

**Nordic-Namibian AACRLS Seminar in Helsinki 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2006**

The Finnish AACRLS Country Committee and the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), together with the Private Archives Unit of the National Archives of Finland, organised a two-day seminar in Helsinki in 7th.-8th June. The focus of the seminar was in sharing experiences with other digitising projects and discussing different technical solutions for digital documents. Issues like metadata, legislation, selection methods and database solutions were also discussed.

Participants of the seminar were: Dr. Bill Minter from the ALUKA project, Marianne Lidskog and Nina Frödin from Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), Per Sandén from the SWAPO Party Archive & Research Centre (SPARC), Bertil Högberg from Afrikagrupperna of Sweden, Werner Hillebrecht from the National Archives of Namibia, Kent Sjöblom and Pertti Hakala from the National Archives of Finland. The Finnish AACRLS Country Committee was represented by Mr. Seppo Kalliokoski (Chairman), Dr. Pekka Peltola (Vice Chairman), Dr. Ulla-Maija Peltonen, Ms. Päivikki Karhula, Ms. Liisa Hovila-Helminen (Secretary), and the project workers Mr. Tommi Lehtonen and Ms. Marja Olli.

The first day was reserved for presentations of ongoing digitising projects. The aim of the second day was to work out technical details and frames for common practises for digitising projects in the Nordic countries and Namibia.

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June**

The day was opened by Mr. Seppo Kalliokoski who welcomed all the participants to the seminar, and was followed by Director General, Dr. Jussi Nuorteva who told about the National Archives of Finland and archival services in Finland in general.

***AACRLS in Namibia: Aims and objectives******Mr. Werner Hillebrecht, Acting Chief Archivist, National Archive of Namibia***

The presentations started with Mr. Werner Hillebrecht's presentation of the AACRLS activities in Namibia. One of the reasons to begin the AACRLS project had been the fact that the majority of the records in National Archives are created by the white settlers and colonial administration and therefore show only their point of views.

The National Archives already holds some private persons' materials dealing with the liberation struggle of Namibia. Additional material is being collected. Collecting oral history by interviewing persons who were active during the liberation struggle is in progress, and the number of recorded tapes is growing all the time. One way of collecting the material is to repatriate it from abroad, since there is plenty of relevant archival material outside Namibia as well.

This collected material is widely used in research and education. One aim is to produce publications based on this material as well. Objective is to make material concerning Namibian anti-colonial resistance and liberation struggle accessible to wider audience and to popularize it. It is important to continue collecting and to preserve the material for future studies.

The AACRLS project is jointly funded by the Government of the Republic of Namibia and the Federal Republic of Germany. The National Steering Committee manages the project. The AACRLS Secretariat is responsible for carrying out and coordinating the project. There are four subcommittees dealing with various aspects of the project: Education, Research and Publications,

Collections, and Capacity-Building committees. There are also regional committees carrying out the project with varying success.

The project has been successful in various areas. The collection of oral history has proceeded well. Research projects on various topics are actively going on. Repatriating the material from abroad has also begun. Some of the pro-independence pressure groups have donated their entire collections. Organising the donated collections is necessary, but it takes time to make the material researchable.

There have been some problems when collecting private archives. Some of the private persons have not been willing to donate their personal collections. For example the material owned by persons still active in politics is problematic. In some cases they want to keep documents for themselves in order to write biographies or to do other private research.

Some of these private archives contain quite sensitive and personal materials, which in some cases might be quite controversial. Such collections also raise ethical questions, once they are deposited in the National Archives. Namibian legislation is problematic because it does not make any difference with personal and public documents. Issues concerning copyrights are also difficult to be solved.

Mr. Hillebrecht mentioned that there has been some misfortune with the staff situation. The National Archives has lost three employees recently.

On international level AACRLS Country Committees have been established in Germany, Finland and Russia. In Sweden the Nordic Africa Institute is cooperating with the AACRLS National Steering Committee in Namibia.

For future work Mr. Hillebrecht expressed the wish that the Nordic countries could continue collecting oral history from activists. Collecting copies of the documents and photos concerning liberation struggle should be continued. Mr. Hillebrecht also wished that original visual material like stickers, leaflets, bulletins etc. could be sent for exhibitions. Lastly, cooperation in designing and comparing different forms of archiving is seen helpful.

### ***AACRLS in Finland***

#### ***Dr. Pekka Peltola, Vice Chairman of the Finnish Country Committee***

Dr. Peltola's presentation concentrated on the work done in Finland. He started by telling the background of the committee members. He and Mr. Kalliokoski had met in connection of training SWAPO trade unionists in Angola and Zambia from 1979 onwards. Mr. Kalliokoski had worked as a missionary in Namibia for decades and Dr. Peltola was working for SAK (Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions) and later for the Finnish Ministry of Labour. He has also worked in Namibia as a reporter, documentary film maker and researcher.

After Namibian independence, the director of the National Archives of Namibia, Dr. Brigitte Lau, contacted Dr. Peltola asking for copies of pictures from the Namibian exile settlements in Kwanza Sul and elsewhere. The idea of digitalising the pictures arose immediately, and a plan for the effort was made, but the lack of resources postponed a realisation of ideas.

The opportunity for the present project emerged in the Anti-Apartheid Convention in Cape Town 1999 with participants from the Nordic Countries and the Frontline States. The Nordic Africa Institute was one of its organisers. Securing the documentation and archiving of the anti-apartheid struggles was seen as an urgent task. The NAI could obtain funding and so the Finnish project started with locating Namibia-related collections in Finland. This preliminary work was done by

Ms. Sisko Mattila and Mr. Mikko Helminen. The actual AACRLS Finnish Country Committee was founded in December 2004. The Committee has expert knowledge on archival, museum and library work.

The next step was to hire two project workers and start the actual digitising process. The Finnish Country Committee organised a Finnish-African seminar on archival principles, practices and solutions in October 2005. The participants of the seminar were Mr. Jade McClune from National Archives of Namibia, Dr. Shekutaamba Väinö Väinö Nambala, Director of Finance and Development from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, Dr. Ezekiel Alembi from Kenyatta University, Kenya, and members of the Finnish AACRLS Country Committee.

After the seminar the two project workers, Mr. Tommi Lehtonen and Ms. Marja Olli, started their work. So far they have worked in the archives of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (former Finnish Missionary Society) and the Finnish Africa Committee. Dr. Peltola argued that it is time now to discuss adopting common practises in digitising archival material. He pointed out that organising the material is sometimes necessary and it can take some time. He also regarded prioritising necessary. Finally he pointed out that cooperation between Nordic countries and Namibia should be planned more precisely and some decisions on future work should be made now.

#### ***AACRLS and the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI)***

***Ms. Marianne Lidskog, Ms Nina Frödin***

Ms. Lidskog presented the work in The Nordic Africa Institute. NAI has for a number of years played a central role in documenting the Nordic involvement in the national liberation struggles in Southern Africa. The Documentation project was initiated in 2003 in order to make an inventory of existing material in the Nordic countries.

Organizations in Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden have located, catalogued and organised their archives. NAI has constructed a website with catalogues of different Nordic collections concerning Southern Africa. Furthermore, some personal stories, documents and slide shows are accessible through the website. Separate partitions are planned for every Nordic country on NAI's website. The database is being continuously developed and the amount of material is increasing. Now NAI has a new database application for this documentation project, which runs on specifically designed server.

The scanned documents - the background material for the book Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa by Tor Sellström - exist as PDF files and are one by one being put in the database in order to show not only the archive list but also the actual documents. This is a unique material, as Tor Sellström was given free access to the archives of SIDA and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. A total number of 40,000 pages were scanned, most of which (but not all) will be posted.

NAI has cooperated widely with various digitising projects in Africa and funded for example archiving projects for SWAPO material in Namibia, and is active in Tanzania and Angola as well. Cooperation with the Lucio Lara archives in Angola continued during 2005 and an interview project with the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation (MNF) in Tanzania has started.

Ms. Lidskog told about strict laws in Sweden concerning copyright issues. Basically one has to get right of publication for every document separately. But if a material has historical value, it may be published in the web. On the other hand, if some documents are harmful or might affect on relations between countries, they should not be published at all. Otherwise documents may be used after 25 year closure period.

***The Work of ALUKA******Dr. Bill Minter***

Dr. Minter told about the ALUKA project and its background. ALUKA is funded by the Mellon Foundation. The project started in 1994 with South Africa. The aim was to digitise material and create a possibility to use it flexibly both in Africa and elsewhere. In the beginning the project concentrated on material concerning African plants, African cultural landscapes, etc.

Later on ALUKA communities were formed in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique. The concept was now to digitise historical archives from Southern Africa, including regional archives, and global solidarity movements' archives. The plan was to digitise 250 000 pages and put them into an easily accessible format for public use. ALUKA complements other similar projects as well.

ALUKA does not intend to digitise all the documents in the archives. One of the goals is to offer material for educational purposes. The material will be used in higher education among students and researchers. Selection of the material to be digitised is made by country committees in the countries concerned.

Dr. Minter presented a list of working phases in a digitalisation project: deciding upon the purpose of the project, selecting and prioritizing, solving the intellectual property rights and ethical issues, actual scanning, doing the optical character recognition process, feeding the metadata, using the database, defining how the material should be reached and presented, taking into account the interoperability with other similar projects, and making sure of the sustainability of the material. Making safety copies from the originals, upgrading the system and maintaining the database are necessary for preservation as well.

As to global organisations, material from the World Council of Churches and United Nations has been scanned. ALUKA is making inquiries all over the world in search for future digitising projects. For example documents from Cuba are considered important for historical research, and Cuban archival material will probably be digitised in the future. Dr. Minter said that ALUKA database will not be open for everyone; it will be restricted and liable to charge. For African societies the use of the database will be free of charge.

***SWAPO Archives******Mr. Per Sandén, the SWAPO Party Archive & Research Centre (SPARC), Windhoek***

Mr. Sandén presented the work in the SPARC project, which was launched in August 2003. The Steering Committee has four members and the number of the whole staff is six persons. The aim of the project is to protect, preserve and present SWAPO's history. The material consists of four containers unorganised material from SWAPO's offices all over the world. The material has been untouched for 16 years. The project aims at digitising and organising the whole material. Estimated time for doing this is 6-10 years.

Because nobody has taken care of the material until now, its condition is poor. Much has already been destroyed. Conservation is possible in some cases. SPARC has decided to digitise everything for future research, actual organising is in some cases impossible for now.

The scanned images are given an identification number, and fields are reserved for description and metadata. Documents are scanned as high resolution colour PDFs and photos as high resolution TIFF. The file size is quite large. Estimated speed in scanning is about 250 pages per day.

SPARC is also recording the present. Interviews from war veterans are collected by using digital recording equipment and video cameras. Audiovisual productions have been done already. One important aspect in the project is presentation of the SWAPO history by publications, documentaries and accessible database. The SPARC offices and database are open for everyone, but material considered sensitive is kept confidential for the time being. The SPARC website will be opened in autumn 2006. Documents, photos and videos concerning SWAPO history will be available on the site.

### **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June**

The day was opened by Marianne Lidskog. The Finnish AACRLS project workers presented their work first.

#### ***Work of the Finnish AACRLS***

***Mr. Tommi Lehtonen, Ms. Marja Olli***

The project started by collecting information about building the digital archive and consulting people who had experience in digitising archival material. Studying principles concerning archiving and digitising was found necessary before making any major decisions. Some research work and consulting had to be done concerning the equipments needed for this project as well. Separate film scanner and flatbed scanner with automatic document feeder was acquired. Selected data formats for digital copies were TIFF for photos and searchable PDF for documents.

The next step was to create a good cataloguing and metadata system for managing the project. Different solutions from other projects required comparing. The Excel sheet provided suitable environment for cataloguing the scanned material and adding the metadata. Metadata is easily convertible from Excel to different database applications. As metadata model the Finnish AACRLS selected Dublin Core. It was found sustainable solution for international use because it offered widely accepted standards for describing.

Because the material concerning Namibia and its liberation struggle is quite extensive and varied in Finnish archives, decisions on what material should be prioritised for scanning had to be made. The Finnish AACRLS Committee has agreed on basic criteria for primary and secondary material. Material in different languages was decided to be scanned according to the same principles. It was noted that different archives and organisations would need partly different criteria. For example the activities of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the Africa Committee of the Finnish Peace Committee were very different and therefore a flexible use of the criteria was reasonable.

The Finnish Peace Committee's Africa Committee had stopped its activities during 1990's and the documents were handed over as such and non-organised to the People's Archives. Therefore, before picking the relevant material for describing and scanning, it was necessary to organise the Africa Committee's material according to People's Archives classification scheme.

In addition to these archives, Finnish AACRLS has also scanned two personal photo archives, and the collection of personal archives will be continued.

***German and Russian AACRLS Committees.******Mr. Werner Hillebrecht, Acting Chief Archivist, National Archive of Namibia***

The German AACRLS Country Committee was founded in November 2004. One of the tasks is to identify non-governmental and governmental sources. Aim of the committee is to collect material from every anti-apartheid movement in Germany. Some of the material concerning solidarity work is situated in personal archives. This material should be located and restored to the organisations' archives.

Collecting oral history from activists is also planned. The lists of the persons who have been actively involved in the solidarity work have already been made. Actual work has not yet begun.

In 2004, Hon. Ben Amathila met Prof. Shubin to discuss the formation of the Russian AACRLS Country Committee. It has been agreed that Prof. Shubin from the Institute for African Studies will head the research and collection work of the Russian Committee. It is unclear, how the project has proceeded.

***Afrikagrupperna's project******Mr. Bertil Högberg, Afrikagrupperna***

Afrikagrupperna has started its own history project. It aims at writing a history of the solidarity NGOs in Sweden. Some NGO archives have been organised with assistance from NAI. Since most of these archives are not organised, Afrikagrupperna have decided to begin with collecting individual memories by making interviews.

Afrikagrupperna have made a list of persons involved in solidarity NGO's and activities concerning Namibia and South Africa. Approximately 50 persons have been selected to be interviewed and so far they have completed about 30 interviews. This group of interviewees should cover as many solidarity organisations as possible. A thematic list for the interviews has been made, but the purpose is to keep the interviews as open as possible.

These interviews are not meant for collecting accurate historical information, but to collect individuals' point of views and memories. Some transcriptions of the interviews have already been put to the internet. Consent from these people has to be asked for, if the interview will be published in any form.

***Discussion***

Nina Frödin told about the Nyerere Foundation, which is collecting oral history in Tanzania. Issues like self-censorship came up while using tape recorders in interviews. Sensitive parts are easily left out by the informant. Trust between informant and interviewer is essential in an interview situation. Furthermore: is it ethically correct to publish these interviews in the internet? Mr. Minter pointed out that there should not be general rules for this. Each interview should be evaluated individually.

Päivikki Karhula from the Library of the Finnish Parliament told about the library's photo database, which will be ready next year. She offered guidance for planning the database and for juridical issues.

General discussion during the seminar included topics concerning technical issues. File size and format were dealt with as well. For accessibility, smaller file size is needed, and for documents it would be good if small text file or HTML-file could be available. There are different practises with regard to file formats. For ALUKA the accessibility aspect is important so file size is kept as small

as possible and HTML and text files are favoured whenever possible. SPARC, on the other hand, concentrates in making very large files for preservation. High resolution (at least 600 dpi) in scanning the photos was recommended by Mr. Sandén.

For documents, using some kind of methods for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) was recommended. Dr. Minter pointed out that scanning and doing the OCR are different phases of digitising documents. Dr. Minter's opinion was that documents should be scanned as images first and the OCR process should be done afterwards with good software for better results. The practises and results varied in different projects when doing the OCR.

Dr. Minter told about how the selection and prioritization had been realised in the ALUKA project. There are common themes in each country: colonial structures, resistance, anti-colonial movements, regional and international context, liberation wars, internal conflicts etc. These are big themes, and it is also possible to divide these themes into smaller sub-categories. One must consider who the users of the selected material are.

Mr. Hillebrecht pointed out, that some of the archives concerning the internal struggle of Namibia have disappeared. There have also been smaller organisations that were funded from outside whose archives are difficult to trace. His concern was that smaller movements and events might be left outside when prioritising major historical themes.

There was some discussion about using the metadata elements. Everybody agreed that basic elements should be common. Mr. Lehtonen showed one example of open-source database solution called Greenstone, which provoked discussion about requirements of usable database.

Dr. Minter said that it would be unreasonable to demand same solutions for every project and archive. Using similar metadata elements would be enough for easy transfer of material between projects and archives. If there is already a working application for a database, there should not be any need for acquiring new database solutions for new projects.

Some Namibian names might have changed their orthography during the years. It was said, that a list of different regions and personal names could be useful to be added to the metadata.

### ***Future plans***

A question about beginning the cooperation with Norway and Denmark was taken up. It was agreed that NAI should try to create contacts to these countries for future cooperation. It would be good if Germany and Russia could get involved in this cooperation as well. Organising a seminar like this one could be worth considering. This would be helpful for other partners to plan digitising projects and to apply common practises.

NAI is developing a database for collected material from Nordic countries. During the autumn, Mr. Lehtonen will visit Uppsala to present the work done by the Finnish AACRLS and to help in transferring the metadata to NAI database. It was proposed that Mr. Sandén could give guidance in technical issues to the staff of National Archives of Namibia.

Mr. Hillebrecht said that National Archives of Namibia could host a seminar concerning handling historical material with participants from Zimbabwe and Angola in the future. It was suggested that Dr. Peltonen would offer her expertise in archival work and copyright issues.

Dr. Minter said that ALUKA is also organising a meeting in Lisbon in September 2006 with representatives from Angola.

Ms. Lidskog suggested that there could be a need for establishing a similar AACRLS Country Committee in Sweden as well.

Afrikagrupperna will start collecting their archival material and continue writing their history.

It was generally noted that sharing experiences and developing common practises should be continued. Local solutions should be discussed between countries for more fluent and fruitful cooperation.