

E-RECORDS READINESS AT THE NATION ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE

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INTRODUCTION

- The dawn of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has been embraced by a number of institutions, including archival institutions as seen by the benefits that can be derived from employing such tools.
- With the adoption of e-government, a lot of electronic records are being generated by public institutions.
- The generation of electronic records by public sector institutions poses an effect on the operations of national archival institutions.
- Archival institutions should be able to accept electronic records produced by government departments since these records are vital to the operation of the country and its citizens.

THE CONCEPT OF E-GOVERNMENT

- There are different views as to what constitute e-government. Most definitions touch on part of what e-government is (Ngulube, 2010).
- It involves the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the delivery of government services and information, enhance the efficiency and accountability of the public administration and strengthen economic performance (IRMT, 2004; Onyacha, 2009; Kumar et al., 2007; World Bank, 2004).
- The implementation of e-government in the world has necessitated the emergence of electronic records hence e-records issues are inseparable from e-government issues.

E-GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE

- The history of ICT in general and e-government in particular in Zimbabwe can be traced back to 1972 with the institution of the Central Computing Services (CSS), which was aimed at providing ICT services to the public service (Comesa, 2011).
- This was then followed with the adoption of the Integrated Results Based Management (IRBM) System in 2005, in which the government is an integral component and one of the three important underpinnings of the main pillars or cornerstones of the system.
- Examples of initiatives which have so far been undertaken by the Zimbabwe Government towards e-Governance are the PFMS and ZIPMAS systems. The Public Finance Management System (PFMS) is an electronic system used within Government to process financial transactions.

E-GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE (CONT'D)

- The Zimbabwe Integrated Performance Management Solution (ZIPMAS) is also a consolidated electronic system used within Government of Zimbabwe for reporting, evaluating and processing financial transactions and staff appraisals.
- Having highlighted the concept of e-governance in Zimbabwe, it has become clear that electronic records are being generated in Zimbabwe's public sector and hence the need for proper e-records management which is required for government accountability, good governance and the protection of human rights.

THE CONCEPT OF E-READINESS AND E-RECORDS READINESS

- By definition and scope, e-readiness and e-records readiness are distinct concepts but highly complementary (Kalusopa, 2011).
- E-readiness forms a platform for e-records readiness (Moloi, 2009).
- E-readiness measures how well a society is positioned to utilize the opportunities provided by ICT.

THE CONCEPT OF E-READINESS AND E-RECORDS READINESS (CONT'D)

- E-readiness thus is the generic degree to which a society is prepared to participate in an e-environment; e-records readiness goes far beyond to measure the extent to which organisations have e-records management systems that ensure that e-records, like counterpart traditional paper records, are captured, managed and conform to the obligatory recordkeeping practices that ensure that records are protected for informational and evidential purposes (IRMT, 2004).

ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS AND E-RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- facilitate the establishment of policies, procedures, systems, standards and practices designed to assist records creators to create and retain records which are authentic, reliable and preservable;
- be involved in the entire records life cycle (conception, creation, maintenance) to ensure the capture, preservation and continued accessibility of records identified as having archival value;
- manage the review of records in order to identify those of archival value; and
- articulate requirements for preservation and accessibility to ensure that archival records remain available, accessible, and understandable through time.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE AND E-RECORDS READINESS

- The National Archives of Zimbabwe seeks to be the leading custodian and provider of the documentary heritage of Zimbabwe as evidenced by the mission statement.
- Its mission is to acquire, preserve and provide public access to Zimbabwean documentation **in whatever format**, in an efficient and economic manner.
- NAZ therefore should be able to render advice, accept, maintain and preserve records in **any format** including **electronic records**.
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NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE AND E-RECORDS READINESS (CONT'D)

- Nengomasha (2009) alludes to the fact that an investigation or an assessment of e- records readiness should be conducted in order to establish the status of e-records management and whether or not the environment is conducive for the creation and preservation of e-records.
- A brief questionnaire was sent to the NAZ director so as to ascertain the extent to which NAZ is ready to handle e-records from government departments.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

- NAZ does not have the adequate infrastructure to cater for e-records preservation. However, it was revealed from the study that NAZ is in the process of formulating an electronic records keeping system under the Temporary Digital Repository.
- While most of the staff members at NAZ are computer literate, there is a need for special training to enhance IT capabilities of employees who are going to be involved directly on the preservation of e-records as it is a specialised field.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD (CONT'D)

- There is a lack of an ICT policy, thus, standards for managing e-records are not clearly laid down.
- This leads to a need for standardisation in the maintenance of e-records within the creating departments, in a similar fashion as standards exist for the management of paper records.
- There are departments that are producing e-records, for example, the Central Vehicle Registry (CVR), Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and Tourism. NAZ is not performing an active role in managing these e-records.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD (CONT'D)

- In paving way for a viable e-government strategy and e-readiness, there is a need for a legislative and policy framework that facilitates smooth flow of operations within the e-environment.
- There is a need for restructuring the NAZ Act, bringing out clearly e-records management, lessons learnt from the South African Archives Act: which clearly defines the formats covered.
- Therefore there is a need for NAZ to play a proactive role by stipulating the premises in which e-records can be maintained within the creating departments and the archival institution.



THANK YOU