

In addition, many archival collections also contain audio-visual records, thus further enriching the recording of the past. Acknowledgement must be given to the various Anti-Apartheid groups in many countries for safeguarding the liberation archives of that period, thus facilitating the re-writing of South African history in an inclusive way. ■

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Archival challenges

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The 21st Century has brought about immense organizational changes in the world of documentation. Information Communication Technologies have led to the creation of vast amounts of documents and the privatisation of public records. It poses new challenges in relation to information storage, retrieval and re-use. The costs of maintaining electronic records and *migrating* them to new technologies often demand both human and financial resources that are beyond the reach of many archival institutions.

Developments related to the ICT revolution have necessitated a revision of skills for the archivists/records managers. A school of thought advocates that a multi-disciplinary approach must be adopted if archivists are to cope with the challenges of preserving electronic records. Access to public records is a right for citizens in a democratic society in the spirit of Article 19 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration. Governments have an obligation to guarantee the authenticity, integrity and preservation of information. Archives therefore play a major role as a backbone of effective democratic rule. It is through sufficient information that citizens are able to participate actively in public debates and decision-making and can exercise control over those they vote into power. The ease with which information is trashed and deleted in today's societies can challenge

democratic values. It is also a well-known fact that enlightenment of a society through access to information is a vital key to development and human rights.

Many developing countries are working hard to integrate themselves into the information society. A disturbing question is how fragile democracies are coping with the challenges posed by today's information society. Paper records are deteriorating in different archival institutions and the responsible organizations cannot afford to hire enough staff to carry out inventories. Developments in the communications field show how the knowledge gap between the information-rich and the information-poor countries has deepened over time. It seems that only people with a first-rate education and informational abilities can survive in this globalising and highly competitive world.

The establishment of Archival and Information Science Programs in Universities and the strengthening of the profession would ease the challenges. It is also important to emphasize the indispensable role played by archivists in government institutions. The aim of the archival mission is to preserve information for future research and juridical matters, serve as a corporate memory and a cultural heritage at a time when electronic and cultural imperialism are taking over indigenous cultures.