

Transcription of Archives and Digitisation, November 21-23

The participants presented themselves and their work with respect to archives and digitalisation. The presentations were followed by a discussion. Below please find transcripts from the taped presentations and some extracts from the discussions.

Edmore Dodzo – National Archives of Zimbabwe: The concept of digitalisation was introduced about a year ago by the Aluka project. They are currently identifying what documents should be digitised and are discussing the reasons behind digitalisation. The main reason being that the paper version might deteriorate. Up till now however, a lack of resources have hindered this. A computerisation of the archives system has just started. An Oral History project out in the villages, documenting the liberation struggle on the ground as a counter image to the usual “top-down” view. They are trying to capture the memories of these individuals

Rena Chitombo – The Centre for Peace Initiative in Africa (CPIA) is a regional peace organisation based in Harare, Zimbabwe, established in 2001 and endeavours to make a contribution towards the promotion of sustainable peace, stability and security in Africa, through conflict prevention, management and resolution. To support its work, the Centre established the General Emmanuel Erskine Research and Documentation Centre (GERDC) in 2001. GERDC holds a wealth of information on Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention, management and resolution. Documents from the UN, OAU and its sub-regional bodies as well as individuals involved in peacekeeping and peace making in their original form. GERDC also holds a wealth of materials on conflict prevention collected from a number of African countries detailing methods of settlement of their conflicts and is supported by national archives in various countries. GERDC recently launched the General Emmanuel Erskine Annual Lecture Series where eminent persons in Africa deliver lectures on peace and security. General Erskine himself delivered the inaugural lecture on national reconciliation - The Ghana Experience. This was followed by a workshop on the national reconciliation process in Zimbabwe, where four papers were presented and debated on. The papers presented were on Marginalized Minorities, Land: Objective, Implementation and Consequences, Impediments to National Reconciliation and Challenges faced by the Media in covering Reconciliation Issues. It was at this Workshop that GERDC received the books by Tor Sellström on Sweden and National Liberation in southern Africa, donated by Ambassador Sten Rylander. We have also other programmes, which the ambassador supports. We haven't done much in terms of digitalising archive material yet but have received information on digital documentation/archives from Unesco. We also have a website which contains some documents from our Conferences/Workshops for downloading as a way of information sharing. The centre has unique sensitive material on political and ethnic issues in the countries in the region from the period of the struggle and letters written to support the liberation struggle which are confidential. The material is for use in the centre, and may not be copied. Digitalisation will assist future leaders in that they will have access to preserved documents.

Khanyisa Bottoman – ANC Archives, South Africa: A project was started in 2002 to collect material from ANC external offices, totalling approximately 140 cubic metres. Due to the scope of the project money was raised from the Mellon foundation (Aluka) and a partnership started with the university of Connecticut. Unfortunately for only 3 yrs. 270 metres of material have been processed and transferred to Fort Hare. DISA and Aluka has approached ANC with digitalisation of some of that material but before any agreement can be signed

some legalities has to be sorted out such as the ownership of copyright and the question of what happens to documents when posted on the internet. Some of the collections that have been processed so far are from organisations and individuals, such as from Mandela when he was the president of the ANC, some were donated by Oliver Tambo and some by the father of the current president Mbeki. We also have documents from Australia, Botswana and Canada just to name a few. The only digitalisation done this far is on IDAF documents. Will be on the website soon. The Oral History has been done. We focused on recording personal histories and a range of leaders and activities of the moment. It sought to fill the gaps existing in the archives and written holdings of the ANC.

Wanda Lara – Association of Tchiveka. A documentation association. Tchiveka was the code name of Lucio Lara (one of the founders of MPLA). The association strives to safeguard the holdings of Lucio Lara. It is a personal archive, but will be part of the National Archives and is part of the heritage of Angola. The project just started and are facing the same problems as many. Main challenges are organising and adding right data to digitised material and the creation of a functioning workshop. We have published a book with some of the preserved documents, and are working on a second volume.

Matt Mabeko-Tali – Association of Tchiveka. Responsible for the technical parts of the project. Some of the problems addressed here are being solved at this point, some are not. There is an increasing commercial side of archives. Oracle pretty much have a monopoly on archival systems that I understand. In order to come up with the best solutions it is necessary for archivists need to work in conjunction with the technical staff.

Elisete Oliveira – Director of the Parliamentary Archives of the National Assembly of Cape Verde. The archives and documentation of the national assembly has as a duty to systemise, diffuse and converse the information necessary for the work of the assembly (the library, the division of documentation and parliamentary information). The parliament archive is a new department that began its work in 2004. The work consists of the recovery, identification, packaging and digitalising of the historic documentation related to the activities of the national assembly of Cape Verde. It is available on website (www.parlamento.cv). The archives use a database for the parliamentary data that allows the administration of the digitalised and filed documents. This already has approximately 25 000 digitalised pages regarding all legislature from 1975. The archives have also made another database with the biographies of all MPs (about 515 registrations).

Johnson R Maira – Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation (MNF), Tanzania. Photographs of Nyerere 1950s-1999. Have started to migrate data from radio tapes to videotapes as they are deteriorating. All Nyerere material, documents, tapes, and photographs are kept in fireproof cabinets and his speeches are available for students and researchers that come to the centre. MNF would like to scan the photographs in order to safeguard them from deterioration and make them easily available for use. A current project is the one on Oral History. Dr Dinah Mbaga is leading a project of interviewing persons who in one way or other helped the freedom fighters stationed in Tanzania. We do this in order to get primary information so that the history being written will not be distorted. We have also arranged the documentation from the OAU Liberation Committee and compiled the indexes with historical annotations. The documents are not at the MNF site but can be access historians, academics, researchers and others through a permit from MNF.

We have been talking a lot about technology; technology is moving fast, so keeping up with technology is another problem. We must find a suitable library database system that can assist

us to keep the documents in a database that can be managed, controlled and secure the handling of the material so it can make back-ups of the material. In Tanzania and many other African countries information management is something new. That is why we still have what we call the traditional librarianship where books and other documents are not scanned. In MNF we are trying to see how far we can go with this so that we move from the traditional way to a more modern where the public can access the material easily without wasting time.

Fabian Kigadye – The Department of Antiquities, Tanzania, are documenting buildings, sites, camps and more that were important during the Liberation Struggle. Tanzania hosted many liberation groups and armies. The project are taking photographs, mapping areas etc and creating a database with the information. The objective is to declare a national monument for people to see where their forefathers used to be located and from where they fought for independence. A hope also exists on creating a documentation/research centre where all the collected material will be so future generations can see how people worked in the struggle against the colonisers. The project is schedule for two yrs and supported by Sida and Unesco and collaborates with the Swedish National Heritage Board.

Leonor Silva & Arnaldo Caliche – National Archives of Mozambique has started a project with other national institutions and colleagues from abroad such as Angola. Mozambique National Archives are looking at working in different ways of preservation and accessibility to information. NA is working on digitalisation together with other institutions. We are working within an Aluka project, starting up another digitalisation project. The project is looking at digitalisation some newspaper clips and Frelimo documents from the liberation struggle. More on this period covers material from the “international police government on Portuguese colonisation administration”. We also have information on other countries liberation struggle such as South Africa and Namibia. We still don’t have an agreement with Aluka but we are working together with Frelimo on which documents to digitise, what kind of information, what method to use, which resources to put into the Aluka project. We already have oral interviews with people who participated in the liberation struggle but we are not yet sure on how to use that. That is our next big challenge. We have already started to digitise our photographs archive and have finished a digitalisation on governmental material, pre- and post colonial. Our challenge in this area now is to find and create a database that meets our needs. We don’t yet have the plan on how to use the digitised material, how to organise it (what programmes to use), how to make it accessible and in what form. I hope to share discussion with you on this matter.

Carlos Alfredo – Director of the National Historical Archives (INEP), Guinea Bissau. There has been several problems connected to the creation of National Archives (?) due to the absence of a legal system concerning archives. None of the public institutions have archival resources to adopt an archival system with the National Archives. An initiative in 1984 saw the result of collecting two km of archival material from the colonial period. During the military conflict in 1998/99 the archives were to a large extent destroyed; the storage for the visual archives was hit by a bomb. Out of approximately 7000 photos, only 2150 were recovered. A renovation project had started before the conflict but most of the efforts and the equipment were then destroyed. The only equipment we have today are two computers thank’s to Unesco. When it comes to digitalisation, we don’t have a programme for its initiation. When it comes to the photographs, we signed an agreement with the University of Madeira in Portugal for its digitalisation. In this way we have managed to digitalise 20 cds. Public institutions lack technicians and technology in this area. The current National Archives does not offer public access or sufficient safekeeping of the archives. The documents are in a

bad shape due to bad environmental conditions. Most documents exposed to dust, wind and humidity. In 2002 we initiated a campaign together with the Administration of Public Institutions on the creation of archival services.

Birger Stenskiöld – National Archives of Sweden. Held a lecture, document to follow.

Pekka Peltola – The Finnish Committee on Archives of the Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle in Namibia (AACRLS). Held a lecture, document to follow.

Werner Hillebrecht – National Archives of Namibia. Held a lecture, document to follow.

Per Sandén & Libolly Haufiku – Swapo Party Archives and Research Centre (SPARC). Held a lecture, document to follow.

Questions and statements brought up during discussion:

S - Birger: Can anyone have sole rights to an archival document? Can use of public property, such as the material in an archival institution, be given to a single user as sole rights? In Sweden it is impossible to privatise public records. In countries where you have a weaker legislation, it might be the case. The only way a Swedish institution can “stop” keeping the records is to destroy it. That is an important legislation for safeguarding for future generations.

Q - Fabian: In the morning session we heard about some journalists who keep photographs for the purpose of sole copyrights. But I understand they were sent to take the photograph as a part of their job, they were paid a salary. Who is then the owner of that photograph? The institution that sent the person or the person who took the photograph? What is the experience from Sweden?

A – Birger: I’ll illustrate with an example. Let’s say the Swedish National Archives pays a photographer to take pictures of the buildings of the Archives. The National Archives can use the pictures for ex different publications about their archives, pamphlets, etc. But say that Coca Cola Company finds out about one of these pictures and find it very amusing to use it in a promotion for eg Coca Cola Light, for some reason. Then of course it would be a violation of that photographers right because we are not using the photographs for its original purpose; we are using them for something else. We are making money out of them. That is how the legislation in Sweden works.

S – Pekka: A problem of the difference of ownership and copyrights exists. A paper has the ownership of photos taken by an employed photographer but the person who took them still maintain copyright; hence the pictures cannot be used elsewhere without his consent. The copyright is forever and the holder gets paid.

S – Birger: Correct. We have a problem with researchers eg who asks if the National Archives can give them the right to publish the photo they have found in one of the archive the NA keep. Our answer is that if you want to publish it in eg your PhD thesis, then our legislation says it is ok. But if you want to publish it in a book you want to sell or in any other commercial product you have to yourself look for the photographer, we won’t help you with that. In many cases the photographer is completely unknown. We don’t have the signature or name or anything to locate him/her. We inform the person asking to publish it, that its done on

his/her own risk. It is not the responsibility of the NA to keep track of all the photographers, who has got the rights and so on.

Q – Fabian: You say that in Sweden everyone can access information, the archives. But my experience from Tanzania is that when you go to the archive you have to pay a certain amount to subsidize the work there. My question is, do you have to pay? And if you have to pay, how does that correspond to the democratic right to access to information?

A – Birger: You don't have to pay anything to access the archives. You have to pay when you make copies for eg a number of pages or documents. Then we have to charge the researcher for that cost. Unless they bring a digital camera of their own. A very interesting process I've noticed with our researchers is that they often bring cameras and you can see them standing up turning pages and clicking the camera. They are allowed to do that according to the regulation in Sweden, as long as they don't use flash, as some documents may be sensitive to flash.

Q – Edmore: The discussion on digitalisation brings me to the Aluka project with the National Archives of Zimbabwe where one of the arguments from the authorities within our institution was that if we digitise the material everyone will be able to access the database. But so far, whenever a researcher needs to access any material from the archives, the researcher has to pay an entrance fee. And we have just ruled out that no digital cameras are allowed in the centre. So the issue that now arises is that whenever we try to digitise, we are not going to benefit in the end. As it is now, the researcher pays an entrance fee and a fee for whatever they find and want to use in the archives. If we digitise, how are we going to deal with payment issues? Unless we use passwords that one needs to access the information.

A – Birger: When it comes to the issue of payment the Swedish National Archives do charge for the access of certain database that are published on the internet. Because when we made the decision to digitise certain material, eg information concerning cars, we couldn't afford to finance the project unless we received some payment for from researchers. So in some cases they have to pay per visit. But we try to keep that as few as possible. But in some cases is that it wont be published at all it might be better they have to pay a small fee. It is a difficult question and personally I believe it should all be free.

Q – Nina: Concerning the internet, we have the case of Estonia, this ferry that sank and the rumours that followed saying they smuggled military equipment on it and all kinds of things. When you then published the material on it people could see for themselves that these rumours where not true and hence some of the hostility disappeared towards the government and the owners of the shipping company. And that is a good thing. As you can actually get rid of rumours, you can get information out, and everyone will have the same information. No one can sit and hold on to information or secrets and only the elite would be let in on the material. That's on one hand. And then it is on the other hand what Werner spoke of this morning, when you have two families – two sides of a story – and maybe they are both dead and how do you verify who tells the truth and what actually happened. Then, how do you balance these two issues? How do you balance open access, giving information to everyone so that we all have the same opportunities to get the information and at the same time safeguarding the intimacy of individuals? It's very difficult.

A – Birger: When it comes to openness, if the person being mentioned in a document is a governmental official or civil servant, then it is free to publish. According to the law, we [the

National Archives, were they to publish] don't have any responsibilities towards these persons, but towards private persons we do. It was the responsibility of the archivists to do the blackening of the names and the social security numbers as one need to remember it is not only names, social security numbers and phone numbers that can tell the identity of a person. A person coming from a very small village would be very easy to identify, as everyone would know that he/she died on the ship. Hence also the village name had to be blackened out.

S – Pekka: Here it is interesting to compare national cultures. About 200 Finns also died in the Estonia catastrophe. But there was not national rage like in Sweden. Why the difference? Of course, national cultures have some to do with it, but also that the chairman of the official investigating committee was a Finn and highly respected in Finland so the report was accepted. But the same thing happened when the Tsunami hit Asia, and many Finns and Swedes died. In Sweden, a couple of Ministers had to resign