

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# After the fire: SCOLMA assists the Jagger Library

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Following the devastating fire in April 2021 which destroyed many of the African Studies books in the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town (UCT), SCOLMA offered to coordinate the donation, selection and shipping of replacement books, working in liaison with UCT librarians.

SCOLMA put out a call for Africa-related books in December 2022 and a good response was received from individuals in many parts of the UK. Potential donors were sent spreadsheets to list their titles after checking them against the UCT catalogue. It was important to note that preliminary checking had been completed, and that the author, title, publisher, publication details and book condition were provided.

A list of books recorded on the UCT library catalogue as being ‘lost in the fire’, as well as items not on the catalogue, was sent to UCT librarians, who confirmed which titles they still needed. In total 180 books, of which 123 were lost in the fire and 57 were additional donations or available only online, were requested.

Donors sent their books to Oxford where they were packed into twenty boxes at the Weston Library. These were then transported to the collection point in Oxfordshire in readiness for their next journey to be added to the container in London. Donors included present and past SCOLMA members, former representatives from James Currey, African Books Collective and Hans Zell, as well as SOAS and the International African Institute. The shipment also included several boxes of government papers. A generous donation of books from the Nordic Africa Institute unfortunately missed this shipment but is hoped to be sent direct to Cape Town in due course, funding permitting.

The books were transported to South Africa as part of a shipment organised by the Borien Educational Foundation for Southern Africa (BEFSA),<sup>1</sup> which regularly sends books and equipment to schools in the region, and SCOLMA raised some funds towards the shipping costs. The boxes of books were packed into BEFSA’s container on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://befsa.org>

13 March 2023 and the container was loaded onto the MSC Caterina on 20 March. MSC Caterina set sail from the port of London Gateway in Thurrock, Essex, on Monday 27 March and arrived in Coega (Port Elizabeth) on 29 April. After customs clearance the books were delivered to UCT on 22 May.

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**Cite this article:** McCann, L. and Rhodes, S. (2023). 'After the fire: SCOLMA assists the Jagger Library'. *Africa Bibliography, Research and Documentation* 2, 30–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/abd.2023.7>