

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)
invites you to a mediated interactive discussion on the history of research
in South Africa focussing on

**Aspects of South African science –
from colonial roots to national endeavours**

Date: Thursday, 16 October 2025
Time: 16:00 – 17:30 SAST (1.5-hour session)
Platform: Zoom
RSVP: [Click here](#) to register

BACKGROUND

In 2024, the country marked 30 years of democracy, offering an important moment to reflect on three decades of transformation in the nation's research landscape - and to engage in a dialogue exploring how our scientific enterprise has evolved, its foundations, and its future frontiers. The session aims to bring together a younger and more diverse audience, highlight selected aspects of South Africa's science history, and draw connections across disciplines to spark rich discussion.

PROGRAMME

16:00–16:05	Opening remarks <i>Ms Susan Veldsman</i> , Director, Scholarly Publishing Unit, ASSAf
16:05–16:20	• Professor Saul Dubow - Historical and thematic framing of South African science in global and national contexts
16:20–16:35	• Professor Jane Carruthers - Overview of the trajectory of the history of science in South Africa, framed through the <i>South African Journal of Science</i>
16:35–17:25	Moderated discussion Moderator: <i>Ms Linda Nordling</i> , Science Journalist and Editor
• Professor Saul H. Dubow Smuts Professor of Commonwealth History, University of Cambridge, Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge • Professor Jane Carruthers Emeritus Professor of History, University of South Africa (UNISA) • Professor Robin Crewe Senior Research Fellow, Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria • Professor Thenjiwe Meyiwa Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Mpumalanga • Dr Lumkile Mondli Economist and lecturer in the School of Economics and Finance at the University of the Witwatersrand • Professor Philiswa Nomngongo Professor of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Johannesburg and holder of the DSI–NRF SARCHI Chair • Dr Adrian Tiplady Deputy Managing Director: Strategy & Partnerships, South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) • Professor Patricia Whitelock Astronomer, South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO)	
17:25–18:00	Closure <i>Ms Susan Veldsman</i>

BIOGRAPHIES



Jane Carruthers Jane Carruthers is Professor Emeritus at the University of South Africa, elected Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa and Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa. She is a former President of the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations and of the Southern African Historical Society, Chair of the Academic Board of the Rachel Carson Centre Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Editor-in-Chief of the South African Journal of Science, and recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award from the American Society for Environmental History. Her research interests are broad, and include environment history, national parks, the history of science, land reform and colonial art. Her book, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (1995) has become a standard reference worldwide. She has been awarded numerous visiting fellowships and has published widely in books, book chapters and articles in scholarly journals.



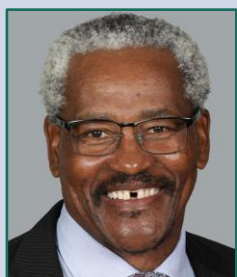
Robin Crewe was born in Johannesburg and studied at Natal University and at the University of Georgia, in the U.S.A. He was the Director of the Communication Biology Research Group of the University of the Witwatersrand that studied honey bee chemical communication systems. He established the Social Insects Research Group (SIRG) at the University of Pretoria (UP) that continues with studies of social insects. He was a Vice-principal of UP from 2003 until his retirement. He is a past President of ASSAf. His current research is on chemical communication and social organisation in honeybees and ants. He was awarded the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship for 2012, the ASSAf Gold Medal for meritorious service in 2013 and in 2019 was the winner of the National Science and Technology Forum-South32 Award for a contribution to Science over a lifetime. He is a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship at the University of Pretoria.



Saul H. Dubow, Smuts Professor of Commonwealth History, University of Cambridge, Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, was born and educated in South Africa (UCT). He lived and worked in Britain. He completed his DPhil in history at the University of Oxford, have taught at Sussex and Queen Mary.



Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa is the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Mpumalanga, appointed by Council on 4 April 2025 and assuming office on 1 October 2025. She previously served at the University of South Africa as Vice-Principal for Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation, following earlier executive roles as Institutional Registrar at Durban University of Technology and Research Director in the Education and Skills Development programme at the HSRC. An NRF-rated social scientist, her scholarly work spans gender studies and indigenous knowledge.



Dr Lumkile Mondi is a South African economist and lecturer in the School of Economics and Finance at the University of the Witwatersrand, where his interests span political economy, macroeconomics, competition and regulation, and public-sector economics. He previously served for eleven years at the Industrial Development Corporation, including as chief economist and divisional executive. Beyond academia, he holds several governance roles, including lead independent director at Gemfields and directorships/chair roles across transport and mining entities. He frequently contributes commentary on South Africa's economy in public forums and media.



Prof Philiswa Nomngongo is a Professor of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Johannesburg and holder of the DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair. Her work advances a “detect-monitor-remove (DMR)” strategy to tackle recalcitrant pollutants - including pesticides, heavy metals, PFAS, and pharmaceuticals/personal-care products—in water and other complex matrices. Motivated by climate- and human-driven threats to South Africa's water security and the country's water-related SDGs, she develops fit-for-purpose analytical methods and applies nanotechnology to environmental problems: from fabricating liquid-chromatographic columns and advanced monitoring techniques to designing nanomaterials for adsorption-based removal of contaminants. She holds an NRF C2 rating.



Linda Nordling is a Cape Town-based freelance science journalist and editor who specializes in African research policy, funding, and science systems. A founding editor of *Research Africa*, she has written widely for outlets including *Nature*, *The Guardian*, *SciDev.Net*, and *Research Professional News*, reporting on the politics and practice of science across the continent. Her recent work includes features and analysis on higher education, health research, and research infrastructures in Africa.



Adrian Tiplady is the Deputy Managing Director at the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory, a national facility of the National Research Foundation that is responsible for implementing South Africa's strategic investments in radio astronomy. For the last two decades Adrian has been primarily involved in South Africa's participation in the international SKA project – from the original compilation of Africa's successful bid to host the SKA, to the negotiation and establishment of the SKA Observatory as an inter-governmental treaty organisation and subsequent establishment of a legally protected South African site to host the SKA telescope. He has specific research interest in delivering impact through research infrastructures.



Susan Veldsman is Director of the Scholarly Publication Unit at the Academy of Sciences in South Africa, responsible for driving the Open Science agenda, to raise the visibility, discoverability and accessibility of South African scholarly journals, improve the quality of SA research output, and support the development of policy frameworks in order to facilitate optimal use and access to publicly funded research. In 2017, she received the Electronic Publishing Trust (EPT) award for her outstanding contribution to the promotion of Open Access in Developing Countries. Recently, she was the Co-chair of the IAP Report on “Combatting Predatory Journals and Conferences”, which was launched on the 16th March 2022. She also received special recognition for her role in establishing the SciELO SA platform in South Africa at the most recent SciELO 25 years celebrations.



Patricia Whitelock is affiliated to the South African Astronomical Observatory and Astronomy Department at the University of Cape Town, where she is an honorary Professor. She is currently the project manager for the South African collaboration with the Vera C. Rubin Observatory and Chairs the South African LSST committee. She was Director of the SAAO. She started the National Astrophysics and Space Science Program (NASSP) and chaired its steering committee for its first twelve years. She has also been President of the South African Institute of Physics and of the Scientific Council for the Strasbourg Astronomical Data Centre, France. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, De Beers Gold Medalist of the South African Institute of Physics, holds a Doctor of Laws (HC) from Rhodes University, and is a Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences. She has published widely in astronomy and has an h-index of 62.