anti-Bullying Week

Objective: Encouraging empowerment through books.

Period: January

Assigned Staff: MP

Annually, in the month of January, Helmich Snijders Campus—Hillside Christian School organizes an Anti-Bullying Week from January 23rd to 27th, 2023. Their theme, "The Leader in Me: RISE (Reflect, Intelligently, Stand, – Empowered)," invited the library to read a story to their groups 3 & 4, encouraging them to discover the leader within as they rise.

The Sint Maarten Library graciously accepted the invitation and assigned the librarian to read a related and age-appropriate book from the Juvenile Non-Fiction collection, "Leave Me Alone" by Kes Gray (J1). Additionally, excerpts were taken from the non-fiction book "Why Are You Picking on Me?: Dealing with Bullies" by John Burstein (J2) during the discussion and interactive phase of the program.

Activity: Book sale
Description: The library is reassessing its collection
Period: January 2023
Assigned staff: SR

In January 2023, the library organized a significant book sale event as part of its collection reassessment initiative. This event aimed to declutter shelves and encourage community engagement through affordable access to a diverse range of books.

With enthusiastic participation, estimated over 400 to 500 books were 'sold', the sale raised 387.33 guilders, demonstrating the community's commitment to literacy and education. Overall, the event underscored the library's vital role in fostering a vibrant literary culture in Sint Maarten and its dedication to providing accessible learning opportunities for all.

Activity: Distribution of the Caribbean Think Book for 4 and 5 May/Caribisch Denkboek voor 4 en 5 mei

Objective: Commemorating and reflecting on World War II.
Period: January 2023
Assigned Staff: MP & DH

The Sint Maarten Library annually circulates the Caribbean Think Books for 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 aimed at commemorating and reflecting on the Second World War.

Since 2018, in January of each year, the Nationale Comité has sent educational materials individually to every student, ensuring each has a personal copy of the aforementioned book. Workshops were provided to instructors to best guide their students in introducing local history and the role the Dutch Caribbean played during World War II.

Assigned staff members organized over 700 copies and delivered the books to schools, serving as a precursor and preparation for the National Observance commemorating the liberation from Nazi occupation after the war.

Activity: Sint Maarten Vocational Training School Career Fair 2023

Objective: Giving back to the community.
Period: February
Assigned Staff: MP

In February 2023, the library enthusiastically participated in the Sint Maarten Vocational Training School's Career Fair 2023, which was themed "Connections to your future". The event aimed to provide students

with insights into various career paths and educational opportunities. The librarian assigned presented information specifically focused on the path to becoming a librarian.

The presentation emphasized the educational journey, including the need for an additional high school diploma and tertiary education options. The event attracted significant student interest, with engaging sessions and relevant questions. Overall, the library's involvement successfully promoted awareness of the librarian profession, inspiring students to consider it for their future career paths.

Activity: **Book Distribution Reading Books**
Objective: Supporting School Libraries and access to books.
Period: March
Assigned staff: FH & IH

In March 2023, the Sint Maarten Library participated in a collaborative campaign aligned with the new policy to support school libraries. This collaboration involved various organizations and institutions, including the National Library of the Netherlands, Biblionef, Sundial School, and the Division of Educational Innovation of the Ministry of Education.

Together with the Sint Maarten library, they distributed over 12,000 brand-new books of high interest-low reading to all primary schools, including public and subsidized, some secondary schools, and various youth associations and foundations, n.l.: Dr. J Enterprises & Ujima Foundation; Youth Detention Centre: Ms. Lalie Centre; Addiction Treatment Center: Turning Point Foundation; and Sint Maarten House of Detention.

The aim of all collaborators is to support literacy initiatives and promote a love for reading among children and youth across different settings and backgrounds. This distribution sought to ensure that a wide range of educational institutions and youth organizations had access to quality reading materials, thereby contributing to the development of literacy skills and fostering a culture of reading within the community.



Activity: **Sint Maarten Library Mural**
Objective: To create a visually appealing representation of the joy and adventure found in reading.
Period: March
Assigned Staff: MP

In March 2023, the Sint Maarten Library, a community-serving organization, participated in the ninth annual SXM DOET: Sint Maarten's national volunteer event. SXM DOET is organized by the Be the Change Foundation, in partnership with the Oranje Fonds.

The library organized a mural activity for SXM DOET. The mural depicted a triptych featuring three generations of readers in the center, which sought to inspire a love for reading among all age groups. On the right side, a Pandora's Box opened, spreading happiness through reading across the world. On the left side, a book transformed into the national bird of Sint Maarten, the flying brown pelican, symbolizing readers seeking new adventures. A team of over twenty-five volunteers and the assigned librarian coordinator dedicated two days to completing the painting based on the sketch by volunteer artist Bernica Michel. This actively engaged the community and served as a promotion of literacy through art. Additionally, this project received sponsorship from Adolphus Richardson, who provided additional materials and support. The activity demonstrated the collective effort to enhance community involvement and highlight the importance of literacy in Sint Maarten.



Activity: Outreach Program—Easter Celebration

Objective: Making reading fun and interactive and inspiring future readers.

Period: April

Assigned Staff: MS

In April 2023, in celebration of Easter, the staff of the Sint Maarten Library cordially accepted an invitation to participate in an engaging event at the Edu Care Day Care Center.

The center organized an interactive educational story time and Easter Egg Hunt specifically tailored for 10 toddlers as part of the library’s Begin Readers program. The dedicated story reader offered an interactive story time and Easter Egg Hunt for 10 toddlers.

The National Library of the Netherlands (Royal Library) and Biblionef generously provided Book Start Kits alongside captivating storytelling, enhancing the children's reading experience. The event promoted cognitive and social development while fostering a love for literacy and education. Overall, it was a successful initiative, nurturing a positive learning environment and encouraging early childhood literacy.

Activity: **Class Tours & Visits**

Description: Hosting Facilitates Educational Excursions

Period: April & May

Assigned Staff: IH, JL, FH & MP

The Sint Maarten Library facilitates educational excursions for visiting groups, aiming to enhance literacy skills and library insight among youngsters. In April and May 2023, students from Public Schools Lionel Conner and Oranje, explored the library with a guided tour by the librarians.

The tour included a research component to instill basic research skills and familiarity with library services.

An age-appropriate PowerPoint presentation highlighted available resources and provided guidance on effective searching and utilizing library collections. Additionally, students were offered library forms to obtain library cards, aligning with the library's mission to foster healthy reading habits through ongoing membership drives for public schools.

Activity: **Summer Program**

Objective: Giving back to the community.

Period: July

Assigned Staff: MS / SR

The Sint Maarten Library welcomed summer camp sessions under the program "Exploring the vast world of books" to promote literacy within the community. Camps included Creative Learning and Edu Care, where story readers led interactive story time sessions. LoLibrary, or Ralph Cantave, participated by reading from his book, "Steve Can Take a Stand." Children of different ages actively participated, gaining valuable life lessons and inspiration to reach their full potential. Library story readers also read captivating stories of "Stuart at the Library," written by Susan Hill, and "Lizzy Lizard," written by local author Robin Boasman. This initiative reflects the library's commitment to fostering literacy and educational events for its community.





Activity: School-Based Assignment

Objective: Work Experience Program
 Period: June–September
 Coordinator: FH & MP

The school year 2023 continues with 2024 students from the Milton Peters College VSBO PKL/PBL and Sint Maarten Vocational Training School placed at the Sint Maarten library to do their school-based assignments from their respective school work experience programs. WEP students from Milton Peters College PBL/ PKL Delicia Leconte and Aruska SIRRIRAM, and Sint Maarten Vocational Training School students Aramik Milton and Syesha Alicunmes.

The Sint Maarten Library's business is books, so the library offers the school's internship program, where students receive experience in library science. The interns learn more about the day-to-day functions of a library. Their duties involve the journey that the books take prior to arriving on the shelf, such as ordering, cataloging, labeling, laminating, and shelving. The intern also gains insight into administration, customer service, answering patron's questions, and helping research public information.

Activity: Health, Sport, and Culture EXPO

Objective: Displaying their activities.
 Period: August
 Coordinator: MP

The library was invited by the Culture Creative Industry hosted by the Department of Culture and Sports to participate in a grand display featuring Health, Sports, and Cultural organizations on the island to highlight their activities.

The library seized the opportunity to promote its upcoming event, the Book Start - Babies and Toddlers Read to Me Campaign for 2023, themed "Introducing Little Minds to the Enchanting World of Books." This event provided an excellent platform to connect with other non-profit organizations, meet potential patrons, and promote library events. The library's participation also demonstrated to the community that it remains operational and committed to serving its members.

Special events and celebrations

Activity: Soft Launch *Kim Saves The Ocean,*"

Period: February 3, 2023.

Attending Staff: MP

On Friday, February 3, 2023, the Sint Maarten Library participated in the soft launch of the book "Kim Saves The Ocean," written by Sara Bharawani, aimed at addressing pollution's impact on Sint Maarten's ecosystem. Clara Reyes narrated the book to children aged four to eight. The library's primary objective is to engage youth in societal evolution across various domains, including business and education. By promoting initiatives like youth entrepreneurship and environmental awareness, the library aims to empower children to become active participants in shaping a sustainable future.



Activity: Royal visit

Period: February 6, 2023.

Coordinator: MP & PL

The Sint Maarten Library agreed to participate in the Royal Visit Cultural Manifestation 2023 Royal Walk, titled Jollification! THE SPIRIT OF SWEET S' MAARTIN LAND, upon receiving an invitation from the Sint Maarten Culture Department. On Monday, February 6, 2023, the government of Sint Maarten received a Royal visit from His Majesty King Willem-Alexander, Her Majesty Queen Máxima, and Her Royal Highness Princess Amalia of Orange, the Netherlands, on the princess's first visit to Sint Maarten.

The Sint Maarten Library presentation, held in the St. Rose Arcade, featured ten schools and their students displaying their products as part of the library's Youth Entrepreneurial Experience. The library's youth entrepreneurship project is part of the 2021–2022 Reading Drive Youth Entrepreneur Program, which is funded by the Koninklijke Nationale Bibliotheek.

The youths displayed various services, including homemade natural products, culinary art, recycled art, fine arts, and literacy art.

Activity: 45-Year Celebration

Period: February 13, 2023

Coordinator: SR

Information Service Manager Irmin Hughes-Richards celebrated 45 years of service on Monday, February 13, 2023. For 45 years, Mrs. Hughes-Richards has dedicated her services to assisting patrons by providing quality information services and assisting the library through its journey. The Sint Maarten Library Board

and staff celebrated her achievements, congratulated her, and thanked Mrs. Hughes for her devoted service to our library and community. A luncheon was held at the Coal Pot restaurant for Mrs. Hughes, her family, the Sint Maarten Library Board, management, and staff commemorated in her honor.



Activity: **Anguilla Public Library Delegation**

Period: April 2024

Attending staff: MP

The Anguilla Library Service visited the Sint Maarten Library as part of their celebration of National Library Week, which had as its subject “There’s more to the story...”

The collaborative aim is to reinforce libraries' commitment, unite librarians, create lasting relationships, and strengthen ties, and gain insights and goals between countries as we share similar services and goals.

Activity: **Sint Maarten Youth Brigade**

Period: May 19, 2024

Attending staff: MP

The Sint Maarten Library accepted the invitation from the Voice of the Youth SXM Foundation (VOTY) and the Sint Maarten Youth Brigade to attend their 10th Rank Promotion Ceremony on May 19, 2024. As the Sint Maarten Library promotes adherence to the law of the land, recognizing that without the law, there is no order in society and understanding that the youth are integral members of this society, they are obligated to learn and uphold the law, which teaches them obedience to higher authority. The library acknowledges the value of the organization within the community and celebrates the promotions within its program.

Activity: **Workshops on Artificial Intelligence in Libraries
& Marketing Strategies for libraries in the Digital Age**

Period: July 2024

Coordinator: FH

Librarian Cheryl Peltier-Davis from Trinidad and GO Opleiding School for Information Marketing Manager Eric Kokke engaged the staff of the Sint Maarten Library in their respective areas of expertise. Cheryl Peltier-Davis shared expertise on artificial intelligence (AI) in a session titled “Artificial Intelligence in Libraries.”. Peltier engaged the staff in understanding the potential of AI technology to enhance library services and improve user experiences, exploring the transformative power of AI across various sectors, and shedding light on its specific applications within a library environment. While Eric Kokke focused on tailored “Marketing Strategies for Libraries in the Digital Age,” insights provided covering a wide range of

modern marketing techniques. Digital marketing, social media engagement, and community outreach. The aforementioned were practical tips tailored to the specific needs of the Sint Maarten Library.

Activity: Celebrating International Literacy Day

Period: September 5, 2024

Coordinator: JP & MP

In observance of International Literacy Day and the Sint Maarten Police Force Suicide Awareness Month, KPSM collaborated with the Sint Maarten Library to promote literacy within the community. As part of this initiative, dedicated officers from KPSM-Corps Police Sint Maarten visited the Seventh Day Adventist School and the St. Joseph Catholic School to engage students and share the joy of reading.

The library played an integral role by selecting 13 books for target groups 3 to 6 for pupils between the ages of 7 and 10, based on topics deemed relevant by the Sint Maarten Police, aiming to engage pupils in storytelling with a meaningful message.

In a world filled with ever-evolving challenges and the constant pursuit of personal growth, the selected books provided the readers with the tools they needed to assist the youngsters to self-reflect, strengthen their self-esteem, celebrate their differences, and encourage their unwavering confidence. The empowering titles were not just books; they were transformative guides on a journey towards self-discovery and empowerment.

Other Activities

Activity: Libraries at Schools and Supporting the Sint Maarten Library

Period: January

coordinator: PL, SR, MP

In 2023, the Sint Maarten Library welcomed visitors from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB): Astrid Kraal and Adriaan Langendonk of Stichting Lezen. There were two primary purposes for their visit. Firstly, they aimed to prepare the library for a school project, focusing on the role of the Sint Maarten library within it. Additionally, they sought to explore opportunities for supporting the Sint Maarten library.

During their visit, selected primary and secondary schools were toured, specifically those actively engaged in reading and equipped with a library. Adriaan Langendonk, representing Stichting Lezen and renowned for his expertise in school libraries, shared insights and knowledge with these schools. Discussions were held regarding workshops to be provided for library staff, covering topics such as youth services, the Virtual Exchange Program, Reading Consultancy, and collaborative efforts like the Bookstart Campaign. Additional workshops were planned for school managers and library staff focusing on school libraries.

A tour was conducted for both visitors, encompassing the former library building, which suffered damage during Hurricane Irma in 2017, as well as the satellite locations in Belvedere and Cay Hill. This tour served for debriefing purposes, allowing for observations, tips, and suggestions to be shared.



Activity: Veteran Librarians and e-books selectors

Period: February / March
 coordinator: PL

Between the months of February and March, veteran librarians Ans Koolen and Barbara Arrindell visited the Sint Maarten Library and respectfully provided their services. Since 2019, we have been providing distance assistance to build the e-book collection from 500 books to over 3000 new acquisitions. Ans Koolens, the former director and retired librarian since 2010, has also been instrumental in brushing up on some old procedures. Barbara Arrindell, retired from the Sint Maarten Library in 2007, was an all-around librarian who was instrumental in the de-selection of the collection and the cataloging of new acquisitions.

Activity: Book Reviews

Period: February - December
 Coordinator: All

Since its launch in 1997, the Sint Maarten Library has focused on reviewing books for adults, children, and teenagers to promote reading. In 2022, the library reintroduced book reviews as part of its strategy to foster a reading community. By 2023, all staff members were involved in selecting books for their assigned target groups. In 2023, 33 books showcased on the website and across social media platforms.

Activity: Cataloging

Period: February - December
 Coordinator: Librarians

A total of one thousand and eighty books were cataloged in 2023 and added to circulation.. Librarians did not only catalog these books, however by former librarian Barbra Arrindell, volunteering student Sebastian Warrington, WEP students from Milton Peters College PBL/ PKL Delicia Leconte and Aruska Sirriram, and Sint Maarten Vocational Training School students Aramik Milton and Syesha Alicunmes.

Activity: Gifts and Donations

Period: February–December

In 2023, the Sint Maarten Library received five book gifts featuring contributions from local authors. The thoughtful donation of these books aims to enhance the reading experience for the enthusiastic members

of the Sint Maarten community, generously contributing to their literary enrichment. With gratitude, the library recognizes the significance of these contributions in promoting a culture of reading and learning within the community. These literary works are made available to the public.

The presented books include:

- "The Butterfly Story Book 2022" is an award-winning project by the Rotary E- Club of the Caribbean – District 7020, presented by Rotarian Bonita Hart.
- "Cusha Columns: The Enigma that is Sint Maarten" presented by author Terence Rey.
- "Kim Saves the Ocean" presented by author Sara Bharwani.
- "The Kingdom of the Netherlands Administered: By the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1954, as amended 2010) in a Nutshell," presented by author Julio R. Romney.
- "Nation Building: Our challenges Resilience and responsibilities": presented by former Governor of Sint Maarten Eugene Holiday.

Activity: Grace Period

Period: June - November

The library granted 2 grace periods for the year 2023. The annual grace period given to the patrons of the Sint Maarten Library is linked with the ending of the school term in June / July prior to the summer vacation. During the centennial celebration of the Sint Maarten Library, which lasted from November 20 to 26, 2023, the administration issued a second additional grace period as an extra incentive. In addition, in previous years, no penalties were issued and there were no questions.

Activity: Volunteering

Period: July

In 2023, the Sint Maarten Library welcomed a student volunteer, Sebastian Warrington, who dedicated one day to supporting the development of his community during the summer. Sebastian assisted with cataloging books in July and participated in March in the SXM DOET Library mural project alongside other student volunteers. One of the Sint Maarten Library's missions is to connect people to the world of ideas and information, and volunteers are encouraged to assist with special library events, help with organizing tasks, provide computer assistance, and undertake various other small jobs.

HR professional development activities and events

The librarians underwent a one-hour practicum on the Libby app provided by OverDrive, Inc. During the session, staff refreshed their understanding of the application, focusing on patron initiation, exploring and lending eBooks and audiobooks, personalizing user experiences, addressing common user questions, and locating marketing materials and support resources. These key aspects will help the staff to personalize their users' experiences

ACURIL 2023 Conference

FH attended the 2023 ACURIL conference, themed Innovation: Opportunities and Challenges in Libraries, Museums, and Archives of the Caribbean. The conference was held in Jamaica from June 2 – June 4, which provided a platform for professionals in the aforementioned fields to engage in knowledge sharing, discuss practices, and explore innovative approaches and technologies. The 2023 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

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.



The 88th International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

As part of the virtual program, both staff members had the opportunity to attend the 88th International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress held in, Ahoy Convention Center, Rotterdam, Netherlands, from August 21 to August 25, 2023. The theme of the 88th IFLA was “Let’s Work Together, Let’s Library,” emphasizing collaboration and leveraging diverse strengths within the organization.

During the congress, the staff members participated in workshops covering various topics such as information management, digital preservation, library services, and technological advancements. They also attended sessions like “Exploring Early Reading Adventures for Kids,” focusing on engaging children with literature and the importance of playful learning experiences from a young age. Additionally, they learned about workplace challenges and resilience in a workshop on toxic librarianship and leadership.

Furthermore, sessions delved into the impact of AI, eBooks, and the efforts of Caribbean and Latin American libraries towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals. A discussion from the virtual exchange program between European, Dutch, and Caribbean libraries revealed insights, challenges, and strengths of libraries in different regions.



Tour the Librarians

In addition, the Dutch-Caribbean group was taken on a week-long tour of various libraries across the country to observe their operations, cooperation efforts, methods of attracting readers, different program ambiances, and the setups and programs they implement to foster a reading culture.

Jolly Phonics

The Department of Education implemented Jolly Phonics in public schools. There were concerns from the Reading Coordinator regarding the reading results of the assessments conducted, indicating challenges in phonemic awareness among students. A plan of action was deemed necessary, leading to pre-implementation training. This training, organized by Stichting Biblionef Netherlands and facilitated by Ineke Bloemendaal, took place in August 2023 and was implemented in September 2023.

Jolly Phonics is a child-centered approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics, focusing on blending sounds to form words and enabling children to read. As phonics provides foundational knowledge for reading, understanding letter-sound relationships is crucial. The Sint Maarten Library expressed interest in the training and allowed their librarian, MP, to participate in the course.

Reading Consultant

Two members of the staff, MP & MS, attended the Reading Consultant Course for the Dutch Caribbean Islands. This training, which promotes reading in a multilingual Caribbean context, was made possible by the financial help of Stichting Lezen. It was organized by Stichting Biblionef Netherlands and led by Bianca Versteeg from Onderwijsbureau de TaalKoffer.

The aim of the course is to actively support elementary school teachers and their students in promoting reading. Both staff members learned how to engage students in reading activities, select books, initiate and support activities related to reading promotion and information skills, and respond effectively to themes and developments within the school. They were also trained to link up with activities that promote reading and information skills, such as National Read Aloud Days and Children's Book Week.

Team Building Retreat

On behalf of the Sint Maarten Library Board, on December 11, 2023, a team building exercise was held for the staff of the library at the Holland House Conference Room. Lunch was provided. The aim of the retreat is to build on the camaraderie and work together as a team. The theme of the retreat was "Together, we believe that we can move the library forward and into the future.". The facilitators of this event were Mr. Roy Cotten and Erna - Dr. N.Erna Mae Cotten - Francis of Visionary Victorious Living Foundation.

NPower

In 2023, staff members at the Sint Maarten Library participated in workshops offered by NPower. These workshops are beneficial for their professional development. The library celebrated this milestone along with another significant event on November 29, 2023, when it marked its 10-year anniversary. The celebration highlighted the collaborative efforts between the library and the Foresee Foundation, which focuses on communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (the 4 C's). These values have resulted in impactful projects that have benefited not only Sint Maarten but also the library itself. Both organizations share similar views and influences that extend beyond education, touching every aspect of community life.

Collaborations

Kingdom Library partnership

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.

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.

Collections

Sint Maarten local authors collection

The St. Maarten collection is a unique collection consisting of books about St. Maarten and books written by St. Martiners. 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 St. Maarten collection was temporarily housed in the historical archive at the Government Administration Building in November 2017. The Sint Maarten Library plans to continue digitizing this collection and make it accessible to the general public via the website.

Caribbean authors 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.

Closing Remarks

In 2024 the St. Maarten Library will be celebrating the postponed festivities of the centenary of the library in 2023. It is the year when the Board Management and staff hopes to be able to start with the process of constructing the new library. Unfortunately to date the progress is being faced with several challenges. Nevertheless, the Board, management and staff intends to proceed diligently with the outlined year activities and remains hopeful that the new library building project eventually materialized so that this can form part of the celebration at the Sint Maarten Library's Centenary.

It will be remiss not to mention that through collaboration, consultation and consistent focus past and future hurdles cannot be overcome regardless of social and economic interruptions locally and globally.

With renewed energy and excitement for the celebration of the 100th anniversary, it now behooves all stakeholders associated with the building of the new library to continue working together in the interest of the literacy development of the people of St. Maarten and responsibility that is sacred to the St. Maarten Library.