



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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ADDRESS BY EXECUTIVE MAYOR, CLLR DADA MORERO, ON THE OCCASION OF FIRST PHASE REOPENING OF THE JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY

Programme Director
MMCs

Esteemed Guest

Valued Partners and

Stakeholders-Friends of the Library, Joburg Crisis Alliance; Johannesburg Heritage Foundation; Bridge Books

Media representatives,
Residents of Johannesburg.

It is a great pleasure for us to be part of milestone occasion. We are filled with immense excitement that we are here today to witness the reawakening of the jewel of the City.

This jewel is an integral part of the beautiful heritage precinct which has contributed immensely as the knowledge production that has played an important role to the beautiful story of the rainbow nation of our country-this precinct has many iconic facilities and pioneers of our democracy.

The reopening is happening. We have few surprises that will showcase after this programme.

We chose this day because it falls within the South African Library Week -17-23 March 2025. This is a demonstration of our dedication to inclusivity, lifelong learning, and digital empowerment – ideals that South African Library Week champions. South African Library Week is a vital moment for our public libraries

This occasion also coincides with Human Rights Day which we commemorate as a reminder of the Sharpeville massacre that occurred 60 years ago, when police opened fire on a crowd of people who had assembled outside the police station.

Allow me programme director to confirm that the reopening of this jewel is an important fundamental right enshrined in our constitution to ensure access and justice for our residents.

It is within this context that we extend our gratitude to all the conversations between the state, and non state actors, resources and more importantly the hard work that went to the efforts of reawakening this jewel which made it possible for us to converge today.

After four years of essential structural repairs, this phased reopening is a concrete example of our commitment to the principles that underpin our libraries' vital role in society.

Programme Director, let's explain the reasons behind the closure of this building; The building like many other public amenities, was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Post the lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions, it was an opportune time to attend to the building as it had unmanageable water leaks which affected the operation of the building and cause water damage to books and artefacts. It was then that Community Development asked JDA as an implementation agency to assist with repairs and try to restore the building.

Moreover, around February 2022 Emergency Management Services issued a non-compliance notice and an order to comply. The building wasn't fire compliant, it did not have the necessary systems (fire detection, protection, evacuation and pressurised water system in case of a fire) in line with the City's by-laws and the building was non-compliant with national building regulations. This was the correct response by EMS as many buildings within the City are vulnerable to fires as has been seen in recent times. Due to the budget constraints and heritage approvals that were needed for the project, it delayed its implementation and opening.

The work undertaken had to contend with legislative and heritage regulations which needed to be complied with, which became apparent that the JCL would require a special attention.

So today we are starting the journey of reopening the JCL. The first sections that will be operational as of Monday, 24 March 2025, are a practical demonstration of this commitment and are now ready to serve our community. They are as follows:

The Young Adult Reference Library space is specifically designed to support our secondary school learners. Here, they will find textbooks, study guides, and essential internet access, all aimed at bolstering their academic pursuits.

The Central Lending section, the heart of our library, is where the joy of reading and learning comes to life. Here, you'll find a vast collection of fiction and non-fiction books, audiobooks, and e-books, all available for loan.

For our younger readers, we are thrilled to reopen the Children's Library. This vibrant space is dedicated to fostering early literacy and nurturing a lifelong love of reading. With

a wide array of children's books and engaging reading programmes, we are laying the foundation for a future filled with knowledge and imagination.

The Reference Section is a haven for in-depth research and academic study. It provides access to tertiary-level and research materials, including specialised resources. Efficient and knowledgeable staff members are ready to assist the community in research efficiency and information gathering. While the other sections of the library are still undergoing renovations, patrons are invited to use the ample space available to study or do research in the quiet shared space in a purposeful and conducive atmosphere, designed to facilitate learning, research, and contemplation.

The first phase opening of the City Library represents our continued investment in knowledge and community. It embodies our belief in the power of learning to improve lives. It is a testament to the enduring importance of libraries in building a stronger, more sustainable Johannesburg.

Another essential service is the availability of free Wi-Fi. It bridges the digital divide, providing vital internet access to those who lack it at home. This supports education, empowers job seekers, and facilitates access to government services. Our libraries become hubs for learning and community connection. Free Wi-Fi allows us to provide digital literacy training, ensuring everyone can safely navigate the online world. Most importantly, it upholds our constitutional right to access information.

In Johannesburg, free Wi-Fi is not a luxury; it's a necessity for an informed, empowered community.

Johannesburg Public Libraries are making information easy to access, wherever you are. Johannesburg Public Libraries are bringing the world to your fingertips with a vast array of online resources, accessible anytime, anywhere with your library membership. Dive into eBooks and audiobooks from platforms like Over Drive and Librivox or stay informed with newspapers and magazines via PressReader and the Rand Daily Mail Archive. Conduct in-depth research with EBSCOHost and Sabinet, explore legal information through LexisNexis, or access comprehensive encyclopedias like World Book.

Furthermore, beyond reading and research, enhance your digital skills with free online courses from Microsoft, Afrika Tikkun, and Google. Learn vital online safety practices with Africa Online Safety Research.

Getting started is simple: visit www.cojelearning.org.za, click the "Free Digital Content" tab, select your desired resource, and log in with your library membership details.

So, as we celebrate South African Library Week, let us also celebrate the first phase reopening of our beloved Johannesburg City Library.

Finally, our gratitude to the stakeholders and residents who have engaged with us in a very constructive manner and nudged our teams to push hard for the sake of our residents.

I would like to make a call to the residents and of Johannesburg to preserve this facility for benefits of future generation.