

ESARBICA NEWSLETTER

2011 Issue 22 Jan - Mar



Inside this Issue

Editorial	1
A lone journey, but a worthwhile quest – Dr Francois Verster	2
National Archives of Zimbabwe – 75 years (1935 - 2010) of archival expedition – Rumbidzai Kambasha	3
Does oral history have a place in the archives or is it just a fallacy? – Tshepho Mosweu	4
Tanzania Develops a National Records and Archives Management Policy: A long awaited tool to support good governance in the public sector - Gwakisa A. Kamatula	5
On a lighter note	6
Employee Excuses for not doing Records Management	6
Did you know?	6

Editorial

In this issue we have four articles from archival luminaries and institutions in eastern and southern Africa. Dr Francois Verster, an archival diva from the Nasper Company Archive, takes us through a challenging journey of his transition from the state archives to the private company archives. Even though he indicates that there is a flickering light (not of the on-coming train) at the end of the tunnel, it would seem that there are challenges for archivists in the private sector, as it is in the public sector.

Rumbidzai Kambasha, editor of Zimbabwe National Archives publications, shares with us the celebration of the 75 years (1935-2010) of Zimbabwe National Archives' archival expedition. Tshepho Mosweu, a young voice from Botswana National Archives, bemoans that archivists from ESARBICA region should be involved in oral history to supplement written sources and fill the gaps that may exist in the people's history especially regarding events that transpired before independence.

Progress in Tanzania involves the formulation of a national policy framework on archives and records management in 2010 to support good governance in the public sector. In this regard, Gwakisa Kamatula, from Tanzania Public Service College shares with us the objectives of the Tanzanian national policy framework.

To sustain ESARBICA newsletter, we need your active participation through submission of articles, case studies in archives, records management and oral history. Future contributions to the newsletter can be forwarded to Mr Mpho Ngoepe at mphongoepe@tsamail.co.za or Prof. Patrick Ngulube at ngulup@unisa.ac.za. The editors would like to thank the contributors for this issue.

Editors
Mpho Ngoepe and Patrick Ngulube

EDITORS



Mr Mpho Ngoepe



Prof. Patrick Ngulube

A lone journey, but a worthwhile quest

Dr Francois Verster, Nasper Company Archivist

After 25 years in the civil service, first teaching, then as archivist at the Cape Town Archives and Records Service, I made the jump: I joined the media company Naspers, one of the largest in Africa in 2007.

At the provincial archives I was in charge of outreach and the work was tough, but rewarding – I wrote articles, gave presentations (at the community centres, schools and libraries), organised meetings and lectures, created displays and initiated oral history programmes, but then ... I needed new challenges. Hopefully with better pay and some recognition as well - I was happy to go.

The Naspers archive was located in a strong-room in the government building I worked since 1991, so I still saw my former colleagues, but with little interaction – and even less of that with my new colleagues. The Naspers headquarters is at the other end of Cape Town, at the foreshore, while the provincial archives repository is way up in Roeland Street, overlooking the mother city. I was quite on my own.

Once a month I would walk down from my windowless room on the fourth floor to meet with my supervisor, who never visited my workplace. The money was better and no-one harassed me, but there were other challenges. The first was logistical: power surges destroyed two computers and a printer. I moved the new printer to another room and connected a 21 metre lead to a socket down the passage. Then the lights started to go out – 19 of them. Nobody bothered to replace them. Then the air conditioning broke down – I worked in shorts and a t-shirt, with itching sinuses. I told my supervisor we needed to go. Soon! For several months, I looked around for a new workplace.

One morning – I always arrived at 6h00, the fire alarm went off – every 17 seconds. For three days. I went home - refused to return before the banshee was throttled. Eventually it was simply switched off, not repaired. Then the fire extinguishing system was malfunctioning and to top it all, books disappeared from the strong-room. It was really time to go.

Then I was allocated an office just across the street from head office. But there was the problem of storage space – almost one linear kilometre of archives needed a home too, while office space is quite expensive. The solution was outsourcing. I approached a company who imported scanning equipment. They have storage facilities at Montagu Gardens, about 7 kilometres outside the city. They also would provide an electronic database – a search engine called Alchemy.

Within two months the trek was completed and the Naspers archive was catapulted into the new millennium. So, the Naspers's archives, a mass of records which had been moved from the basement of company headquarters up to Roeland Street (just after that archives building was completed in 1989), were again transported – this time downhill, literally, but hopefully not figuratively. Whatever the outcome, a new era had begun: the dark ages were also history and cyber space beckoned.

The scanning process was a joint effort: I channelled records to the “conveyor belt” - First Coast Technology's teams of sorters, scanners and IT-boffins; ensuring the correct numbering of 50 separate inventories. We complemented each other: I was the archive specialist, and they fed the hungry beast that is Alchemy. Eventually 5 million images were crammed into this behemoth. And still new titbits keep coming from the dozens of components. The paper trails of electronic and print media all lead to the computer in my office. I am king of a huge mountain of information, compressed like a many-faceted diamond.

After the newspaper Die Burger was founded in 1915, Nasionale Pers eventually mushroomed into a multi-media giant, with the electronic products alone generating about 6 billion rand (60% of its income). Since M-Net was created by the enigmatic Koos Bekker, this company (listed on the JSE in 1994) lead the way to new markets. At present (February 2011) Naspers has offices in 160 countries.

This sounds wonderful, but also daunting – if you are the company archivist, you are the king of a hill so high that you become invisible from the ground. For, just like the provincial archivist has to constantly battle to make him/herself known (or noticed!), so it is with company archivists. I now reside in a large office with a stunning view of table Mountain (air-con ticks over like a Rolls Royce, thank you), with scanners, printers, laptops - the works, and slowly, excruciatingly slowly, putting together a support network inside and outside the company.

My outreach/marketing skills are again a saving grace: I attend book launches, write reviews, play roving reporter at literary and related conferences, lecture, act as external examiner, mentor and record manager, write history articles for internet websites, etc., etc. Variety is one spice I have in abundance.

Evidently, one has to have skills – the more the better. And a hunger to learn – I added a diploma in Journalism (CPUT, 2007) and a masters in Journalism (Stellenbosch, 2010) to diplomas in teaching and archival science and an honours and masters in history (1992) and a DPhil in cultural history (2003), while working full time, as well as a freelance journalist on an almost daily basis. Work and personal focuses merged: I am the Naspers archive, and the archive is me – I am the face of this enterprise. Somebody has to be!

Free time is a scarce commodity – I practically gave up graphic arts, but at least my writing skills are improving! Moreover, I am sitting on a treasure of information, being the sole “portal” to the Naspers archive: both guard dog and guide dog - for researchers.

It is up to me to implement this resource the best I can, while facilitating information. And to spread this message: archivists are in short supply, but archives are accumulating rapidly - there is a bright future for this profession.

National Archives of Zimbabwe - 75 years (1935 - 2010) of archival expedition

Rumbidzai Kambasha, National Archives of Zimbabwe

An Act of Parliament founded the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) in 1935 and enforced it as an institution mandated with the task of keeping the nations records. It acts as the storehouse of the nation's history. Under the theme 'Celebrating 75 years of Archival Excellency,' the National Archives celebrated its 75th year of existence in 2010.

In 1935 the importance of preserving, conserving and acquiring public archives was noted and through Independence (1980) and Zimbabwe's Economic meltdown, the importance is still being noted. Through various activities, NAZ managed to showcase and highlight its journey to the people. 75@30 referred to 75 years of archiving and 30 years of independence.

The NAZ in collaboration with the Spanish Embassy and the National Art Gallery held a photo exhibition entitled 75@30, Moments from People's History. This exhibition was sponsored by the Spanish Embassy so as to highlight the importance and effectiveness of the Illustrations Office and the pictorial collection at the National Archives of Zimbabwe.

It was a really successful exhibition with different embassies invited and other people being in a position to purchase some of the photos.

It was during this same exhibition that it was noted that the collection within the Illustrations Office had a long gap which needed to be covered.

The gap was from independence to date and because of the success of the Exhibition, it was decided that a photo contest be held that will

also be in line with the celebrations. So the competition was held which was open to all people from Zimbabwe and it ran for nine months. The final were held on October 9 and three winners walked away with different prizes all sponsored by the National Archives and the Spanish Embassy.

Before the photo contest finals were held, the same exhibition was taken to the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) so as to showcase the exhibition in a different part of Zimbabwe were foreign countries meeting to trade. It was also a success there.

The institution held an end of year party that was different from all the parties that are normally held. This was simply because of the anniversary that was being celebrated. Former employees were invited and long service awards were given.

To seal off the activities that were being done to celebrate the anniversary, a professional symposium was carried out to cater for the professional side of Archival Administration. Directed by Prof. Patrick Ngulube from UNISA, the symposium gave speakers from within Africa an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with different Archives in Africa. Various speakers from Kenya, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe all highlighted the achievements that have been made by the National Archives of Zimbabwe in the past 75 years. Achievements have been made and Archival Excellency is still being seen. The speakers included Prof. Nathan Mnjama from the University of Botswana and Ms Elizabeth Ouma from the National Museums of Kenya.



(a) one of the photos being exhibited. Boy with tobacco leaves



(b) invited guests at the exhibition



(c) the runner up photo – a boy doing laundry



(d) the photo that won the first prize—the Government of National Unity (GNU)



The above photographs showing the National Archives' stand with the photo exhibition.



Photographs taken at the Professional Symposium, with people being educated and also enjoying themselves



Does Oral History have a place in the Archives or is it just a fallacy?

Tshepo Mosweu,
Archivist: Botswana National Archives and Records Service

Some scholars believe that archivists should not concern themselves with conducting oral history interviews as they already have too much work load or archivists will be contributing to the record creation or even that oral history cannot be validated as a true reflection of what actually transpired. But these arguments should not prevent the archivist from conducting oral history interviews especially in Africa where histories were not fully documented before the arrival of the colonialists. Traditionally, histories were passed from generation to another through word of mouth among African societies as the art of writing was very limited. It is a well-known fact that the elderly members of any of the African societies possess a wealth of knowledge as regards to their histories. There is no other means of preserving that knowledge unless it is collected through oral history interviews. It's therefore scary if these histories are not adequately captured and preserved for future generation to know about. With the advent of globalization and other ills brought about by modernization, we face the

danger of losing our histories and that would culminate into robbing future generations of who we really are as a people.

It seems like oral history collection is not given the priority it deserves in archival institutions, especially in the ESARBICA region. National archival institutions should play an important role in collecting these histories as they supplement written sources and fill the gaps that may exist in the people's history especially regarding events that transpired before independence. As the custodian of our heritage, archives are better placed to collect and preserve oral history. It is upon the scholars, especially African archivists to devise ways of ensuring that oral histories are authentic, reliable and trustworthy just like other type of archives. It is high time that African archivists through associations like ESARBICA come up with standards and guidelines of collecting and preserving oral histories and encourage their members to channel the necessary resources towards their oral history programme.

Tanzania Develops a National Records and Archives Management Policy: A long awaited tool to support good governance in the public service

Gwakisa A. Kamatula
Tanzania Public Service College-Tabora

Records management is a key function of the government programmes and services, and is therefore, an information base of the government. As such, over the past decade, Tanzania has had made great progress to establish a solid foundation for managing government records. From 1997 to date (2011), a records management improvement programme, focusing on subject files, has been undertaken in government ministries, departments and agencies. The aim of these initiatives was to decongest and restructure registries, to introduce new guidance and procedures for organizing, managing paper records and to train records management personnel. The formulation and adoption of records management scheme of service has opened the way for a comprehensive and integrated approach to the knowledge and skills required across the records and archives field. The enactment of the Records and Archives Management Act (Act No. 3 of 2002) which gave the Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) full mandate to control and advice on all issues pertaining to records and archives management was also a significant step forward.

However, despite all such progresses, Tanzania has had no national policy on records and archives management. This has resulted in delays in decision-making process, denial of citizens' rights, corruption, lack of accountability and unauthorized access to government information; thus undermining the government efforts to enforce good governance and the rule of law. ISO 15489-1, (2001: 5) requires that; "Organizations should define and document a policy for records management. The objective of the policy should be the creation and management of authentic, reliable and useable records, capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required". Following this fact, Tanzania finally formulated the Records and Archives Management Policy in 2010.

The policy, sets out a framework within which records and archives of the United Republic of Tanzania can be managed in accordance with statutory requirements and international standards to ensure reliability, authenticity, integrity, and usability for the national development. Moreover, the policy applies to all types of records whether subject file or case files, transaction records or the specialized records generated, received and maintained by government offices. It also applies to records of national interest generated, received and maintained by private sector and individuals, regardless of their form and/or medium. This policy also covers those records and archives of the Union matters as stipulated in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 Article 4(3) 1st schedule.

This policy intends to provide a reliable, effective and efficient records and archives management services for the achievement of National Vision, mission, goals and strategies. In order to achieve the above vision and mission, this policy has the following objectives:

- I. To ensure reliable, accurate and complete evidence -based decision, action and transaction or communication;
- I. To ensure reliable, accurate and complete evidence -based decision, action and transaction or communication;
- II. To ensure accessibility of public records and archives for as long as they are needed to support the legitimate information needs of government and citizens,
- III. To promote public trust, optimise information sharing and re-use and reduce duplication in accordance with legal and policy obligations;
- IV. To ensure safety and security of public and private records;
- V. To acquire and preserve records of enduring value to the nation from public offices, private institutions and individuals; and
- VI. To optimize public participation in preservation of records and archives for the development of the nation.

Conclusion

Formulating a policy is one thing, and effecting and implementing it is another. As stated by ISO 15489-1, Organizations should ensure that the policy is communicated and implemented at all levels in the organization. This calls the National Records and Archives Management Department (RAMD) of Tanzania which has been charged with the responsibility of enforcing and monitoring compliance to the policy; to ensure that the policy is disseminated and implemented in all government and private departments in the Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. However, it is not yet known when the department is going to effect the policy and whether it has set aside sufficient fund for the purpose. Stay tuned!

On a lighter note

A young monk arrives at the monastery. He is assigned to helping the other monks in copying the old canons and laws of the church by hand. He notices, however, that all of the monks are copying from copies, not from the original manuscript. So, the new monk goes to the head abbot to question this, pointing out that if someone made even a small error in the first copy, it would never be picked up. In fact, that error would be continued in all of the subsequent copies.

The head monk says, "We have been copying from the copies for centuries, but you make a good point, my son." So, he goes down into the dark cellar underneath the monastery where the original manuscripts are held as archives in a locked vault that hasn't been opened for hundreds of years.

Hours go by and nobody sees the old abbot. So, the young monk gets worried and goes down to look for him. He sees him banging his head against the wall and wailing, "We missed the "R", we missed the "R". His forehead is all bloody and bruised and he is crying uncontrollably.

The young monk asks the old abbot, "What's wrong, father?" With a choking voice, the old abbot replies, "The word was CELEBRATE not CELIBATE!"

Employee Excuses for not doing Records Management

- Employee's toe was injured when he kicked the filing cabinet.
- Employee's psychic told them not to.
- None of my files are involved in litigation.
- I don't want to remember the past.
- If I file it, I'll know where it is but never need it. If I don't file it, I'll need it but never know where it is.
- Hunting for important documents adds excitement to a boring schedule.
- Stacking papers on your desk protects it from ultraviolet radiation.
- Being as confused as everyone else helps you fit in.
- Moving piles of paper keeps you in shape
- Confusion brings out the best in you.
- Organization kills creativity.
- Shuffling papers prevents dust from piling up.



Did you know?

The Cape Archives Repository (CAR) contains the oldest paper-based record of South Africa generated by the Dutch East India Company (DEIC)/Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) which governed the Cape from 1652 to 1795. The oldest record in the holdings is a resolution created on board Jan van Riebeeck's ship "the Dromedaries" dated 30 December 1651, therefore written a few months before arrival at the Cape. This consisted of the deliberations of Jan van Riebeeck and his advisors.

Source: Verster, F. 2007. 72 Roeland street: the home of our history. Village life, 22:18-21.