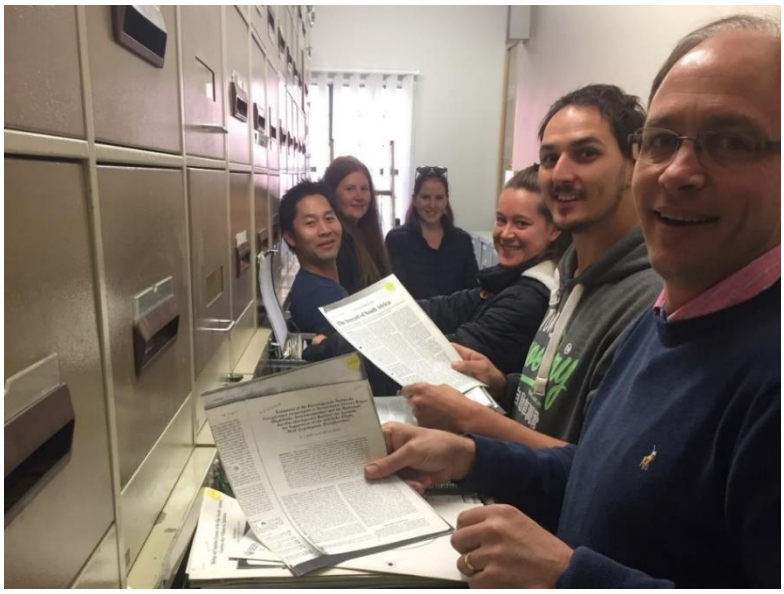
THE END OF AN ERA WHEN REPRINTS OF SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES DOMINATED RESEARCH

For many decades, researchers depended on collections of reprints of scientific papers to maintain easy access to the literature. It was common practice for researchers to purchase reprints of their papers and to share these with colleagues globally. When photocopy technology emerged in the 1970s, it became possible for scientists to make copies of papers and to add these to collections of their reprints. The Tree Health team at FABI depended for many years on a very large collection of copies of papers and reprints.

Former Director of FABI, Prof Mike Wingfield, initiated this collection and began with papers dating back to his undergraduate years. This collection moved around with Mike as he progressed through his studies, first to the University of Minnesota then back to Stellenbosch, later to the University of the Free State and then in 1998 to Pretoria when FABI was established. As students joined the team and deposited their reprints, this collection grew to more than 40,000 papers, mostly covering topics pertaining to tree pest and disease problems globally.



The era of reprint collections effectively ended when it became possible to store papers in PDF format on computers. And this was also the time when the FABI tree health reprint collection ceased to grow and to be used actively for research purposes. The group now share extensive collections of PDF copies of papers, all efficiently filed using databases such as EndNote. The time came when the FABI Tree Health reprint collection needed to be rationalised and for the extensive space used to maintain it to be used more effectively. Those papers not easily accessible via the Internet or of some historical importance needed to be identified and saved. And the bulk of the papers now available electronically could be recycled. Prof. Bernard Slippers, Director of FABI, undertook this mammoth task with a group of FABIans, marking the end of the FABI Tree Health reprint collection.