

# *Notes and Communications*

## *Education and Training of Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers in Africa*

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### *Introduction*

In an information-generation society such as ours, information in various formats is being created on a daily basis by individuals and corporate bodies. These formats can be appropriately termed "records." Record may be defined as recorded information in any form, regardless of media or characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Records play a vital role in the development of mankind. Records are necessary because they contain information vital to the daily operation of a business, organization, government and associations, and as well as to the role of institutions, and private persons. Without records, for example, a business could not function.<sup>2</sup> Many businesses have ceased to exist as a result of losing their records through fire, natural disaster or negligence. In the case of government agencies, loss of records, especially through fire, which is a common feature in some African countries, results in hardship to individuals and bodies dealing with those government agencies. Individuals may wish to prove date of birth, date of graduation or tax assessment for purposes of reference or identification. Failure to find a record for reference or other purpose may lead to frustration. In the business sector, failure to obtain a record often costs money and loss of goodwill. Individuals, organizations and institutions therefore need to keep complete and accurate records. In the business sector, for instance, accurate records of earnings, expenses and deductions can result in substantial savings, thereby avoiding overpayment of taxes.

In many African countries, among the high producers of records are commercial companies, educational institutions, associations, governments and their agencies, industries, health institutions, the armed forces, etc. Naturally, the highest producer of records in African countries, as elsewhere, is government.

Records are generated daily by the various levels of government, namely, federal, state and local governments, and district councils. In many sectors of records generation, it is discouraging to note, records-keeping has not been given the requisite attention by organizations and individuals. In some offices filing is not done regularly; hence the problem of inability to retrieve needed records. In other offices, records are not properly taken care of and deteriorate fast or even disappear as a result of exposure to

the elements or through theft. A considerable amount of time is lost searching for records through manual systems. It is important that records creators should cultivate the practice of keeping photocopies of original documents that are essential. Individuals and organizations which do not keep proper records spend a considerable amount of time searching for particular documents. This delays decision-making, wastes time and leads to frustration. Successful records-keeping requires the services of professional and para-professional records managers who can bring order to the chaotic world of information in many organizations and institutions. Through education and training, the new breed of records manager would be able to improve the present situation of information management in many businesses, institutions, government offices and organizations in African countries.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the essential requirements for the education and training of archivists, manuscript curators and records managers at the professional and para-professional levels in Africa, and to propose a curriculum for each of the different levels.

### *Current Situation of Archival Education in Africa*

Unlike library and information science, which have a long history of operational programmes of study at the diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels in African countries, education in archives and records management has been very slow to develop. In countries where it exists, it is represented by a formal programme with a few courses, or courses taught as an integral part of a library and information science programme.

In contrast to the United Kingdom, where all archival courses are based in history departments except at University College London, where courses are taught by library and information science departments, courses on archives administration and records management in Africa are taught in departments of library and information science.<sup>3</sup>

At the non-graduate diploma level, courses on archives are offered by the Kenyan Polytechnic and by the School of Library, Archival, and Documentation Studies, Mantep Institute, Tanzania.<sup>4</sup> In Ghana, a one-year certificate course in archives is offered by the Department of Library and Archival Studies. In Kenya and Tanzania, students combine courses in archives and records management with those in library science and information technology. In Kenya, the archives and records management courses include records management, archives administration, preservation, conservation and reprography, and administrative history of Kenya. This non-graduate diploma programme is aimed at providing support services to professional archivists in Kenya National Archives and to serve other institutions and organizations in Kenya that need archival expertise.

At the first degree level, the departments of Library Science in Nigerian national universities located in Kano, Maiduguri and Zaria offer a course on archives administration as an integral part of the education of librarians. In Kenya, the Faculty of Information Sciences of Moi University in Eldoret produces information science graduates with a specialization in archives and records management. These graduates offer introductory courses in library and information science, information technology, publishing, the book trade, archives and records management — in the first two years of the undergraduate programme. In the third year, students specialize in courses on archives and records management, which include subjects such as office records and records centre management, administration and description of archives, preservation, and conservation.<sup>5</sup>

At the doctoral level, there is no separate programme on archival education in any African university at present. However, at Ahmadu Bello University and University of Ibadan in Nigeria,<sup>6</sup> doctoral students may base their theses on archival issues and obtain the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Library and Information Science in Ahmadu Bello University and in Library and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan.

At present, neither practising nor retired archivists are being utilized in many African countries as part-time or full-time lecturers to supplement the teaching of archival courses. Lack of in-service courses organized either by the national Society of Archivists or the universities offering courses on archives on specific themes have created problems for archivists and teachers of archives wanting to upgrade their knowledge and acquire new skills. However, some national archives, such as those of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Sudan, organize their training programmes for archives assistants.<sup>7</sup>

### *Planning Considerations*

In planning for education and training in archives and records management, some important considerations need to be borne in mind. These are discussed in the paragraphs which follow.

The first is the level of education and training to be offered. It is suggested that three levels of education and training should be provided. The first level would be the para-professional, which is two years in duration. Candidates at this level, on successful completion of their two-year programmes, would be awarded the Diploma in Archives and Records Management Certificate. They would then work in archives and records management as archives officers or records management officers. This level of staff, which has been found very useful in many establishments in African countries (especially libraries), would assist professional archivists in their work in archives and records offices. Such personnel might also be appointed to be in charge of small records units such as local government records, business records, records of religious and educational institutions, etc.

It must be emphasized that as para-professionals the role of such personnel in archives is to assist archivists similarly to the role of library technicians in libraries. The second level of education and training is at the professional level. The duration of study at this level should be eighteen months. The graduates would be called "archivists" on the successful completion of their degree programme, while the nomenclature of the degree programme would read "Master of Archival Studies" (MAS). These graduates would occupy leadership positions in archives. A third level of education and training, which is also at the professional level, would be the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree programme. The duration of this programme, unlike the master's programme should be three years minimum. This would be similar to doctoral programmes in other disciplines. The graduates would be called "archivists" and their degree would read Doctor of Philosophy in Archival Studies. Such graduates could choose a teaching career in a university where archival studies programmes exist. (The functions to be performed in archives, and staffing requirements, are presented in **Appendix 1.**)

A second consideration is the admission requirement for candidates. At the diploma level, it is recommended that the minimum entry qualification should be five credits of secondary school education, while at the master's level, the entry qualification should

be an undergraduate degree with minimum average of 50 per cent in subjects in the arts and social sciences. For the Ph.D. programme, the entry qualification should be a master's degree with a minimum average of 60 per cent. Work experience in an archives or records office should be an advantage.

A third important consideration is the academic department of an institution of higher education that would offer these courses of study in archives and records management. It is suggested that the diploma programme be offered by the polytechnics. For instance, Kenya Polytechnic has for some years been offering the diploma programme in order to encourage the polytechnics to specialize in diploma programmes, while the universities concentrate on degree programmes. Ideally a separate department of archives and records management, such as exists in Moi University's Faculty of Information Sciences, should offer the degree programme; at present, however, many universities in African countries have no such department. The solution is to create such departments. In some countries, such as Nigeria, however, there is an embargo on the creation of new academic departments in universities by the National Universities Commission. In such countries, the creation of a Department of Archives and Records Management would either have to be postponed to a future date, or the nation's society of archivists — where it exists — would have to make a special case for it in the university of its choice. Nearness to archives is an important factor in the choice of an institution in which to mount an archives programme. A university or polytechnic located in a town or city where there is an archives is better placed to provide the practical part of the training than an institution that is in a town where there is no archives. As a temporary measure, the two degree programmes in archives and records management could be offered by the departments in universities currently producing librarians. As a matter of fact, these are the departments that teach courses on archives and records management as part of the academic training of librarians. At the University of Ibadan, for instance, the department is officially known as the Department of Library, Archival, and Information Studies even though it has yet to mount a degree programme in archival studies.

A fourth important consideration is the staff to teach in an archives and records management programme. The staff must possess the relevant qualification in archives and records management — such as an MA in Archives Administration or a Ph.D. in Archives Management — or a related discipline in which courses on archives and records management are offered, such as a Master of Library Science (MLS) or a Ph.D. in Library and Information Science. In addition, the teaching staff should preferably have practical experience of working in an archives and records centre; part-time lecturers, particularly serving and retired archivists, could also be used to strengthen the staff component.

A fifth consideration is teaching resources. These include textbooks and journals on archives and records management, a demonstration area or laboratory that houses conservation materials and equipment, and an archives or records unit for practical work. Success in the teaching and learning process will largely depend on the resources available to both teachers and students.

A sixth consideration is the curricula for the various programmes. The curriculum for each level must be distinct. At the diploma level, it is suggested that emphasis should be placed on the practical aspects of archives and records management; for instance, the ratio of theory to practice should be forty to sixty. Areas in which courses could be designed include appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description, preservation,

bibliographic control, and methods of disseminating records and information (**Appendix 2**).

Teaching materials would include transparencies, audio-cassettes, slides, computer disks and duster, while teaching equipment would include overhead projectors, audio-cassette recorders, video-cassette recorders, slide projectors and computer terminals.

At the master's level, the curriculum should contain courses on the following topics: research methods, statistics, nature and types of records, appraisal and acquisition of records, arrangement of records, indexing of records, bibliographic control, preservation of records, computerization of records, systems analysis, information management, research (thesis or project) and practical work (**Appendix 3**). At the doctoral level, two seminar-oriented courses would be followed by research which should result in a thesis (**Appendix 4**).

The final consideration in the education and training of archivists is the inauguration of a programme for archives and records management. Unless there is an individual or group of persons who shows interest in the establishment of such a programme, however, it may prove difficult to get one established. As stated elsewhere, most Nigerian Universities do not have archives programmes because there is no interested individual or pressure group that would initiate the process leading to their establishment.<sup>8</sup> Individuals and groups that could initiate the process of establishing educational and training programmes in archival studies are the national society of archivists, the archivists and records managers themselves and the professors who teach archives and records management. This political pressure is necessary. Perhaps one reason for the non-establishment of educational programmes in archives and records management in the universities of African countries is the absence of this political pressure. Where it exists, moreover, it is not strong enough to bring about the desired change.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, this paper began by stressing the value of records and the importance of record-keeping. It then went on to argue that for the purpose of effective records management, the education and training of records managers should be addressed — there being only a few of them in many African countries. Educating and training records management professionals will not only produce personnel who will help to improve the image of records-keeping culture, but also enhance the image of the archival profession in each country. The paper then identified and discussed six factors essential to the establishment of archives and records management academic-training programmes, and provided the curricula for the education and training of archivists and records managers in African countries. It is suggested that education for archivists in African countries should be mounted at the diploma and postgraduate levels. An undergraduate programme has not been proposed for the present because there are still few archives in many African countries today. Furthermore, the demand for archives and records management personnel appears to be higher at the para-professional and postgraduate levels.

## Appendix 1

### *Functions and Staff Requirements in Archives and Records Management*

<i>Functions</i>	<i>Staff Requirements</i>		
	<i>Professional</i>	<i>Para- Professional</i>	<i>Non- Professional</i>
<i>1. Acquisition and Appraisal</i>			
i. Searches for records	Archivists Officers	Archives	Support Staff
ii. Appraises records	Manuscript Curators		
iii. Evaluates records monetarily	Records Managers		
<i>2. Custodial Functions</i>			
i. Accessioning			
ii. Description	Archivists	Archives Officers	Support Staff
iii. Classification	Manuscript Curators		
iv. Numbering, boxing, labelling, shelving	Records Managers		
v. Microfilming			
vi. Conservation	Archivists	Archives Officers	Support staff
vii. Access policy	Manuscript Curators		
viii. Screening and records disposal	Records Managers		

### 3. *Preparation of Finding Aids*

- |                             |   |                   |               |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------|
| i. Description of materials | Archivists<br>Manuscript Curators<br>Records Managers | Archives Officers |               |
| ii. Typing                  |   |                   | Typists       |
| iii. Filing                 |   |                   | Filing Clerks |

### 4. *Information Retrieval*

- |   |                     |                   |                |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| i. Registration of Archivists researchers |                     | Archives Officers | Clerical Staff |
| ii. Research and reference service        | Manuscript Curators |                   |                |
| iii. Micro-graphics                       | Records Managers    |                   | Clerical Staff |
| iv. Reprography                           |                     |                   |                |

### 5. *Other Services*

- |                                      |   |                   |               |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------|
| i. Recruitment and training of staff | Archivists<br>Manuscript Curators                     |                   |               |
| ii. Exhibition of archival documents | Managers  | Archives Officers | Support Staff |
| iii. Publication of documents        | Editors   |                   |               |
| iv. Recording oral history           | Archivists<br>Manuscript Curators<br>Records Managers | Archives Officers |               |
| v. Public relations/<br>publicity    | Archivists<br>Manuscript Curators<br>Records Managers |                   |               |
| vi. Consultancy services             |   | Archives Officers |               |

**6. Management**

Personnel,  
financial,  
and  
programme  
management

Archivists  
Manuscript  
Curators

Administrators  
Accountants  
Clerical Staff

**7. Teaching**

Archives  
and records  
management

Archivists  
Manuscript  
Curators  
Records  
Managers

**8. Research**

Archives  
and records  
management

Archivists  
Manuscript  
Curators  
Records  
Managers

**Appendix 2*****Archives and Records Management******Diploma in Archives and Records Management Curriculum (two years)******Year 1******1st Semester***

- ARM 111 History of archival services in Europe, USA and Africa  
 ARM 112 Organizations, governments and institutions of a specific country and their records  
 ARM 113 Appraisal and acquisition of records and manuscripts  
 ARM 114 Description of records and manuscripts, I  
 ARM 115 Description of records and manuscripts, II  
 ARM 116 English and communication skills

***2nd Semester***

- ARM 121 Sociology of archives and records centres  
 ARM 122 Arrangement of records and manuscripts, II  
 ARM 123 Description of records and manuscripts, II  
 ARM 125 Administrative history of a specific country



*Year 2**1st Semester*

ARM 211	Reference service
ARM 212	Preparation of information retrieval systems
ARM 213	Preservation and security of records
ARM 214	Management of archives and records units

*2nd Semester*

ARM 221	Practical work in an archives
ARM 222	Project

**Appendix 3*****Archives and Records Management****Master of Archival Studies Curriculum (eighteen months)*

[N.B. This programme is designed for graduates with little or no background knowledge in archives and records management.]

*Year 1**1st Semester**Compulsory Courses*

MAS 111	Research Methods in Archives and Records Management
MAS 112	Quantitative Methods for Archivists and Records Managers
MAS 113	Archives and Records Management in Developing Countries
MAS 114	Acquisition and Appraisal of Records and Manuscripts
MAS 115	Arrangement and Description of Records and Manuscripts
MAS 116	International Archival Legislation

*Elective Courses*

MAS 117	The European Tradition; Development of Archival Institutions and Archival Practice, A.D. 1600 to the Present
MAS 118	The New World and the Commonwealth: Development of Archival Institutions in the USA and in Commonwealth Countries
MAS 119	Oral Archives

*2nd Semester**Compulsory Courses*

MAS 121	Indexing Records and Manuscripts
MAS 122	Reference and Information Services
MAS 123	Management of Human and Material Resources in Archives and Records Centres

MAS 124	Preservation, Conservation and Security of Archival and Records Units
MAS 125	The New Technologies and Their Effect on Archives and Records Management, A.D. 1800 to the Present: From quill-pen to computer
MAS 126	The History of Government and Its Records in a Specific Country

*Elective Courses*

MAS 127	Business Records and Archives
MAS 128	Institutional Records and Archives
MAS 129	Automation of Archives and Records

*Year 2**1st Semester*

MAS 211	Research Proposal (writing, submission and defence)
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*2nd Semester*

MAS 221	Thesis (writing, submission and defence)
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**Appendix 4*****Archives and Records Management****Doctor of Philosophy in Archives Studies Curriculum (six months, full-time)*

[N.B. This programme is designed for graduates holding the Master of Archival Studies (MAS) or Master of Arts in Archives Administration.]

*Year 1**1st Semester*

DAS 111	Research Design in Archives and Records Management
DAS 112	Seminar on Topical Issues in Archives, Records Management and Manuscripts

*2nd Semester*

DAS 121	Research Proposal
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*Year 2**1st Semester*

DAS 211	Thesis
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*2nd Semester*

DAS 211	Thesis
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*Year 3**1st Semester*

DAS 211      Thesis

*2nd Semester*

DAS 211      Thesis

**Notes**

- 1 Kenneth W. Duckett, *Modern Manuscripts: A Practical Manual for their Management, Care, and Use* (Nashville, 1975), p. 337.
- 2 Jeffrey R. Stewart, *Filing Systems and Records Management*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1981), p. 2.
- 3 Michael Roper, "Archival Education in Britain," *American Archivist* 50, no. 4 (1987), pp. 586-98.
- 4 Stanley K. Ng'ang'a, "Archives Curriculum Development at the Kenya Polytechnic," Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA), *Proceedings of the 9th Biennial General Conference, Mbabane, Swaziland, 3-8 November 1986*, Robert J. Kukubo, ed. (Roma, Lesotho, 1986), p. 216.
- 5 Moi University, Faculty of Information Sciences, *Regulations and Curriculum for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Information Science* (August 1990).
- 6 Michael Afolabi, "Postgraduate Education in Archives and Manuscripts Administration in Nigeria: An Analysis," *Nigerian Library and Information Science Review* 6, no. 1 (May 1988), p. 26.
- 7 Bunmi Alegbeleye, "The Training of Archivists in West Africa: History and Trends," *American Archivist* 46 (1983), pp. 319-20.
- 8 Michael Afolabi, "Planning Factors Essential to the Establishment of University Archives," *African Journal of Academic Librarianship* 5, nos. 1 and 2 (1987), p. 63.