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ASSESSMENT OF THE APPRAISAL PRACTICES OF ARCHITECTURAL RECORDS AT THE GABORONE CITY COUNCIL IN BOTSWANA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the appraisal practices of architectural records at Gaborone City Council (GCC) in Botswana. The study was guided by the American Taxonomy approach and the ISO 15489; complemented with the Shrock (1996) guidelines to cater for the appraisal of intrinsic values found in architectural records. A case study research design was adopted. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through open and close ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews from action officers, records management staff in the key departments at the GCC, of which 32 responded out of 47, representing a response rate of 68%. Personal observations and documentary reviews were also conducted at the GCC to supplement the data collection. Furthermore, the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS) personnel dealing with appraisal were interviewed. The study revealed that the appraisal practices of architectural records at the GCC were inadequate as evidenced by overwhelming unappraised architectural of records generated; poor identification of records for appraisal; lack of staff to do appraisal; lack of competencies and skills of records personnel in the appraisal of architectural of records; lack of financial and material resources to conduct appraisal; and lack of guidance from BNARS on the appraisal of architectural of records. As a result of this, architectural records were not properly managed as per records management standards. The study concluded that the absence of an effective record management system at the GCC had led to the disorganisation in the management of architectural records. It is therefore recommended that the GCC adopts and promotes best practices on the appraisal of architectural records.

Keywords

Appraisal, Architectural Records, Records Appraisal, Records Management, Botswana.

Introduction and background to the statement of the problem

Most leading scholars in the archives and records management discipline agree that owing to the possible values inherent in records, appraisal is an important, yet a complex task (Cook 1996; Ngulube 2001; Schellenberg 1956). Appraisal challenges archives and records management professionals to determine the fate of recorded information on whether to preserve or destroy it. The complex task of appraisal is even more cumbersome when it comes to architectural records. Nelb (1996) admits that architectural records present archivists with difficult appraisal challenges arising out of their characteristics of being dispersed, widely duplicated, voluminous, transitory and vulnerable. Even so, the appraisal of architectural records is of great importance to the

society. This is due to the fact that compared to other types of records; architectural records have a high retention rate than the two per cent that is worth retaining for most other types of records (Nelb, 1996). This is not only attributed to their potential value as legal evidence, but also that they are central to protecting the future of the buildings, structures and landscapes that are a result of the designer's work (International Council of Archives) [ICA] 2000).

Several studies have been carried out on appraisal, focussing on public organisations elsewhere in the world. In the Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the Council on Archives (ESARBICA), there is consensus among researchers that this critical function is often neglected, leading to the congestion of record keeping systems (Garaba 2005; Kalusopa and Ngulube 2012; Keakopa and Ngoepe 2011; Mnjama 2006; Ngulube 2001; Ngulube and Tafor, 2006). Specifically, in Botswana, earlier studies conducted at the GCC by Tshotlo and Mnjama (2010); Mnjama and Sebina (2011) all confirm this. The studies showed that although the GCC operates a central records management system, it appears not to be compliant with the archives and records management standards and procedures. The studies also singled out and recommended the need for a comprehensive records management policy with clarity on the appraisal and retention of records. However, a review of these studies shows that they assessed records management systems in general and none of them focused on the appraisal of architectural records, more so at the GCC where such an organisation's operations depends on such records to fulfil their historical legal, cultural and contractual values. Drawing from appropriate literature and empirical findings, this study sought to assess the appraisal practices of architectural records at the GCC with a view to recommending a suitable approach that could be used as a guide for future appraisal of such records at the institution.

Location and context of the study: Gaborone City Council (GCC)

In Botswana, the GCC falls under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. It was established by the Township Act Chapter 40:02 of 1965. The Council is headed by a Mayor who is elected every two and a half years. The Town Clerk is the Administrative Head. The Council functions through various structures, namely: the Full Council, which operates through Council Committees mandated to handle matters related to statutory functions, the Ward Development Committees of which Councillors are ex-officio members, and through collaboration with different stakeholders at different levels of consultations. The mission of the GCC is to efficiently provide social services and infrastructure through stakeholder consultation, skilled and motivated staff and use of appropriate technology. Its vision is to be the model of excellence in the provision of quality and sustainable social and infrastructural services. The GCC intends to accomplish the above through the following values: *diligence, integrity, compassion, honesty, compassion, accountability, and botho (respect)*. It also needs to put together the collective responsibility of its eleven departments, coupled with the right people with the right information at the right time.

The Town Clerk provides technical and professional advice to the GCC and its committees, with the assistance of the management team. The management implements Council resolutions under the guidance of the Town Clerk and assures that development projects implemented are approved by the Council. The Council consists of eleven departments which include: Human Resources and Administration, Civil and Mechanical Engineering Services, Finance and Development Planning, Ipelegeng, Public Health, Education, Physical Planning, Housing and Estates Management, Social and Community Development, Fire Services and Architecture and Building Control. The Records Management Unit falls under the Human Resources and Administration Department.

The Architecture and Building Control (ABC) Department consists of four sections, namely: Planning and Development, Maintenance and the Building Control. The ABC Department is responsible for processing all applications for building permits and issuance of occupational permits upon completion of private developments. The Department also undertakes construction projects and maintenance of the Council properties and other building structures under the authority of the Council. Lastly, it manages the cemetery, the nursery, and park bookings and hires open spaces.

This study focused on three sections being: Planning and Development, Maintenance and Building Control as they deal with building and architectural records. From experience and reports, it is evident that ABC Department has been facing problems in the management of architectural records (BNARS 2009). The main problem stems from lack of a comprehensive records management programme, records management policy, retention and disposition schedules. As a result records have never been subjected to appraisals and are stored anyhow and anywhere irrespective of the condition of the storage (Mnjama and Sebina 2011; Tshotlo and Mnjama 2010). The storage rooms are so congested and it is difficult to make reference to the information contained in non-active records (Mnjama and Sebina 2011; Tshotlo and Mnjama, 2010). This is because nobody knows what is where and to some extent files go missing and some parts of their contents have been removed while others are disposed illegally without regard for the legal implication of doing so (Tshotlo and Mnjama 2010). It is against this background that this study was conceived.

Research objectives

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the appraisal of architectural records at GCC with a view to recommending a suitable approach for appraisal. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Identify the type of architectural records generated and /or received;
2. Determine the appraisal practices in use for architectural records;
3. Examine training needs, competencies and skills of records personnel for appraisal;
4. Identify resource needs for conducting an effective appraisal exercise;
5. Explain the challenges of appraising architectural records at GCC;
6. Determine the role of BNARS in the appraisal of public architectural records; and
7. Propose or recommend a suitable approach of appraising architectural records at GCC.

Importance of records appraisal in organisations

In records management, appraisal is the process by which an organisation identifies its requirements for maintaining records (Shepherd and Yeo 2003). The appraisal process deals with the selection and also the acquisition of records with continuing value. Mills (2005) asserts that an appraisal programme is essential for organisations seeking to conform to the international standard for records management, International Standard Organisation (ISO) 15489-1. Barata et al., (2001) also agrees that public organisations have to work according to established standards in order to ensure that the appraisal criteria serves to provide either authority to destroy records or a statement that records are considered to be of continuing value to warrant their preservation.

Records appraisal enables an organisation to meet its business needs, accountability and community expectations (Ndenje-Sichalwe 2010). Accountability is the main principle in the appraisal of public records (Cook 2010). Mills (2005) emphasised the need for organisations to have a better understanding of the records they create and those who create those records. That would help avoid the destruction of vital records. Appraisal encourages organisations to define

and communicate selection and acquisition of policies suitable for architectural records. It also promotes collaboration and sharing of resources for collecting, preserving and making the best use of architectural records (ICA 2000).

Appraisal practices of architectural records

According to Eastwood (1992), no theory of appraisal has been generally accepted as the foundation of methodology and practice, and as a result, archivists have adopted various approaches for appraising records. These approaches include the American taxonomy approach to appraisal, European taxonomy approach to appraisal, document strategy and the macro-functional analysis approach (Bailey 1997; Cook 1997; Cook 2000; Jenkinson 1922; Samuels 1986; Schellenberg 1956).

Cook (1996) indicates that there should be theoretical consensus guiding the appraisal of architectural records. The ICA (2000) concurs that a selection criteria is needed due to the fact that not all architectural records can be preserved because of their volumes. In selecting architectural records, it is necessary to consider the relative value of various professional practices they document as well as the scale, quality, impact on the built environment, research and innovation and degree of influence of the building and facilities that they record (ICA 2000). Appraisal decisions for architectural records should be based on the policies applied in architectural offices and archival institutions and on comprehensive knowledge of the immediate administrative needs of firms and their legal and fiscal obligations (ICA 2000). This includes their potential requirement for maintaining and altering buildings, and making any restoration or reconstruction work. The informational value of various types of architectural records must also be subject to review within the firm in order to assess their relevance and uniqueness (ICA 2000). ICA (2000) identified other values that can also be used to guide the retention of architectural records. They include: documenting the creative process, documenting the profession of architecture, documenting the history of the built environment, documenting urban and social history and administrative and legal criteria.

In addition to the value based appraisal criterion, Shrock (1996) asserts that architectural records have intrinsic value which makes them worthy for retention. These exist in cases where:

- the physical form may be the subject of study, as in the case of drawings or copies made using experimental or rare materials and methods;
- The drawings have artistic value;
- The records are very old and therefore rare to find;
- The records have unique or curious features such as annotations, overlays, pasted additions or corrections; and
- The records have value by association with an important designer or client, a civic function, etc.

The Minnesota Historical Society (2009) confirms the intrinsic values found in architectural records and further states that records with intrinsic values have unique characteristics that make them extraordinary and worthy of retention.

A synopsis status of the appraisal practice of architectural records in the world

From the literature reviewed, it appears empirical literature on the appraisal of architectural records is less robust in Africa.. However, in the developed world, nations a number of archival institutions have paid attention to the appraisal of architectural records. Nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America have produced themes and guidelines for

appraising records of historic and contemporary government buildings (Gawne 2003). The proposed themes and guidelines include the physical form of the architectural record, aesthetic or artistic quality, value for exhibition, age, unique or curious physical features and value by direct association (Nelb 1996). Further, an assessment of the above must be combined with the intellectual issue of content or scholarly value inherent in an architectural documentation in order to come up with effective appraisal strategies (Shrock 1996:208). However, these strategies seem to be inadequate because problems continue to surface. For example, in the United States of America, architectural firms are overwhelmed by architectural records as a result of the complexities surrounding the appraisal of these records. This situation has left most the archival institutions with a problem of failing to decide what to destroy because records have been piled there for a long time hence it is difficult to detect the valuable records (Nelb 1996). Lathrop (1980) also affirms that in the US, the proliferation of architectural records both in type and in numbers presents archivists with formidable problems of appraisal. As a result, little reliable information is available about the survival of records from the past one hundred years. In the 1990s, the Northwest Architectural Archives in the US also came to conclusions that architectural archives are voluminous and present formidable problems of appraisal. As a result, it is difficult to set appraisal criteria for these complex records. This also presents challenges of deciding what to keep and what to destroy because there is no perfect formula (Lathrop 1996).

In Africa, very little literature does cover the appraisal of architectural records. In the Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the Council on Archives (ESARBICA), some few scholars such as Akotia (2003), Mnjama (2006), Garaba (2005) and Ngulube (2001) have attempted to focus on the appraisal of records in general, acknowledging it as a critical function in recordkeeping and archival systems. Akotia (2003) found out that national archives institutions in most countries in Africa give guidance to ministries and departments on the appraisal of records. However, in most cases, such professional advice was not implemented, leading to backlogs of records that are not appraised. As a result, such backlogs have become a big problem across government institutions in the ESARBICA, leading to poor retrieval and access to requisite records. In his study, Garaba (2005) also observed that backlogs of unappraised records within the ESARBICA is compounded by various factors such as: lack of expertise to conduct the exercise, lack of cooperation by departments whose disposal authorities have been applied for but not affirmed, staff shortages, and lack of funding which makes it impossible for archival institutions in the cities to visit outlying stations to inspect and appraise records. A study by Mnjama (2006) found out that a lot of unappraised records were lying within the record creating agencies in deplorable conditions because appraisals were not conducted in the ESARBICA. Ngulube (2001) also observed that the appraisal of records in Southern Africa continues to be a big problem due to lack of a standardised appraisal approach. He also noted that no matter how many attempts are made, archival appraisal decisions by their very nature remain subjective.

Specifically, with reference to architectural records, one of the key studies was by Hart (2003) who presented a paper at the XVII Biennial ESARBICA conference in Maputo, focusing on the challenges of preserving architectural records. The study revealed that the decision to keep architectural collections brings with it several considerable preservation challenges as a result of their bulk volume, awkward physical size, fragility and increasing existence in electronic format (Hart 2003). He also observed that it is in fact the large size of these records which represents the greatest danger to their proper preservation. As a result, the records end up being left and forgotten on shelves, in dusty areas where unclean, hot and humid conditions are not conducive for their proper preservation. The preservation of architectural records has also been complicated by the development of computer-aided design (CAD) and other digital processes used in generating architectural records (Hart 2003).

In Botswana, a study by Ramokate and Moatlhodi (2010) alluded to the accumulation of public sector records resulting to lack of appraisal. The study found out that records in most record creating agencies, including organisations holding architectural records, were never subjected to appraisal. In all, it can be affirmed that in Botswana, there is no literature specifically addressing the appraisal of architectural records; hence the need for this study.

Methodology

This study was largely guided by a qualitative research approach. The researchers used a case study research design. The population size of the study was 47 participants. Of these, 32 responded, resulting in a response rate of 68%. A purposive sampling technique was employed in this study targeting Top Management, Records Personnel at GCC, Technical Officers, and Records Management Staff at BNARS. The study participants were identified based solely on the researcher’s discretion on who is relevant to the study, considering the positions held in the office and its influence in the management of records, particularly architecture and building records. The sample population of 47 officers was drawn based on their knowledge and understanding of the operations and activities that generate architectural records. Table 1 presents the study sample.

Table 1: Study Sample Size

Category	Total Population	Number Purposively Sampled
Management	3	2
Development Officers	27	18
Planning and Building Control Officers	19	11
Technical/Maintenance Officers	19	11
Records and Archives personnel	8	5
TOTAL	76	47

Source: Field Data, 2014

Data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, personal observations and document reviews. Three separate semi-structured questionnaires were used for the various target groups namely: The Head of Architecture and Building Control; the Technical Officers questionnaire (including architects, structural engineers and quantity surveyors); and Records Officers. There were follow-up interviews with all the officers and with Records Management Staff at BNARS. The current records management policies, manuals and procedures at GCC and BNARS were also reviewed. With the aid of an observation check-list, the nature and physical organisation of the architectural records at the ABC were observed. Basic descriptive statistics were derived from quantitative data and results presented. Qualitative data from interviews, observation checklists and document reviews were also processed and analysed by coding and grouping data into themes using thematic and content analysis. These two sets of data were compared and interpreted to present consolidated results.

Findings and discussions

Data interpretation for this study was based on empirical information collected through the questionnaire, interviews, observations, documentary review, and informed by ISO 15489,

American Taxonomy approach and the guidelines by Shrock (1996). The research interpretation and discussions are discussed below.

Architectural records generated and/or received at the GCC

In this section, the study presents findings and discussions on the types of records created and captured, format, access, retrieval and use, control and management, storage, retention and disposal of architectural records at the GCC.

Creation and capture of architectural records at the GCC

The ICA (2000:22) has acknowledged that most architectural records created elsewhere in the world include: building records of palaces, castles and royal estates, councils of government, provincial governments, and archives of prominent families, containing plans or other documents relating to houses, factories and churches.

The present study found out that only one respondent 1 (3.1%) indicated that the GCC created plans for commercial and industrial purposes whilst 8 (25%) indicated that the GCC created plans for houses and boundary walls. A total of 15 (46.9%) respondents indicated that the GCC created plan minutes, inspection reports and occupation permits whilst 4 (12.5%) respondents indicated that the GCC created bills of quantities. The other respondent 1 (3.1%) indicated that the GCC created plans, building permissions and occupation certificates. The remaining 3 (9.4%) respondents did not answer the question.

The study established that the GCC did not have any form of documentation showing the amount of the different types of architectural records in its holding. This may imply that vital records stood the risk of being lost because nobody knew what was available. The implication of which would be difficulty for the GCC to plan for future storage requirements because they did not know the amount of records they had.

When asked about any other formats in which these records were created, the majority of the participants 27 (84.4%) indicated that architectural records were in paper form. The remaining 3(8.4%) did not respond to the question. Data obtained through personal observations revealed similar types of records were created although they varied from section to section.

Establishing the format of records at an early age is essential so that their retention standards can be determined. This would ensure that as soon as the retention periods of the records expire, they are disposed of without delay. This principle would be beneficial to the GCC as records would not remain in storage areas for indefinite periods, hence saving storage space for architectural records only needed for the survival of the organisation.

The study further revealed that there was no recordkeeping system managing the creation and capture of architectural records at the GCC. A records management system would normally enact physical and intellectual access restrictions which help to prevent unauthorised access. In addition, a recordkeeping system would regulate what should be captured and what should not. This, in turn, makes it easy for an organisation such as the GCC to only create that which is important for sustaining its operations. The absence of a records management system at the GCC could lead to a build-up of overcrowding and disorganisation of architectural records. This in turn, makes it difficult to know what to keep among the masses of records and it hinders the efficient retrieval and use of records in the future.

The study also showed that there was no policy stating what is to be captured in the record keeping system. Lack of policies in records creating organisations has been confirmed by different scholars in the ESARBICA region (Wamukoya 2000; Kemoni 2007; Keakopa 2007; Mloi, 2009). Mnjama and Wamukoya (2007:279) did allude to the absence of organisational policies in the management of records in the ESARBICA region. In Kenya, Kemoni (2007) revealed that records management units in organisations did not have a policy for creating records. In Botswana, Keakopa (2007:71) and Mloi (2009) also identified the absence of records policies to be a rampant problem in most organisations. This state of affairs impedes proper management of records throughout their life cycle. Similarly, the absence of a policy, stating the types of records that must be captured by the GCC suggested that the GCC creates many duplicate records which may occupy valuable space and impede access and retrieval of records for future use. This may also mean that the activities capturing important architectural information may have been overlooked in most cases. As a result, vital records may not be available when needed and this may negatively affect the decision making process.

Access and retrieval of architectural records at GCC

According to the ISO 15489-1, any organisation that creates records must have mechanisms that facilitate easy access to such records (ISO 15489-1, Section 4.2.5.2:2001). Soy (2004), also maintains that once appraisal decisions are made over records, they will determine the extent to which an organisation or repository will be able to make information available so that it can be used by those who need it.

In the present study, the largest number of respondents 16 (50%) could not state if they used the architectural records while the following groups stated that they accessed them: 4 (12.5%) management; 3 (9.4%) development officers; 1 (3.1%) technical officers 6 (18.8%) maintenance officers. The remaining two did not respond to this question. Observations and interviews revealed that apart from the building departmental employees who were directly involved in the activities of the ABC department, other attendant departments such as the Fire, Physical Planning, Public Health, Roads Division, and Sewerage Engineers from Water Utilities occasionally used the architectural records.

In terms of access, the study found out that the GCC was faced with difficulties in locating closed files. When asked if it was easy to obtain information from closed files, the study revealed that 8 (25%) of the participants indicated that it was easy to obtain information from closed files whilst 19 (59.4%) indicated that it was not easy to obtain information from closed files. The remaining 5 (15.6%) did not respond to this question. This study confirms the observations made by Mnjama and Sebina (2011) who found out that access to older records at the GCC was virtually impossible as the records in most cases were transferred to various storerooms without any documentation indicating such transfer. It would therefore, be advisable to keep information on the records being transferred from one location to the other so that officers can have a tracking reference tool. Failure to do so would mean that the organisation may not know where the records would be when they are needed.

The implication is that the state in which the closed architectural records were kept at the GCC could make access to them difficult because the officers may spend a considerable amount of time trying to locate a file which is nowhere to be found. This would deny officers the right to make reference to records at the right time when conducting the business of the GCC. In a situation where the record cannot be located, the GCC may not be in a position to account for its actions and deliver quality services to its customers.

Control and management of architectural records at the GCC

The IRMT (1999) identified five control mechanisms used for managing records from their creation or receipt so that they can be identified and used when required. These include: registration, classification, indexing, tracking, and appraisal and disposition. Ngulube and Chinyemba (2005) point out that applying control mechanisms over the life of a record enables an organisation to establish its physical and intellectual control over the records that are created and captured by an organisation.

This study established that the GCC implemented a general records classification scheme in 2009, even though architectural records were not incorporated into such a scheme. This is worrisome because the GCC failed to make efforts to at least maintain a register/index of semi-active and inactive architectural records in its store-rooms. The register or index would assist in prescribing the logical arrangement of semi active and non-active records and even make it easier to keep track of the volume of records kept in the storeroom. It is best for the GCC to produce a record of the chronological order in which they have arranged architectural records in the storerooms so that it can serve as an index while they work on incorporating architectural records in the classification scheme which will give way to the development of an index. Mostly, lack of indexes would be associated with a haphazard arrangement of records which could hamper access to information when required.

This problem of lack of classification scheme and indexes was not unique to the GCC because elsewhere in Africa, previous research on public sector records management by Kemoni (2007) in Kenya and Lyarru (2007) in Tanzania revealed that there were inconsistencies in the use of classification schemes. Other studies conducted in public sector organisations in Botswana such as those of Mampe and Kalusopa (2012), Ramokate and Moathodi (2010) and that of Tshotlo and Mnjama (2010) revealed that there were no classification schemes in government ministries and departments. Tshotlo and Mnjama (2010) also bemoaned the poor classification scheme of records at the GCC. Similarly, Ramokate (2010:74) has also highlighted poor classification schemes in the ministries and departments where the records were created and captured haphazardly without being informed by an analysis of organisational functions or business processes.

Storage of architectural records at the GCC

The International Records Management Standard, ISO 15489-1, states that records should be stored in an environment that ensures their usability, reliability, authenticity and preservation for as long as they are needed (ISO 2001). This study, sought to find out where non active architectural records were kept. Respondents were asked to state where they stored records which were no longer needed and 15 (46.9%) respondents stated that records were stored in boxes in the store-room, 1 (3.1%) of the respondent indicated that records were stored in boxes in passages and corridors. A total of 12 (40.6%) indicated that non active architectural records were kept in other areas other than the ones indicated above. The remainder 2 (9.4%) did not respond to the question. Further, the study revealed that some closed records were stored in mobile cabinets which were filled to the brim while others got unlucky and found their way on the floor and at the basement. Generally, basements are not ideal for the safe storage of any type of records because they are prone to human and natural disasters. In most cases, basements are used as dumping areas for old damaged materials in an organisation and they are usually dirty. At the GCC, storing architectural records in the basement exposed them to the risks of being lost or damaged.

Mnjama and Sebina (2011) condemned the basement as not ideal for the storage of records. It cannot accommodate any type of filing equipment and hence records are simply dumped on the floor. The Medical Protection Society (2014) concurs with this and further noted that storing archives of paper in a basement should be avoided as basements are prone to flooding. However, Barata et al., (2001) advised that if records were stored in a basement, the potential for flood damage should be assessed and appropriate preventive measures should be taken.

The findings of this study showed that keeping records in basements and storerooms did not follow any procedure to ensure that the information about them is transferable. The absence of a procedure of transferring architectural records makes access and retrieval of architectural records difficult and delays the delivery of services to the customers. The findings also showed that the storerooms where records were transferred were so congested that there was no space for the newly created records. This could mean that in future, the GCC may not have the capacity to accommodate the growth of architectural records as the space designated for their storage was very limited. It would also be practically impossible for records officers to sort through piles of documents in a limited space. The findings also revealed that there were no registers used to document records that were retrieved from boxes and to some extent, they were never not returned into the box after use. The absence of registers to keep track of closed records retrieved from the boxes may lead to a loss of irreplaceable legal and fiscal architectural information, and hence compromising the operations of the GCC.

This study also acknowledges the poor environmental conditions of the storerooms storing architectural records as earlier observed by Tshotlo and Mnjama (2010) and Mnjama and Sebina (2011). For instance, both of the studies found out that the environmental conditions of the records storage rooms at the GCC were unfavourable in that they could lead to the deterioration of records. In the same breadth, Chinyemba and Ngulube (2005), in their study in South Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal warned that storing records in poorly controlled environmental conditions can lead to their deterioration and loss. Mazikana (2007) posits that in a number of African countries, records in government ministries and departments are poorly maintained. Records have often been dumped in storerooms and sheds where the roof leaked, the windows were broken and doors were only partially effective. The storage of closed records at the GCC was chaotic and attracted implications on the access and retrieval of architectural records required to support the business and accountability needs of the organisation.

Retention and disposition of architectural records at the GCC

Chachage and Ngulube (2006) posit that records retention and disposition is fundamental to efficient and effective records management, hence it is the pillar of any records management programme. Mnjama (2003) also maintains that records retention schedules can only be useful if they are created in a manner which enables the schedules to be applicable.

The findings of this study showed that 31 (96.9%) indicated that there was no records retention and disposition schedule at the GCC whilst 1 (3.1%) respondent could not provide a response to this question. This implies that there is no retention schedule for architectural records at the GCC. A follow up question was made on how long architectural records were retained. A large population of twenty 20 (62.5%) respondents indicated that architectural records were kept indefinitely. Lack of a records retention schedule at the GCC suggests that some of the architectural records no longer required by the organisation were still occupying valuable storage space. Important records stood the risk of being destroyed at a premature stage. The major implication for the GCC could be that valuable evidence could not be determined because authority to prescribe such does not exist.

Previous research on public records management in Botswana has revealed that lack of retention and disposition schedules resulted in challenges in the management of public sector records. For instance, Mampe and Kalusopa (2012) noted that lack of retention and disposition schedules at the Department of Corporate Services in the Ministry of Health meant that semi-current and non-current records were kept together and this affected their retrieval. Ramokate and Moatlhodi (2010) also noted that lack of retention schedules in record creating agencies in Botswana was one of the contributing factors to failure in conducting records appraisal exercises in the public sector. From this study, it can be deduced that lack of retention and disposition schedules halted the implementation of appraisal exercises, leading to accumulations of unappraised records. Large quantities of unappraised architectural records make it difficult to access vital information that could be used to make informed decisions and improve productivity and public service delivery. A lack of records retention schedule has also been found to be a matter of concern in the public registries in Zimbabwe (Chaterera 2013) and at the Department of Provincial and Local Government in South Africa (Ngoepe 2008).

The absence of retention schedules at the GCC would have severe implications on the storage and human resource requirements. Valuable storage space and high levels of manpower needs could be wasted on records which may not be valuable to the organisation. This would impede access and retrieval of records for references and research purposes.

Appraisal Practices of architectural records at the GCC

The study also sought to find out the appraisal practices of architectural records at the GCC. National Archives of Australia [NAA] (2003) argues that not all records are kept indefinitely. This is because most records are in formats that deteriorate over time or require constant observation to make them accessible. The prevailing view in records management about appraisal emphasises that it is acceptable to dispose of records when they are no longer required. Shrock (1996) came up with three steps that form the appraisal process for architectural records that include:

- Identifying the format that may be represented in an architectural collection. Such information provides the basis for assessing significance, determining treatment and setting priorities.
- Identifying the items that have intrinsic value which makes it vital not only to retain this material but to retain them in their original format.
- Examining the condition and the size of the individual drawing.

Shrock (1996) also suggested a sampling method which archivists may use to make sample projections about the entire holdings. The information obtained can then be used alongside with an assessment of content and scholarly value to determine the overall value of the collection in relation to the cost of its preservation.

The findings of this study show that 19 (53.1%) indicated that the GCC did not appraise records whilst 5 (15.6%) respondents indicated that they had no idea as to whether the GCC appraised architectural records or not while 5 (15.6%) respondents were not so sure. . The other 1 (3.1%) respondents did not respond to the question. Only 3 (12.6%) respondents indicated that the GCC appraised architectural records. However, they could not clearly state the criteria used to appraise architectural records.

This implies that the GCC might have never subjected most of its architectural records to appraisal. The GCC created and generated many architectural records which needed to be appraised so that only valuable records could occupy the storage space. Failure to appraise the records could lead to unnecessary expenses emanating from the storage space and the human resource. The absence of architectural records appraisal at the GCC could have a negative implication on the effective management of architectural records as a strategic resource. Thus, it would be difficult to know the volume of architectural records created, their location, preservation status and problems faced in providing access.

Ramokate and Moatlhodi (2010) similarly found out that various ministries and departments in Botswana did not appraise records, resulting in the accumulation of semi current and non- active records. This is not unique to public sector organisations because a study conducted by Motlhasedi (2012) revealed that the Botswana Training Authority, a parastatal organisation, had also never carried out records appraisals since it was established. Elsewhere in Africa, Mazikana (2007) observes that there are reports of huge backlogs of unappraised records in Africa and these have delayed making archives available to the public.

Training needs, competencies and skills of records management personnel at the GCC

Mnjama (1996) indicates that effective management of a records management programme must be supported by a team of well qualified managers. Ngoepe (2008) affirms that records and archival training and upgrading of skills can be achieved through workshops, vendor sponsored programmes, professional seminars and college or university level courses. Therefore, this study sought to establish if records officers managing architectural records at the GCC had the required skills and competencies to manage them.

The study revealed through interviews that only 2 records officers had obtained Diplomas in archives and records management at the University of Botswana in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Interviews with Records Officers further revealed that they had never been trained to appraise and care for architectural records. The Records Officers also noted that lack of training mainly stemmed from the fact that senior management did not value records management services. Similarly, Tshotlo and Mnjama (2010) found out that the GCC was not giving records management the attention that it deserved. Lack of management support for the management of records, including architectural records suggests that very little can be done in terms of time and resources to support the planning and implementation of records management functions such as appraisal.

A document review showed that the current establishment for records management personnel had a total of 9 posts, of which 3 were artisans holding Certificates in Archives and Records Management, 5 technicians holding Diplomas in Archives and Records Management and 1 professional holding a Degree in Library and Information Studies. The nine (9) officers were dispersed among registries of the GCC. Two (2) officers were based at the Architecture and Building Control registry to perform all the records management and archives duties. The number of records management personnel responsible for the management of architectural records was inadequate given the large amounts of architectural information generated by the GCC.

The current study showed that the professional competencies for records personnel managing architectural records were relatively low. The results indicated that the two records personnel managing architectural records had received training in records management at a diploma level.

It could be concluded that low levels of training in records management could contribute to failure to implement challenging records management tasks such as records appraisal.

A study by Ramokate and Moatlhodi (2010) were also of a similar view that this obtains in most public institutions in Botswana. They found out that apart from inadequate training, the majority of records management staff in Botswana were inexperienced in archival practices such as appraisal. They further argue that lack of training and experience on appraisal may result in questionable appraisal decisions, a situation that could lead to loss of valuable information.

Previous research on public sector records management in Africa has highlighted a shortage of staff as being a challenge. For instance, Mnjama (2006) noted that shortage of records management staff is a common problem in the ESARBICA region. This has contributed to backlogs of unappraised records. Ngoepe and Keakopa (2011) found out that the acute shortage of staff in the archives and records system of South Africa resulted in their inadequacy to execute the mandate of the archives system

Based on the above findings, it is concluded that the GCC does not have the capacity to appraise architectural records. Otherwise if the GCC used the current records personnel to appraise its architectural records, possibilities could be that appraisal decisions made would be questionable and have severe implications on the retention of valuable architectural records.

Resource needs for conducting an effective appraisal exercise at the GCC

The availability of progressive and comprehensive legislation is not a guarantee to positive changes in the management of public records unless the resources to support implementation of the laws and policies are availed to record creating agencies and archival institutions (Ngulube and Tafor 2007). These resources include: competent staff, funding, accommodation, equipment and materials. These resources enable an organisation to plan for current and future activities on the basis of the records management objectives, and make it easy to restructure existing systems so as to suit the information needs of the organisation (IRMT 2000).

From the interviews conducted, the two records officers indicated that they needed funds, more records officers, file folders, archival boxes, pens and accession, pencils, computers, printers, printing papers and a spacious building. A follow up question was asked to find out if records management had a separate budget, and the records management personnel indicated that the GCC records management union had its own budget. Interviews held with the Records Management Supervisor revealed that the budget allocations for records management only started in 2009 and since then it had been inadequate. Furthermore, interviews revealed that a large part of the GCC budget for records management catered for salaries and personal emoluments. However, the Records Management Supervisor stated that compared to the previous financial years, there had been some major improvements on the budget allocations for the year 2014/2015. Document reviews showed that the budget allocation for the financial year 2013/2014 was P884 740.00 whilst for the year 2014/2015, it was P2 511 800.00, indicating an increase of 35.2% from the previous financial year. Information obtained from the reviewed documents revealed that the major development on budget allocations came about as a result of an official circular issued to local authorities by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLG-RD). The circular underscored the fact that records management was among the burning areas that underpinned services delivery in local authorities with most of them recording high levels of audit queries due to poor records management systems. As a way to mitigate the problem, the Ministry of Local government directed local authorities to give

records management a priority in budget allocations and training plan preparations. As a result, the GCC witnessed the increase in the 2014/15 budget allocation.

In terms of human resources, it is always advisable to consider having adequate staff so that they can match the workload of the records management activities of the organisation. Dlamini (1999) once pointed out that the shortage of skilled and experienced personnel to carry out different duties of the records management cadre results in the same people doing everything. This leaves the staff overworked, less effective and less committed to do their duties. Challenging and demanding tasks such as records appraisal therefore, requires that an organisation such as the GCC has enough qualified records personnel so that the task receives the attention that it deserves in a timely manner.

As for space, a spacious building is a necessity in an organisation with a broad mandate such as the GCC which generates voluminous architectural records. A spacious building would have enough space to accommodate semi active and non-active architectural records and even have enough working space for records personnel to appraise architectural records. Above all, the IRMT (2000) notes that the building should be safe, secure, clean, efficient and economical.

Role of the BNARS in the appraisal of public sector architectural records at the GCC

The function of an archival institution is to manage the raw material of history for the benefit of the society as a whole. Private, non-governmental and governmental organisations should follow similar procedures of the records management service, including records appraisal and be subject to the same professional codes of ethics as repositories of the same state (IRMT 1999).

In that regard, the BNARS enacted a number of regulatory instruments in order to ensure that there is uniformity in the management of records across the country. The Botswana National Archives and Records Services, Records Transfer Manual (2009) provides guidelines to ministries and departments on primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, transfer of records between ministries/departments and transfer of records from depositing agencies to the BNARS records centre, transfer of records from the records centre to an archival repository.

The current study showed that the BNARS was responsible for providing advice to public organisations on the management of records throughout their life cycle. With regard to appraisal, the study revealed that the BNARS was currently developing records appraisal guidelines which would be distributed to government ministries after completion. In the event that the completion of appraisal guidelines developed by the BNARS was delayed, organisations would be encouraged to be proactive and take it upon themselves to see that the policies and procedures that regulate the appraisal of records are developed at organisational level and if completed, they should be approved by the BNARS before implementation. This would even enable organisations to customise such policies and regulations to suit the needs of their organisations.

The study further revealed that while the BNARS waits for the completion of the appraisal guidelines, public organisations can use the micro appraisal theory because it eliminates the risk of destroying vital records. In addition to that, the study showed that the BNARS encouraged record creating agencies to keep appraisal reports for accountability purposes. It is advisable to keep appraisal reports so that they can be used as evidence in case there are any queries on the appraisal decisions.

Furthermore, records personnel at the GCC indicated that they were aware of the advice provided by the BNARS on the appraisal of records at record creating agencies though they have never approached them for assistance. It was worrisome that though the GCC knows about the advice provided by the BNARS on appraisal, it neglected such an opportunity which could assist it improve the state of its non-active architectural records. This could imply that BNARS is not marketing its services effectively.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined the appraisal practices of architectural records at the GCC. The study revealed various challenges, including lack of senior management support on records management services, inadequate qualified personnel, poor and inconsistency in the use of the existing classification scheme, inadequate storage space for non-active architectural records and lack of retention and disposition schedules, resulting in the absence of appraisal of architectural records. The study outlined useful recommendations to promote best practices in the appraisal of architectural records at the GCC in Botswana.

In view of the findings of the study which are presented and discussed above, the study makes various recommendations as outlined below.

Creation and capture of architectural records

The study confirmed that architectural records created at the GCC were largely paper based and there were no standardised policies and procedures for their creation and capture. Therefore, the study recommends that the GCC plans for the development of a record keeping system and policies and procedures that will facilitate the effective creation and capture of these records.

Access and retrieval of architectural records

The findings revealed that access to non-active architectural records at the GCC was not easy. Therefore, the study recommends that the GCC starts arranging and labelling the location of closed files and this information should be safely kept.

Control and management of architectural records

The study showed that there was no control and management of architectural records. The study therefore, recommends adherence to the current file classification scheme by all the GCC departments. Staff sensitisation about basic records management procedures should be undertaken.

Storage of architectural records

The study established that the GCC did not have suitable storage facilities for its semi current and non-current records. It is therefore, recommended that proper procedures and guidelines should be developed and be implemented to regulate the transfer of closed records. The GCC should place all storage areas under the responsibility of the central registry which should then seek to establish the covering dates of the records, and their value to the operations of the Council. Moreover, each records transfer to the storage (storeroom) must be accompanied by a records transmittal list. With regard to inadequate storage space, the GCC needs to assess the storage requirements for architectural records with a view to obtain the suitable storage equipment.

Retention and disposition of architectural records

The study indicated that that the GCC had not developed retention and disposition schedules for architectural records. It therefore, recommends that the schedules be developed and applied to architectural records that have accumulated over the years.

Appraisal practices for architectural records at the GCC

The study established that the appraisal of architectural records at the GCC was not done. It is recommended that:

- As a matter of urgency, the GCC should consider using external expertise to appraise its architectural records and deal with the accumulated backlog. Records management staff should also be trained or exposed to records appraisal to enable them to appraise the GCC records in the future.
- The draft records management policy should be finalized and implemented. It is envisaged that the policy will guide management to upholding proper records management practices throughout their life cycle. The policy should be endorsed by the Office of the Town Clerk and distributed across the GCC for the purpose of acceptance and ownership.
- A records management procedures manual should be developed and implemented to enforce compliance with the provisions of the records management policy cited above. The procedures manual should prescribe and outline “how to do” elements for each records management practice (such as appraisal) that the policy seeks to enforce.
- Since the GCC produces large amounts of different types of records including architectural records, it is recommended that the Council develops its own records appraisal criterion for all types of records and it should be based on international best practices.
- The GCC should establish a Records Management Committee. The Committee should be made up of focal persons from each department, including the ABC Department. The committee would provide a platform for the development and review of records appraisal decisions and retention schedule prescriptions, and advice for the design and implementation of a new system designed to capture architectural records.

Suggested appraisal approach for architectural records at the GCC

The findings of this study showed that the GCC did not have a criterion used for appraising architectural records. The study therefore, recommends that the GCC should review and adapt elements of the American taxonomy and macro appraisal approaches and supplemented with Shrock guidelines on the appraisal of architectural records.

Training needs, competencies and skills of records management personnel

The study established that architectural records were managed by Records Officers holding diploma qualifications in records and archives administration. This study recommends that the GCC recruits professionals to manage non-active architectural records and work with training institutions such as University of Botswana introduce tailor-made specialised short courses on the care and management of these records.

Resource needs for conducting an effective appraisal exercise

The study recommends that the GCC utilises the trade-off initiative and increase the existing manpower. The Council should also consider using workshop approaches suggested by Mnjama (2003; 2006) for records appraisal whereby records management professionals gather in one place to appraise records and thus, deal with the appraisal of backlog in a shorter period of time.

Role of the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS)

The study established that BNARS was responsible for providing advice to government agencies on the appraisal of records and information but that this role should be strengthened. Therefore, BNARS should:

- Be proactive by undertaking regular visits to all government departments so as to monitor compliance with the set standards and policies on all aspects of records management, including appraisal.
- Enforce compliance so that government agencies do not have the chance to be in breach of the laws and regulations on the systematic management of records.
- Develop training schedules for government departments where records professionals will undergo hands-on training on the appraisal of records.
- Ensure that all government departments are registered to attend the training sessions as this will enable officers to acquire the required skills and competencies for appraising records.
- Make regular out-reach programmes and ensure that all government departments are invited. This will help in updating the knowledge of records personnel in government agencies on the role of BNARS with regard to the appraisal of different types of public sector records.
- vii. Come up with an initiative that will create specialisation in the management of different types of records, including architectural records. This will help equip records personnel with sufficient knowledge on the general care, including appraisal of such records.
- viii. Set up different focus groups comprising of records personnel in government agencies to share experiences and challenges on the appraisal of records. The lessons learnt from all the organisations should be captured, map the way forward and distributed to all government agencies for feedback and implementation. Progress on implementation should be monitored.

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