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# ARCHIVING WHITE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS IN POSTCOLONIAL ZIMBABWE: 1980 TO PRESENT

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## Abstract

This paper is premised on the observation that mainstream archival activities are the main cause and source of the “absences and silences” of the voices of the minority and the underrepresented in the archives. The aim of the study is to explain the context and documentation strategies of archiving and preservation of Historical Manuscripts (HM) of the white community in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In particular, the study seeks to: (a) Determine the legislative, regulatory framework for the management of HM in selected cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe; (b) Assess the acquisition policies and practices of mainstream cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe; (c) Describe the usage, purposes, and accessibility of both pre-archival and archival HM of the white community. The findings of the study revealed adequate provisions in the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act (2001) for the archiving of HM of the white community in Zimbabwe, although there were limitations of outdated policies for the institutions studied. The study also addressed the issue of limited funding and shrinking budgets which impeded on the operations of both selected cultural heritage institutions and white community associations. This resulted in failure to adhere to archiving/records management standards, and the upgrading of equipment and facilities, as well as the recruitment and retention of requisite and qualified staff. Overall, this endangers the HM collections to neglect and decay. HM were migrated from Zimbabwe to other countries regionally and abroad into private hands, and their extent, nature, condition of storage and status of preservation are undetermined.

**Key words:** archives, memory, minority, white community, migrated archives

## Introduction

Documentation and archival memory affect many of the central concepts of society's governance, functioning, identity, “memory”, and stability. Records and archives support and strengthen important elements of society's infrastructure, culture and operations. They contribute to accountability, transparency, multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice (Jimerson 2003).

In post-colonial Zimbabwe, the white community is a racial and numerical minority, as categorised by Schaefer (1993), constituting less than five per cent of the total population. Mainstream archival activities have marginalised their documentation in the post-colonial

dispensation. The Collection Development Policy, appraisal strategies and the Oral History Programme (OHP) have been utilised to fill the gaps in the archive by focusing on documenting the black majority which is absent from the colonial archive. The registry model (Ngulube 2012) that the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) subscribes to has ensured that government activities and its records and archives predominate the post-colonial archive in Zimbabwe. The challenge with these efforts has been that it tended to focus on documenting socio-political and economic elites from the black majority, while marginalising minorities and the underrepresented, including the majority black population and whites as a racial and ethnic grouping (Ngulube 2012; Murambiwa, Ngulube, Masuku & Sigauke 2012; Manungo 2012).

The study, therefore, acted as an intervention strategy to explain the management and preservation, of Historical Manuscripts (HM) of the white community and to propose a management framework that would ensure the preservation of the above, and save them from further decay and degradation given that they are endangered. This would bequeath a wealth of information and knowledge to both the heirs of the settler community and Zimbabweans at large. It would bring the HM into the wider scholarly community in terms of circulation.

The study affirms the call of justice as advocated for by Jimerson (2003), when he argues that the prevailing relations of power and influence in societies (even in democracies) tend to disadvantage certain voices. The call of justice implies two imperatives; firstly, to proactively enable participation and access and, secondly, to construct the archive beyond the normative assumptions circumscribed by power and the status quo. In this context, the justice potential of the HM must be identified and sustained (fought) because destroying, neglecting and hiding the HM of the white community because there are gaps in the black community would be an injustice. The HM of the white community is a powerful resource for restorative justice and is critical to shaping contemporary Zimbabwean memory and the understanding of Zimbabwe as a society. A study to identify the nature, format, extent, location and preservation conditions of the HM of the white community in post-colonial Zimbabwe is not only restorative justice, but is also creating a more accurate version of the past, of which information contained in the HM could assist Zimbabwe to shape and connect with contemporary and future struggles for social justice and equity, accountability, governance, stability, transparency, multiculturalism, and diversity.

## **Statement of the problem**

The National Archives of Zimbabwe and other repositories in the country, namely the National Museums in Bulawayo, Harare, Gweru, the Railway Museum, the Bulawayo Historical Library, and the two National Galleries in Bulawayo and Harare, constituted the context of the study and the archiving of displaced and endangered memories of a minority (Historical Manuscripts) was central to the research problem. In Zimbabwe, documentation and archival memory are contested territory, because of the “silences” and “absences” of minorities and the underrepresented in mainstream archives. Zimbabwean archival memory is selective and the voices of the socio-political and economic elites abound in the archive at the expense of other voices. Furthermore, in the case of the National Archives of Zimbabwe, public sector records and archives predominate. Minorities and the underrepresented are evident by their “absences” and “silences”.

The above has created a scenario where HM of the white community abound within and outside Zimbabwe. The HM are housed and managed by varied repositories, organisations, families and individuals in undetermined conditions and locations. Their extent, format, and content are unknown, and most are yet to be adequately identified and described. Their location and preservation conditions are unknown, and so are their users as well as the

purposes they are consulted for. As such, this leaves this shared cultural heritage open to decay and neglect and a resultant loss to Zimbabwe. Resultantly, they have been withdrawn from circulation, denying society and the wider scholarly community access to them.

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to explain the context and documentation strategies of archiving and preservation of HM of the white community in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- determine the legislative, regulatory framework for the management HM in selected cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe.
- assess the acquisition policies and practices of mainstream cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe.
- describe the usage, purposes, and accessibility of both pre-archival and archival HM of the white community.
- propose a management framework for the future management of both pre-archival and archival HM of the white community in Zimbabwe.

## **Literature review**

The focus of the reviewed literature is on the Southern African region and seeks to show efforts already implemented or currently underway in Zimbabwe and South Africa. It must be borne in mind that most of these efforts are largely an attempt to compliment the colonial archive and in the case of South Africa it was an attempt to compliment the metanarratives of apartheid archives. It should be understood that countries like Zimbabwe lacked post-colonial archival discourse and this impacted on the implementation of the post-colonial archival enterprise as observed by Ngulube (2012). South Africa went through a transformational discourse as argued by Harris (2000) and this is the most critical distinction about the archival enterprise to document the underrepresented. A study done by Rodrigues (2013) reveals the efforts to document the underrepresented and this study utilised the literature surveyed by the above for unravelling the South African initiatives.

Rodrigues (2013:129) states that “Unlike the international literature reviewed, where extensive research was revealed on the topic of documenting the under-documented and related practices, a review of the South African literature, revealed only some exploratory research into the need to fill the gaps in archival and other collections of themes and groups that were marginalised in this country’s documentary heritage, due primarily to apartheid, but also to colonialism, as was observed in the rest of Africa section”. These studies are mainly in the form of short papers that make readers be aware of such a problem and mention the need to document these topics and communities.

However, he argues that:

these studies are neither in-depth exploration of the implications nor do they offer possible actions or strategies and practical solutions that may or should be espoused to improve this situation (Harris, 1997; 2002; 2005; McEwan, 2003; Hatang, 2004; Sachs, 2006; Field, 2007; and Stevens, Duncan & Sonn, 2010; and Josias, 2011). These studies tend to focus on a specific definition of underprivileged groups, overlooking other groups that may also have had, or have, their histories underrepresented in the national documentary heritage of South Africa, such as certain linguistic groups or minority and immigrant communities (Rodrigues, 2013:129).

Citing Harris (2000), Rodrigues (2013:129-138) points out that during the days of struggle and resistance against apartheid the:

memory of resistance and struggle was forced into informal spaces and the deeper reaches of the underground. Outside the country, the liberation movement and their support networks documented their own activities and gathered – both formally and informally – the memories of exiles and those remaining in South Africa. Many prominent anti-apartheid activists and researchers deposited archival materials with institutions located in Europe and the USA.

Harris (2000:11) further argued that:

during the 1980s an increasing number of anti-apartheid organisations and individuals began depositing archival materials with collecting institutions, particularly university libraries. Significant accumulations were collected by, inter alia, the Cory Library at Rhodes University and the Gandhi-Luthuli Documentation Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As the apartheid era drew to a close, a transformation discourse quickly emerged in the archive's profession during the 1990s. This discourse was informed by the belief that archives called for redefinition, more exactly reinvention or refiguring, for a new democratic South Africa. Since then, a growing number of institutions, especially non-public institutions, have been committed to filling apartheid-type gaps in social memory.

In addition, Rodrigues (2013) observed that numerous initiatives have been launched to capture the untold stories of the political struggles for freedom against colonialism and apartheid, such as the Apartheid Museum and the Mayibuye Archives. These archival programmes consequently focus on those individuals and organisations that have contributed to the liberation struggles.

Harris, (2000:11) asserted that “More recently, the National Archives has also secured the credibility to participate in this endeavour, Bringing the hidden, the marginalised, the exiled, and the ‘other’ archives into the mainstream”. Hamilton, Harris and Reid (2002:12) cited in Rodrigues (2013) were of the view that, “to a degree, there have always been marginalised voices in mainstream institutions such as the National Archives”. Citing the case of gays, they argue that “What is required here is a sensitive and informed rereading of existing archival materials. While the materials were initially compiled for a very particular police function, the materials may also be read creatively, against the grain”

Using post-apartheid statues as an example, Rodrigues (2013:129) posits that The National Archives and Records Services of South Africa Act, “indicates a policy commitment from the state archives to actively identify existing gaps in the country’s documentary heritage, and to actively seek these ignored voices from their perspectives, by including relevant non-government materials”

Citing Harris (2002:75-76), Rodrigues (2013) observed that as in the developed world the case in South Africa showed that “theories and debates influencing archives internationally – such as social history, the postmodernist discourse, and ‘post-custodial’ approaches to archival collection – also brought about the emergence of archives that have been committed to filling gaps in the country’s social memory and telling the stories of some of these underrepresented groups”. However, Rodrigues (2013:132) states that “the narratives of under-documented communities in South Africa have not gained enough real or widespread support, and therefore the drive towards creating an equitable and representative archival heritage has not been comprehensive”.

In reviewing literature on the documentation of the underrepresented in Africa, Rodrigues’ (2013:129) observed there is “...some exploratory research into themes and communities that were marginalised – especially in the aftermath of colonialism – in Africa’s documentary heritage. Although limited, these discussions do recognise that the underrepresentation of some groups of society in the archives is a reality in Africa”. Rodrigues (2013:129) further posits that:

the domestic literature seldom refers to organisational records as a means to preserve the social memory and history of underrepresented communities, tending rather to

focus on non-traditional archival means, such as intangible indigenous knowledge, heritage objects and oral history projects. What is more, attention is predominantly on under-documented themes and localities such as ‘liberation struggles’ and ‘rural areas’, and not on under documented communities or groups, such as immigrant groups...

Drawing parallels to the situation in South Africa, Rodrigues (2013:132) found out that “these developments often deal with the past from the theoretical perspective of post-colonialism, focusing on attempts to establish historical truth and collective memory for groups or communities who have often been marginalised and excluded from dominant accounts of history in the context of a colonial framework”. Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren (2005:55-57) cited in Rodrigues (2013) point out that the effort is to counter balance colonialism and question the colonial archive in its tenets, they however, see the colonial archive as “a unique opportunity to begin the process of constructing a new archive with interpretive possibilities different from those offered by existing collections, especially official ones”.

Anyira, Onoriode and Nwabueze (2010:2) cited in Rodrigues (2013) found out that Indigenous knowledge (IK) is another form of underrepresented community heritage that has also been given some attention in African countries. Documentation strategies for IK have become reliant on methods such as recording interviews of resource persons, using cameras, tape recorders and ethnographic research methods to capture indigenous information because of the nature and complexities associated with IK.

Rodrigues (2013:129-135) observed that like some of the developments observed in South Africa, the initiatives in African countries that collect records considered to be ‘traditional archival objects’, such as organisational records and other traditional archival records, are often those that attempt to bring the untold stories—and to document the under-documented topic—of the liberation struggles into the archives. In understanding the initiatives surrounding records of the liberation movement in Africa, the study by Rodrigues (2013) relies on Garaba (2010) a study that focussed on documenting the liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

Garaba (2010) cited in Rodrigues (2013) offers various examples of initiatives to document these liberation movements. These include the Tchiweka Documentation Centre in Angola which is a private repository documenting material collected by Lucio Lara “in order to preserve and inform about the history of the liberation struggle in Angola” (Garaba, 2010:77). The SWAPO Party Archive and Research Centre (SPARC) which was started with the aim of collecting, recording and preserving the history of the SWAPO Party in Namibia; FRELIMO’s party headquarters which house the liberation struggle archives of Mozambique; and the ZANU PF Archives which contain the records of ZANLA its military wing in Zimbabwe. At this juncture this study would add to the list the archives of Mafela Trust an organisation set up to look after the welfare of former ZIPRA combatants, which is also making efforts to archive the liberation records of ZAPU and its military wing ZIPRA in Zimbabwe.

Rodrigues (2013:132) cited Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren, (2005:56) who observed that in recent years, archivists in Africa have begun various efforts to preserve, digitise, and disseminate on the Internet collections of documents on the struggles for freedom. Among the most significant undertakings are the History of the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa project (the Hashim Mbita Project), The University of Connecticut-African National Congress Partnership, the African Archivist Project at Michigan State University, and the Nordic Documentation on the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa. “Although differing in geographic scope, scale, and internal structure, all these projects share a common objective: to ensure that the record of this moment in world history is not lost to posterity Rodrigues (2013:132).

However, Rodrigues (2013) argues, that efforts to document the under-documented in Africa – especially those not related to non-traditional archival objects such as oral history, and those not associated with political liberation struggles – are minimal. Citing Tough (2009:187-188), he posits that recent international archival discourses, such as

postmodernism, and the transformation debates generated in post-apartheid South Africa have not yet been wholly recognised in the rest of Africa and may not fully "... 'fit' with the experiences of countries north of the Limpopo".

Rodrigues (2013) concurs with the findings by Ngulube (2012:27) in the case of Zimbabwe, Ngulube (2012:27) noted that the lack of specific, clear and focussed collection policies results in the absence of a complete record of the past. He stated that "in fact, projects to document the underrepresented are non-existent. It is left to the oral historian to give the undocumented a voice in the archive". Ngulube (2012:27) further argues that "archivists cannot be proactive in seeking materials on undocumented areas as result of a lack of an acquisition policy. It is only by having such policies that we may build a "total archive..." In his analysis of the oral history project, Ngulube (2012:28) noted that collecting oral history was one of the strategies used to fill gaps in the Zimbabwean archive. He conceded that there was limited excellence in archiving the oral history project arguing that "the tendency of the oral historian was to concentrate on the elite" those considered to have contributed to Zimbabwean history were interviewed. Some of the factors that undermine the preservation of holistic archives are numerated by Ngulube (2012). On the same note, Manungo (2012:64) concurs with Ngulube's observation and states that it focussed initially on prominent Europeans and the black elites after independence.

## Methodology

According to Myers and Avison (2002), a research method is a strategy of inquiry that includes research design and data collection. It also influences data collection procedures. The method for the study was both qualitative and quantitative, relying on interviews and case studies for data collection as a methodology.

A multiple case study research was used to address the exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research question (Stake 1995; Yin 1994). The justification was that a case study is holistic, it exists in a real-life context. Non-probability sampling techniques were employed. The population units of the study for these objectives were three managers of white community associations, four members of the white community in Zimbabwe, five directors from selected cultural heritage institutions, and 21 memory workers from selected cultural heritage institutions. Purposive sampling involved the researcher deliberately deciding which white associations and organisations were best suited to provide the required information (Burns & Groove 2007). This sampling technique was suitable for the study because of the following basic advantages thereof: the study required specific memory experts competent in archiving memory; archiving memory was a limited exercise in Zimbabwe and few sites or institutions worked as memory centres with expertise and competency in archives; and economically, it was not possible to draw a large sample of the white community organisations and associations, as well as that of memory workers.

Data collection utilised unstructured face-to-face interviews, content analysis, questionnaires and non-obstructive observation. To ensure content validity (archiving of societal memory), the study approached academics of archival science (not sampled by the study and these were derived from the National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo) to examine the content of the interview guide and questionnaires. The said academics examined the data collection tools for content and accuracy regarding archiving of memory. On the other hand, reliability as defined by Ritchie, Lewis, Nichols and Ormston (2013) addresses the ability of the tool to replicate the same result on repeated occasions. This study tested the tools for reliability by asking four academics and four students of archival science to respond to the

questions twice in two weeks and see whether the same students and academics gave the same answers.

Data analysis utilised open coding and the identification of developing themes as they emerged from the qualitative data. This was done without predetermining what categories would emerge (Strauss & Corbin 1998:101). Analysis was generally descriptive, theory generation, analytic and thematic.

Ethically, the study observed the following: accountability, implying that research was not done in secret; and results were submitted to fellow academics and were honest about abilities and objectives of the study. It also ensured that participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from the participants. Privacy and confidentiality were observed to protect the identity of the participants through the use of pseudo-names and, ultimately, it was bias free in writing about the underrepresented and minorities (Rubin & Babbie 1997:76-77). The study obtained informed consent from each participant. No participant was forced or coerced to answer questions they did not wish to answer, and respondents were free to discontinue participation or withdraw from the study without being asked to provide reasons. The data collected was presented as it was, and has not been manipulated to satisfy the researcher's interests. Moreover, the data collected was only used for purposes of this study.

## **Results**

The findings of the study for research objectives 1 to 3 are presented below under each specific objective of the study.

### **Legislative and regulatory framework for archiving HM**

The first objective of the study sought to determine the legislative and regulatory framework within which HM are managed in selected cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe. The findings indicate that five (100%) of the directors of selected cultural heritage institutions cited the following legislation the National Museums and Monuments Act (2001) (NMMZ Act 2001), the National Archives Act (2001) (NAZ Act 2001), the National Gallery Act (2000) (NG Act 2000), and the National Library and Documentation Service Act (1985) (NLDS Act 1985), which mandate the operations of these institutions as inclusive and not discriminatory towards the white community. These statutes require that the selected cultural heritage institutions must collect, manage, preserve and make accessible the heritage of the white community in Zimbabwe. A brief discussion of the role played by each of the identified laws impacting on the management of HM in Zimbabwe is provided below.

- The National Museums and Monuments Act (2001)  
This act allows for the establishment and administration of museums and the preservation of ancient, historical, and natural monuments, relics and other objects of historical or scientific value or interest.
- The National Library and Documentation Service Act (1985)  
This act provides for the establishment of the NLDS, the administration of affiliate government, ministerial, departmental, and educational libraries and the training of librarians.
- The National Gallery Act (2000)

The act was passed to create and regulate functions with respect to the establishment, management, and control of galleries or museums of art, as well as the fostering and promotion of the fine and applied arts in general.

- The National Archives Act (2001)  
This act provides for the storage and preservation of public archives and public records, and for the declaration and preservation of protected historical records. As such, this reveals that in terms of legal mandates, no statute discriminates against the white community; however, it is the NAZ Act (2001) that clearly speaks to the archiving of archives, records and HM as defined in this study. It also allows for the declaration of HM as historical as compared to the other statutes.

### **Interpretation and application of legislation on archiving HM of the white community**

Respondents (directors of selected cultural heritage institutions) were asked to indicate which statute or sections of the statute mandate them to archive HM of the white community in Zimbabwe. On this issue the findings revealed that one (20%) of the respondents reported that there was no specific legislative mandate that compels them to archive HM of the white community. They archive them by agreement; they can either reject or agree to it as per a specific request and according to their management capabilities. There was no legislation that guided them on working with the white community. This respondent also pointed out that “a legislation for HM, I think the NAZ, could deal with it but a legislation maybe dealing with a particular section of a community. I don’t know whether it could be fair to anyone to do that, but I think the NAZ Act of 1986 deals with the issue of HM for posterity in general”.

The second respondent (1: 20%) said there was no specific legislation relating to HM archiving in general for their organisation. Instead, they archive HM of the white community, because “it is written in our mandate that we are the caretakers of heritage, but in terms of a specific mandate that we must curate white community HM, it does not exist”. He did say that they would prefer that it is written somewhere to make sure that this heritage is not lost. The third respondent (1: 20%) pointed out that:

Our heritage act needs to be revised to accommodate especially those aspects (HM) where we can consider some sensitive material from whites which by right, we should keep and provide as custodians of heritage. We then have areas where we cannot just disclose because they are state secrets.

They also stated that in terms of the National Archives Act of 1986 they are mandated to address that, although the National Heritage Act is silent about this matter, as alluded to earlier. The respondent was also in favour of legislation that governs the curation of HM for posterity in Zimbabwe.

One (20%) respondent said he was not aware of any specific legislation relating to the archiving of HM in his organisation. The same respondent further argued that although it might exist, he “would be in favour of legislation that governs the curation of HM for posterity in Zimbabwe from all communities and individuals in Zimbabwe. Legislation should transcend colour, tribe or creed and be inclusive of all communities in Zimbabwe”. Lastly, another one (20%) respondent reported that “The NAZ Act mandates us to manage HM from individuals and organisations, irrespective of their creed”. When asked which specific sections of the Act addressed that, he stated that “The specific sections I would not know off hand, but there is a section that deals with HM and it gives us the broad mandate to acquire manuscripts from any individual or community in Zimbabwe, and it also further gives us powers to have them declared national historic collections, some of these manuscripts”.

Related to the issue of legislation, the study sought to ascertain if the White Community Associations were aware of the legislation that mandated the management of their HM. The findings revealed that 2 (66.6%) of the respondents professed ignorance of the legislation that compels them to keep certain documents for certain periods of time, or transfer them to an archival facility, whilst 1 (33.3%) of the respondents said he was aware of legislation that compels them to keep financial and accounting records for a period of ten years.

### **Acquisition policies and archiving practices of selected cultural heritage institutions**

The second objective of the study sought to assess the acquisition policies and practices of mainstream cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe. The questionnaire that was administered to memory workers in selected cultural heritage institutions requested that they indicate all areas for which they had a written policy that had been officially adopted by their institutions. On this issue, the study established that no actual written policy was availed to the researcher or observed being utilised; however, the fact that policy is guided by statutes implied that these policies were available to some extent. At the same time, the fact that there is no policy does not mean that it does not exist; policy can be implicitly derived from statute or practice, tradition and precedent. All the selected cultural heritage institutions operate according to the dictates of statutes as listed above. The findings also revealed that in instances where a written policy existed, it was not updated to cover issues like loans, reproductions, migrations or disaster and emergency procedures for the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. Specifically, the responses to this issue revealed the following:

- (1) Thirteen (61.9%) respondents reported that there is a written policy on what selected cultural institutions collect, while 8 (38.1%) respondents said no.
- (2) Fifteen (71.4%) respondents indicated that a written policy exists and is officially adopted regarding how institutions acquire their collections, and six (28.6%) respondents did not answer this question.
- (3) Nine (42.9%) stated that a written policy is utilised for the arrangement and description of HM or how collections are catalogued, while 12 (57.1%) did not yield any data.
- (4) Ten (47.6%) respondents reported that a written policy defines how HM are stored in selected cultural heritage institutions, and 11 (52.4%) were ambivalent about the question.
- (5) Eight (38.1%) respondents stated that a written policy stipulates the display of HM collections, while 13 (61.9%) did not yield any data to this issue.
- (6) Eleven (52.4%) respondents indicated that a written policy informs the preservation strategies and practices, while 10 (47.6%) were ambivalent about the question.
- (7) Nine (42.9%) respondents stated that a written policy also informs and defines access to HM in selected cultural institutions, and 12 (57.1%) did respond to this question.
- (8) Nine (42.9%) respondents said that duplication and reproduction of HM are also guided by a written policy and practices, and 12 (57.1%) did not yield any data.
- (9) Twelve (57.1%) of the respondents stated that these matters are also guided by a written policy, and nine (42.9%) were ambivalent about the issue.
- (10) Nine (42.9%) of the respondents said that security provisions for HM are also made in a written policy and practices, and 12 (57.1%) did not yield any data.
- (11) Six (28.6%) respondents said a written policy informs and guides how the condition of HM collection is documented, and 15 (71.4%) were not sure.
- (12) Seven (33.3%) respondents reported that a written policy exists and is utilised in the loaning of collections to other institutions, while 14 (66.7%) the respondents did not provide any data for the issue.

- (13) Three (14.3%) reported that no written policy exists for the above good housekeeping procedures for the management of HM collections in selected cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe; while 18 (85.7%) were unsure.

The study also posed the same questions to five directors of the selected cultural heritage institutions. The findings to this issue are presented under the following broad aspects, and the responses generally concur with what memory workers said. However, there were instances where the interpretation of policy or its existence differed from institution to institution. One (20%) of the sampled directors reported that *“they had no written policy whatsoever for the above categories and this was indicative of the fact that the institution’s mandate is in natural specimens (NMMZ Act 2001)”*. Another one (20%) respondent stated that *“they had a general written policy but it was not specifically for the HM collections but for the entire institutional collection”*.

One respondent (20%) stated that *“they had a policy on what they collect and all that was determined by the parent institution or head office in Harare (National Gallery Act 2000), because the collections committee is Harare based”*. Regional institutions take directives from Harare and proposals on what to collect are only approved by head office. The same respondent pointed out that he faced challenges relating to equipment and facilities, as well as the critical lack of requisite skills by staff not trained to preserve the institutions collection. According to the respondent, this was also *“compounded by the lack of curatorial expertise in the country and particularly in the organisation”*. Another deviation from the norm, meaning the existence of a written policy for HM, was in relation to the category on the provision of reproductions and photocopies, on which the respondent stated they had no written policy, and the biggest challenge faced was that the institution lagged technologically to provide such services to its patrons. Equally true was that the institution had no written policy on how to deal with disasters and emergencies that could affect its collections.

Overall, four (80%) of the respondents said they have some form of written policy, but it emerged that in some instances, the written policy was too brief, as stated by one (20%) of the respondents, or was still a draft, as reported by another one (20%) respondent. Interestingly, one (20%) of the respondents stated that *“collection loaning was covered by written policy. However, exclusion was not premised on preservation or conservational concerns, but the fact that the collection was colonial, and of sensitive nature”*. As such, *“it would not be loaned to anyone intending to glorify or valorise the colonial legacy”*. The respondent (1: 20%) stated that loaning of the collection depended on the organisation, was restricted to sister institutions which are public sector or quasi-government, depended on the intended use and for a two-week stipulated period only (NMMZ Act 2001).

Generally, four (80%) of the respondents stated that the application of policy and adherence to standards as stipulated were difficult because of the lack of resources or limited funding from the main sponsor, which is government. Important to note is the statement of one (20%) respondent that acquisition of HM was only possible if provenance could be established; in its absence, the institution would not take the HM into custody. This was part of the written acquisition policy for HM (NAZ Act 2001). One (20%) of the respondents stated that their draft policy lacked a component on collection loans; however, they would consider requests for loans based on merit, although it was not clear what merit was given because it was not defined and not stipulated as policy.

### **Use, purposes and accessibility of both pre-archival and archival HM of the white community**

The study's third objective was to describe the use, purposes and accessibility of both pre-archival and archival HM of the white community. The questionnaire for memory workers asked the respondents to describe the use and accessibility of HM collections in the selected cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe. The findings revealed that the following:

- a) Institutional accessibility to the public:** 21 (100%) of the respondents indicated that the selected cultural heritage institutions were open to the public. Personal observations indicated that the archival and library institutions operate from Mondays to Fridays from 8:00 to 16.45 but are closed on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. The museums are open 24/7, including public holidays from 8:00 to 16.45, while the galleries are open Mondays to Saturdays from 8:00 to 16.45, and are closed on Sundays and public holidays. All Zimbabwean visitors have access at a small fee, but foreign researchers must have a valid research permit and must procure a reader's ticket for the duration of their use of the institution's collections.
- b) Rationale for giving access to the public:** respondents were asked to describe the rationale for giving access to their collections. Respondents were free to provide more than one option. The findings on this aspect are illustrated in table 1

**Table 1: Rationale for access**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative per cent</b>
No response	6	28.6	28.6	28.6
Because it is a public institution	1	4.8	4.8	33.3
Because it is a public institution that stands to serve the interests of the people of Zimbabwe	1	4.8	4.8	38.1
For research, educational purposes and cultural heritage awareness and amusement	1	4.8	4.8	42.9
Historical heritage has to be accessible to all Zimbabweans and interested non-Zimbabweans	1	4.8	4.8	47.6
It is a government institution mandated by an Act of Parliament to serve the public	1	4.8	4.8	52.4
It is a national public gallery open to everyone to explore and experience the essence of Zimbabwe's identity through exhibitions	1	4.8	4.8	57.1
It is a public library generally created for the public	1	4.8	4.8	61.9
Museums are custodians of the national heritage on behalf of the public	1	4.8	4.8	66.7
Museums are permanent institutions that serve the community for both education and entertainment	1	4.8	4.8	71.4
People need access to information and hence a library should do that	1	4.8	4.8	76.2
Providing access to our documents is one of our core duties	1	4.8	4.8	81.0
So as to afford members of the community the opportunity to view our artwork collection	1	4.8	4.8	85.7
The essence of the establishment of the archive is to provide access to all collected and preserved collections (NAZ Act 28:6)	1	4.8	4.8	90.5
The mandate of the National Archives is to preserve archives for access provision. Therefore, the public accesses the acquired archives	1	4.8	4.8	95.2
We preserve the documents that make up the historical memory of the nation and these are open for public scrutiny and access	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2016

Table 1 shows that six (28.6%) of the respondents, although acknowledging that their institutions were accessible to the public, did not yield any data on why they make their collections accessible. Cumulatively, 15 (71.4%) gave various reasons as illustrated by table 1 above for giving access to their collections. Observations by the researcher indicate that the

majority of respondents (15: 71.4%) appreciate that access is an integral part of collection management and is partially the reason for preservation of memory.

- a) **Digitised collections:** respondents were asked if any of their collections were digitised and the findings revealed that ten (47.6%) respondents said no collections were digitised, one (4.8%) reported that their collections were partially digitised, while equally another 10 (47.6%) stated that their collections were digitised.
- b) **Digitised collections available online:** the study wanted to find out from the respondents if they had digital collections available online. The study established that 15 (71.4%) had no digital collections available online, five (23.8%) said their digitised collections were available online, while one (4.8%) was ambivalent and did not provide any data on the issue.
- c) **Web links:** respondents were asked to provide evidence of web links to their collections or organisations. The findings revealed that 11 (52.4%) of the respondents said they had no online link, four (19.0%) provided the following link [www.archives.gov.zw](http://www.archives.gov.zw), one (4.8%) provided [www.nmmz.co.zw](http://www.nmmz.co.zw) as the link to their collections online and five (23.8%) completely ignored this section of the questionnaire and did not yield any data. Personal observations on this issue revealed that all the selected cultural heritage institutions have a web presence, although 18 (85.7%) respondents did not provide a link for their institution.
- d) **Percentage of HM online:** respondents were asked to quantify the proportion of online material to the total HM collection in their custody. The findings to the above showed that five (23.8%) said the material available online was less than 10% of the entire collection, while 12 (57.1%) could not quantify the proportion of their collections available online. Four (19.0%) of the respondents were ambivalent and did not yield any data.
- e) **Physical visits:** respondents were asked to indicate the number of physical visits the institutions received annually. The findings revealed that two (9.5%) of the respondents reported that they had fewer than 100 visits annually, one (4.8%) stated that they received more than 20 000 visitors annually, nine (42.9%) said they received between 1 000 and 9 999 visitors, one (4.8%) reported between 10 000 and 19 999 visitors annually, five (23.8%) said between 100 and 999 visits, two (9.5%) said they did not know the exact number of visitors annually, and a further one (4.8%) reported that physical visits were not applicable to their institution. Personal observations indicated that a valid cumulative rate 18 (85.7%) of the respondents have physical visits ranging from 100 to 20 000 visits annually, which is indicative of greater use of their collections by patrons.
- f) **Online visits:** The study sought to determine the number of online visits received by the selected cultural institutions annually. The findings indicated that one (4.8%) said that they had 1 000 to 9 999 online visits, three (14.3%) reported 10 000 to 19 999 hits online, two (9.5%) said 100 to 999 hits, two (9.5%) reported that they did not know, one (4.8%) stated that it was not applicable to their institution and 10 (47.6%) reported that their institution was not online at all, while 2 (9.5%) were unsure.
- g) **Research inquiries:** The study also sought to establish the number of research inquiries on an annual basis, which included both requests in person, telephonic, email or web based, to understand the use of the collections for research purposes. The study established that nine (42.9%) respondents reported that they received fewer

than 100 research inquiries, three (14.3%) stated that they received between 1 001 and 1 500 inquiries annually, one (4.8%) reported more than 1 501 inquiries, three (14.3%) said the research inquiries were between 101 and 500 annually, two (9.5%) said they received between 501 1 000 inquiries and three (14.3%) reported that they did not know the exact number of research inquiries their institution received annually.

Based on the above inquiries and physical as well as online hits, there is evidence of use and consumption of cultural heritage in the selected cultural institutions in spite of the challenges faced in archiving HM collections from the white community in Zimbabwe.

## Discussions

The findings in this study corroborate the argument of Murambiwa et al. (2012) and Parer (2000) that the National Archives of Zimbabwe is specifically mandated to perform archival work and, as argued by Ngulube (2012), it must play a more central role than the other cultural heritage institutions, in ensuring that racial minorities and the underrepresented find a voice in the archive and guarantee an integrated societal memory for posterity.

Of significance to the study is the fact that although the said statutes (NMMZ Act of 2001; NG Act of 2000; and the NLDS Act of 1985) are silent on the archiving of HM, the interpretation by the directors of these institutions was that they do not discriminate against the white community; in fact, they had in their custody various formats and quantities of HM as revealed by the findings of the study.

The inadequacies of statutes imply the perpetuation of an imbalanced and fractured archive. This confirms the argument by Haskins (2007:402), who discusses the discontent with archival memory and propagates against giving official institutions the sole responsibility of archiving memory. However, the findings deviate from the above stance in that economic challenges and a lack of technical expertise among the white community imply that official institutions like the selected cultural heritage institutions must continue to archive and document societal memory as mandated by statutes.

From a postmodernist perspective as espoused by Cook (2001), Harris (2000) and Derrida (1996), there is need to reconceptualise the archive, and as such, craft policies that expand the boundaries of the archive. The policy in this instance should begin to speak to what constitutes memory, identify gaps that marginalise minorities and the underrepresented in the archive. Equally, the policy must begin to innovate regarding collection development and go beyond the monumental role that OH has assumed in most archival institutions.

Policy shifts should also begin to redefine and reconceptualise the role of other cultural repositories in the country apart from the NAZ. This concept typifies the archival discourse championed by South Africa (transformational discourse) as posited by Harris (2000) and Ngulube (2012).

The findings also concur with the argument by Manungo (2012) that the OHP was established to fill the gaps that acquisition and collection policies failed to address. However, a point of departure for this study is that the OHP actually marginalises the white community because it tends to focus on the black majority and elites. The findings revealed that HM were listed in the top three most important or valuable records or collections of cultural heritage institutions. This demonstrates their informational value as a complement to the official or public archives in repositories locally.

The existence of other repositories and institutions housing HM of the white community means there is need to quantify and document these too, and this qualifies the various collections to be regarded as endangered archives whose state of preservation is unknown and undetermined. Limited budgets have led selected cultural heritage institutions to suspend some of their key operations, which effectively means that curation and archival work is impeded and neglected, and the decay of collections ensues.

Jimerson (2003) observes that limited resources require archives to be selective in what they preserve. When linked to the priorities as stipulated by statute and policy, this statement implies that archiving HM in Zimbabwe is a mammoth task that will play a subservient role to public sector records and other forms of heritage.

The findings on the issue of archival backlogs are also one of the discontents in the literature reviewed made by Foucault (1969) and Derrida (1996) as they postulated theoretical questions about processing, applications, selection and description of archival collections. The issue of custody of white community archives is a contentious one given the politics of the day in Zimbabwe. Setting up a community archive for the white community would be deemed politically incorrect and inappropriate.

Although literature highlighted the role of the NAZ in documenting memory in Zimbabwe, the findings revealed that there are other forums and initiatives that are actively documenting white memory in the country, albeit in a limited way.

The study revealed that HM are endangered from neglect and decay, white memory has been migrated, and the financial and political challenges facing Zimbabwe have undermined the efforts at archiving white memory and dented the overall Zimbabwean archival endeavour. A curatorial strategy proposed by the study was essential for guaranteeing that we addressed the “silences” and “absences” of the voices of the white community in post-colonial Zimbabwe, given that these have potential and actual value, for cultural preservation, for the reconstruction of the past, for administration and as part of the collective societal memory, covering socio-economic, political and technological issues.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

In relation to the issue of statutes and regulatory framework the study concluded that the NAZ, Act (2001) has the provisions for the archiving of HM of the White Community in Zimbabwe, and that the NAZ must play a pivotal role in the archiving of HM, as compared to other cultural heritage institutions. The study concluded that policy that speaks to the acquisition and archiving of HM applied to the NAZ, as stipulated by statute NAZ, Act (2001). For the rest of the selected cultural heritage institutions there was no specific written policy on HM archiving from the White Community. Overall, there was inadequate funding for the operations of the selected cultural heritage institutions in Zimbabwe. The study therefore, concluded that the issue of lack of funding was a common problem affecting the archiving of HM of the White Community in Zimbabwe. This problem did affect both selected cultural heritage institutions, and the White Community itself. The study concluded that the existence of archival backlogs in processing donated or bequeathed HM was discouraging the White Community from donating their HM with the NAZ, and other repositories locally. Personal observations led to the conclusion that 3 (14.3%) of the selected cultural heritage institutions did not have purpose-built storage and exhibitions buildings, the remainder 18 (85.7%) suffered from obsolete equipment and lack of maintenance because of limited funding from the fiscus.

The study also concluded that selected cultural heritage institutions were willing to accommodate the HM of the White Community. They were willing to partner or collaborate with the White Community in preserving white community memory, and keen to render any assistance to the White Community in its efforts to preserve its memory. Generally, the application of policy and adherence to standards as stipulated was difficult because of the lack of resources or limited funding from the main sponsor which is government.

All the selected cultural heritage institutions were accessible and that HM collections were available for use by the public, 23.8% of the HM collection was available online, whilst 47.6% has been digitised. Inquiries, physical as well as online hits, was evidence of use and consumption of cultural heritage in the selected cultural institutions in spite of the challenges faced in archiving HM collections from the White Community in Zimbabwe. Personal observations on the issue of web tools led to the conclusion that all the cultural heritage institution had a web presence although 18 (85.7%) respondents did not provide a link for their institution. The study also concluded that access was an integral part of collection management and was partially the reason for preservation of memory

Subject to improvements in the economy and political situation in Zimbabwe, the study makes the following recommendations:

- The selected cultural heritage institutions should formulate new funding models and strategies to mitigate against the limited funding and shrinking budgets from the main sponsor (which is government) to be able to archive HM and manage their entire collections.
- Legislation and policies should be updated to meet the archiving needs of society, and to meet the challenges of archiving memory in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, to ensure that an integrated societal memory is attained.
- The study recommends that a web presence for selected cultural heritage institutions should be established, adopted and deployed for the archiving of HM in Zimbabwe, this will enhance access to collections.
- Collaborative partnerships with white community associations should be encouraged to render technical expertise and curatorial advice.
- The NAZ should play a pivotal role in the archiving of HM in Zimbabwe as mandated by the NAZ Act of 2001.
- The NAZ should adopt a stewardship role (Wurl 2005) as a management framework for the archiving of HM in Zimbabwe. This will allow the NAZ to render archival technical expertise to other selected cultural heritage institutions and associations of the white community.
- Where possible, the NAZ should take into custody HM collections that individuals and communities are willing to donate to the NAZ.
- The NAZ should deal with and reduce the processing backlogs to ensure that HM collections are brought into scholarly circulation and enhance access to the collections by society.
- The NAZ should update or amend its Act and policies given that the last amendment was in 2001, to cover fees for using archival facilities.
- The NAZ should also archive HM from other minorities in Zimbabwe.
- The study recommends that the Government of Zimbabwe should adequately resource the operations of cultural heritage institutions in order to enhance the archiving of HM and other collections in their custody,

- The NAZ should have a commitment of purpose to enact statutes for the archiving of HM from the white community and other minorities, including the underrepresented in Zimbabwe.

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