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## BOOK REVIEW

**“Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama” Mpho Ngoepe, Thatayaone Segaletsho, Segomotso Masegonyana Keakopa, Julie Moloji & Shadreck Bayane (Eds). ESARBICA, Pretoria. ISBN: 9780620792592**

The purpose of this review is to provide a critical reflection of the book titled “Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama”, published in 2019. Firstly, I offer my congratulations to the authors for assembling a book that honour one of the gurus in the archives and records management profession for the good and valuable work he did for the archives and records management profession, particularly in the Eastern and Southern Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA). The book was launched during the ESARBICA conference held on 9-13 September 2019 in Gaborone, Botswana. It is written even in the bible on the book of Proverbs 11:17-31 that “...those who do right will receive a good reward”. The reviewer is very much impressed that the authors managed to identify and recognize one of the archives and records management gurus in Africa. Additionally, the author is very much happy to provide a review report for the book as a records management practitioner, researcher, and former student of Professor Nathan Mnjama at the University of Botswana.

### **Author’s introduction**

The book was edited by Prof Mpho Ngoepe (University of South Africa), Dr Thatayaone Segaletsho (University of Botswana), Dr Segomotso Masegonyana Keakopa (University of Botswana), Ms Julie Moloji (University of Botswana) and Mr Shadreck Bayane (Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC)). The book unpacked the journey of Prof Nathan Mnjama as one of the gurus in the archives and records management profession and honours his outstanding contribution to the profession, particularly in the ESARBICA region. *Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama* provides an overview of Prof Mnjama as a practitioner and one of the prolific scholars in the profession. The book consists of thirteen chapters written by amongst others former students of Professor Nathan Mnjama, his colleagues, friends, and fellow professionals in archives and records management. The book covers various issues such as the characteristics of Prof Mnjama as a mentor, colleague and graduate supervisor in the archives and records management profession.

### **Chapter summaries**

Chapter 1:

Chapter 1 provides a snapshot overview and/or foundation of the motivation that triggered the assembling and publishing of the book on “Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama.” This chapter provides the genesis of “Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama”.

Chapter 2 on “Shine on dear Professor Mnjama” which was written in the form of poetry regards Prof Mnjama as one of the pillars in the archives and records management profession. In this Chapter, the author views Prof Mnjama as an inspiration to many in the profession and as a teacher with immeasurable humility. This is indeed evidenced by his uncountable contribution to the archives and records management profession.

Chapter 3 on “Nathan Unpacked: Understanding Mnjama through His Name” provides a brief biography of Professor Nathan Mnjama and further unpacks Professor’s name – “Nathan” to draw his point home of a man whose every letter marking up his name lived up to his character. The author denoted the name “N-A-T-H-A-N” to mean N for Nurturing, A for Archivist, T for Trustworthy, H for humility, A for Angel and N for neatness. He was spot on, for these were Prof’s personal and professional attributes.

#### Chapter 4, 5, 6 and 12

Chapter 4, 5,6 and 12 all provide a snapshot overview of the characteristic and qualities of Professor Nathan Mnjama as a graduate supervisor at different levels (Masters and PhD levels). In this chapters, the authors provide their own interpretation of the characteristics and qualities of Prof Mnjama.

#### Chapter 7

In chapter 7, the author provides an overview of her continuous interaction and working with Prof Nathan Mnjama as his colleague and mentor in archives and records management at the University of Botswana and regional conferences. The author outlines how he benefited a lot from Prof Nathan Mnjama as a colleague and mentor.

#### Chapter 8

In this Chapter, the author explains his interaction with Prof Nathan Mnjama when he was on a crucial assessment and/or project to rescue Kenyan Government by locating and copying Kenyan records which had migrated from their country of origin.

#### Chapter 9

In chapter 9, the author shares his academic journey with Professor Mnjama at University of London, ESARBICA conferences, Institute of Development Studies, Botswana Qualification Authority etc. In this Chapter, the author regards Prof Mnjama as an asset in the archives and records management profession.

#### Chapter 10

In Chapter 10, the author highlights working with Professor Nathan Mnjama at the Kenyan National Archives, and his interaction with Prof Mnjama when he was pursuing PhD in archives and records management at the University College London as his supervisor and at various conferences regionally and internationally.

#### Chapter 11

In this chapter the author shares his experience in interaction with Prof Mnjama at different levels such as in the International Records Management Trust projects and several conferences, seminars, and workshop and how he benefitted from his knowledge and experience, particularly in archives and records management.

#### Chapter 13

The last chapter provides a list of scholarly contributions authored by Prof Nathan Mnjama. Furthermore, the chapter provides a word cloud of Prof Mnjama’s most prominent scholarly contributions.

What does the reviewer say about “Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama”.

After reading and interrogating this book on “Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama” I found the book to have covered all important issues and addressed its aims and objectives. The issues covered in this book are very important and can be used as a benchmark, motivation, encouragement etc. The book covered the works of Prof Mnjama as an archivist, researcher and graduate supervisor. The book also assembled a list of scholarly contributions and/or publications in archives and records management by Prof Nathan Mnjama. The collection of this publications can be used as retrieval tool for everyone interested in Prof Mnjama’s scholarly publications. The structure and content of the book is perfect. However, the reviewer feels that in a collection of all students supervised by Prof Mnjama at both undergraduate and postgraduate could have also formed an important part of this book.

What chapter did the review enjoy?

Many chapters in this book are very interesting, however the chapter that the author and/or reviewer enjoyed most is Chapter 2 on “Shine on dear Professor Mnjama” which was written in the form of poetry and Chapter 3 on “Nathan Unpacked: Understanding Mnjama through His Name”, it was funny to see how Mr Shadrack Bayane unpacked Prof Mnjama’s name. I also enjoyed Chapter 8 on “Mnjama and Migrated Archives” where James Lowry explained his interaction with Prof Nathan Mnjama when he was on a crucial assessment and/or project to rescue Kenyan Government by locating and copying records which have left their country of origin.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In concluding, the book was good and worth reading. Indeed, I enjoyed reading “Memoirs of an Archivist: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Mnjama”. I therefore recommend this book for archivists, records managers, researchers, and lecturers not only in archives and records management but other fields of knowledge. Chapters that describe the characteristics and qualities of Professor Nathan Mnjama as a good mentor can be used by other lecturers as a benchmark on the qualities of a good supervisor and/or mentor. Students, lecturers, and researcher can benefit from the book. The book also has a collection of publication by Prof Mnjama in archives and records management that can be used by students, lecturers, archivists and records managers as a referral, scaffold, and retrieval tool. The author and/or review recommend that new series of a book which honours Prof Mnjama and/or other archivists and records managers be conceptualized. It is based on the review that this may motivate other experts to work hard in the profession, motivated by the likes of what Mnjama and others have achieved in the profession especially in the context of Africa.

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