

A Library PQR: Peter Lor's library ABC, part 6

P is for **Portal**, an “unincorporated community” (population approx 700) in Cochise County, in the South-Eastern corner of Arizona. I chose Portal for an entirely unprofessional reason: it's a fantastic birding location. I visited it in 2010 with Charles Townley, and we saw an Elegant Trogon, among other special birds. The town is so tiny that the library is hard to miss. It's named after its founder, Myrtle Kraft. Now part of the Cochise County Library system, it is largely run by volunteers. It is open 20 hours a week, but we missed the opening hours, so a picture of the exterior will have to suffice. The Library has a web page with information about its services, which are quite extensive, including talking books, inter-library loan, photocopying service and public computers with Internet access. See <http://cochise.lib.az.is/cportal.html>.



Q is for **Queenstown** (population 70 000), in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, founded in 1853 as a military outpost intended to protect white settlers from attack during the Frontier Wars with the amaXhosa. The Queenstown Public Library was founded as a subscription library in 1859, one of around 70 established in South Africa during the 19th century, mainly by settlers of British extraction. Following WW2, provincial library services were established and free public library services were provided through a partnership between the provinces and the respective municipalities -- but largely restricted to white persons until Apartheid ended. Inside the quite impressive building I found a roomy and rather traditional public library, with an adequate but somewhat dated bookstock. My visits to rural public libraries in South Africa suggest that they often play an important role in providing study spaces for students, but in many cases they do not appear to be heavily used by the general public.



R is for **Rhodes University**, in Grahamstown, an important educational centre, also in the Eastern Cape. The university library has had a major facelift and has been significantly extended since I last visited the campus. The new building, opened in 2010, includes many green features and was designed with disabled students in mind. (See <http://www.ru.ac.za/library/aboutus/ournewlibrary/>.) I was warmly received by the Director, Ujala Satgoor, who is the current President of LIASA (Library and Information Association of South Africa), and given a guided tour. There are several attractive and well-equipped reading areas, including a Research Commons for academics and advanced students, and a Postgraduate Commons. All of these spaces are well used. The library website reflects the typical facilities and services one would expect in a university library in North America or Western Europe.

