

Preservation of government records in Botswana

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Abstract

This study aimed at establishing the state of preservation management of government records in Botswana. Of interest was finding out what preservation activities and conditions are maintained at records creating government organisations. The study used a survey methodology. The study population consisted of 34 administration officers supervising records management and 8 records managers purposively selected for interviews. Stratified simple random sampling was used to select the 76 questionnaire respondents who are records management unit operational officers. Personal observations were done to substantiate data collected from respondents. The findings revealed that, although, the surveyed institutions demonstrated reasonable commitment to preservation, they do not uniformly respond to preservation management. In conclusion, the study recommends the development of preservation policies and procedures which would form the standard procedures for preservation of records in public sector record keeping.

KEYWORDS: Records, archive, preservation, preventive preservation, Ministry and Department

1. Introduction

The challenge facing the information society today is to ensure the long term preservation and continued accessibility of information

materials overtime. Harvey (1993) opines that because of the need to provide access to information overtime while at the same time preserving the information carriers, access to records and archives and the preservation of these materials should be done simultaneously. Recorded information is created on materials that are susceptible to damage caused by mishandling, biological agents, unstable environmental conditions, technological obsolescence, and natural and human induced disasters, Holden (2004). Preservation, therefore, is an aspect of collection management that ensures the continuation of access to recorded information. Undoubtedly, continued access to information is essential for the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another and the provision of evidence for past decision making to shape the future. This means that today's history is dependent on past preservation of records. According to Ritzenthaler (1993:2), preservation programmatic elements address broad concerns such as records storage, use and handling, holdings or collection maintenance, conservation treatment and disaster preparedness. Subsequently, preservation management plays a major role in the existence of national and corporate memory as well as availability of information for posterity.

Nevertheless, preservation management has two phases to it: preventive preservation and restorative preservation. Preventive preservation simply refers to all activities done to ensure a record does not deteriorate, where deterioration is prevented at all costs while restorative preservation on the other hand refers to treatment of a damaged record or library material to return it to its accessible form. Consequently, proponents of preservation, Harvey (1993), Holden (2004) and Ritzenthaler (1993) have suggested that

preventive preservation is always the first line of action that can help reduce deterioration of records. Examples of preventive preservation measures are good housekeeping, well planned buildings for records storage and exercised control over the climate and environment to which records are exposed. The use of the above listed activities will ensure less costs and long-term access to archival documents compared to the costly exercises of conservation and restoration (Holden 2004). Therefore, it is important in preservation discourse to stress the importance of preventive preservation over restorative preservation.

Given the significant role preservation plays in ensuring continued access to information outlined above, in Africa; preservation management is not yet well implemented. Evidently, a survey on preservation in Africa by Mazikana (1992) showed that archival institutions in most African countries are far behind in terms of developing and implementing sustainable preservation strategies and studies which places some of the continent's valuable information in danger of easy deterioration. The study further revealed that preservation in most institutions is assumed to be the work of the national archives, incorporated only at the end of the life of a record when records have been appraised and are to be preserved as archives. This notion is flawed because preservation needs precede the creation of a record. In this manner, Akkussah (2002) advises that a successful preservation management programme has to be put in place even before the creation of the record. This means before records are created, there is a need to have suitable storage facilities and environmental conditions for sustainable access to records.

To be able to understand the slow acceleration of preservation implementation in Africa generally, it is worthy to note the challenges archival institutions in Africa face.

These challenges are outlined by Ngulube (2003) as lack of adequate funding for archival institutions; lack of political will in support of preservation management; lack of training and knowledge on preservation for archivists and records managers in Africa; bad climatic and environmental conditions in the continent and reactive approach to records preservation. Correspondingly, Ngulube (2003) adds that in most cases, preservation management is not in place, instead institutions respond to records deterioration rather than putting in place preventive measures to protect records. For this reason, comprehensive preservation of records and information carriers in most African countries remains a far-fetched achievement.

By the same token, the Sub-Saharan Africa region is not exempt from preservation management challenges. Evidence for support in this view can be found in studies by Chida (1994), Thurston (1996), Ngulube (2002) and Nsibirwa and Hoskins (2008) which reveal that archival documents and other information sources in both archives and libraries are steadily deteriorating and some have already deteriorated beyond repair in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. The sentiment expressed in the findings of these studies embodies the view that both records and library materials in this region have not been exposed to proper preservation management. Furthermore, Thurston (1996) points out that failure to ensure sustainable preservation of archival materials in Sub-Saharan Africa is not only caused by finance issues but by the poor format of archival documents, frequent careless handling, use and exposure to harsh environmental conditions. Urgent intervention is, therefore, necessary to improve the implementation of strategies for preservation management in the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

Comparatively, in Botswana, like most African states, preservation management is

marred by challenges. In spite of the limited studies on preservation of records in Botswana, the existing studies on both archival and library materials, such as Ramokate (2006), Hlabangaan (2006), Mnjama (2005) and Monageng (1997) indicate the need to intervene and come up with sustainable preservation activities to save Botswana's heritage and corporate memory. Ramokate (2006) has revealed that records management and access to records are given priority ahead of preservation. This lack of balance between access and preservation has a crippling effect on the availability of records overtime and a possible loss of access to such records. A further observation by Hlabangaan (2006) indicates a lack of trained personnel, lack of appropriate facilities and little awareness on preservation as contributory factors to poor preservation of information carriers and information in Botswana. On similar sentiments, Monageng (1997) notes that preservation institutions in Botswana lag behind in preserving documents due to lack of custom made areas for records storages and as a result use ordinary basements as records centers.

Moreover, Keakopa (2004) revealed that the continuing escalating costs of infrastructural development and maintenance; frustrating accessibility primarily in rural areas; increased migration of skilled manpower resulting in heavy reliance in foreign consultants for design and maintenance of systems and a lack of repository strategies for the long term preservation of digital information hinder the preservation of records in Botswana. Moreover, Kalusopa and Zulu (2009) found the lack of policies, strategies and guidelines on preservation, particularly for digital materials in Botswana. Based on the above previous studies, it is conclusive that Botswana has a long way in achieving ideal preservation management.

2. Background of public service records management in Botswana

The Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS) has the responsibility and mandate of managing both government records and archives by the Archives Act of 1978. Originally, BNARS was named the Botswana National Archives (BNA) whose responsibility was to acquire, preserve and facilitate access to public records of enduring value. In 1985, BNA was merged with the National Public Records Services into a single Unit, a decision necessitated by the overview of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs to which these two entities belonged to. The Directorate of Public Service Management Office of the President Ministerial Organisation Report (1992) states that the main objective of merging Records Services with the National Archives was to "create conditions conducive to the improvement and promotion of efficiency and effectiveness of both public Records Management and Archives Administration". BNA was then named BNARS in 1992 with an expanded mandate to cover in records management throughout the public service for the provision of leadership and professional competence.

Additionally, prior to April 2010, all Records Management Unit (RMU) personnel were employed by BNARS and seconded to government Ministries and Departments. An interview with the BNARS Head of Records Management (2011) however, show that a move to decentralize human resources from BNARS gave Ministries and Departments full responsibilities of employing, paying and training RMU officers while BNARS only provides advisory and inspectorate services on records management. Currently, each Ministry has a records manager, who provides insights and leadership on records management to the Ministry and all its Departments. The records manager reports to the director or the assistant director, corporate services in the Ministry headquarters, while records officers in the RMU operate as artisans and technicians and

report to the administration or human resource officer responsible for the RMU.

Lastly, the management of government records in Botswana is guided by the Records Management Procedures Manual which was developed in 1986 and revised in 2009 by BNARS. In 2009, BNARS also developed a Records Transfer Manual which is meant to guide the processing and transfer of semi-current records to the government center operated by BNARS. In addition to these two guiding documents, BNARS Head of Department (2011) explained that BNARS has developed a general Records Management Policy for individual Ministries and Departments to adapt, which is accessible through the BNARS website. Accordingly, all government Ministries and Departments (including the ones covered in this study) use the revised Records Management Procedures Manual of 2009, the Records Transfer manual and the generic Records Management Policy, all developed by BNARS to guide in their daily records management practices.

3. Statement of the problem

Preservation is the means through which records are accessed and is a major component of records management. Papers within which records are made are susceptible to damage overtime. Similarly, technology becomes absolute, hence the need to have preservation strategies that can make the records accessible for posterity. The importance of records cannot be overemphasized. They provide evidence for decision making, transparency and accountability. Authentic records are the means for a growing economy and democratic governance. Hence the integrity and availability of government records is paramount to Botswana people. The government is accountable to its people and is the largest producer of vital national records. Preliminary investigations at

BNARS however revealed a growing concern of records reaching the department from most Ministries and Departments in a deteriorating state. The Head of Records Management at BNARS revealed that records reaching BNARS for transfer to the records center are often tattered covered with irrelevant ink writings and liquids while some writing had faded. Under these circumstances, BNARS is forced to spend more on conservation and restoration of records, a process that is quite demanding. These preliminary findings were a pointer that preservation of government records is poor at records creating agencies. A study by Monageng (1997) showed preservation is not a priority for most Botswana institutions such that records are in danger of rapid deterioration. It is against this background that this study sought to assess preservation of government records in Ministries and Departments and make recommendations for future preservation development.

4. Objectives of the study

Preservation of records begins at creation hence the study sought to assess mainly the status of preservation of records in Botswana prior to their transfer to BNARS. BNARS is involved in secondary preservation.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Establish the policy framework on the preservation of government records in Botswana.
2. Identify preservation activities and strategies applied by government Ministries and Departments.
3. Assess the suitability of records storage facilities in relation to preservation requirements.
4. Identify the challenges faced by government Ministries and Departments in the preservation of records.

5. Make recommendations about improving the preservation of records in government Ministries and Departments.

5. Methodology

The targeted population of this study was 186 officers working in records management areas in selected government Ministries and Departments in Botswana comprising the Head of Records Management at BNARS, a records manager (8/8) from each of the eight Ministries covered in the Study, an Administration Officer (41/41) supervising the RMU from each Department in the covered Ministries and the operational officers (111/135) of the RMU. The study covered eight Ministries and their respective forty one Departments shown in the list below.

1. **Ministry of Education and Skills Development** and its respective departments as follows; Department of Corporate services; Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation; Department of Teacher Training and Development; Department of Primary Education; Department of Secondary Education; Department of Out of School and Education Training; Department of Teaching Service Management; Department of Vocational Education Training; Department of Auto Trade Technical College and the Department of Tertiary Education Financing. The entire ten departments were covered.
2. **Ministry of Lands and Housing** and its respective departments as follows; Corporate Services, Department of Surveys and Mapping; Department of Town and Regional Planning; Department of Lands Division; Department of Housing; Department of Deeds

Registry and the Department of Lands. The entire seven departments were covered.

3. **Ministry of Transport and Communications** and its respective department of Corporate Services. The Department of Central Transport Organisation, Department of Road Transport and Safety, Department of telecommunications and Postal services and the department of Information technology were not covered as permission to cover the Ministry was delayed. Only one out of the five Departments was covered.
4. **Ministry of Agriculture** and its respective departments of ; Corporate services; Department of Crops Production; Department of Animal Production; Department of Plant Protection; Department of Integrated Agricultural Research; Department of Veterinary and the National Master Plan for Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development(NAMPAAD). The entire seven departments were covered.
5. **Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture** and its respective departments of; Corporate services, Botswana National Archives and Records Services; Department of Culture and Youth; Department of National Library Services and Department of Sports and recreation. The entire five departments were covered.
6. **Ministry of Mineral Energy and Water Resources** and its respective departments of ; Corporate Services, Department of Mineral Affairs, Department of Energy, Department of Mines and Department of Water Affairs. The Department of

Geological Surveys was not covered because it is outside the study area of Gaborone in Lobatse. At least five out of the six departments were covered.

7. **Ministry of Local Government** and its respective departments of; Corporate Services. The Departments of Tribal Administration, Department of Local Government Service and Management, Department of Food relief Services, Department of Local Government Audit and the District Commissioner were not covered because these were undergoing reviews for centralization to the central government. At least one of the six departments was covered.
8. **Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs** and its respective departments of; Corporate Services; Department of Civil and National Registration; Department of Women Affairs; Department of Immigration and Labour and Social security. The Industrial Court could not be covered as the personnel were too busy to engage in the study. At least 5 out of the 6 departments were covered.

The Ministries and their respective Departments above are very relevant in informing this study because they are representative of major significant Ministries to national development such as the Ministry of Transport and Communications; the Ministry of Mineral Energy and Water Resources; the Ministry of Labour and Home and Home Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. Equally important is the representation of minor but significant ministries in the study such as the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. Having covered

eight Ministries in the study makes it admissible for generalizing the findings on the preservation of government records in Botswana since 8 (50%) is half the number of Ministries in Botswana which are sixteen in total.

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents for interviews who consisted of records managers and administration officers supervising the RMU while stratified simple random sampling was used for selecting respondents to the questionnaire from RMU operational personnel who have differing levels of skills in records management. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to officers working in the RMU. The rationale for selecting RMU officers is that they are directly responsible for implementing preservation techniques, general maintenance of records and advising client on proper use of records. There were 34 out of 41 administration officers supervising the RMU who answered the interviews. These were selected because of their supervisory duties which ensure the maintenance of quality standards in preservation and records management; advocacy for records management and preservation within management meetings; planning; budgeting for preservation and records management activities, and facilitation of training for records management personnel. Further 8 out of 8 records managers responsible for each of the eight Ministries took the interview because they are professionals who among other duties formulate policies for preservation and general records management, plan and develop quality assurance manuals, guide the proper implementation of the set standards and offer professional expertise on general records management and preservation for departments under their Ministries.

The study used both open ended and closed type of questionnaires which were personally handed to the respondents accompanied by an introductory letter. These were collected

after two weeks, following an appointment by the researcher to come for them. Structured interviews were held for at most one hour with administration officers supervising RMUs once all questionnaires were collected. This was done so as to supplement the data gathered in the questionnaires. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder with the permission of the interviewee and where such permission was not granted, the researcher took handwritten notes. The researcher made separate appointments with the department in the study to carry out personal observations to now confirm the data given by RMU officers and administration officers. To eliminate bias from the respondents, the study used the non-participatory obtrusive observation to inspect records storage rooms, environmental conditions, ventilation, control of light and general maintenance of records and storage areas in regard to preservation. Finally, to validate the data collected from RMU officers, administration officers and personal observation, appointments were made with records managers to schedule interviews. These interviews were very useful in supplementing gaps all the collected data.

6. Findings and discussions

The study population comprised of 120/186 respondents. For collecting data from RMU officers, 111 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 76 were fully completed, while 9 were never filled out and 26 were lost by respondents. The response rate for questionnaires is thus 68%. The targeted number for recorded interviews was 41, out of which 34 were successfully carried out while the rest failed due to various reasons. Instead of interviewing the Director for BNARS, the Head of Records Management Division and Head of Archives Division were recommended by the Deputy Director since the Director was out of office during the data collection period and these were a success.

The response rate for interviews is 83%. For observations, the targeted number of Departments was 41 and all these were observed. The average response rate for the study is 64.5%. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a 50% response rate is adequate for analysis while 60% is found as good and 70% is considered very good.

6.1 Preservation policies

The first objective of the study sought to establish the policy framework on the preservation of records in government Ministries and Departments. Forde (2007) defines a policy as the driving force for the achievement of any goal in an organization as it guides, binds and set the quality standard for implementation. Information gathered from interviews with records managers and Heads of Records Management and Archives at BNARS indicate that all government Ministries and Departments including BNARS lack a written and binding preservation policy. At BNARS, the policy is still in the draft stage. BNARS has developed a Records Transfer Manual of 2009 which is used to guide Ministries and Departments in transferring their non-current records to BNARS records Center where ideal storage conditions for the preservation of records are available. According to the Head of Archives at BNARS, however, the manual is not a substitute for a preservation policy but rather, one of the preservation measures by BNARS for Ministries and Departments.

Indeed the transfer of records to BNARS records center is a very good preservation measure since the records center has suitable conditions for records preservation and qualified human resource that helps in the care and maintenance of such records. Furthermore, if Ministries and Departments transfer records to the records center, they are incorporating the records lifecycle model which dictates that records should be moved from one stage to another based on time

intervals and thus helps in reducing backlogs and creates space in the records creating Departments. It is, however, worth noting that this implementation of Records Transfer by Ministries and Departments is still lagging behind as evidenced by the low response rate (0.14%) of Ministries and Departments to transfer their semi-current records to BNARS Records Center. Consequently, the failure to transfer records to BNARS records center on time poses very serious preservation challenges to public records in the secondary stage of the records life cycle. These records are exposed to less favourable storage facilities and climatic conditions which overtime results in rapid deterioration.

An equally significant point to note is that lack of a preservation policy is not only peculiar to Botswana government Ministries and Departments as studies in other African states have shown this to be a problem in their given states. A study carried out by Mazikana (1992) discovered that some archival institutions in Africa do not have written preservation policies. Another study by Akkussah (2002) in Ghana also came out with similar results. Moreover, a very recent study by Ngulube (2010) revealed that most of the archival institutions in South Africa still lack preservation policies. It is therefore fair to conclude that Botswana is not the only country in Africa that lacks a written preservation policy.

6.2 Volume, types and formats of records held in government ministries and departments

The study sought to determine the volume, types, formats and years covered by records held by government Ministries and Departments. Personal observations revealed that there are approximately 550, 000 +- files in the surveyed Ministries and departments. Establishing the exact number of records was not possible since not all record were stored

in uniform mobile cabinets and Departments also had no idea of how many records they each had in their custody. Due to the overwhelmingly large volumes of records, according to interviews with Administration officers, some Departments have sent their records to the two commercial record centers in Botswana being Document Bank Botswana and Crown Records Management because their growing rate could not be accommodated by the government records center.

With regard to the period covered by the records in the custody of government Ministries and Departments, most collections range from 1963 to 2011. Nevertheless, the bulk of the records in government Ministries and Departments were created in the 1970's. This is a period in which, according to interviews, Botswana had no professional records management and preservation personnel. Under these circumstances, identification and access of such archival records may never be realized due to failure to ensure proper care, handling and creation of finding lists as indicated by information gathered from interviews with Heads of Archive and Records management at BNARS. Ideally, most of the older records should have been in the custody of BNARS but due to shortage of space in BNARS Records Center (previously located at the National Archive in Gaborone), many of these records are still held by Ministries and Departments where they are exposed to less favourable conditions as indicated by interview with Head of Archives at BNARS. Interviews show that with the recent opening of the purpose built Records Center in Gaborone, Ministries and Departments are encouraged to deposit their semi-current records to the Gaborone Records Center.

Similarly, the study sought to identify the types of records held in government Ministries and Departments. Data collected from questionnaires and observations

indicate that Ministries and Departments largely hold paper records. Although most for government offices have computers, there is no management of electronic records in place within government Ministries and Departments as pointed out by responses from interviews and questionnaires. Interviews reveal that electronic records are created, maintained and disposed by action officers without monitoring. The results of the lack of management and depository of electronic records created by action officers to the Department's electronic storage result in loss of valuable corporate memory as no information management principles are applied to managing such information as indicated by interviews with records managers.

In addition to paper records, questionnaires, interviews and observations show that, audiovisuals, comprising of audiotapes, maps and photographs constitute another type of records found in government Ministries and Departments. In all the surveyed Ministries and Departments, it became evident through observations and interviews that records in other formats than the traditional filed records are not kept in the RMU or the records storage areas. The reason for this is that, there seems to be a prevailing perception, indicated by interviews and observation, that the RMU and other designated records storage areas are only responsible for paper records. Accordingly, interviews revealed that records relating to the core functions of a Department are managed by the function group that created them while RMUs keep mainly but not limited to general records. For instance, the Human Resource Officer keeps his/her work related functions and in the same way, a Finance officer does the same with his work files, an arrangement whose explanation could not be attained in the study as no respondent had an answer to.

6.3 Organisation of records in government ministries and departments

The study sought to find out how records are arranged within Ministries and Departments as Brunton and Robinson (1993) opine that organisations must have control over their holdings through arrangement and description of records, both for their own good management and to ensure that records are available for use. Based on this presumption, the arrangement of records both in the current and semi-current stages of the records life cycle was established. The most popular way of arranging records is by subject, followed by chronology throughout the Departments and Ministries covered based on questionnaires and interviews. Conversely, personal observations indicated that most Ministries and Departments have no logical patterns for arranging semi-current records which were mostly dumped all over records storage areas, especially those kept in the storerooms. As it can be expected, observations indicate no arrangement and description for records in unique formats such as audiovisual materials in the storage areas. Comparatively, the findings on the lack of description and arrangement for records in unique formats are similar to those found by Mnjama (2005:466) who notes that "the most neglected archival resources are audio-visual collections which remain unprocessed and hence inaccessible to researchers". The same results have been unearthed by Matangira (2003) whose study revealed that most Eastern and Southern African archival institutions have done very little to develop and archive audiovisual materials. Most maps are folded into rolls, stored in floors and in worst conditions in storerooms that keep other departmental tools such as spades, greasy cans of petrol, diesel and unserviceable equipment. Personal observations by the researcher reveal that audiotape records have no arrangement and description of what they

contain and hence remain inaccessible to Departments and ultimately the public.

6.4 Awareness of the importance of records preservation

The third objective of the study sought to determine the level of awareness on the importance of preservation for records in the government Ministries and departments in Botswana. Harvey (1993) warned that for records preservation to succeed there must be substantial awareness on the importance of preservation to managing records. This awareness forms the basis of all actions to be taken to improve compliance with all records management practices which contribute to the accessibility and integrity of records and archives. The information gathered from interviews indicates a failure by government Ministries and Departments to understand and commit to preservation and its importance to records management. Most Ministries and Departments assume their role is only limited to creation of records and management of such up to the semi-current stage with little effort to ensure that the lifespan of the records is elongated as revealed by questionnaires, interviews and observations. Under these circumstances, there is very little commitment to ensure proper care, handling and storage of records for long term use. Above all, RMUs and records management in general receive low recognition and appreciation in government Ministries and Departments according to interviews with Heads of records Management and Archives at BNARS; hence less attention and resources are spent to ensure the protection and preservation of records. It is also apparent, according to interviews, that records management and preservation ranks the lowest in the Department's priorities for development and because of this awareness of preservation is very low.

As a rule of thumb, preservation awareness goes hand in hand with the provision of training in preservation management. For this reason, Akkussah (2002) found out that the lack of training on preservation programming is a contributory factor to the failure of preservation strategies. The sentiment expressed in the source embodies the view that the same people who are expected to ensure the long term preservation of records may also act as agents of deterioration if they are not empowered to understand what factors contribute to record deterioration. For this reason, the study sought to examine the professional qualifications of records officers deployed in the surveyed Ministries and Departments in Botswana. The information gathered from the questionnaire revealed that more than half of the respondents (51.3%) lack a basic preservation training while the remaining (39.5%) have some formal preservation training components. A small number (9.2%) did not respond to the item indicating a lack of a preservation component in their professional training.

Additionally, the bulk of the personnel managing records in government Departments and Ministries, according to questionnaires and interviews, possess lower basic professional training while some still have no professional training. Interviews and questionnaires show that at least one (1.3%) officers in the RMU have a Form Five leaver's certificate (Botswana General Certificate for Secondary Education without any professional training). According to interviews, these officers were employed at a time when there was low shortage of professionally trained officers in the country yet the department needed officers. At least (18.4%) officers working in the RMU possess a Junior Certificate (Grade 9) with Basic Training in Records and Archives Management. Interviews reveal that all officers employed with a Junior Certificate acquired in-service short course training in records management because most were

employed in the 1980 and 1990', a period in which professional records management was not yet offered in tertiary schools in Botswana. Furthermore, questionnaires and interviews reveal that at least (39.4%) officers have a Form Five Leaver's Certificate (Cambridge O Level's School Leaving Certificate) with Basic Training in Records and Archives Management Certificate in Records Management. These have also been offered in-service short course training in records and archives management. In comparison to the officers employed in the RMUs prior to 2005, most officers whose employment commence from 2006 hold at least a relevant Diploma. Therefore (27.6%) officers have a Diploma in Archives and Records Management while the remaining (13%) officers possess a Diploma in Library and Information Studies.

Turning to the availability of higher qualifications in records and preservation management, Botswana has no degree in Records Management offered locally. Consequently, the trend is to do a certificate (level 100) and a diploma in Records and Archives Management (Level 200 and 300) and obtain a degree in Humanities (Level 300 and 300). The questionnaires further showed disparities in the distribution of professionally trained personnel within Ministries and Departments such that one Department could have many professionally trained staff while others have only in-service or no training at all. According to interviews, the untrained staff is long serving officers who joined the profession in the 1990's when the minimum entry into the records management profession was either a Primary School Leaving certificate and/or a 9 year Junior Certificate were employed with only a junior certificate qualification.

As mentioned earlier in the study, Ministries and Departments only began employing records personnel only from April 2010, prior to that these were only employed and

managed by BNARS and seconded to Ministries and Departments. According to interviews, the de-centralization of records personnel from BNARS to Ministries and Departments had implications on preservation at creation stage such as inheriting untrained staff that have long served and awaited training on the former BNARS training list and the uneven distribution of trained staff. Accordingly personal observation by the researcher reveal that Departments with less professionally trained staff faced the risk of even less preservation management awareness and implementation compared to those with many professionally trained staff as indicated by observations.

6.5 Preservation strategies used by government ministries and departments in Botswana

The fourth objective of the study sought to identify preservation activities and strategies used by government Ministries and Departments. The information collected from questionnaires indicated that the main preservation activity used by government Departments and Ministries in Botswana is boxing. Moreover, a small number of departments use photocopying (7.9%) as a back-up for records. On preservation strategies, (2.9%) used lamination and a very insignificant number used encapsulation, digitization and microfilming (1.3% for all the three methods). The results on the preservation strategies used by government Ministries and Departments are not different to those obtained by Akkussah (2002), in which boxing emerged as the main activity used by government Departments and Ministries to preserve records in Ghana. Furthermore, similar to Akkussah's (2002) findings, other activities such as photocopying, lamination, digitization, microfilming and encapsulation score very

low, indicating that these are almost nonexistent.

Apart from incorporating preservation strategies, there are cost effective ways to use to ensure records are preserved, in particular, handling. The majority of respondents (78.9%) revealed that they had no documented handling procedures for records in different formats in their custody. Only a few of the respondents (14.5%) indicated that they do have documented special handling procedures for records in different formats while (6.6%) did not give a response. Observations undertaken by the researcher also revealed that indeed government Ministries and Departments had no written special handling procedures for records. It is, however, very important to have these documented especially to guide newly appointed staff and users of records.

With reference to handling records in other formats, observations indicated that departments have large quantities of maps, architectural drawings, audiotapes and cassettes but have neither storage facilities nor handling procedures for these. The result of this is that these records are thus often damaged by being cramped in small spaces and exposure differing degrees of light and temperature. In contrast to old Departments, newly formed Departments, which are at least 10 years old, have very organized RMUs, a set of guidelines for the care and handling of records and portrayed a strong adherence to the Records Management Procedures Manual in the management of records. This new development could be attributed to more awareness on the importance of preservation, appreciation of records management and presence of qualified staff who initiated records management on the new Department.

In addition to handling, the study sought to establish if records officers and users of records are sensitized on the care and handling of records. The study show that

(66%) of questionnaire respondents indicated that although sensitisation of records officers and action officers on the care and handling of records is implemented, most records are still mishandled. Observations by the researcher indicated that file covers are torn, files are dismantled, and contents of files are stained with liquids and scribbled with pens such that original writings are not visible. Nevertheless, interviews reveal that BNARS has made a recommendation to all government Ministries and Departments to form Records Management Committees that are responsible for ensuring compliance with set Departmental standards in records management, addressing complaints and issues such as poor handling of records. The committees are to be made up of at least two senior managers, records management personnel and other departmental staff. Observations found that out of the 41 Departments surveyed, only fifteen had already instituted the committees while others have not yet started. It is hoped that with these committees, records management practices could become a departmental concern and have more support.

Alternatively, the study sought to find out the extent to which government Ministries and Departments implemented preventive preservation. Generally, preventive preservation activities focus on a presence and implementation of good housekeeping practices within both the RMUs and the storage areas for semi-current records. Good housekeeping ensures that the breeding of pests is prevented, dust is controlled and clean air circulates in records storage areas. Observations on housekeeping practices show that there is not much cleaning done in the records storage areas and even where cleaning is done, there is no supervision to ensure that records are protected from dirt. On average, RMUs are cleaned more frequently because they do not only house records but also house the officers working in the RMU. As for records storage areas

outside the RMU, these are mostly neglected and are accessed only when there is a record in demand.

Another aspect investigated is the regular examination of records for preservation activities. Questionnaires and observations by the researcher showed that examination of records is very low in government Ministries and Departments. About (55%) of the questionnaire respondents revealed that they never do a records examination, (8%) claimed to do it every 6 months, (13%) said they do it once a year and a further (11%) did not respond to this question and wrote not applicable which indicates no examination of records is done in their Departments. Contrary to the above findings, observations by the researcher revealed only five departments in the study did records examination. These departments also did records examination only to prepare records for transfer to BNARS records center.

In preservation management, one of the key areas to consider is to have a detailed disaster preparedness plan in case of an outbreak of disasters such as floods, water leakages, fire and other hazards. Ngulube (2005) observed that disaster management is not only useful to the protection of records and archival materials from natural disasters but also protects people caring for these records. Interviews and observations by the researcher show that all the surveyed government Ministries and Departments have no disaster preparedness and management plans.

Currently, all the surveyed Departments are well protected from water leakages and there were no water soaked records found. However, Departments revealed a concern that some doors to the RMUs have been cut too short hence could allow water, pests such as lizards, ants, cockroaches and so on to enter records storage areas from other offices in the department. There were minimal cases of damage by water found in most records

that date back to the 1960s showing that recently created records have received more protection from water than those created earlier. In addition, at least 24 government Departments and Ministries have installed fire detectors, 25 fire extinguishers, 17 water sprinklers (not good for records) and 19 smoke detection systems. These are not regularly serviced and inspected by the Gaborone City Council Fire Department which is expected to service and maintain these. Furthermore, there is no fire protection programme in place in all the surveyed Ministries and Departments and the Fire Departments has no awareness on the handling of records even if there was to be a fire outbreak. Similarly, records officers and all personnel in the Departments are not sensitized on how to use fire extinguishers in case there was a fire outbreak, even though these extinguishers are provided for in the Department.

At last, the study investigated how electronic records are preserved in government Ministries and Departments. The findings, like reported earlier showed there is very little activity taking place on the management of electronic records. Interviews revealed that the entire surveyed Departments and Ministries lack a preservation policy and guidelines for electronic records management. The findings on electronic records management in Botswana are similar to those provided by the International Records Management Trust (2002) which also showed lack of knowledge on electronic records management as well as lack of set regulations and procedures for managing electronic records in most African states. Moreover, Mutiti (2002) in a survey of electronic records management practices in ESARBICA member states found out that except for South Africa, most of these member states lacked procedures and retention schedules for the management of electronic.

6.6 Records storage and facilities

The fifth objective sought to assess the suitability of records storage facilities in relation to preservation requirements. Observations by the researcher revealed that all current records are kept in the RMU's while semi-current records are stored in departmental storerooms. Interviews and observations also indicated that most government Ministries and Departments are in dire need of records storage areas and there are no purpose built areas for storing semi-current records. Interviews further revealed that there is never consultation with records management experts or BNARS when constructing buildings to get advice on how to meet the needs of records hence problems with storage facilities. Observations by the researcher revealed that areas where records are stored sometimes have electric cables located on their walls such that in case of firebreaks, records storage areas will be first to be affected.

Another significant factor in preservation management for storage facilities is the maintenance of environmental controls in records storage areas. The study thus sought to find out if areas storing records have different environmental controls to other offices within the departments. Observations by the researcher and interviews revealed that the entire surveyed Ministries and Departments have no separated environmental controls in the records storage areas for semi-current records. By the same token, there are no such controls because RMU's also houses officers who throughout the day control light, temperature and ventilation to suit their own human needs over those of records. Nonetheless, these finding concur with findings made by Akkussah (2002) which indicate that most government departments in Ghana had no environmental controls for both semi-current and current records in their custody.

Accordingly, an attempt to determine the proximity of storage areas of records to industrial or high pollution areas was made. The findings indicate that (61%) of the departments surveyed are in areas that can be said to be industrial and possibly with high air pollution, a phenomenon that can lead to high deterioration of paper based records. Mosothwane (1999) observed that Botswana faces high air pollution especially in major towns where high densities of motor vehicles emit unclean air. It is thus conclusive that at least (61%) of the surveyed departments' records face possible deterioration caused by air pollution considering that Gaborone is a capital city which is clouded by thousands of motor vehicles.

Subsequently, the study sought to investigate what security measures are in place to ensure that records are safe from unauthorised access in both the RMUs and in the storage areas. Observations by the researcher reveal that security of records is a concern for all the surveyed Departments and Ministries. Whereas RMUs have glass partitioning which hinders unauthorised entries, records storage facilities have not controlled access. Records storage areas in the Departments and Ministries have no intruder alarms and interviews further indicate that records storage areas are often locked and the key is given to the security guards as it is the case with most departmental keys. It, however, surfaced through interviews that the use of key to the records storage areas is not closely monitored to know who has it when and why. Under these circumstances, anyone in the Departments can access the semi-current records without monitoring.

Lastly, storage areas were examined to establish if proper cleaning is maintained in areas storing semi-current records since RMUs are cleaned on daily basis. Observations by the researcher revealed that regular cleaning of records storage areas is not in place; because for most departments

these are not only records storage areas, but also storerooms where other departmental equipment are stored. Consequently observations by the researcher indicated that at least 11 out of the 41 surveyed departments had evidence of rats, lizards, beetles and bats in 11 storerooms for keeping semi-current records. Although, RMUs are regularly cleaned, observations revealed that officers eat within the areas, such that 14 out of the 41 observed RMUs had insects. Notwithstanding these findings, interviews and observations also revealed a lack of fumigation programmes to manage and control pest infestations.

6.7 Records preservation implementation within government ministries and departments

The sixth objective sought to identify how government Ministries and Departments implement and manage preservation of records. Interviews with Heads of Archives and Records Management at BNARS indicated that records management in Botswana faces a myriad of challenges which then translate into preservation challenges. Firstly, there is a lot of resistance to change amongst action officers on proper handling and use of records which result in damages to records and their integrity. Secondly, the frequent transfer of records officers from one department to another has also contributed to the slow implementation of proper handling and care of records amongst Ministries and Departments. Interviews reveal that there are Ministries and Departments that are poor in caring for records, such that once an officer from such a Ministry is transferred to another Ministry where compliance with proper handling and care of records is succeeding, he/she continues the culture of mishandling records in the new department hence making setbacks for the preservation programme. Finally, the current implementation of the

electronic National Archives and Records Management System (NARMS) has shifted the focus of records management from the care and maintenance of paper based records to the investment towards the new development that is thought to be the solution of problems in records management and hence less attention on paper records. In view of the above, implementation of preservation management within the Departments and Ministries that create such records is now proving difficult.

Additionally, interviews indicated the lack of a specific vote reserved for preservation activities in BNARS or even in the government Ministries and Departments as a major blow to preservation effort. The funds allocated to BNARS and other government agencies cover all costs of maintaining these agencies and preservation has to compete with all the other activities that the agencies carry out. This contributes to the slow implementation of a fully-fledged preservation programme because preservation on its own requires a vote that can finance it for successful outcomes. Coupled with lack of a budget for preservation is the lack of space for the growing records volumes in the Departments and Ministries. Interviews pointed out a dire need for space to store records as a major preservation obstacle. Observations by the researcher revealed that records in both RMUs and storage areas are stored in very small spaces such that they easily get damaged.

Of central concern also, for preservation management, is that records management as a profession, has not yet received the attention it deserves across most government Ministries and Departments, a problem that makes its development to lag behind. The supervision of records management at Departmental level is under an Administration officer, whose office;

administration is marred by its own challenges such that advocating for records management in departmental meetings is very much an afterthought.

Whilst the discussions above probed into records management issues that ultimately affect preservation management in Departments and Ministries, the focus on BNARS indicates it also has its own barriers which then fail preservation. Part 3 (a) of the Archives Act mandated BNARS with the responsibility to preserve public records and archives hence it is ideally the advisor and inspector of preservation in Botswana. Nonetheless, interviews reveal a misunderstanding by government Departments and Ministries for this to mean BNARS is the only institution to preserve records. As a result, government Ministries and Departments seem to have developed a lot of passiveness in committing to preservation of records which leads to unprecedented deterioration of records in the records creating agencies of Botswana government. Secondly, although the Act further empowers the Director for BNARS to provide advisory services on proper records keeping practices to all public offices, this has not yet been fully realized. Interviews revealed a general ignorance on the role of BNARS to government Ministries and Departments which eventually results in most management teams within Departments and the Ministries approaching Document Bank Botswana and Crowns Records Management, privately owned companies, for help in records management and preservation instead of BNARS. A third concern is that there is very little that BNARS has achieved in sensitising the general staff in government Ministries and Departments on preservation and records management issues. By and large, these factors make the preservation of records to be a low priority area for government agencies.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Policies and procedures for preservation of records

The study found that there is no legislative framework to guide preservation management. This is an omission that can result in even more preservation problems. The study recommends that that the Botswana National Archives and Records Services develop a guideline on preservation policy for itself, the Ministries and their respective Departments. The policy development guideline should cover the following:

- a. Explicitly explain the importance of implementing preventive preservation at the creation of records.
- b. Indicate preventive preservation measures that Ministries and Departments must do to prevent rapid deterioration of records in their custody.
- c. State the suitable storage conditions within which records are to be stored.
- d. Identify suitable facilities and equipment that records should be stored in to extend their longevity.
- e. Emphasise the need to do regular examination of records in order to identify problems in records management and preservation.
- f. Conduct records and archives preservation workshops for records staff and other departmental staff.
- g. Develop standardised and well specified requirements for records and archives staff from different level to ensure each is capacitated to perform preservation.
- h. Provide recruitment of trained personnel to manage records and their preservation.

For benchmarking purposes, BNARS could use a preservation policy guideline and prototype by Forde (1997) and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (2006) since these two preservation policies are very

comprehensive, detailed and conform to international standards for preservation policy specifications.

The study recommends for the establishment of a National Committee on Preservation and Access to Records in Botswana. The committee should be chaired by the Director, BNARS because already the archives act requires he provides guidance to all public records, thus he would be able to take this role as well here. Further major members to consider in the composition of the committee could be members of the University of Botswana Library and the University of Botswana (UB) Department of Library and Information Studies. The University of Botswana Library has an archive section and its members can thus offer industry and research experiences to the committee while the (UB) Department of Library and Information Studies is the academic department that is engaged in research on preservation, standards and procedures for records, archives and library materials. The establishment of a National Committee on Preservation and Access to records will ensure that the national memory from both private and public agencies is preserved for posterity. The mandate of the proposed National Committee on Preservation and Access could be:

- a. Promoting awareness on preservation to information professionals including records creators; records managers; archivists, librarians and the general public through different media such as radio, television, newspapers, posters and documentaries.
- b. Overseeing the implementation of preservation policies, standards and procedures.
- c. Development of standards for storing records, acid-free paper usage and building conducive environments for the management of electronic records.

- d. Initiatives of research projects on preservation, conservation and restoration of national records.
- e. Promoting liaisons with regional and international preservation agencies to learn and grow from their experiences and achievements.
- f. Promoting the creation of restorative and conservation media centers.

Equally important to the creation of preservation policies and guiding standards, Botswana needs to have a preservation vote for individual Ministries and Departments. This vote would make provisions to fund among others training officers on preservation, production of preservation manuals, purchasing materials needed to support preservation activities and repair any preservation equipment. A specific vote for preservation will also ensure that preservation of records in the public sector is never interrupted from creation of a record to the non-current stage of a record life cycle due to lack of funds. Likewise, there should be adequate resources and budgets for records managers to hold workshops, inspections and offer advisory services to their Departments from the main Ministry. The study found that although records managers are expected to travel between departments to do inspections and trainings, there are no funds allocated for such. Given this, records managers are then unable to play their role fully in both the Ministries and respective departments.

7.2 Storage facilities

The study revealed that there are problems with maintaining suitable conditions for the preservation of records and thus propose for the development of a Records and Archival Material Committee to be formed. This committee would operate as a sub-committee under the National Preservation Committee to develop the National Storage and Paper Requirements for Archives and Records in Botswana. Already countries such as South

Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America have these standards which form part of their national preservation strategy. Botswana could benefit from these developed national standards to develop their own standards suitable to their environmental conditions. Additionally, the study further recommends for the collaboration of BNARS; records professional; the UB Department of Library and Information Studies; Botswana National Library Services; the University of Botswana Library and the Botswana Bureau of Standards to develop a national standard for relative humidity and temperatures to guide preservation needs of records in Botswana. These standards, once developed and implemented, would help ensure that storage facilities are built to the required specifications and records are stored accordingly.

Secondly, the study revealed that records in government Ministries and departments are exposed to differing environmental and climatic conditions. Undoubtedly, maintaining the required environmental and climatic conditions for records is expensive; hence the study recommends the need to engage in preventive preservation management by public agencies. It should be the responsibility of all records users, creators and managers to ensure that records are handled and stored in ways that are not destructive. A list of all the do's and don'ts of preserving records whilst handling and using such should be availed to all officers to ensure all understand what needs to be done to ensure records' lives are elongated. Records managers for each Ministry could develop these guiding activities for their departments and make follow-ups to ensure these are adhered to.

Thirdly, findings of the study indicated that there is a need for space to store records in government Ministries and Departments. To overcome this problem, the study

recommends for an increased ownership by records personnel to carry out records regular records examination and appraisal of records to ensure that there is no backlog. Even though it is true records are continually growing in number, there were indications that most departments still have records that have never been appraised such that they take up space. In addition to this, most departments had not complied with transferring records to the BNARS records center which could reduce the need for space. The study further recommends that records managers should strongly advocate for the transfer of records to BNARS records center within their designated Ministries and Departments.

To conclude, it became clear in the study that there are no disaster management plans and back-ups for all the surveyed Ministries and Departments. Therefore, the study recommends that the records managers and records officers should develop disaster management and preparedness as well as have facilities for such. The disaster management plan should be clear on who does what, when and with what in case of disasters. On a similar note, all the surveyed Departments and Ministries had no pest management plans in place, which are also recommended to be developed and implemented by records managers.

7.3 The level of awareness by records officers on preservation of records

Despite the lack of statistical evidence for an association between the level of professional education and preservation management in government Ministries and Departments, the study found out that those Departments and Ministries with more highly professionally trained officers had much better preservation measures and protection of records from damages. The implication is then that if

preservation management is to prosper in Ministries and Departments, there is a need to have more professionally trained personnel. For this reason, the study recommends for individual Ministries and Departments to train records personnel who need professional training to better to implement preservation management. Even more training is needed for those departments that inherited a high number of untrained personnel. This training to build awareness should include also users of records to ensure they help records personnel in preserving records. This therefore calls for records managers to work hand in hand with departments to promote awareness on preservation in records management through workshops and short courses.

The study also found that Botswana has few trained personnel in preservation which calls for the now few more qualified staff to conduct training of those who are not trained. Thus the study recommends intensified cost sharing efforts by BNARS, Ministries and Departments to work hand in hand in training staff on preservation through inter-departmental workshops. For example, if BNARS has trained a number of qualified preservation personnel, then these staff could offer preservation training to Ministries and Department vice-versa, maybe at a fee. This arrangement could ensure that BNARS, Ministries and Departments can cut training cost while at the same time ensuring officers are capacitated to do preservation management. In addition to this, BNARS could develop a guideline and a code practice for staff handling records with the help of the proposed National Preservation Committee to raise awareness on preservation of records. Botswana can consult the guideline and prototype developed by the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (2007) for such a code of practice.

A further point of concern in the study was the finding that not all records managers have

undergone records management training. Some records managers have a degree in either Humanities or Library and Information Studies without the records management component. Under these circumstances, the study showed that records management and preservation implementation varies from one Department to another, even for those under one Ministry. To standardise records management and preservation of government records, the study recommends for the development and implementation of standard professional and educational requirements for records managers. The post of a records manager, at a Ministry level requires the following; outstanding theoretical and practical background in records management procedures; principles and practical outcomes of records management, preservation management; an ability to be innovative to improve services and strong advocacy skills for records management development. Locally, Ministries and Departments can benefit by employing more of the University of Botswana graduates whose programmes offers a holistic training on records management and preservation.

Above all, to improve awareness on preservation of records within Ministries and Departments there is a compelling need to promote records management as a profession and an important function in the government structure. The study found that preservation is directly affected by slow growth and recognition of records management in Botswana such that if records management could improve, preservation would also improve. It is worth noting that BNARS has produced a number of guidelines to help improve records management such as the Records Management Procedures Manual of 2009 and the Records Management Policy template to name a few. The onus is now on records managers and their respective departments to implement these. Secondly, BNARS itself is placed under the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, a ministry that has

narrow ministerial powers and very competitive departments of youth, sports and culture. This view is equally endorsed by Mnjama (2005) that with experience gained from other common wealth countries such as Ghana and the Gambia, placing the national archives under a ministry without wide ministerial powers results in the institutions suffering. Against this background, BNARS is almost invisible. Therefore, the study recommends the placement of BNARS to a ministry with wide ministerial powers to improve records management in Ministries and Departments in general. For instance, placing BNARS under the Ministry of Presidential Affairs could elevate its authority and improve its relevance because the Ministry has wide ministerial power, is highly recognized and well-funded.

7.4 The role of BNARS

BNARS is legally required to be involved in preserving the nation's documentary heritage, a function that should not only be done at the end of the records lifecycle as it is the current case. In view of this, BNARS should delegate its personnel to ensure that records are preserved from creation to the end by carrying out awareness workshops and helping Departments develop and implement standards for preservation at Departmental and Ministry level. The focus of capacity building by BNARS should not only be limited to providing records management and preservation awareness to records personnel but to also capacitating records users and management of departments. In relation to management teams of Ministries and Departments, BNARS should focus on empowering them on handling records, records administration and the legislative framework governing records management and administration.

Furthermore, BNARS as an inspectorate for proper records management and preservation needs to further develop a guiding tool

similar to the Records Management Procedures Manual, for the preservation of records. The tool should put emphasis on preventive preservation strategies such as good housekeeping, use of appropriate cleaning materials and the maintenance of suitable storage conditions and facilities. Emphasis should also be made on selecting non-reactive acid-free paper for creating records as well as acid-free boxes for storing such records. In addition to this, regular surveys and inspections by BNARS should be undertaken to identify problems and challenges in public sector records management and hence come up with ways to solve these. Similarly, BNARS should advocate for a policy that requires all new government buildings to show a consideration for records in their structures. This will force all future plans to make the necessary considerations for the storage of records and hence enhance preservation management.

As a final point, BNARS needs to do more to educate individual Ministries and Departments on function in relation to records management and preservation. The findings of the study had revealed that Departments are confused on the role of BNARS managing and preserving public records. Some departments even admitted seeking help from privately owned records management companies instead of consulting BNARS. This trend thus calls for BNARS and the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture to engage in massive marketing of BNARS, its mandate and the services it can offer to government Ministries and Departments. The marketing can be through the use of radio, television, internet, newspapers, arts festival and any medium that can sell the national archive to people. Coupled with marketing its services, BNARS should also make a counter effort to erase the belief among Ministries and Departments that preservation is only confined to BNARS. It is very important that BNARS makes it

clear to Departments and Ministries that as much as it is the one responsible for preservation of national archives; preservation however begins at creation, not at the end of the record's life. Thus Departments and Ministries need to ensure that the earlier stages of records are preservation driven so that the records survive longer.

8. Conclusion

Preservation is a very important aspect of records management as it ensures the accessibility of records over a period of time. In Botswana, preservation is still very much thought to be the work of the archive, a notion which has led to less commitment to the preservation of records in the creation stages. Although, Ministries and Departments are engaged in preservation management, there is more that needs to be done to ensure the national heritage and memory is available for future use. Preservation of records in the surveyed government Ministries and Departments is marred by lack of preservation policies, guidelines and resources as well as few professionally trained personnel who could implement preservation. Even more contributing to these challenges is the delayed developments of code of ethics for preservation, national standards for storage facilities and control of conditions such as temperatures, relative humidity and paper quality for creating records. However, with opportunities for collaboration between the academic institutions and both private and government records management organisations, preservation management has the potential to succeed.

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