

**THE FUTURE OF THE PAST: PRESERVATION OF, AND ACCESS  
TO, LEGAL DEPOSIT MATERIALS AT THE MSUNDUZI  
MUNICIPAL LIBRARY, PIETERMARITZBURG**

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**Abstract**

*This article is based on part of a study that investigated preservation of, and access to, legal deposit materials at the Msunduzi Municipal Library<sup>1</sup>. Constant access to legal deposit materials will depend on proper preservation methods from the time they are first produced. The focus was to identify how the different materials are preserved and stored especially since every institution has unique needs with regard to the climatic conditions of the area. The study also examined challenges faced by the depository, skills and knowledge of the depository staff about preventative preservation methods, resources for conservation, and collection management strategies. The methods to help make materials accessible were established by examining the means and processes used. Using methodological triangulation which included a self-administered questionnaire, in-depth interviews, observation and collection of graphic data findings indicate that there are inadequate preservation activities and strategies for legal deposit materials at Msunduzi Municipal Library. The legal deposit collection was at risk of being lost and inaccessible to present and future generations. This was mostly due to lack of preservation activities and strategies as a result of lack of knowledge in preservation, adequate funding, staff training, preservation policies, environmental control of stack rooms, proper handling and storage of materials.*

**Key words:** Public Libraries Africa, Preservation of Library Materials, Legal Deposit of Books South Africa

## **Introduction and problem statement**

Little has been written about the preservation problems that legal deposit libraries face and how they are tackled, although it is clear they do have problems and various constraints on action. It is a multi-faceted task to measure the value of having the published heritage of a country collected, preserved and accessible to people through a statutory requirement such as legal deposit. All over the world libraries and archives are faced with deterioration of collections and this is not new (Foot 1997). Ngulube (2003:1) states that:

most of mankind's documentary heritage is recorded on materials subject to the ravages of unstable environments, biological factors, careless handling, natural and human made disasters, inferior paper, impermanent and acidic inks ... that render information inaccessible.

The right of access to information, the new technology used to make multiple copies, the increase in air pollution have all contributed to the increase in the rate of both chemical and mechanical damage to cultural heritage collections. These issues coupled with the economic situation that leads to poor funding or lack of funding for library collections cause a threat of deterioration and loss of printed national and international heritage, force libraries to make the best use of scarce resources (Foot 1997).

Africa has many challenges with regard to its library and information services and many libraries are not functioning properly due to lack of finances, lack of full support from the government and policy-makers, and lack of proper training of library staff (Rosenberg 2001:13). Ngulube (2003:18) quotes Oliver (1999:10) who stated that "the preservation of public records and archives in general, and vulnerable records particularly in South Africa has been greatly neglected". Yet, in the post-apartheid South Africa the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 gives everyone the right of the access to information and other regulations are putting more strain on records in whatever form. Preservation thus becomes very important. Tuckett (2003) says that:

legal deposit libraries form an integral part of the library and information service structure of South Africa as their

resources are freely utilised by countless numbers of people throughout the country from all levels on the information needs scale.

It is every citizen's democratic right to access legal deposit materials but on the other hand these materials have to be preserved for future use. The Victoria Electronic Records Strategy quoted in Ngulube (2002:27) states that "we know the past by records people have left us". Without preservation, people will not be able to access the publications for posterity and therefore future generations will lose parts of their national heritage. These issues and challenges have not been properly addressed in South Africa (Ngulube 2002:18). Ngulube (2003:335) found that:

for South Africa to overcome the impending preservation crisis there is need for adequate funding, staff training, environmental control in records storage places, standards for preservation and access, research and development, and preservation planning.

Fenn and Muir (2003) state that "the purpose of a collection is a determining factor in its preservation needs". The primary purpose of Msunduzi Municipal Library legal deposit collection is to provide access to materials published and produced years ago because these materials were deposited and need to be properly preserved for future generations. However, Msunduzi Municipal Library has been faced with a number of disasters over the years including recent flooding with water on the 19 February 2007 caused by a tap that was left running on the first floor.

Legal deposit has associated problems. The large volume of different materials received cause storage difficulties and often there is no means of weeding materials due to governing regulations that insist that all materials should be permanently stored.

#### *The objectives of the study*

The objectives of the study were to:

- establish the activities and strategies used to preserve legal deposit materials;
- determine the level of staff skills and training in preservation;

- determine what procedures are in place to safeguard the collection;
- discover the challenges faced with preserving legal deposit materials;
- determine what means and processes are used to help make materials accessible; and
- make recommendations based on the findings of the study.

### *Definition of terms and concepts*

In the context of this study:

- Legal deposit is the requirement, enforceable by law, to deposit with a specified institution a specific number of copies of publications produced within the limits of the jurisdiction. Legal deposit is applicable to all forms and media of publications but reference will be made mainly to the traditional printed matter, the most commonly deposited (Lunn 1978:1).
- Preservation refers to maintaining material's original structure or until they deteriorate to the point that their content needs to be transferred to some more durable form. Legal deposit libraries preserve their collections not for preservation's sake but to facilitate access to these resources for future use. According to Sahoo (2007:110) "preservation is the process in which all actions are taken to check retardation and deterioration". Yet, Van Garderen (2007) states that "preservation implies that the long term value of the information object has been recognised and that steps, however minimal, have been taken to maintain and protect the information object". This includes preventative measures (good house keeping) and curative measures (reversing the effects of time). Preservation in the past was shaped around the notion of permanence. However, no matter how well protected and cared for, materials cannot last forever because of internal processes of decay that defy the most sophisticated intervention (Harris 2000:46). Current preservation strategies in South Africa make use of a combination of some or all of the four elements namely restoration, media conversion or preservation reprogramming, preventative preservation and pre-archival intervention (Harris 2000:48).

- Access refers to the way a document may be found. In this study, it referred to access for posterity, that is use in the future or long term. Legal deposit materials are preserved with the intention to provide access for future use. With no preservation there is no access, for example, one cannot access a newspaper if it was not preserved properly due to various factors that can cause it to deteriorate badly causing it to crumble into pieces when handled.

### **Literature review**

Very few empirical studies directly related to preservation and access of legal deposit materials at a public library have been conducted. A few studies have been done on the preservation of public records and archives (Ngulube 2003) and also about publishers and the problems they experience concerning legal deposit (Tibane 2005). Various reports and papers have been written about legal deposit (Lunn 1981; Larivihre 2000; International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA), 2000a; IFLA 2000b; Library Association 2001) and others about preservation (Harris 2000; Sahoo 2007; Abid 1998; Smith 1999; Khayundi 1995; Mazikana 1995).

### *Legal deposit*

The origins of legal deposit are credited to France when King Francois I introduced legal deposit with the Ordonnance de Montpellier in 1537 (Library Association 2001; Larivihre 2000:11; IFLA 2000a; IFLA 2000b; Lunn 1981; Willemse 1963:9). Larivihre (2000:11) and IFLA (2000b) state that:

The king wanted to collect and gather the current and the future production of all editions of the books which deserve to be seen in order to ensure that it would always be possible to refer to the original work as first published and not modified.

Today, legal deposit law enforces organizations and individuals that produce materials to deposit one or more copies to a particular institution except for the Netherlands where deposit is voluntary. Legal deposit has a number of functions these including the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage, copyright protection, censorship, bibliographic control, provision of statistical information; library stock;

government and legal publications; exchange material and universal access to published information (IFLA 2000a; Larivihre 2000:10; Lor 1995:96; Lunn 1981).

The most mentioned purpose of legal deposit is to preserve a nation's heritage and this implies according to Lor (1995:96) that:

Legal deposit is not merely a question of preserving heritage so that some unknown scholars may gain access to it in the future. It also has to be made available in the present.

### *Legal deposit in South Africa*

The Legal Deposit Act No. 54 of 1997 governs legal deposit in South Africa (Tuckett 2003; Library Association 2001; South African Constitution 1997). The Act covers all print materials, audiovisual materials and electronic publications. However, the Legal Deposit Act enables libraries to collect a variety of materials but in practice electronic especially online materials are not collected (Library Association 2001; Lor and Letshela 2002).

There are a number of reasons for the partial implementation of the Act including lack of technological, financial and staffing capacity (Lor and Letshela 2002). Lor and Letshela (2002) point out that South African libraries do not at present have the technological capacity to fully put into practice the legal deposit act which includes technology required to capture, store and make accessible online electronic documents as well as properly trained staff to do this.

### *Access to legal deposit in South Africa*

Access can be looked at in two ways. First of all, there is access to the material itself and in the case of most deposit libraries this involves making a visit to the library and consulting the material on the premises. The second aspect is about access to the records of the material held by use of a catalogue or bibliographic list and not of direct access to the material. Many libraries today have moved from using the traditional card catalogue and are using computerized catalogues including web online public access catalogues which on one hand increases access to materials yet on the other hand restricts access to those affected by the digital divide.

South Africa is emerging from a society that was deeply censored to a country that has legislation in its Bill of Rights, which grants its people basic rights. One of the basic rights is 'access to information' and is found in section 32 of the constitution (Constitutional Court of South Africa, 2007; Harris, 2000:25). Kekana (1999) states:

The Bill gives everyone the right of access to any information held by the state, and any information that is held by another person and that is required for exercise or protection of any rights. Ever since the installation of the democratic order in South Africa, government has implemented numerous steps in law and practice that lend themselves to greater openness and transparency and allow citizens greater access to information.

These rights are supported by the African Charter of Human Rights and other international conferences including IFLA as a result of violation of free expression and the flow of information leading to libraries not being able to serve the needs and interests of their users (Kekana 1999). The right of access to information includes the right to receive and impart information.

### *Public libraries*

The history of public libraries is unique to each country and has developed from varying degrees of government support, citizen involvement, structure and mechanisms for funding including philanthropists like Andrew Carnegie (McCook, 2004:266; Shera 1994:200).

Today the role of the public library in countries for example Chad, Ghana, Hong Kong and South Africa includes the function of a legal depository (Larivihre 2000:9). The precise role of the public library is still very unclear because they often lack a clear focus for their activities and priorities (Brophy 2001:30; Kinnell and Sturges 1996: xiv). Although, in 1995 the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) issued a public library manifesto together with IFLA that states:

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of

individual and social groups (McCook 2004:278; Brophy 2001:27-28).

Brophy (2001:30) emphasizes that public libraries in the past responded to external change, however, they may not be able to keep up with the changes due to the information age.

### *Public libraries in South Africa*

In comparison with most other African countries south of the Sahara, South Africa has a comparatively long public library history (McCook 2004:268; Mostert 1999). However, public libraries in South Africa have always been affected by politics (Lor, van Helden and Bothma 2005:268; Mostert 1999). The public library is regarded as a social phenomenon and it needs to reflect this (Stilwell 1995:12; Friis 1962:7). Friis (1962:13) argues that "the library provides means to an end and invites people, pleads with them, entices them to make use of those means". However, South Africa has more libraries than other African countries south of the Sahara, yet the distribution is uneven due to the apartheid system (Lor, van Helden and Bothma 2005:268; Mostert 1999).

In Africa public libraries are faced with dreadful financial constraints where in some cases buildings and the librarian's salary remains while books and other resources are no longer bought (McCook 2004:277; Rosenberg, 2001:13). In South Africa like many other African countries public libraries are facing many problems including lack of funding and yet there is increased handling of legal deposit materials (Ngulube 2006:113). Leach (2006:123), as mentioned earlier, emphasizes that "public libraries both in South Africa and internationally are under financial pressure owing, in large part, to a decline in public (or government) funding". Although the provision of public libraries in South Africa is supposed to be the primary responsibility of the local authorities, the governance and financing arrangements are complex because they involve both second-tier and third-tier government, provincial and municipal authorities (NEPI 1992:20). As far back as 1988 when Zaaiman (1988:10) conducted an investigation into 'The use of libraries for the development of South Africa', he points out that many high level government officials



doubted that public libraries can contribute to development. Zaaiman (1988:11) stressed that:

Good intentions and general philosophies are no longer an acceptable basis for the allocation of funds when the need to combat poverty, starvation, unemployment and a lack of housing and schools compete with libraries for government support.

Findings of a survey of public libraries conducted by Leach (1998) quoted in Leach (2006:127) discovered inadequate funding had a significant negative impact on important facets of public library provision and turned out to be the most frequently mentioned problem.

Many libraries are dependent on donor agencies like the Carnegie Corporation, Mellon Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This problem has been recognised by both librarians in Africa and the donor agencies but nothing has led these libraries to sustain themselves because most are still dependent on outside funding (Rosenberg 2001:14).

### *Preservation*

In the past the term 'preservation' in archives and libraries was used synonymously with 'conservation' and books plus paper repairs were left to the craftsmen and artisans namely bookbinders, artists and printers (Jordan 2003:2352; Harris 2000:48; Swartzburg 1980:8). This involved a long history of practices and techniques used to deal with problems of decay and damage to materials. These are the traditional convenient ways of making certain long term access to simply protect the integrity of the medium on which it was documented by basically repairing and rebinding the books and replacements of reprints and facsimiles in case of rare books (Smith, 1999). This approach changed noticeably during the 1970s and 1980s when the identification of mass embrittlement of books in stacks affecting a huge percentage of holdings at various institutions (Smith 1999; Whiffin and Havermans 1998). However, no professional definition of the term was in use at the time. This only surfaced in the 1980s when Susan Swartzburg (In Jordan 2003:2352) provided a functional definition:

Preservation concerns not only the conservation of a book, or other object in its original format but also, quite

literally, the preservation of the intellectual content of library materials and the maintenance of the physical plant where library materials are housed.

Today preservation includes conservation, reformatting, collection development activities and disaster prevention (UCSD 2007; Jordan 2003:2352; Harris 2000:49). It therefore includes transferring information from one format to another and conservation is an integral part of a comprehensive preservation programme. Ngulube (2003:39) states that "preservation has shifted from being item oriented to being collection aligned".

Library materials can be preserved successfully by slowing the process of deterioration and by preventing incidental and catastrophic damage (Harvard College 2001; Reed-Scott 2000:82; Smith 1999). However Smith (1999) argues that:

although the process of preservation is frequently seen to be retarding or reversing the effects of time, in fact much of the work of preservation involves forecasting how something will age and taking steps to mitigate the aging.

In addition Harris (2000:47) says that a number of external processes accelerate decay including rough handling, ravaging pests, exposure to light, fire, water, dust and polluted air, and extreme or unstable climatic conditions.

Hunter (1997:133) states that "modern paper, it turns out, contains the seeds of its own destruction; the very production of paper introduces elements, particularly sources of acid, which lead to deterioration". However, over the years many researchers have looked at the issue of preservation in regard to use of permanent paper, paper deacidification and reformatting but there remains much which is still unknown and all these ways will still not reverse damage that has already been done. Therefore libraries and archives need to approach preservation in a number of different ways including preventative preservation which involves looking at factors of deterioration, disaster management and security; restoration; media conversion or preservation reprography (Harris 2000:48-49).

### *Preservation and access*

The balance between preservation and access has always been uncertain in those items that rely on the stability of the carrier be it printed on vellum, emulsion on wood-pulp paper or grooves on acetate disks (Smith 1999). One of UNESCO's main missions is to help sustain, increase and disseminate knowledge by assuring the world's heritage and making it accessible to as many people as possible (Abid 1998:122). It was recognised that to ensure the world's documentary memory did not deteriorate at an alarming rate they initiated the 'Memory of the world' in 1992 to protect and promote the world's cultural heritage (Abid 1998: 122). This was a result of the terrifying state of preservation and the bad conditions of access to cultural heritage in different parts of the world. According to de Stefano (2000:317) quoted in Ngulube (2003:35):

Preservation and access share a relationship. In that sense, one entails the other while on the other hand; the need for access to information necessitates the need of preserving the intellectual content of documentary materials. These two are reciprocal.

Smith (1999) states that strategies have emerged to manage and preserve print media and these include:

- Controlling storage environments to keep temperature and humidity consistent and at optimal settings that retard the natural processes of decay;
- Instructing staff and patrons to handle fragile items in a way to minimize more damage;
- Removing items from service and providing surrogates like microfilm and photocopies;
- Rehousing items in acid free containers or inert mylar sleeves; and
- Implementing emergency preparedness strategies by equipping storage areas with water damage protection and training staff in urgent response to catastrophes, human-made and natural.

### *Factors of deterioration*

Deterioration is when any material becomes inferior in quality or condition. The various types of deterioration of paper-based materials include and show signs of wear and tear, shrinkage, cracks, brittleness, warping, bioinfestation, discoloration, abrasion, holes, dust and dirt buildup. In general library materials are prone to deteriorate when subjected to the following factors:

- Environment factors like light, temperature, humidity and moisture, dust and dirt, water;
- Biological factors like bacteria, insects and rodents;
- Chemical factors like acid and lignin;
- Human factors including building design, handling and care; and
- Disasters including floods, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, volcanoes and fires.

(Sahoo 2007:105-106; Ngulube 2003:84; Harris 2000:47; Banks 2000:114).

### *Preservation education and training*

Preservation advocacy is a key part of protecting collections by involving and convincing staff to think about how their actions affect the collections (Drewes 2006; Feather and Eden 1997:19). Ngulube (2003:124) states that:

Education and training are concerned with the development of knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for individuals to live meaningfully and to contribute positively to society. Training relates to specific processes and procedures. It should provide people with techniques in how to apply rules and standards. It covers how principles are applied, in a practical programme.

After decades of library schools not offering courses in library preservation, today they are excellent opportunities in a number of developed countries like America, Britain, Germany and France (Swartzburg 1998:139). Feather and Eden (1997:20) stress that:

Staff must be made aware of the need for particular environmental conditions to be maintained, especially in

storages areas, and the need to report any deviations from normal or acceptable conditions.

The preservation of materials irrespective of their format and media that they are captured on, to a great extent, hinges on librarians and archivists with necessary skills and knowledge to deal with the records at every stage of their use by society (Ngulube 2003:124).

### *Preservation challenges in public libraries in Africa and South Africa*

Africa has many challenges with regard to its library and information services. The social, economic, political and cultural factors play a role in this and are reflected in the condition of the library and archives facilities in those countries (Mazikana 1995:21; Rosenberg 2001: 13). Many libraries are not functioning properly due to some of the following reasons:

- Lack of funds and trained staff,
- Dependency of library development on donor agencies,
- Adopting a western library model that is not totally suitable for Africa,
- Lack of proper purpose built buildings and equipment,
- Lack of proper environmental control in tropical temperatures, and
- Other factors include political instability and absence of organized national preservation programmes.

The preservation challenges in South Africa are like many other African countries related to economic, social and political issues, lack of funds, staffing, donors and adopting a western model library. In addition is the challenge of production of poor paper. Westra (1987:6) states that:

In South Africa as elsewhere, the deterioration of archival library collections is mainly due to the poor quality of paper used for writing and printing. The process of deterioration can be reduced by controlling the environment in which the collections are stored, but the obvious way of ensuring that the book of today will be preserved for the future is by using durable acid-free alkaline paper.

Another major challenge is environmental control and the South African climate. South Africa has a temperate sub-tropical climate with considerable regional variations caused by differences in elevation, in wind systems, and in ocean currents. Westra (1987:3) says the western interior of South Africa is the driest compared to the hot and humid KwaZulu-Natal which is problematic from a preservation point of view.

### *Research methodology*

Methodological triangulation was used in order to look at the study in different ways and this included a questionnaire, interviews, observation and collection of graphic data. The units of analysis were the staff of the legal deposit department and the whole population was surveyed. In this study, quantitative and qualitative techniques were employed. The results of the self-administered question and observation schedule were analysed using SPSS. Data collected using the interview schedule was analysed qualitatively.

A covering letter and seventeen questionnaires were distributed and thirteen questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 76.5%. The library manager and the head of legal deposit were interviewed (face-to-face) using a semi-structured interview schedule. Five different stack rooms were observed using an observation checklist.

### *Research findings and discussion*

Several findings of importance are discussed in the light of the research problem. Literature is reviewed, especially with reference to other studies conducted in related fields.

### *Preservation policy and means*

A preservation policy is important to support the development of a comprehensive preservation programme. The study shows that the Msunduzi Municipal Library did not have policies to improve preservation conditions and develop conservation facilities and no policies for the training and recruitment of qualified staff. Even though four (30.8%) respondents to the questionnaire stated there was a

policy, the majority of the respondents five (38.5%), stated that there was no policy to improve preservation conditions. Seven (53.8%) respondents said there was no policy to develop conservation facilities and 46.1% stated that the library had no policy to train and recruit staff. Feather and Eden (1997:20) stress that:

Staff must be made aware of the need for particular environmental conditions to be maintained, especially in storages areas, and the need to report any deviations from normal or acceptable conditions.

The mission statement of the Msunduzi Municipal Library, solicited during the interviews, does not incorporate preservation policies at all. The library manager and the head of legal deposit both confirmed that the library did not have any preservation policies, although the Head of Legal Deposit mentioned that they were currently working on a collection development policy. Therefore, one may argue that the four respondents (30.8%) that stated that the library had a preservation policy were unaware of what is contained in the library's mission statement and what a preservation policy or plan entails. Without a preservation policy the staff have no guidance in terms of preservation and why they need to preserve.

One of the main reasons mentioned for not having a preservation policy was lack of, or inadequate, funding (Feather and Eden 1997: 28-29). The library manager explained that, due to lack of funds, there was no role played by the manager in preservation. The head of legal deposit said the role played was an administrative one. The present study established that the legal deposit department did not receive adequate funding, like many African libraries. This was shown when respondents were asked in the self-administered questionnaire to rank priorities for improving the management of the legal deposit collection. Increased funding emerged as one of the top priorities. Only 12.5% of the total budget of the Msunduzi Municipal Library is allocated to legal deposit. The library manager emphasized that this was not sufficient, because it covered staff salaries and nothing else. There was also lack of support from the government and policy-makers. Legal deposit funding came from the provincial library in the past, but as the years went by this funding had dwindled. This led to the Msunduzi Library increasingly depending on donors such as the Mellon Foundation and Carnegie Corporation. This problem has been

recognised by librarians in Africa and by the donor agencies, but nothing has prompted these libraries to sustain themselves, because most are still dependent on outside funding (Rosenberg 2001:14).

The funds received from the Mellon Foundation have been used to buy computers and software (Millennium) for cataloguing legal deposit materials and conversion of data from URICA to Millennium Library software, after the UKZN library changed its software from URICA to Sirsi and did not include Msunduzi Library legal deposit materials. The grant from the Carnegie Corporation, the larger of the two grants, was used to renovate part (the lending and children's departments on the first and second floors) of the Library in 2006. This indicates that preservation was not on top of the Library's priority list. The Msunduzi Municipal Library is in the process of receiving a second grant from Carnegie and when they receive this they hope to use it to renovate the periodicals section of the legal deposit department and to buy some equipment, for example document scanners. The lack of sufficient funds and increased dependency on donors leads to uncertainty, in that none of the interviewees could foresee the direction in which the preservation policy/strategy will move over the next five years. Rosenberg (2001:14) studied libraries in Africa and reached a similar conclusion. One of the respondents stated that the shift all depends on funding and they will have to wait and see what happens when the donors stop their funding.

### *The environmental conditions of stack rooms*

Findings related to the environmental conditions of the library building and stack rooms, with regard to temperature, relative humidity, light and pest management, to determine how paper-based materials were preserved are presented.

### *The building*

The building is the collection's most important source of security; it is fundamental and affects preservation and access in various ways. Therefore the way it was built, how it is maintained and other protective qualities are key to preservation. The present study revealed that the library building was custom-designed and built in 1975 for the purpose of its current use. It was built during the time when many



institutions all over the world had just identified mass embrittlement of books and were starting to understand that preservation does not entail conservation only. The building was not designed for the preventative preservation of materials. The HVAC system was a year old and was installed when parts of the building were renovated in 2006. The HVAC system was maintained every six months. The periodicals stack room had a HVAC system and a de-humidifier. The other stack rooms did not have this equipment, except for the maps stack room, which had a HVAC system. The building was made from brick and concrete and since being built in 1975, the building was only partly renovated in 2006. Only parts of the library had been renovated and not the stack rooms. The researcher was unable to establish why the stack rooms were not given priority during the renovation. The researcher can only speculate that other departments and functions of the library were seen as priority when compared with the preservation of legal deposit.

#### *Temperature and relative humidity*

The study found that the temperature at the Library was not monitored, as five respondents (38.5%) said that the average temperature in the building was about 20° to 23°C, although the majority of the respondents, 53.8% (seven), were not sure about this. The temperature of the stack rooms were not monitored either, since nearly all respondents, 76.9% (10), were unsure about the average temperature in the stack rooms (see Table 1). One respondent said it was 27°C, while another reported 28°C. Apart from the periodicals and map stack rooms, all the other stack rooms did not have HVAC systems. Both of the stack rooms that had HVAC systems, namely the periodicals stack room and the maps stack room, had the HVAC on during the researcher's visit. However, the periodicals stack room was hot and the HVAC was set at 26°C, but the map stack room was cold and the HVAC was set at 18°C. The three other stack rooms that did not have HVACs were hot. Westra (1987:7) stresses that "environmental control through air conditioning is essential for hot and humid coastal regions, such as Natal". The periodicals stack room has an upper area which is used as a work room for the periodicals staff and this could be the reason why the HVAC was set at 26°C, to accommodate the staff.

**Table 1: Average stack room temperature  
N=13**

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Count</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|----------|
| Unsure          | 10           | 76.9     |
| Non-response    | 1            | 7.7      |
| 27°C            | 1            | 7.7      |
| 28°C            | 1            | 7.7      |
| Total           | 13           | 100      |

The study further revealed that the relative humidity was not monitored in the stack rooms. More than half of the respondents, eight (61.5%), indicated that the relative humidity was not constantly monitored in the stack rooms. The researcher observed that all five stack rooms did not have instruments to measure the relative humidity. The periodicals stack room had one dehumidifier. The interviewees confirmed that the library did not have any equipment to measure relative humidity and therefore it was not monitored at all. High humidity and high temperatures are hazardous to materials and it is vital to maintain a constant temperature and relative humidity, as great fluctuations are not good for the materials (Sahoo 2007:105-106; Ngulube 2003:84; Harris 2000:47; Banks 2000:114). The temperature and relative humidity also depends on the geographical area and climatic conditions of the area in which the archive or library is situated. The Msunduzi Library is in Pietermaritzburg and is therefore faced with great fluctuations in temperature. It is rather humid because it is approximately 80kms from the Indian Ocean. Therefore there is a need to control the climatic conditions and monitor the temperature and relative humidity.

### *Light*

It was clear from the results that most materials in the stack rooms were exposed to fluorescent light all day, as well as to natural light from the windows. Five (38.5%) respondents were unsure about the number of hours, one (7.7%) respondent specified that materials were exposed to light all day and two respondents indicated eight hours and eight and a half hours, respectively. Three (23.1%) respon-

dents estimated approximately ten hours. Only one stack room, namely the periodicals stack room, was not affected by natural light since it was located in the basement and had no windows. The lights were not fitted with ultraviolet (UV) filters, nor did the windows have UV film fitted to filter light that causes deterioration of paper. Sahoo (2007:111) emphasizes "sunlight should be prevented from falling directly on papers because the sun is a great emitter of ultraviolet light".

### *Pest management*

The study found that materials accessioned were not checked for insects/vermin before they were placed in the stack rooms. Eight (61.5%) respondents said that materials were not checked for pests, three (23.1%) respondents were unsure and two respondents did not answer the question. The study revealed that the stack rooms had been infested with cockroaches, bookworms, spiders, fleas and dust-mites. Hunter (1997:144) stresses that these unwanted visitors are attracted by warm and humid conditions. The temperatures in the stack rooms were relatively high.

The library had a routine extermination of vermin every six months, to remove infestations of pests, especially cockroaches. However the respondents did not know what chemicals were used. Chemicals are harmful to materials as well as human beings

### *Storage and handling*

The present study revealed that the stack rooms were generally not clean. A majority of the respondents, 53.8% (7), said that the stack rooms were not clean, while 30.8% (four) said they were clean. Five different respondents' comments were received with regard to question 23, an open-ended question, about how often the stack rooms were cleaned. The comments included 'hardly', 'maybe once a month', 'never', 'once every two months' and 'only when very dirty'. Six respondents were unsure and two did not answer the question, possibly because there was no routine cleaning done and the respondents had not seen any cleaning been done in the stack rooms. The researcher observed that all the stack rooms were very dusty and two of the stack rooms were dirty.

The study found that of the five stack rooms only one stack room had adequate storage space. The remaining four did not have enough space. The respondents ranked 'increase capacity of storage space' as the top-most priority (see Table 2). There was also a problem with shelving, where some boxes of newspapers are placed on the floor. This could lead to major damage to materials, especially in the case of a water disaster. This lack of adequate shelving is also seen where materials are stored on top of the shelves due to lack of storage space.

A large number of respondents, 76.9% (10), revealed that there were no guidelines for staff in terms of handling of materials and a fairly large number, 61.5% (8), said there were no guidelines for users either. This raises serious preservation issues, because much of the damage caused to materials is a result of bad handling.

**Table 2: Priorities for improving the management of the legal deposit collection**

| Priorities for improving management                      | Level of the priority |          |       |                |           | Total score | Rank |
|--|-----------------------|----------|-------|----------------|-----------|-------------|------|
|  | Major priority        | Moderate | Minor | Not a priority | Undecided |             |      |
| Raw score  | 4                     | 3        | 2     | 1              | 0         |             |      |
|  | Count                 | Count    | Count | Count          | Count     |             |      |
| Increase storage capacity                                | 10                    | 3        | 0     | 0              | 0         | 49          | 1    |
| Develop disaster plan                                    | 10                    | 2        | 1     | 0              | 0         | 48          | 2    |
| Process backlog of acquired collections                  | 10                    | 2        | 1     | 0              | 0         | 48          | 2    |
| Increase funding   | 10                    | 2        | 0     | 1              | 0         | 47          | 3    |
| Preservation/conservation of collections                 | 9                     | 3        | 1     | 0              | 0         | 47          | 3    |
| Improve staff training and expertise                     | 9                     | 3        | 0     | 1              | 0         | 46          | 4    |
| Develop policies & procedures for handling new materials | 8                     | 3        | 1     | 1              | 0         | 44          | 5    |
| Improve storage conditions                               | 8                     | 3        | 0     | 1              | 1         | 42          | 6    |
| Improve finding aids                                     | 6                     | 5        | 1     | 1              | 0         | 42          | 6    |
| Reformat collections                                     | 7                     | 4        | 0     | 1              | 1         | 41          | 7    |
| Automate description systems                             | 8                     | 3        | 1     | 1              | 0         | 36          | 8    |

Major priority=4, moderate=3, minor=2, not a priority=1, undecided=0

### *Disaster preparedness and management*

Disaster planning is considered a main component of preservation and no library is completely free from devastation that can happen as a result of human-made or natural disasters. The study revealed that the library did not have a disaster and recovery plan and this was confirmed by the interviewees. The respondents ranked 'develop disaster plan' as second on the list, to improve the management of the legal deposit collection. This is shown in Table 2.

The researcher observed that, due to lack of adequate shelving, a number of materials were stored on the floor, which is not safe in the case of any type of water disaster. This finding is quite worrying, since the library has been faced with a number of water disasters in the past.

### *Security*

The study revealed that the library had security personnel, an electronic security system and an intruder alarm system, linked to the municipal security system. Though electronic security systems are important to reduce theft, the attitude of the library staff to maintaining security is similarly important. The study found that the security systems especially the security personnel, were not effective, because books were stolen, in spite of having security staff and a security system in place. The building has two access points, the front entrance used by everyone and a back entrance used mainly by staff. The back entrance is not manned by security staff, nor does it have an electronic security system. The other concern was that approximately 12 members of staff have keys to enter the building, making it difficult to tell when various employees accessed the building.

### *Condition and care of materials in general*

In any archival or library institution a holdings survey is done to discover possible preservation problems. It is clear that this had not been done at the Msunduzi Municipal Library. The study confirms that

materials had been affected by damage caused by water, mould, insects, light, poor handling, vandalism and acidity.

Five respondents (38.5%) indicated that the general condition of materials was average, four respondents (30.8%) said it was good, one respondent (7.7%) said it was very good and another respondent (7.7%) stated that the condition was very poor. The study revealed that the condition of books and periodicals was average, but the condition of most newspapers was very poor.

When respondents were asked to rank priorities for improving the management of the legal deposit collection, 'preservation/ conservation of collections' was ranked third (see Table 16) and was therefore among the top priorities. The present study has revealed that there is an urgent need to reformat newspapers and transfer them to another medium in order to preserve them, because binding, boxing and filing does not seem to be a suitable option for their preservation.

#### *Level of skills and knowledge in preservation management*

The ability to carry out, and knowledge of, preservation are crucial in order to carry out preservation. Preservation advocacy is a key part of protecting collections by involving and convincing staff to think about how their actions affect the collections (Drewes 2006; Feather and Eden 1997:19). The study found that none of the staff at the library had any training in preservation management. The cross-tabulation (Table 3) of age and education reveals that the five respondents who answered the questionnaire had university education and are in the age categories of 31-40 and 41-50. The majority of these respondents studied their library science degrees approximately 20 years ago, when institutions in South Africa did not include preservation management in the curriculum.

**Table 3: Crosstabulation of age of respondents and education of respondents (N=13)**

| Age of respondents | Education of respondents |           |            |              | Other education of respondents |                          | Row total | %    |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------|
|                    | High school              | Technikon | University | Non-response | College                        | Teacher training college |           |      |
| 31-40              | 0                        | 1         | 2          | 1            | 1                              | 0                        | 5         | 38.5 |
| 41-50              | 3                        | 0         | 3          | 0            | 0                              | 0                        | 6         | 46.1 |
| Over 60            | 0                        | 0         | 0          | 0            | 0                              | 1                        | 1         | 7.7  |
| Non response       | 0                        | 0         | 0          | 1            | 0                              | 0                        | 1         | 7.7  |
| Column Total       | 3                        | 1         | 5          | 2            | 1                              | 1                        | 13        | 100  |
| %                  | 23.1                     | 7.7       | 38.5       | 15.4         | 7.7                            | 7.7                      | 100       |      |

*Column totals in Table 3 do not necessarily add up to exactly 100% because percentages have been rounded off to one decimal place.*

#### *Access to information*

The Legal Deposit Act No. 54 of 1997 of South Africa specifies and states that the public has a right to access the legal deposit collection. Access to the legal deposit collections is affected by whether or not publishers and individuals deposit materials, the materials are properly preserved, the order of storage arrangements for the materials and finding aids to locate the materials and different pieces of legislation. In South Africa, the different pieces of legislation include the Bill of Rights, that grants people access to information.

The study found that all materials at the Msunduzi Municipal Library were open to use. Lack of finding aids made it difficult to locate various items especially the legal deposit books. In the past, the Msunduzi Library had a verbal agreement with the UKZN and all the legal deposit materials were described on the UKZN URICA catalogue. When UKZN library changed its software in 2006 from URICA to Sirsi it did not include Msunduzi Municipal Library materials. The Msunduzi Municipal Library managed to secure



funding from the Mellon Foundation to buy computers and Millennium library software and were experiencing a backlog of materials that needed to be re-input on to a computer system. The researcher was not able to find out the exact percentage of books waiting re-inputting. The respondents ranked 'process backlog of acquired collections' as second on the list of priorities for improving management of the legal deposit collection. Four respondents (30.8%) said one of the impediments to the use of legal deposit was not being able to physically locate the materials. Three respondents (23.1%) indicated that this was due to lack of the necessary equipment. Two (15.4%) said it was because of processing backlogs and one (7.7%) indicated this was due to a lack of finding aids, because materials had not been processed.

In general, other materials, including periodicals, newspapers and government publications, can be found using various methods. The newspapers and journals can be found using a card catalogue and government publications and maps can be found by using written indexes on the shelves; otherwise staff used the Dewey Decimal Classification 20 index to find materials. These systems are archaic and inadequate and are an impediment to accessing materials.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the findings of the study preservation of, and access to, the legal deposit materials at the Msunduzi Municipal Library requires urgent attention. All the role-players in preservation, including the government and policy-makers, need to step in quickly to prevent further loss and damage to this South African cultural heritage collection. As mentioned earlier, without preservation there will be no access, since access hinges on adequate preservation methods.

## **Recommendations**

The sixth objective was to make recommendations to the Msunduzi Municipal Library based on the findings of the study. These are:

- The study showed that it is important to preserve legal deposit materials properly, for present and future use. It is recommended that the library should develop a preservation policy to initiate and support preservation efforts, at all levels. The library

should incorporate preservation into their mission statement, to create a foundation for preservation. This strategy should be created to help meet the Msunduzi Municipal Library's specific needs to identify areas of concern, optimize all available resources towards preservation and establish goals for continual development, over time. The preservation policy could then be used to clearly define the preservation programme and to solicit an operational budget and additional funding for the library from the government and policy-makers.

- The study revealed that the stack rooms are not up to preservation standard. The stack rooms need to be upgraded to control the environment, to prolong the useful life of the materials, by protecting them from light, temperature, relative humidity and pests. All stacks require a HVAC system to help control the climate and keep it consistent for the preservation of materials and not for the comfort of the staff. The staff of the periodicals stack room should be provided with another work area, outside the stack room, to prevent the HVAC system being regularly changed for staff comfort. The environment of the stack rooms should be monitored constantly, using data loggers, thermo-hydrographs and similar instruments, or by using simple instruments such as thermometers or humidity strips that also provide useful information. This equipment needs to be bought and staff need to be trained how to use it and monitor the environment. The fluorescent lights should be covered with UV filters and staff should switch off the lights when the stacks are not being used. Natural light through the windows should be blocked out using UV filter film or even curtains, blinds or shades.
- The study revealed that the stack rooms were not generally clean. It revealed that the stack rooms had been infested with cockroaches, bookworms, spiders, fleas and dustmites. The stacks should be cleaned on a regular basis using a vacuum cleaner, which sucks up the dust rather than re-circulating it. Good house-keeping and maintenance of optimal storage conditions would help control the breeding of pests. Management needs to find out what chemicals were used to fumigate the library and stack rooms and whether or not they are harmful to the staff and the materials. The practice of using insect repellents such as naphthalene bricks, dry neem leaves and

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## Endnotes

1. The Msunduzi Municipal Library was officially re-named the Bessie Head Library on 12 July 2007.
2. The study was confined to paper-based materials although the Legal Deposit Act No. 54 of 1997 includes electronic and audiovisual materials.