



**arts and culture**

Department:  
Arts and Culture  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

**AND**

**RECORDS SERVICE**

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**DIGITISATION STRATEGY**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa was established by promulgation of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (Act No 43 of 1996 as amended). This piece of legislation transformed the former State Archives Service into a National Archives and Records Service whose mission, functions and structures reflect the South African democratic political order and imperatives. In essence, the mission of the National Archives and Records Service is to foster a national identity and the protection of rights

- *By preserving a national archival heritage for use by the government and people of South Africa;*
- *By promoting efficient, accountable and transparent government through the proper management and care of government records.*

Records were originally created for a specific purpose as evidence of transactions. By preserving public records created by governmental bodies as archives, the National Archives and Records Service seeks to preserve the memory of what a governmental body, an organization or an individual did, as well as the circumstances and context connected with the activity. Archival records therefore help us to understand who we are, either as individuals or as organizations, and where we come from.

By providing us with information about our past, we are better able to understand the present. This information is as important to a nation as individual memory is to each person. Indeed, archives provide a basis for the proper understanding of the past that is important in South Africa to inform the development of a new democratic society. A public archives such as the National Archives and Records Service is therefore a special resource for dealing with the social memory of our nation and with protecting people's rights in our country. It is a major resource for fostering a national identity. It is also a treasure house of national memory resources that is accessible to all.

Through its statutory regulation of the management of current government records, the National Archives and Records Service promote efficient, accountable and

transparent evidence-based governance. This is because the information in public records constitutes a strategic resource to enable governmental service delivery. Public records also serve as a major channel for accountability, and are a cornerstone of democracy. Through access to public records and archives, transparency is promoted. By regulating systems of classification of public records in all media and their functional management and disposal, the National Archives and Records Service foster their effective retrieval, use and preservation for functional and archival purposes.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO DIGITISATION

One of the earliest initiatives for digitisation in South Africa was a workshop held at the University of the Witwatersrand in September 1997, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which then gave rise to the Digitisation Imaging South Africa (DISA) project. This project commenced in 1999 and was the first collaboration project on digitisation to be undertaken in South Africa at national level. Through initiatives such as DISA all problems related to digitisation were exposed in South Africa thereby highlighting the need for a national policy framework to guide particularly the digitisation of national heritage.

The National Archives played a leading role both on the DISA project and on the development of the National Policy framework. Policy Statement 3.3 of the National Policy on the Digitisation of Heritage Resources state that "*custodian institutions need to create a digitisation strategy in line with this policy and to actively engage in digitisation initiatives. An environment for such initiatives is provided in terms of the development of institutional digitisation strategies which should include the recording and management of rights*".

This strategy is therefore developed in compliance with the National Policy on Digitisation of Heritage Resources. The strategy does not replace the authority of the policy but outlines the institutional commitment to digitisation, with a parallel objective to fully comply with section 3 of the National Archives and Records Service Act. As the custodian of the national archival heritage and charged with the responsibility to make this heritage accessible, the National Archives thrives to

improve equitable access to archival resource not only in its custody but also provides leadership to provincial and local archival repositories to support access public to information.

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS**

The holdings of the National Archives and Records Service exceed 140 kilometers of shelving space, comprising records in a variety of media. This includes paper-based textual records, electronic records as well as audio-visual, photographic and cartographic material. As the National Archives and Records Service is a public archives, its records originate in the main from the execution of the business of national governmental bodies. These records are transferred to the National Archives and Records Service for custody in terms of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (No 43 of 1996) 20 years after their creation. The records reflect the activities of governments in South Africa and their impact on the lives of ordinary people since middle of the 17th century.

Governmental bodies produce vast amounts of administrative records. The National Archives and Records Service appraise such records in order to determine their disposal either through destruction or transfer to a repository for permanent archival preservation. It is aimed to preserve at least 5% of public records on average, although in many cases a higher percentage of records are retained. Records which are essential for the protection of the rights of citizens are preserved in their entirety. Currently about 5% of the holdings of the National Archives and Records Service are non-public records. These records are of private or non-governmental origin and are of national significance.

The collections of the National Archives are divided into paper and audio-visual records. While the largest percentage of the collections is paper-based, there is a sizeable collection of audio-visual material. Both these records are housed in appropriately controlled environments in custom built storage facilities.

Since a major part of the holdings of the National Archives and Records Service do not adequately reflect the experiences of particularly those South Africans who had been marginalised by Apartheid, the National Archives and Records Service has

embarked on a number of programmes that aim to encourage people to bring their stories and experiences into the archives and therefore to actively participate in the process of forming the collective memory of the whole society. Of special significance is the National Oral History Programme, whereby the challenge is converting orality into material custody without compromising the intrinsic archival value of oral sources. Equally important are the endeavors in reaching out to the public, public programming, particularly to members of society who had been marginalised in the Apartheid era, and who consequently suffer structural disadvantage.

#### **4. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The work of the National Archive is guided by the following laws and policies;

##### **4.1 Legislation**

- 4.1.1 Schedule 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), provides the constitutional framework for the provision of library services.
- 4.1.2 National Archives and Records Service (Act No. 43 of 1996 as amended)
- 4.1.3 Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000 (PAIA)
- 4.1.4 Protection of State Information Bill
- 4.1.5 Administration of Justice Act
- 4.1.6 IT related legislation etc.
- 4.1.7 South African Heritage Resources Act (SAHRA)
- 4.1.8 Transformation Charter for Heritage Sector
- 4.1.9 Transformation Charter for Library Services
- 4.1.10 Electronic Communications and Transactions Amendment Bill, 2012

4.1.11 Cultural Laws Amendment Act, 2001 (N. 69 of 2001)

4.1.12 Cultural Laws Second Amendment Act, 2001 (N. 69 of 2001)

4.1.13 National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (No. 25 of 1999)

4.1.14 Legal Deposit Act, (No. 54 of 1997)

4.1.15 Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act, 2008 (Act no. 51 of 2008)

4.1.16 Copyright Amendment Act, 2002 (No.9 of 2002)

## 4.2 Policies

1.1.1 National Policy on Digitisation of Heritage Resources (Draft)

## 5. RESOURCE ANALYSIS

Although digitisation has been done in South Africa since the late 1990s, the uptake by particularly the heritage sector has been very slow. While the reasons for this slowness may be attributed to fear of the unknown, the major challenge has been that of resources. Compared to other institutional priorities, digitisation has not featured very much as it has been seen as nice-to-have rather than a strategic function. Therefore most of the projects undertaken thus far by institutions have been funded from foreign funding instead of own budget.

The National Archives has not fully embarked on digitisation except participating as a partner in other externally driven or funded projects. The reason for this has been the limited resources in terms of skills, funding and IT infrastructure. These limitations have reduced the ability for the National Archives to become a leader within the archival sector.

## 6. COLLECTIONS

The definition of what constitutes "an archival record" has undergone profound changes in tandem with the discourses in the development of the history of ideas. For centuries an archival record was identified with manuscripts, and written records. With time the "archival record" came to mean recorded information, regardless of form or medium. Essential to this definition is the understanding that a record takes on archival quality if the information it contains has enduring value. Archival records can therefore be paper-based textual records, electronic records, audio-visual, photographic or cartographic material.

Postmodernist thought has stretched this definition even further, emphasizing the phenomenon of the record independent of the traditional concepts and location of custody, viz. the archives as a building for preserving the record, or the agency that is responsible for preserving and managing the record, or the process of archiving itself.

The holdings of the National Archives and Records Service exceed 140 kilometers of shelving space, comprising records in a variety of media. This includes paper-based textual records, electronic records as well as audio-visual, photographic and cartographic material.

As the National Archives and Records Service is a public archives, its records originate in the main from the execution of the business of governmental bodies. These records are transferred to the National Archives and Records Service for custody in terms of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (No 43 of 1996). The records reflect the activities of governments in South Africa and their impact on the lives of ordinary people since the middle of the 17th century. These records include court records, estate papers of the deceased, records of property rights and tenure, amongst others.

Governmental bodies produce vast amounts of administrative records. The National Archives and Records Service appraise such records in order to determine which ones warrant the expense of transfer and permanent archival preservation. The aim is to preserve at least 5% of public records on average,



although in many cases a higher percentage of records are retained. Records which are essential for the protection of the rights of citizens are preserved in their entirety.

It was with the advent of colonialism in present day South Africa and the attendant colonial administration in the second half of the seventeenth century, that traditional written records; evidence of governance, started being generated in what is today the Republic of South Africa. While the ideological direction of colonial and Apartheid era administrations is reflected in the records generated, the holdings nevertheless constitute a rich and invaluable source of information and knowledge about all South Africa's people during these eras.

Official records also reveal people's resistance and acquiescence to colonial rule and Apartheid administrations. A transformation imperative contained in our country's archival legislation requires as one of its foremost functions and objects that the National Archives and Records Service fills these apartheid-shaped gaps in the country's social memory by actively collecting non-public records of national significance with enduring value. The charge is to document all those aspects of the nation's experiences that had been neglected, thereby supplementing the information contained in our public records.

## **7. PROGRAMMES**

A range of programmes designed to reshape the National Archives into an organisation geared to the successful implementation of the National Archives and Records Service Act, promote and foster democratization both internally and in the broader context of its operations. These programmes are guided by the government-wide strategies which seek to improve livelihoods, access to information, access to economic opportunities, access to justice and access to basic human rights.

This strategy seeks to enable the National Archives to fully embrace information technology in support of these government-wide priorities. The fears of the eventual demise of analogue technology cannot be ignored by the National Archives as some of the older formats such as dictabelts are already obsolete

and there is no equipment to read them. Therefore this strategy is not only seeking to address born digital material but also conversion of obsolete formats.

The following functions are mandatory and are the ones which guide the programmes of the National Archives:

## **7.1 PRESERVATION**

This is an area of crisis, with over 50 million pages of paper-based records in urgent need of restoration. Our present four-pronged preservation strategy (pre-archival intervention, preventive preservation, media conversion, and restoration) will be maintained. However, the facilities and the internal capacity of the National Archives have been reduced over the years and digitisation will go a long way in improving certain functions through automation and unsupervised self-service for the clients.

Also the introduction of digitisation will contribute towards the long-term preservation of archival material through deferred use of originals which can then be safely stored away in properly controlled environments. This way the limited capacity and resources can be effectively utilized where they are most needed.

## **7.2 ACCESS AND USE**

Preservation supports access and digitisation has the ability to further link the two. Provision of access is the driver for all our efforts to collect and preserve archival records. However, access has been seriously compromised for those records that are fragile, on formats that are obsolete, and those that are machine readable. Digitisation assists in enabling the National Archives to comply with its legislative mandate of providing access to archival resources.

Once digitised, a number of users can access the same records at the same time which is a huge advantage over the use of original records. Through our improved website, users can also be able to access selected digitised collections online through our improved National Automated Archival Retrieval System (NAAIRS). Work is under way to improve both the website and NAAIRS to accommodate digitised records and pilot project are also under way to provide

digital content for trial on both NAAIRS and the website. The National Archives commits to the following:

- Every effort will be made to improve and expand our capacity to provide access to archival holdings (both paper and audio-visual).
- The provision of additional user support staff will be a priority.
- Efforts to improve our capacity to provide support in all the official languages will be made.
- Full compliance with the requirements of the Promotion of Access to Information Act will be ensured.
- Technical developments in support of access to archival information will continue to be monitored and where applicable, implemented.
- Enable access to relevant material that is usually inaccessible due to location or geographical boundaries

### **7.3 COLLECTION BUILDING**

The gaps left by the exclusive collection of records during apartheid must be addressed. Cooperation and sharing of resources, platform and technology is one way where the gaps can be addressed. Various collecting agencies have been working together with the National Archives to supplement our collections and augment their research value through collection linking. This has not been easy in the analogue environment but is highly possible in the digital environment.

The advantage of digitisation is that collections do not need to be removed from the custodian institution, instead digital copies, websites can be linked, and institutions can share servers through digital repositories. The National Archives has already been working with organisations such as the Nelson Mandela Centre for Memory and other organisations to digitise Rivonia Trial Records. The National Policy on Digitisation of Heritage Resources refers to National Digital Repositories and the National Archives will be one of these digital repositories.

## **8. SYSTEMS ANALYSIS**

Currently the National Archives has not acquired any systems for digitisation. Instead we are working with the State information and Technology Agency (SITA) to evaluate and develop systems for either the National Archives specifically or the entire public service. Some of these systems will incorporate digitisation and all records management requirements of the National Archives Act will be incorporated into these systems.

At international level the National Archives is a member of the International Council on Archives, who have developed the ICA/Atom which all members can use freely. The South African Government recommends open source software for all public entities and the National Archives is required to comply with government's position on the use of open source systems. The National Archives will continue to monitor developments in technology and processes and will revise accordingly.

All systems to be used will be open source in as far as they are compatible with other systems for other activities such as preservation, access and archive management. It is the objective of the National Archives to ensure equitable access to archival records but the costs of digitisation may be very limiting as to the scope extent, and means by which we will be able to provide digital resources to the users. It should also be noted that the cost of the management of digital resources continues to escalate as more resources are added and this can become a major liability in the future. Therefore the National Archives will have strict selection criteria which will be informed by use, value and vulnerability. Also business continuity and disaster recovery will play a major role in assisting in deciding on which collections to be digitised. All government departments will be required to have budgets to digitise A20 records before they are transferred the National Archives, provincial archives. Circulars in this regard will be issued by the National Archives.

## **9. STAKEHOLDERS**

The National Archives has a variety of stake holder ranging from contributors who are usually public entities, the archival sector and various categories of users. Strategically the National Archives must ensure these stakeholders' interests are catered for in our plans. In line with the government-wide priorities which emanate

from the constitutional mandates, access to information provides the basis for education, economic freedom, justice, social development, and all the other basic human rights. The following stakeholders have been identified:

- Contributors
- Sector
- Users

## **10. STRATEGY**

### **10.1 Policy Review**

During the time of the development of this Strategy, all existing policies and manuals are undergoing review and new policies are being developed where gaps have been identified. The Digitisation Strategy is based on the National Policy on Digitisation of National Heritage Resources which requires all heritage institutions to have their institutional digitisation strategies to guide the implementation of the national policy.

However, there is a need to review certain processes and methods which may no longer be compatible with modern technology. Traditionally photocopying and microfilming were the only two methods used to produce surrogates and these have specific technological requirements. Digitisation provides better capture tools and systems which can then be output to hard paper copy or microfilm. The policies or guidelines which were applicable for these will be reviewed accordingly to accommodate the benefits from digitisation.

### **10.2 Business Case**

- *Refer to Annexure A (National Archives Digitisation Strategy Business Case)*

### **10.3 Selection Priorities**

Selection plays an integral part in the implementation of digitisation strategies. All records deposited with the National Archives have been appraised accordingly and have been deemed worth keeping for posterity. However, due to limitation of resources and capacity not everything can be justified as being good candidates for digitisation. Some of these records have not been consulted for more than 50 years or more and some have been consulted almost on a daily basis. Therefore the National Archives will use strict criteria

for selection and this will be informed by technical, economic, demand, value, and political, social and sector-specific requirements.

#### **10.4 Capacity Development and Skills Development**

Capacity development does not only focus on training but also includes the provision of sustainable infrastructure required to manage digitisation. Digitisation utilises technology that is evolving rapidly creating the risk of obsolescence if timeous upgrades are not done. The National Archives will ensure that the infrastructure and skills developed are sustainable in the long-term. A detailed infrastructural requirement is included further in this document. The following skills must be developed for the sustainable management of digitisation programmes, projects and resources:

- Advanced Computer Training
- Digital Resource Management
- Project Management
- Disaster Management and Business Continuity
- Digital Capture and Photography/ scanning
- Systems Management
- Digital Preservation

#### **10.5 Funding**

Digitisation is no longer an option for heritage institutions. It has become a core function which should be funded accordingly. Digitisation has been included as one of the strategies for the Business Continuity Programme of the DAC, especially for the National Archives. The benefits of digitisation are as follows:

- Improved Access
- Backup of originals
- Disaster recovery and Business Continuity
- Risk Mitigation Against loss to theft, disasters
- Improved Intellectual Control
- Provides the ability to share resources with other institutions
- Contributes towards reduction of cost for the physical preservation of original material
- Provides the best option to provide access to obsolete formats such as dictabelts.
- Marketing of National Archives resources
- May help in attracting young users

## 10.6 Programmes and Projects

### 10.6.1 Programmes

Digitisation forms part of the National Archives programme of action into the future. This is because of its ability to improve on traditional methods of access, preservation, security, and links up with records management requirements.

### 10.6.2 Projects

Projects will be developed in line with the set criteria for selection. Systematic identification of possible projects will be done in consultation and/or in partnership with other stakeholders. The following projects have been prioritised:

Description of Project	Stakeholders	Implementation Period	Type of Collection
Percy Yutar Papers (part of the Rivonia Trail Records)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory</li> <li>National Archives and Records Service</li> </ul>	2012-2013	Paper Records
Dictabelt Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Archives and Records Service</li> <li>Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory</li> <li>French Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA)</li> </ul>	2013-2014	Audio Records
Death Notices and Registers (this project was initially a microfilming project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Search</li> <li>National Archives</li> </ul>	2013 onwards	Paper Records
Rivonia Trial Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Archives</li> <li>Other Stakeholders with parts of the collection</li> </ul>	2014...	Mixed – paper, audio, video
<p><b><i>Note that more projects will be added to this list as they are identified (e.g – collections listed on the following Memory of the World Registers – national, regional, international.</i></b></p>			

## 10.7 Preservation Strategy

The product of digitisation is a digital library or archives (resource). These resources have specific requirements for preservation which employs a proactive approach rather than a passive one. The biggest threats to digital resources are obsolescence, data integrity, trustworthiness, escalating storage costs and neglect. Once an organisation embarks on a digitisation programme, these threats become real and should be managed proactively. A dedicated section dealing with digital preservation will be considered for establishment.

Digital preservation includes the management of born-digital material such as electronic records. These are especially more vulnerable to loss in the absence of a proactive system to manage their preservation. The National Archives has been identified as one of the National Digital Repositories in the National Policy on Digitisation of Heritage Resources. The purpose for these digital repositories is to preserve and provide access to digital resources produced in line with the national policy.

## 10.8 Access Strategy

Access to digital resources shall be governed by the following:

- 10.8.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996)
- 10.8.2 National Archives and Records Service Act No. 43 of 1996 (as amended)
- 10.8.3 Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) – No. 2 of 2000
- 10.8.4 Minimum Information Security Standards – 1996
- 10.8.5 Protection of Information Act No. 84 of 1982
- 10.8.6 Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 2002 (Act No. 25 of 2002), etc

## 10.9 Standards and Best Practices

The following standards and best practices will apply:

- 10.9.1 SATR13028:2010/ISO/TR 13028:2010 – Information and documentation – Implementation guidelines for digitization of records.
- 10.9.2 SANS 15801/ ISO 15801-Recommendations for trustworthiness and reliability
- 10.9.3 SANS/TR 19005-1:2005/ISO/TR 19005-1:2005; SANS/TR19005-2:2011/ISO/TR19005-2:2011; SANS/TR 19005-3:2012/ISO/TR 19005-3:2012 – Document management – Electronic document file format for long-term preservation.



- 10.9.4 SANS 23081 – 1:2006/ISO 23081 – 1:2006 – Information and documentation – Records Management Processes-Metadata for records, Part 1: Principles
- 10.9.5 SANS 23081 – 2:2009 /ISO 23081 – 2:2009 - Information and documentation – Managing metadata for records – Part 2: Conceptual an implementation issues
- 10.9.6 SANS/TR 23081- 3:2011/ISO/TR 23081- 3:2011 Information and documentation – Managing metadata for records – Part 3: Self-assessment method
- 10.9.7 MoReq2010: Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic records
- 10.9.8 ICA-Atom: Open Source Archival Description Software
- 10.9.9 Encoded Archival Description (EAD)
- 10.9.10 UNESCO pronouncement on the digitisation of collections.

#### 10.10 Community Engagement

- 10.10.1 User Community
- 10.10.2 Professional Community
- 10.10.3 Government (three tiers of government)

  
**STRATEGY APPROVED/NOT APPROVED**

**M.B. GILDER (ACTING NATIONAL ARCHIVIST)**

**SIGNATURE:**  **DATE:** 27/11/2013