# Digitisation

## A panacea for Increased Access to Historical Information at the National Archives of Zambia.

# by

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# Introduction and Context

- Archives administration in Zambia is the mandate Archives of Zambia (NAZ).

- This mandate is derived from the National Archives Act Chapter 175 of the Laws of Zambia, 1995 edition.

- The Act is meant to provide for the preservation, custody, control and disposal of public records and archives.

- The National Archives of Zambia holds a lot of archival information.

# ARCHIVAL INFORMATION

- These records of any public or private institutions, which have been preserved for reference and research purposes.

- They enable better quality planning ,decision making and action by providing for continuity ,access to the past experiences ,expertise and knowledge ,and a historical perspectives.

- Archival information is useful as it enables consistency and effectiveness of human action.

# VALUE OF ARCHIVAL INFORMATION

- The value of archival information can only be seen when it is used.

- Archival information must actually be available and accessible.

- National Archival Institutions need to bridge the gap between archival information and users.

- One of the ways of bridging this gap is by digitisation of archival information.

# DIGITISATION

- This process of transforming analog material into digital format.( Pearce –Moses,2005)
- This the process by which analogue contents is converted into a sequence of 1s (ones) and 0s (zeros) and put into a binary code to be readable by computer. (Hughes ,2004)
- It is the transformation of analogue information from whatever form and from whatever support to digital code using computer technologies

# DIGITISATION AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZAMBIA

- The archives that were digitized were the BSAC's records (1890-1924 ) called District Note books.
- The District Notebooks are a unique and valuable source of historical, political, administrative, ethnographical and anthropological information.
- The District Notebooks are the most requested items among the National Archives of Zambia's holdings .
- Additionally, historical maps, photographs and newspapers have been digitised

# Objective of digitisation

- To safeguard and ensure the preservation of the most valuable and perishable components of the archival patrimony of the National Archives of Zambia through digitization.

- To render them more accessible and facilitate their future fruition by a broader number of researchers and interested parties.

# Objectives continues

- To enable a select group of National Archives of Zambia's members of staff to gain theoretical knowledge and practical experience in electronic records management and website design, and in the selection and indexing of archival materials
- To enhance the national and international visibility of the National Archives of Zambia by increasing awareness of its holdings.

# After the digitisation process,

- An extensive database was  created to facilitate the access of archival information.
- A multimedia room was expanded for the installation at National Archives of Zambia with a software and hardware available therein to provide users with the means to consult digitised information.
-  computers were installed in the research room to enable researchers utilise the digitised materials through simple keyword searches.
- The dissemination of information on what materials were digitised  was enhanced through the creation of the website and posters in the research room to assist researchers know what has been digitised.

# Statement of the Problem

- Despite this intervention, researchers have continued to request for the physical materials and still use and handle the fragile materials.

- There has been no research to evaluate the failure or successes of the digitisation project undertaken by the National Archives of Zambia.

# Objectives of the Study

- To determine the extent to which the ICT services provided by the National Archives of Zambia are used.

- To determine the extent to which the ICT services provided by the National Archives of Zambia meet the user needs.

- To make recommendations on how best the National Archives of Zambia can provide archival information using ICTs.

# Rationale of the study

It was expected that the findings of the research would help the department identify gaps and weaknesses in accessing archival information and subsequently  measures be taken to bring about effective use of digitised materials by researchers and staff at National archives of Zambia.

# Literature review

- The Institute of Museum and Library Services (2006), after conducting a survey of archives, museums, public and academic libraries, and state library administrative agencies, announced that 94 percent of archives have reported some digitisation activity over the past year.

- Asogwa(2011) submits that  more institutions are developing digitization initiative, and hundreds of libraries, museums, history, and archives have launched projects designed to digitize their collections and place them on the web .

# Reasons for digitisation

- The main advantage of digitisation increased access of archival information to researchers.

- Multiple users can view the same materials simultaneously.

- Researchers no longer need to spend  time and money travelling to the archival institution to research as they can do this where ever they are as long as they have the necessary computer facilities. (DeGracia ,2009)

# Reasons continues

- Digitisation also improves the quality of that access. For instance, materials from different collections located thousands of miles apart can be viewed side by side in a researcher's living room.( Smith,1999)

- Digital versions of documents can be manipulated to aid a researcher in ways that the original object cannot. An example  is the digitization of a 1791 architectural plan of the District of Columbia, which  cannot be used by researchers and yields little detailed information to the unaided eye.

- However, its digital counterpart can be enhanced in size, sharpness, and colour so that users can decipher the details of the map and understand the planning of the nation's capital. (Smith in DeGracia ,2009)

# Reasons continues

- DeGracia (2009) argues that digitisation of archival documents reduces some of the costs faced by the archival operation providing access. For instance, the time archival staffs require serving the public when dealing with paper records. ,

- Asogwa (2011) summarised that digitisation of archival materials has tremendous benefits for administration, education and research as digital materials can be read in new and creative ways and may be delivered directly to end-users, and retrieved remotely.

# Methodology

- The research was conducted at the National Archives of Zambia headquarters in Lusaka where the digitisation was done and hence research services being offered.

- At the time of the research there were 120 registered researchers and all of them were picked as respondents.

- A questionnaire, which contained both opened and closed ended questions used to collect data.

- The data collected was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

# Presentation and Discussion of the findings

- According to the research findings, it was established that 70% of the researchers interviewed were aware of the availability of digitised materials.

- It was further discovered that the majority of the respondents indicated that they accessed digital archives very often.

# Presentation and Discussion of the findings

- The research revealed that the majority of the respondents consisting 65% claimed that they were able to find digital archival information easily and quickly than when using physical documents.

- In terms of efficiency in accessing digitized archival information on the computers, the study found that the majority 50% of the respondents mentioned that it was fairly effective and 20% mentioned it to be very effective, while a few mentioned that it was not effective.

# Presentation and Discussion of the findings

- However, the majority researchers  (70%) indicated that the computer terminals  were inadequate and suggested   that more computers should be provided.

# Presentation and Discussion of the findings

- In investigating whether or not the members of staff were helpful in assisting the researchers in retrieving relevant information. The research findings indicated that 65% of the researchers said that they were very helpful and 35% said they were helpful.

- In an attempt to ascertain the rating of the competence of the National Archives of Zambia members of staff computer skills, 65% of the respondents said they are very competent while 35% said they are competent.

# Recommendations

- National Archives of Zambia should provide more computers for researchers to use, as the two computers that are used to access archival information, which has been digitized, are not adequate.

- National Archives of Zambia members of staff should guide researchers by providing information on what has been digitized and can be accessed on the computer terminals.

- A guide or manual should be given to all researchers especially those using the National Archives for the first time.

# Conclusion

The provision of digital archival  information through Information, Communication and Technologies requires proper and adequate facilities to allow users access the required information effectively and efficiently.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION