

Making a Case for the Establishment of a University, Documents, Records and Archives Management [DRAM] Programme at the National University of Science and Technology [NUST], Zimbabwe

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Introduction and Background

- Records, are assets which have to be managed adequately;
- The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Zimbabwe, is a state university which was established in 1991 and has a very rich history which spans close to 25 years;
- Proper records management could help universities to manage their information efficiently, fulfil their mandate, protect them from litigation, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance

Statement of the Problem

- NUST does not have a DRAM programme in place to manage the enormous amount of records generated by the university;
- No DRAM unit, records management policies, purpose built records management infrastructures, qualified records management personnel and resources
- The university's records management resources face the danger of being inaccessible
- University records support the administrative and educational research of the institution and the objective of the university is to support the teaching, research and services in the university

Purpose of the Study

- This study sought to make a case for the establishment of university documents, records and archives management programme at NUST;
- The study also sought to determine how documents, records and archives management programmes have benefited other tertiary institutions.

The Nexus between University Mission and Records Management

- Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005) were of the opinion that records are considered a resource and are utilized fully and cost effectively to realize an institution's mission and to facilitate timely decision-making;
- Asogwa (2013) mooted that tertiary institutions can only be effective and efficient if records management is considered a business process designed to support institution's objectives, records are considered a resource and are utilized fully and cost effectively to realize an institution's mission;
- NUST therefore, has to manage its records same as any other asset which promote and support the objectives of the university;

The Need for a Documents Records and Archives Management (DRAM) Programme at NUST

- The proliferation of both paper and e-records at NUST means the university can no longer afford to turn a blind eye on establishing a documents, records and archives programme;
- Coetzer (2012) highlighted that university records have to be part of a comprehensive records management system that ensures that all university records are properly and securely managed, replaceable (in the case of vital records), preserved, archived and disposed of;
- The main purpose of establishing a records management system in university systems is to have the right information in the right place in the right order, at the right time, for the right person at the lowest possible cost (Popoola and Baje, 2004).

The Need for a DRAM Programme at NUST

- Universities are accountable to government and the general populace and as a result, a DRAM programme must be in place;
- DRAM guarantee that the institution meets its records keeping requirements by capturing and preserving the evidence required to establish its accountability (Chinyemba (2011));
- Good governance is hinged on informed decision making and records management are the sources of information which can be used by NUST management to make meaningful decisions;
- NUST has a lot of departments, units and faculties which produce records and thus, there is a need to have a central agency or unit which coordinates all records management activities.

The Need for a DRAM programme at NUST

- A DRAM department within the university will provide training and guidance to units and departments on proper records management, it will foster compliance and standardisation of records management across all university functional areas;
- The recent cases of high profile individuals being investigated for falsifying academic qualifications is a cause for concern for universities with no proper records management;
- Students may query marks and grades allocated to them, or their assessment marks may be missing. There has to be proper records management to ensure that all assessment marks are captured to safeguard the credibility of the university's grading and assessment system;

The Need for a DRAM Programme at NUST

- Another challenge associated with the absence of a DRAM programme is the loss, theft and destruction of records;
- A missing record can halt business, e.g. stop promotion of deserving employees, stop a disciplinary hearing, delay graduation of deserving students, stop funding for deserving programmes and stop an important meeting from taking off.
- NUST cannot afford at all to have its business coming to a halt because of missing records or documents.
- Records management programmes also develop disaster management strategies and plans which can help the university to recover or survive disasters.

[The Vuvuzela Times: NUST Students demonstrate...threaten ...](#)

blevava.blogspot.com/2011/09/nust-students-demonstratethreaten.html ▼

Sep 22, 2011 - NUST Students demonstrate...threaten University closure ... into the streets of Bulawayo protesting against the continued deteriorating students' ... students' interests and bringing solutions to the deepening crisis in Zimbabwe.

Records Management and Litigation

- In the conduct of business, universities might face lawsuits, that is, take legal action against or have legal action taken against them;
- Young (2006) in legal proceedings, information is power, and the archives generally contains accurate, unbiased, and readily available information for a legal strategy that is beneficial to the organization;
- Records become useful as they are evidence of contracts, agreements and communication between different parties and in such cases, it becomes a challenge if records are inaccessible or destroyed;
- Records retained for an insufficient period can cause serious hardship to the University through criminal penalties and fines, loss of rights and money, adverse inferences at trial, or charges of obstruction of justice or contempt of court (Marywood University, 2013:1).

The Need for Records, Documents and Archives Policies at NUST

- Good records management is dependent on the availability of policies to guide the university community;
- Policies are key in coordinating records management activities and stating procedures;
- NUST has not had any records management policy, without which, there will be no binding course of action for all university records management activities;
- NUST has to establish a records management committee which will have the mandate among other things, to draft policies and procedural manuals for records management.

Access, Control and Retrieval of Records

- State universities like NUST have to ensure that records are accessible and retrievable as and when needed by the public and or government;
- Academics and students in universities are enlightened communities which will most likely challenge management if policies are not adhered to;
- The university community therefore, needs to have access to records, policies, constitutions, and other documents which can be used to hold university management accountable;
- Records management systems will ensure that there are proper records and document control measures to ensure that records are accessible as this saves the time of university employees and users of records

The Need for an Archive at NUST

- NUST also needs to make sure that records which have secondary value are preserved for posterity;
- The university therefore, has to have an archive dedicated to the management of records which have enduring value;
- Without a proper archive corporate or institutional memory of the university will not be captured and this may negatively impact on the identity and prestige of the university;
- The Marywood University (2013) USA, highlighted that university archives complement existing metrics for gauging institutional productivity and prestige
- University archives are also important in promoting public relations and marketing of the university.

The Need for an Archive at NUST

- These archives are a reflection of the university's successes and achievements and thus can be made accessible to a wide range of audiences and through a multiplicity of channels and media like university websites, virtual archives and physical archives;
- Wakimoko and Bruce (2015) postulated that an archives "in an academic setting works directly with alumni relations, media relations, marketing;
- Young (2006) had earlier on highlighted that organizational archives are useful in advertising, promotion, and public relations as a group's past successes are a drawing card in attracting interest, commitment, and contributions, whether in the form of civic and political support, volunteers, or even financial donations.

The Need for an Archive at NUST

- University archives are key as they guarantee that legal requirements for the management of records are met;
- Information literacy has become popular in academia and tertiary education, and archives have also been considered as important resources therein.
- The increased emphasis on primary source materials in information literacy instruction, which may include records from both university archives and special collections, has increased the value of archives to students (Wakimoko and Bruce, 2015).

Research Data Management at NUST

- Research is a major component in tertiary institutions, and research output has to be managed meticulously;
- In recent years, archivists have become more involved in the research and particularly the teaching mission of colleges and universities (Yakel et al, 2008);
- NUST has to see to it that research data is accurate and well managed;
- Iwhiwhu (2005:347) highlighted that records should be managed to meet the research needs of researchers within and outside the university, which are aimed at the growth, and development of the university and the nation at large

E-records and Documents Management Challenges

- E-records management presents a lot of challenges which require strategies.
- Information communication technologies (ICTs) have facilitated communication using emails and other electronic means like social media.
- In academic institutions, students and academics are increasingly creating and accessing electronic documents, course materials, on-line assessments, e-mails and research databases (Kyobe, Molal and Salle, 2009;
- Universities cannot afford to only have strategies for paper records management without consideration for e-records management as the bulk of transactions in universities are now being conducted electronically;

E-records and Documents Management Challenges

- NUST has also adopted e-learning where tuition is offered online. Such electronic transactions require that the university have a unit or department whose mandate will be to manage all forms of records
- A documents, records and archives management unit within NUST will go a long way in ensuring that the university community generates authentic records by conducting workshops and generally guiding the university community

Availability of Trained Records Management Personnel

- NUST is privileged in that it has a Records and Archives Management department and a lot of students who have graduated in this degree program;
- Therefore, setting up an institutional records, documents and archives management system will not be problematic as there are a lot of graduates to employ and a department which has the know-how on records management;
- NUST also has administrators and or secretaries managing records without training and grounding in records management principles. Uwaifo (2004:89) mooted that records management has little prospect of success unless the services of trained personnel were employed

Conclusion

- It is a truism that NUST needs a documents, records and archives management programme at NUST. Such a system will go a long way in facilitating informed decision making, compliance and records management policy formulation inter alia. Without a records, documents and archives management systems in place, NUST will face litigation, loss of vital research, incomplete records, and poor decision making

Thank you for Listening