

## Behind the Scenes at the Library

Pietermaritzburg's Bessie Head Library – a name it acquired in 2004 after the Natal Society transferred its assets to the municipality – can trace its roots right back to the Book Society set up in 1849. This society was absorbed by the Natal Society, established in 1851, which acquired permanent premises for the new library in Longmarket Street in 1876. This building remained the city's main library until 1975, when it moved into the present building. As a copyright library, the institution has a collection, which in theory is meant to have in its depository all material published in South Africa. While there are undoubtedly some gaps in this collection, the huge amount of material stored in the library is nevertheless impressive. The library also has several special collections, including a collection of valuable maps.



The Natal Society Library in Longmarket Street. Based on the Peugeot 203 outside, this photograph probably dates from the 1950s or early 60s.



The present library building photographed in 2009.