

# SASA PRESENTATION 2014



*"We must change or will be irrelevant": an evaluation of the National Archives of Zimbabwe operations: Cathrine Moyo*



# **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The National Archives and Records Administration of America Archivist Carlin in 1995 had an opening speech which had the quotation ““We must change or will be irrelevant” becomes the cornerstone of this presentation. The same sentiment is what rings a bell to any archivist in Africa and perhaps world over when one considers the role the archives play in preserving the nation’s history.

This presentation focuses on the role the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) plays in the changing environment in preserving the national documentary heritage. The NAZ is the storehouse of the documentary heritage of Zimbabwe mandated to acquire preserve and give access to documentary heritage, in whatever format. The NAZ has to be reflective of the changing environment in which access needs to be ascertained but balancing that with preservation. The sentiments portrayed by the quotation reflect that through the passage of time archives should brace up for change if they are to remain relevant. The thrust of the paper is hinged on the need to move from just passive recipients of archives to being active archivists who think out of the box. Archivists have to move with the times.



- ❖ This presentation will evaluate the NAZ preparedness to embrace changes in acquiring, processing, preserving and giving access to archival holdings in the new information epoch and establishing virtual archives. Issues on legislation, implementation of policies, use of ICTs, processing, preservation and giving access to archival holdings will be analyzed. The presentation will explore the use of electronic records and how NAZ's role has shifted in acquisition. The use of ICTs in having a turn-around in the changes to be incorporated if a virtual archives can be established. The presentation will highlight the impending environmental changes which makes change a pivotal issue in archival holdings. Challenges: Information Technology, the operating environment, acquisition, processing, preservation and accessing of the documentary heritage. The demise of the archival holdings is imminent and unavoidable if strides are not taken to correct the imbalances of access.



- ❖ The opening statement expresses the difficulties faced by third world countries particularly Zimbabwe in its pursuit of establishing a virtual archives. The statement truly reflects the predicament the country is in. The sentiments expressed present a picture where the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) is caught up in a web of the advancement of Information Technology while it faces the stringent issues of technological obsolescence. The pressures of the global village seem to place the NAZ in a difficult position in which it is faced with so many challenges which include training facilities, electronic records capabilities, technological obsolescence, high staff turnover, budgetary constraints and the general archival environment. The first world is rapidly changing ways of accessing archival holdings while the third world countries are lagging behind. The issue to be raised in this presentation is whether transformations should be shared, aided or left to overhaul systems as and when governments of the day decide to change the course of events. The question to be asked is whether the rapid changes in this global village should be only for the first world countries. Meanwhile we celebrate the successes of the first world countries how do we deal with the archival retrieval systems of the third world countries? In the quest of the first world countries attaining digital excellence do they have room for the third world countries by assisting them to excel and aim at establishing meaningful virtual archives like theirs? How are we as third world countries expected to rally behind systems which are difficult for us to attain? Do first world countries offer any assistance in building virtual archives for the third world countries? The summation of the presentation concludes that while virtual archives are the 21<sup>st</sup> century reflection of growth Zimbabwe lags behind but has no choice but to keep trailing.



# THE PROVISIONS STIPULATED BY NAZ LEGISLATION

To provide for the storage and preservation of public Archives and public records; for the declaration and preservation of protected historical records; for the repeal of the National Archives Act [*Chapter 309*]; and for matters incidental to or connected with the foregoing.

## Mission Statement

NAZ's mission statement is "To acquire, preserve and provide public access to Zimbabwean documentation in whatever format, in an efficient and economic manner."

The legislation has its short comings, it does not specify the important aspect of archives which is access. It stipulates that it is interested in public records and archive and it does not enunciate the new kid on the block electronic records. The mission statement at least covers the short comings by specifying access and documentation in whatever format. The challenges involved are central to the provisions of the legislation.



# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Information Technology has presented archivists with various challenges but while opening up new possibilities for controlling records, storing them in less space, preserving them electronically and providing worldwide access. The statement focuses on the need to change if we are to remain relevant.

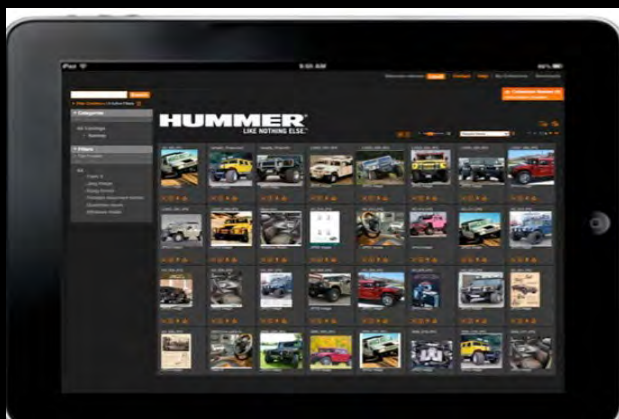
The statement indicates that there are changes to be made because of time, environment and technological changes.

Digital and mobile assimilation in the archival world changes the outlook of archives. Archivists should brace up for changes occurring with the echelons of the information age. The information age has brought of changes in acquisition, preservation and access to archival holdings. The NAZ is facing a whole lot of challenges in remaining afloat and remaining relevant. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is an epoch where the young generation has taken Information Communication Technologies by storm. The NAZ is faced with reinventing itself and accept the existence of diverse dichotomies and archival models and practices that may tend to rebuke legacy practices. Pringlinger 2007.



# Web 2.0

The use of Web 2.0 has an impact on archival preservation and access. Real time communication has brought in a different way to visualize archival preservation and access. Blogging, Facebook, twitter and various social media has enabled real time communication. The issue of real time communication has an impact on archival preservation. Preservation has been affected by digitization of archives, if careful policies and stringent measures are not put in place to oversee the preservation of archival material created during these transactions the archives will have a blank period and missing strides in holdings. The use of web logs, podcasts, social blogging, wikis and social networks can be utilized for marketing archival holdings. It has been noted by Tapscott and Williams 2006 :12 that archivists are obliged to harness the new collection or perish. The words of Carlins 1994 echo on the same predicament. Accordingly Prelinger 2012:118 indicated that “absent an aggressive and enthusiastic populism the archives risk irrelevancy and increased marginalization.” In so many words the archivists have been warned of the impending danger of their demise it is up to them to keep the ball in the court.





# Access to archives



Access to archives should be at least accessible in the form of lists and the newly processed archives can be posted on the website and even accessible through mobile phones. The use of Web 2.0 technologies puts archivists in a corner where they need to reinvent themselves if they are going to make their holdings more accessible and relevant to society. Murambiwa and Ngulube 2011. 89 Murambiwa citing Tapscott and Williams 2006) noted the change in technology which has ushered in Wikinomics which is based on the principle of openness, peering, sharing and acting globally while working collaboratively.

There is a strong belief that while archivists have theoretically accepted the indivisibility of its two primary missions, preservation and access, archivists tend to privilege preservation. Prelinger 2007. Preservation without access is useless. This has been cited by so many authors Moyo 2002, Ngulube 2006, Ngulube 2009 Access will remain a topical and pivotal issue for archives as it is at the core of all archival duties. It is the cornerstone of archival work therefore should be promoted as much as possible. The NAZ 25 year closure period impact negatively on access. There are conflictual pieces of legislation which have been put in place like the Freedom to access Information law. This law guarantees access to all public information but it does not conform to the NAZ Act which has negative connotation towards access.

Access is dependable on what has been processed. Processing archives has been an impediment to archival access. The backlog as indicated by Murambiwa and Ngulube stands at and will take more than 14 years to clear. The challenges of processing impedes access and there should be projects where processing of archives is targeted at. ICA provisions stipulate that operational constraints should not be stumbling blocks to access. There is room for access to be granted to archives whose closure periods have lapsed but without finding aids it will be a Pandora's box. There is also room of providing archives which are processed tailor made to the demands of the researchers' needs. The informatics and index can be utilized in identifying those ones. Selective processing which is targeted at researchers' needs can be prioritized.

# Access to archives



Has the NAZ increased access from 75% - 100% by 2013? What kind of access is constituted by that 100%. The International Council on Archives is interested in promoting liberal access to archives held by government archives. According to Murambiwa one of NAZ's strategic goals under the Results Based Management Scheme is to increase access from 75% - 100%.

Access will always remain topical in archives. It is the ultimate goal of acquisition, processing by describing archives and making finding aids. The archivists and their archival holdings have to remain relevant thus maintaining visibility and utility. The new technologies available on the market can be utilized for accessing archival holdings. NAZ has made frantic efforts in decentralizing archives by creating some finding aids and databases for regional centres use for their researchers. There are still in the process to make the regional records centres full-fledged archival centres. The NAZ has been presented with an opportunity to digitize their collections but the government in place is still sceptical about it. There is a thought that the interested parties such as InterPares have got ulterior motives for such programmes.

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Access is still affected by the 25 year closure period. The archives being generated today can be deleted, unearthed with the new Technology. The new technology has to be strongly considered if archives will remain relevant to clients.



# Access to archives



## Oral History

Oral history has made several strides in acquiring the histories of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe and their ways of living. Proactive use of oral history and the use of it in innovation would assist the archivists in broadening the concept of archiving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is need to have archives converted into interesting phenomenon.

## Issue of Informetrics

Library and Information Science have made strides in forging ahead with innovative ways of moving on with the times. The libraries have sought methods of sustainability and usability while the archives lag behind.

Archives are primary sources which are kept for posterity and useful in ensuring good governance, transparency and accountability. The issue is how ready have archives remained at the fore front as a game changer with the impending technology? Archives present a whole array of knowledge which can be utilised for good governance, accountability, economy and effective heritage and cultural explorations. The uses of archives have been linked to various issues surrounding critical thinking Onyancha. They noted that they are a key to research but the archives are not widely used. The NAZ bears testimony to that. The reading room accommodates 25 users but in the years after 2000 the numbers of users have been fluctuating annually. The same users mostly academic have essentially made NAZ reading rooming their second home. There are very few other users who utilize the reading room besides a few people requesting for genealogical information and academics. Murambiwa and Ngulube in a matrix compiled the statistics as follows

## Adapted from Murambiwa and Ngulube 2011 updated 2014

Year	No of researchers
1999	2 292
2000	4 020
2001	4 088
2002	4 208
2003	3 049
2004	3 628
2005	3 400
2006	3 525
2007	2 346
2008	1 548
2009	1 693
2010	2 347
2011	2 495
2012	2 169
2013	1 580

The issue to be raised with such fluctuations and seemingly dwindling numbers is that there is need to explore other avenues which can put the NAZ back on the map. Informatics presents such a view that the visibility of the archives can be enhanced. Onyancha et al noted that when one researches about information needs one realizes that with the vast amount of archives preserved for posterity archives still are not the first port of call for most researchers. There is evidence that there are no apparent marketing plans in place. Onyancha indicated that archivists seem not to be aware of the potential of use their holdings have. Archivists have remained passive recipients of archival holdings and it seems if they do not market their holdings the archives demise is eminent.

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According to Dearstyne (1987) cited in Onyancha 69 “ archivists have given relatively little attention to the issue of who uses their resources and what difference that use makes ... archivists need to analyse the use of holdings in order to more clearly define their professional mission.” Murambiwa and Ngulube in their concluding remarks indicated that an index to clearly show the use of holdings, the shortcomings in access to be implemented. The index is a wise move to try and stimulate the archivists’ minds on the requirements of the researcher. There are areas of improvement which can be noted and improvements implemented if the index is used. The use of the index and informatics as alluded to by Onyancha can enable the drive to user centric as opposed to material centric. The archivist has mostly worried about preservation more than access. The NAZ Act propelled this as preservation, in fact storage is still the legislative mandate the NAZ has. Archivists need not to keep hanging to preservation only without making their holdings accessible. The modern day archivists should be at the fore front of the floodgates of archives not impediments to access. The library services have on the other hand enjoyed the use of user studies in guiding them on collection development. The user studies determine trends, improving customer service and marketing library services. The archivists can borrow from the information counterparts on the use of user studies to guide them into widening their relationships with researchers. There is need of linking research applications of collections to the need of the users of whatever interests.

Informatics can be defined as Diodato 1994 cited in Onyancha 2013 “methodologies that examine patterns that show up not only in publications but also in many aspects of life as long as the patterns deal with information. The information is used for scholarly evaluation of communication patterns. The archivists can use informatics to evaluate their services so that they can market their holdings to their full potential.

## Marketing

The National Archives of Zimbabwe need to take stock of its users and have advocacy/ marketing strategies which will allow users to learn lots from the wealth of information the NAZ has. Regrettably, archivists have always waited for other people to market their services. Prelinger 2012 noted that a wholesome repository relying on presenters, journalists, producers of TV and radio programmes and scholars and academics top expose the treasures. Murambiwa and Ngulube noted that an effective web presence communicates clearly the purpose activities and collections of the archives. Zimbabwe up to 2011 has held online content availability with contempt and suspicion. There have been challenges surrounding digitization and the Zimbabwean government was sceptical about having archival holdings uploaded. According to Murambiwa and Ngulube they alluded to this as fears of information imperialism. They noted that the beneficiary of archives is vague although they subscribe to the fact that it should be the public but it is not clearly indicated by the legislation and policies in place.

The importance of marketing in archival holdings is often overlooked. Marketing is an essential component in archival visibility. The importance of marketing archival holdings cannot be underestimated. There is need of identifying users and even potential users and entice them with the newly processed archives. The archivist must be in a position of knowing the fields of study of their clientele. The control desk register can assist them in retrieving information pertaining to the clientele. The NAZ register comprises of the topics and subjects which the users are interested in reading. There is need of archivists being proactive as they would want to maintain visibility. Marketing ensures that visibility is maintained. The mission of the NAZ is illustrative that it is creation and a servant of government and society and it operates mostly with a view of giving back information wise. The archives which are stored in the repositories are as good as useless if they are not utilized or are underutilized. There is need of maintaining a standard by ensuring that quality provision of access and services is maintained.



According to Kumbar information professionals must learn to effectively market and advertise their services. He outlined some basic steps which include the following :

1. Competition for customers
2. Competition for resources
3. Maintain your relevance
4. Stop being taken for granted
5. Promote an updated image
6. Visibility
7. Valuable community resource
8. Rising expectations
9. Survival
10. Beneficial to archive image. Effective marketing can enhance its chances of getting funding, increase in usage, change of perceptions and enhance the clout and reputation of the library and staff. (Steadley 2003).



Marketing has been a mammoth task for the archivist because of the following:

1 Old models

Humility archivists like their librarian counterpart wait for people to notice that they are doing a sterling job.

Myth that archives are places of dumping records/archives.

Old expectations that access in which physical presence will be granted. The use of e mail has been laid back to just providing a bit of information so as to entice a user to come and use the archives at NAZ.

Lack of training and education Archivists are not well versed in marketing, marketing tools and techniques. Universities have no taken marketing as an aspect to cover in their teaching curriculum.

Confusion of the term marketing, mixed up with terms like promotion, public relations and publicity.

Fear. Archivists are afraid of borrowing from the private sector.

Passive versus active stance

Archivists wait for clients to come to them. They also wait for people to stumble on NAZ website.

# User studies

Use of user studies will assist in archives to be processed. Kilasi, Maseko and Abankwah 2011 alluded to the use of user needs in assisting archivists in identifying the researchers' needs. They argue that a clear cut access policy should be the starting point. The access policy can constitute the following purpose of policy, composition of holdings and the resources available. The clientele who can gain access is also determined by the collections. The NAZ has to find ways of letting its clientele the newly processed archives and use the guides as a starting point. The guides at the NAZ although last printed in 1972 can be a good starting point in enlightening the users what the archives has. The guide can be digitized.

# Preservation

De-accessioning by making sure that we microfilm some archives and have the technological expertise to manage digitization and clouding. NAZ has been microfilming from time immemorial and it adds value to preservation. Microfilms can be preserved for posterity if the preservation conditions are adhered to.

Preservation must be proactively pursued. The hybrid environment creates a new environment for preservation. Electronic or digital information poses peculiar problems of carrier longevity, machine dependency, authenticity, authorship, integrity and meta data issues Akussah:2013 There is need of developing new standards new tools and even develop new skills to match the changing dynamics. There is need of incorporating a new breed of archivists who have got an appetite of a tape worm. The technological phase should not lead to archival amnesia. Preservation in the technological environment should take into cognisance that computer systems can crash, data can be corrupted, technological obsolescence virus attacks, issues surrounding indiscriminate deletion, overwriting and metadata issues and lack of long term access planning preservation of electronic records and issues surrounding the portability of data among computer systems. Akussah and Tianiyu 2000 cited by Akussah2013. NAZ needs to develop strong infrastructure, laws policies, standards and practise to support of functional records and preservation of management programmes. There is a new breed of archivists which can be incorporated into the system and the blend the old with the new.

Marketing is essential in enabling a Total Quality Management approach. TQM is defined as “ a systematic process which focuses on understanding customer needs and improving customer services. Donald 2003. It is vital to implement TQM so that the evaluation of archival holdings and services can be ascertained and that there will be continuous improvement. Marketing can go a long way in increasing visibility. The NAZ can fully market their holdings after they have conducted an informatics exercise and have used the index to determine the needs of the researcher. Relevancy and applicability of the technologies to be utilized can enable the NAZ to fully market their holdings and keep abreast with the changing environment. TQM can be implemented as a way to evaluate the quality of archival services and provide goals for improvement. Kumbar noted that libraries and information centres of all types and sizes are faced with the need to market. Archivists have to learn to effectively market and advertise their services.

Perceptions of marketing are also issues surrounding preservation. It is perceived that if there is high usage of archives then preservation is compromised. Preservation on physical papers has always been a topical issue. Paper has its own seeds of demise, it is made with water and the manufacturing plants the seed of destruction from the onset. The continuous user of records leads to deterioration. The life cycle of a record

The use of the functional approach in appraising records is an issue. The functions of departments can assist in archival description as this will enable the quick processing of archives. Additional archives when they are accessioned later can fit in the already created finding aids without any problems.

Capacity building. This is a vital aspect in archival institutions. Cover issues.....

Have marketing strategies in place. The technological age has led to archives to start thinking of revamping their ways of doing business.

# Training

Training is an important aspect in service delivery. Have short courses for archivists to attend to sharpen their skill in giving access to archival holdings. The training programmes at various universities should train students in the best methods for providing service. Issues like clouding, digitisation evaluation of archival holdings should be treated with vigour and might. New ways and terms are cropping up in archives like clouding, digitization, archival diplomacy, archivists need to equip themselves with the latest versions of these. They need to understand them and be at the fore front of changing the ways archives are viewed. Archives are shifting and the way they are portrayed has a different meaning from the way they were viewed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Portray the way archives are viewed

Demographic factors indicate that there is a new wave of users who would like utilize archives. There various methods of accessing information which include twitter, blogging, Facebook, archives forum and web page browsing. Within the 21<sup>st</sup> century more access should be granted to clients from all walks of life. Students want to learn more from NAZ but it is imperative that NAZ clauses for access be analysed using the clients' needs and wants. There is a growing number of interested parties in archival collections, quick web searches have replaced deep archival research but unfortunately most archives are not online. They are inhibiting factors like copyright, reluctance to embrace technology, budgetary constraints and a resistance of providing public access without infringing on the legislation have made access difficult.

## Financial constraints

The credit crunch has ruined the prospects of NAZ being a necessary department. In 2009 the director Murambiwa once approached the ministry of Home Affairs that the department be closed but that was denied. The resources allocated to the department leaves a lot to be desired. The environment the NAZ is operating in can let NAZ be swallowed into oblivion. The onus is on NAZ to avert this issue by being creative.

NAZ is affected by a continuous budget cuts and dwindling budgets and marred by financial constraints. The way forward is to work hand in hand with other regional Archives, for technical support and innovative resolutions to ensure that the NAZ remains on top.

## Legislation

The issue of the legislation is a stumbling block as it does not give NAZ the power to include private collections and archives. The interesting areas which can be noted can be that for the liberation struggle history. The ZANU PF group is still holding on to their archives which are still not described for accessibility to be fostered.

The NAZ has to evaluate services so that it can target the required sections and deal with them. The NAZ has sought refuge in conducting as many oral history programmes as possible.

Archival access has evolved from face to face encounter to include electronic mail, web based access and in a way telephonic inquiries. A recommendation is given that a demographic collection development assessment is done to identify the users and their requirements. There is need of NAZ engaging a proactive accessioning, arrangement and description and engage students in assisting so that archives can be processed swiftly and clients given access to processed archives at the earliest convincing time.

IT collections are diverse and ever changing. Policies should be put in o place to regulate collections. Refer to issues surrounding IT and connect with library policies from collection development.



# Way forward

The use of the functional approach in revamping processing at the archives will alleviate the dwindling rates of archival processing. There have been government ministries which have been created and disbanded with new government sessions coming into play as from 1980. There are archives which disappear and cannot be accounted for when different ministries are formulated while old ones are wiped out. The use of the functional approach in accessioning describing archives can assist the user in understanding the business and the role played by different ministries.

Ngulube, Masuku and Sigauke 2011 posit that archives have to reinvent themselves by moving away from their Jenkinson and Schellenberg's archives to archives with a modern flair. Archives during those days were purported to be of a static nature. Prolific researchers who are post modernists and archival stalwarts like Terry Cook, Verne Harris, Ngulube Patrick and Sello Hatang subscribe to total archives. The archives of the day should include archives which totally covers all human activities worth archiving. Ngulube, Masuku and Sigauke 2011 cited examples from the Australians who have established IK regional centres. The researcher subscribes to the preservation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) but would go further and argue that the aspects of IK have been incorporated into Oral History. Oral history collections at the NAZ cover a whole spectrum of collections using IK. There is room for improving collections by enacting policies which enable the preservation of IK and contextualizing it to fit in with the "new" archives at NAZ. IK and Oral history if married will be another way of attracting a new market of clientele for the use of archives. The NAZ should not remain Eurocentric in approach if it has to be a force to reckon with.

Tacking archives to the people is another health way of keeping the archives usable. The NAZ can be applauded for venturing into such a project.

The use of oral history as a source has enabled NAZ to make collections of histories which have not been accessed through the archives. There are a number of projects which have been covered which include the following

Capturing a fading National Memory earmarked for the oral history testimonies of those who encountered the liberation war, be it minority or majority,

Rain making ceremonies

Shrines and the role they played in the History of Zimbabwe.

One Zimbabwe one nation project –

oral history recordings of marginalised people such as Kalanga, Budya, Korekore and Shangwe to mention a few.

The oral history programme needs to enlarge collections on issues pertaining to land. Issues surrounding land have taken a centre stage in the ways archives are viewed. There are countries which have failed to understand the way the land issue have been tackled. It can be pivotal for archives to provide information on how land has been redistributed to offset the claims that it has been "barbaric".

There is also an interesting chapter which can be covered by oral history that of Murambatsvina// demolishing houses and squatter camps and Garikai/ Thlalani kuthle allocating stands for construction to people. The topical issues can attract the attention of researchers. The deterrent issue with the archives at the NAZ is that until recently if processing has been accomplished well there has not been much of archival processing of the post-colonial era. The only processed archives which have always been timeously done are deceased estate files and civil cases in some instances. The oral history programme can substantiate the archival holdings.

The qualification the archives have in Zimbabwe lags behind. The methods used for covering arrangement and description needs to be reviewed to suit a digitized environment where archival clouding and digitisation is the talk of the town. Many processes have remained in limbo

Appraisal without acquisition is just wishful thinking. Acquisitions without preservation is just hoarding. Preservation without access is just stockpiling. If you're doing all these things AND providing access, you've got an archives.

## Archives: The Venn Diagram



"Archives: The Venn Diagram"  
(CC) 2013 Rebecca Goldman  
Derangement and Description  
[derangementanddescription.wordpress.com](http://derangementanddescription.wordpress.com)

# CONCLUSION

The attitude will determine the altitude because ICT has taken the world by storm and archival holdings can benefit from it. According to Prelinger 2007 the changes in access can bring in visibility, fame, allure and even wealth. There is so much of information NAZ has been preserving over the years for posterity which can bring it in the limelight if digitized, are set in the cloud and archives are accessible. The NAZ has to start addressing massive new audiences and building new constituencies. The use of the index, informatics and an appraisal of the archival holdings is essential if marketing will make inroads in gunning for new markets and exposure.

