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ACCESS AND USE OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS' (PICTORIAL) COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The main focus of the article is to analyze the accessibility and usage of the pictorial collection at National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ). The article defines the concepts of access and use of the pictorial collection and their applicability as historical sources of information in the archives. The pictorial unit has a mandate of selecting, preserving and making available images and prints for the public usage. Regulations at times impose a burden on archival services and prevent information from being as widely available to researchers as possible. This is contrary to the current trend and policy approaches to make public information more accessible. According to Forde (2000) "we have moved away from the concept of the archivist as the dragon at the gate repelling all attempts to access information in case the documents might be damaged". Use of archival collections should be granted to the public as without use the whole purpose of acquiring, preserving and providing access will be defeated.

Keywords

Access, National Archives of Zimbabwe, use of archives, pictorial collections

Context and background

It is important to note that the word photograph and picture will be used interchangeably. In the formative years photographs have not been viewed as important historical sources as only written records were regarded as archival and deserving of preservation. Some archivists designated them as "miscellaneous ephemera" or "memorabilia" and as such were given the last boxes in manuscript and archival collections. Photography started with the middle class in Europe so as to immortalize themselves in portraits as the upper class did with paintings.

Photography started as pictorial photography towards the end of the 19th century when photographers manipulated their negatives and prints in darkrooms to imitate contemporary painters and the result was known as pictorial photography. The resultant prints were like drawings, paintings, etchings or lithographs more than like photographs. This was developed so as to have photography accepted as art. In the 1920s and 1930s came straight photography which concentrated on the real world with as little alteration and manipulations as possible. The finished products were of high quality. It is vital to define the key terms at this point which are access, use and pictorial.

Lady Elizabeth Eastlake in 1857 described photography as "business which gives evidence of facts as minutely and impartially as only an unreasoning machine can give". It is elaborated further as sworn witness to everything presented in view and classified according to the archivist's knowledge and interpretation of any identifying information that accompanied the photograph (Ritzenthaler, Munoff & Long 1984).

It is important to note that photographs are not made as paintings and drawings which are a result of the skill and attitude of the person but are taken mechanically by a device. This notion has been used to convict that photographs are authentic and objective representations of reality as seen by the camera and by anyone present when the picture was taken."The camera does not lie" is a cliché derived from the notion above though not true, as clarity of image; composition

and point of view are determined by photographer. This led Szarkowski (1966) curator of photography at the New York Museum of Art to define photography as “a picture making process based on selection”. The above sentiments imply that the photographer can affect the message a photograph conveys.

Access and use

Access is defined as the right opportunity or means of finding, using or approaching documents and /or information. It is the authority to obtain information or to perform research using archival materials. According to Evans; “access is the availability of records or archives for consultation as a result of legal authorization and the existence of finding aids. Access is therefore the legal availability of information to researchers for the establishment of physical and intellectual control over the holdings of an archive. Physical control entails knowing how much material the archive contains, where it is and safely housed. Intellectual control is concerned with knowledge of the provenance, form and informational content of the record (Hinchey & McCausland 1995).

Access is referred to as the terms and conditions of availability of records or information maintained by an archive for examination and consultation by researchers (Hinchey & McCausland 1995). Access should be granted but it should be controlled to protect the documents as they are unique and irreplaceable. Legislative requirements and donor agreements should be upheld, information guarded from theft, damage and /or rearrangement

Repositories have a dual responsibility of preservation and use with a reasonable regard for their preservation weighing the demands of present day inquirers for their use against the demands of posterity for their preservation according to (Schellenberg 1956). On the other hand, (Bordin & Warner 1966) put emphasis on the obligation to provide access and echoes that libraries should never forget that their primary function is not the collection and preservation of artifacts as such but the service of the scholarship. The *Standards for Access to Research Materials in Archival and Manuscripts Repositories* (SAA 1976) also states that it’s the responsibility of archives to make available research materials in its possession to researchers on equal terms of access. An archive should also explicitly state its access policies in rules and regulations, research guides so as to aid users and promote uniform staff decisions regarding access.

Facilities to enable usage and access to information should be in place and they vary from archive to archive depending on nature of record and purpose of the operation. An access policy should be in black and white taking into consideration the nature of the information contained. It should include the clientele, confidentiality of information, protection of individual privacy, restrictions on information placed by depositors and levels of access.

Use of archives entails the broad and various reasons why researchers want to have information available to them. They use archives for scholarly work, exhibitions, biographies, publications, family histories and souvenering.

Archiving of the pictorial collection in Zimbabwe

NAZ is a Government department with a mandate of acquiring, preserving and providing access to records in whatever format. NAZ administers different formats of information i.e. records and archives, maps, prints, illustrations and pictures. The thrust of this paper is therefore the pictorial collection of NAZ which is a unit under the library section. The illustrations collection houses photographs relating to Zimbabwe both published and unpublished for permanent

preservation. It started as a collection of 343 prints and negatives illustrating the country's history from 1561 to 1924 collected for an exhibition in 1936 and it has grown to over 60 000 processed images and about 25 000 negatives.

The collection has been boosted by a number of notable acquisitions and materials coming from mainly albums, scrapbooks, diaries or individual prints donated or loaned for copying by members of the public. In most cases the collections are complete but if not efforts are made to fill these gaps. The Ministry of Information's Photographic Section deposits its non current negatives and pictures with our section. The section also has prints by the outstanding southern African painters of the last century and Thomas Baines, Edmund Caldwell and Alice Baulfour's artistic works in prints.

The pictorial collection is largely in black and white or sepia toning format as they are the preferred formats in terms of preservation of these unique archives for posterity if not digitized.

Access to the pictorial collection at NAZ

Orphan works

Orphan works are records and photographs that do not have useful data on authorship or ownership at the time of creation, are anonymous and have no signatures. The faint chance of finding the right owners vanishes. Orphan works are a huge problem in archives. Virtually every archive has at least one collection containing such works. This is a huge problem in nearly all archives as materials created by private individuals or defunct organizations is not accessible and caught in a loophole where no one can exploit it. At NAZ 35% of the photographs are orphan works and hinder accessibility and usage. Provisions should be made to access such photographs once reasonable efforts to trace the owner have failed. It is important to note that orphan works hamper research as access to unprocessed pictorial collections cannot be granted.

Copyright

Copyright is the exclusive right, granted by law to make and dispose of copies. It belongs to the creator of a work and passes to heirs unless it is sold or transferred to another party. Determining whether or not material is out of copyright is time consuming but necessary (Hinchey & McCausland 1968).

Access to NAZ pictorial collection is granted to all pictures with the exception of those covered by law or other restrictions that may contribute to the researchers' study. The copyright regulations at NAZ state that if a picture is 100 years old and has never been published copyright still exists. Section 7 of the copyright for librarians states that:

Photographs taken before the 1st of Jan 1967 are protected for 50 years from the taking of the negative, thus any taken before May 1923 are now in the public domain. Photographs taken after 1st Jan 1967 if unpublished are protected definitely (as in the case of unpublished manuscripts) if unpublished the period is 50 years from the date of the 1st publication.

Copyright regulations at NAZ pictorial collection results in us lagging behind in terms of making our holdings accessible to everyone in the digital world even if we complete our digitizing process. 10% of the collection at NAZ is affected by these restrictions and thus hampering research and use of the pictorial archives.

Current copyright legislation *was not* written in the digital age and whilst its format is neutral some of the provisions either do not map across to the digital environment or actively restrict usages that appear to archivist and users alike. The expectations of the users are that the digital and digitized records will be made available as widely as possible using modern methods such as the internet. Availability of records on physical record offices poses no copyright problems and provisions exist for the supply of copies.

The dangers of not modernising the law to allow use in the digital world is that users will disregard copyright law or that the material which could add value to researchers of all kinds will not be accessible. The law of copyright *has not* kept pace with change and now presents barriers to the development of the new services that the public desires. Copyright imposes an unnecessary heavy burden on archives. The requirement to obtain permission to use historical information in the knowledge that the majority of copyright holders will be untraceable is not effective. The purpose of copyright is to reward and protect creators. The public interest should be served and materials made available as freely as possible where such freedom causes no damage to the interest of the owners. Fear of copyright infringement, inability to trace rights owners get in the way of access and use of the pictorial heritage at NAZ.

Finding aids

Finding aids are produced by creators and archivist alike to provide access to information. They range from a general overview of the entire collection to descriptions of the individual collections up to specific material of interest within the items. Finding aids are signposts which lead the archivist and the researcher to the information that they are seeking about or from archives. They may include catalogs and guides that provide information about the holdings of a repository (Holbert 1977). In other words, finding aids encompass a range of descriptive media such as registers, guides, inventories and indexes that establish physical and intellectual control of the collections. Researchers should be able to find a great deal about the holdings through finding aids and not rely on the knowledge of the archivist. The most and important finding aids are accession registers, descriptive inventories, bridging aids, guides to holdings (concise guides), reports of holdings and indexes to descriptive inventories and concise guides. Even though NAZ has finding aids researchers cannot research on their own without the assistance of an archivist thus the aids are not comprehensive.

Special lists

Photographs present problems for access and retrieval for research purposes as their original titles if any will not be relevant to the researchers' enquiry. The indexes used for photographs are series description sheets and item lists for instance names of people, places and subjects. Special lists on photographs can also be used as finding aids. These are compiled lists about an organization, locality or individual for quick retrieval of information. Chronological lists are also finding aids that are used at NAZ pictorial collections to show key events in their chronological order.

Guides to holdings (concise guides)

These provide a general overview of the contents of the holdings for quick and easy reference. Entries are usually an abstract of the descriptive inventory. At NAZ there is a national guide to the pictorial collection which has all the subjects and classes that our collection is divided into for example mining, sport, entertainment, trade, religion, and infrastructural development etc.

This makes research easy and quick for researchers as they are led to the information they are seeking about or from the pictorial section. That makes access to the collection easier.

Accession registers

Registers are also finding aids used at NAZ pictorial collection to show identifying codes, date and summary of contents for the pictorial collection. They give a brief description of the photograph, where it comes from, name of the donor or transferring source.

Bridging aids

They bridge the gap between the researcher's need to find information about a person and an organization or event and the pictorial collection finding aids. The researcher should have knowledge of the names of the bodies, companies or individuals that were involved in their area of interest. Finding aids will then be used to locate the photographs under investigation and get to work easily using what they know. Bridging aids are therefore a collaborative effort between the archivist and the researcher to access information within a holding by linking social, political, economic functions of those involved in order to obtain information which relates to particular aspects.

Digitization

The system that operates at NAZ in terms of access of the collection is still largely manual though NAZ is in the process of digitizing its collection. A lack of resources to digitize and keep abreast with the ever changing technology cripples NAZ. The manual system hinders access and use of the collections hugely and as a result NAZ remains the preserver of heritage that is scarcely used due to anonymity is not marketed online. Canadian archives, for instance introduced (GOL) Government Online to initiate access of services online and school net to bring culture into the digital age. Access has also been provided through "standard for the common look and feel for the internet" to necessitate the overhaul of many departmental websites. Access is also provided through exhibitions and places on the National archives website and to the individual items through the index descriptive texts. The gallery of Canada promotes accessibility, knowledge and research of Canadian heritage by publishing via internet an extensive collection of historical photographs, artworks maps and illustrations fully researched and documented for authenticity. They are presented in a user friendly format to advance dissemination of materials and information pertaining to the heritage of Canada. Printed and digital reproductions of selected images and captions are also provided to the public online hence enhancing accessibility to heritage.

Access to information in a digitized format also leads to staff commitment as all staff will be eager to see their records made accessible to interested public through the internet. The institution once embarked on digitization of the pictorial collection but the information was lost due to computer viruses and technological obsolescence. The organization should have a proper backup strategy and a regularly updated antivirus system if the digitization program is to be a success. However proposals to have funds channelled towards re-launch of the digitization program are underway at NAZ pictorial section as proposals have since been send to the Government to assist us with this important exercise. Moreover, NAZ is working with the Ministry of Information and the Herald Office and they have offered to give NAZ their pictorial database in digital form and this is a positive stride towards digitization of NAZ collection. However, there is no written law which binds the Ministry of Information and Herald Office to deposit with NAZ which makes it difficult to make a follow-up.

Time frame for reproductions

Since NAZ system of reproductions is still manual access is hindered since negatives have to be retrieved from the repositories to get work to be done. The stipulated time frame for the reproductions of photographs is two weeks and therefore researchers have to wait for this period to get copies of photographs reproduced. This hinders access to the pictorial collections as the clientele that we get are foreigners who need these as souvenirs and will not be having time to wait for such a time frame. Moreover, the availability of water at NAZ also hinders reproductions as without water copies cannot be available. This defeats the purpose of marketing the existence of archives at NAZ. This issue also goes back to the same problem of not revising and amending rules and legislations now and again to keep trend with the archival world and competitors. The waiting period for getting copies of reproductions is not defensible since the staff at the studio does not have large volumes of work coming their way. The regulation has to be amended in this respect because trend shows that one person can do 30 photographs a day and yet there are three professionals to carry out reproductions. Without amendment of the regulations access continues to be hampered as professionals in this respect will continue to justify their time frame for reproductions due to the written regulation even when it is not practical in terms of workload.

Partnering

Partnering with other cultural institutions, corporate, non Governmental organizations and Government bodies is also a positive stride towards promoting access and use of archives. The NAZ has cordial relationships with the Culture Fund, Embassy of Spain, Embassy of Iran, the National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe (NAGZ) and the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) whereby it is funded or they partner in a bid to promote access and use of NAZ pictorial collection. In March 2010 NAZ had a joint exhibition with NAGZ and the Embassy of Spain which showcased 75 specially selected photographs from the people's socio-economic, cultural, political and historical events. The theme of the exhibition was *75@30: Moments from People's History*. This theme was derived from the 75 years of archival excellence that NAZ is celebrating in September 2010 whilst Zimbabweans at large celebrated 30 years of freedom on 18 April 2010. This exhibition was meant to boost access and use of NAZ pictorial collection and it surely did as NAZ received orders from the invited people. NAZ also partnered with NMMZ in celebrating their International Museums Day on 18 May 2010 at the Natural History Museum in Bulawayo. NAZ also exhibited at this event in a bid to market more than 75 years of history in images. Partnering in this instance was a signpost to leading researchers to the information that NAZ houses and thus improving access and use of the pictorial collection.

Galleries

Galleries at NAZ are also used as tools to accessing the pictorial collection at NAZ in the sense that researchers go on guided tours and view exhibitions. These exhibitions will be a mini showcase of the entire holdings and as a result some researchers will end up at the pictorial collection after having a feel of what NAZ has on offer after guided tours with the research officers. Access and use are therefore enabled through guided tours of the galleries and our liberation war huts that have the history of Zimbabwe in images and texts as well as artifacts. Our galleries also have framed prints by the famous and outstanding southern African painters of the last century and Thomas Baines and Edmund Caldwell's artistic works. Galleries are therefore important signposts to what NAZ offers to the nation. However the research section is not changing exhibitions regularly citing lack of resources as a scapegoat for their incompetency

and the last time the exhibition was changed was in 1996. This hinders access as researchers will opt for our competitors such as the National Art Gallery and the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe who thrive on getting the market to the people rather than wait for the market to come to the people.

Identity crisis

A lack of marketing of NAZ leads to an identity crisis for staff when compared to their competitors in the cultural sector of the economy. There are so many cases where staff are mistaken for the NGZ and the NMMZ as these “hinge on getting the product on the market rather than wait for the market to come to the product” as echoed by Mazikana (1990). It is high time that NAZ hinges on marketing the products that it has so as to match with its competitors. The website can be used to achieve this as well as Public Programmes such as radio and television shows, quiz debates in schools and even brochures can also be used as marketing tools in a bid to make archives and their holdings known otherwise we end up having the same researchers. (Mazikana:1990) Lack of marketing can lead to so many instances where decision makers fumble and search in vain for required information without knowing that the information is readily available in the archives. Research has it that in most cases archivist will be willing to take archives to the people but lack of funding is the major drawback as we have 10% retention on the sales that we make within the archives. However, we hope funds will be channelled towards the proposed brochures that were designed by NAZ Editor which we hope will go a long way in making us a known treasure. The Midlands Province also organized an outreach Programme for the month of June which carried the theme “Taking Archives to the People”. NAZ’s Oral History programmes are also a marketing tool.

Uses of pictorial collections at NAZ

Biographical and institutional studies have long been interests of historical research and photographs and illustrations have gained attention from researchers to supplement written texts. Photographs are accessed for their varied research reasons and evidence they carry as primary sources of information. Photographs are accessed for their documentary and historical values, photojournalism, interpretive exhibits, film making, publications and many other reasons to be discussed below.

Interpretive exhibitions

Interpretive exhibits have become the norm and replaced the open storage style of display. Photographs are used at large to showcase and present contexts in which artifacts were created or used. They can also replace artifacts which are not available or which cannot be put on display for varied reasons. In Zimbabwe, NAZ’s pictorial collection is used as showcases at events such as Anniversaries, Agricultural Shows, Zimbabwe International Trade Fair and Celebrations to mark important milestones in the Zimbabwean History. These photographs when properly mounted are a good public image for the nation and the custodians of the nation’s history in images. The exhibitions can be mounted at the repositories or at offsite locations for special occasions, for outreach projects, and own archival publications.

Scholarly and popular publications

Research has been marked by an increase in the use of photographs and illustrations to supplement written texts to visually attract and entice readers. The publications can be public books or in scholarly works such as dissertations and theses. It is the right of the archivist to

establish whether the photograph is out of copyright and make it accessible at the discretion of the Director. In all cases the Director of NAZ has all the powers to clear researchers or impose restrictions if deemed necessary. NAZ regulation also states that the researcher should acknowledge NAZ in all cases as the source of information. It is also a prerequisite to deposit a copy of the publication within a month of publication as stated in the Printed and Publications Act (PPA). NAZ has also published two pictorial histories of the country i.e. the Rhodesian Epic in 1966 which has since been replaced by the Zimbabwe Epic in 1982. These two publications concentrate on the history of the country from the past, growth of nationalism, struggle leading to independence and the Zimbabwean heritage. *The Zimbabwe Epic* was last researched and compiled by Mazikana and Johnstone in 1984. This is due to lack of resources, brain drainage, high staff turnover and lack of refresher courses let alone induction of new staff. This hinders access and use as without proper induction it is difficult to offer services to researchers.

Biographies and obituaries compilations

NAZ pictorial collection has been a major source of databases when compiling biographies and obituaries. The media usually relies on NAZ pictorial office for photographs that will be published at the passing on of individuals and legends. The Zimbabwean Hero's Acre compiles publications on fallen heroes using NAZ database. The pictorial sources will be used to complement written texts. These photographs are also used by the archivists at NAZ to compile their own lists of the fallen heroes who have contributed immensely to the liberation of the country. These pictures will have a brief obituary to accompany them. The obituaries will be manned on a board at the entrance of the archives so as to educate and disseminate national history. This is also viewed by students who visit the archives during their guided tours by the research officers. This information has also been used at exhibitions that the institution has taken part in to show the unique treasures that NAZ has among other cultural sectors. The editors and publishers also rely on the archives for photographs when compiling biographies for individuals and for publishing, creating and updating their existing databases among other reasons.

Documentary films

Documentary film makers use archival collections of still photographs in the preliminary stages of film making as they research subject and availability of visual images. Still photographs are also used by local and national television producers to take place of film footages when specific scenes cannot be located in the audiovisual archives. Still photographs are also used for artistic changes of pace or in a montage to illustrate. Short notices for newscast can be achieved faster using still images. Pictorial collection at NAZ is an important source for film makers in Zimbabwe to complement audiovisual archives which are hindered at times by technological obsolescence.

Photojournalism

The pictorial collection at NAZ is also widely accessed for use in newspapers and magazines and they vary widely in context and meaning. The photographs may depict discipline celebrities, events, individuals; sport etc. The media usually relies on NAZ office for Photojournalism. Zimbabwean Journalism fraternity relies on NAZ pictorial unit to shape and beef up their textual evidence in their serials.

Family histories

There is a high demand of pictures for use in tracing and keeping family histories and genealogy. These have gone a long way in assisting the public to know of their ancestral past. Use of pictures in this horizon is very important as some people grow up as orphans who have never known their parental history and if NAZ has these in their custody copies can be made upon payment of a fee. However, Copyright regulations still apply as it is not allowed to have the whole collection of an individual. A third of the entire collection can be taken by researchers for instance photographs of individuals; like Selous, C. J Rhodes, and Smith to mention but a few are in full sets and as such access is restricted. Family histories can be traced under the name of the individual and if there is nothing bridging aids can apply where the researcher is aware of the organizations the person has been part of or the towns they once lived in. This has proved fruitful to many researchers. It is important to note that 95% of the people who use pictures for tracing family histories are Whites and the Coloured populace in comparison to the 5 % of the blacks. Important to note is the fact that blacks who deposit their photographs are the prominent individuals in society in the socio-political, chieftainship business circles etc. This might also be attributed to the lack of public programmes at NAZ. Outreach programmes should really be taken seriously to educate people on the role of archives as legal custodians and preservers of information for posterity. In this HIV and AIDS world that we living in it will be essential to have a well documented family and nation's history in images as generations are fast succumbing to death.

Documentary sources

Photographs that show that something existed or that a particular event happened are called Documentary photographs. Photographs have been used to bring about social reforms in Zimbabwe in many aspects of the life of a nation through use of documentary photographs. Urban historians, planners and historic preservationists can also use pictures to restore buildings scheduled for historical preservation to their original appearance using photographs.

Comparative evaluations

Researchers have used pictorial collection at NAZ as research methodologies. Many historical sites in Zimbabwe have deteriorated or collapsed with time due to neglect or unawareness of their existence. Pictorial collections at NAZ have been consulted by archaeologists and anthropologists to restore sites to an existing original state using images. This has proved fruitful as some of the restorations that are done at heritage sites have used pictorial information from the archives. Moreover some heritage sites have been destroyed and preserved using pictures in case of developments taking place. Pictorial collections are also consulted by sociologists and ethnographers as analytical tools for studying societal values, patterns, attitudes and behaviours. Comparative evaluations of the ever dynamic culture will be drawn from pictures.

Educating

NAZ provides access to its pictorial collection in a bid to educate the public. Education is one major use of the pictorial collection at NAZ. Visitors who come to the pictorial collection will be educated of our holdings as they visually attract and entice researchers. The various subjects that photographs come in are in essence an educating tool for the nation as comparisons can be drawn easily using images. Some of the pictures in the collection have been used to educate on the varied subjects applicant to the nation.

Souveniering

Some NAZ clientele is not of Zimbabwean origin and would want copies of the photographs that our collection boasts of to take to their countries as testimonies of having passed through Zimbabwe. The popular subjects with researchers from abroad are early forms of transport, religion, mining, liberation war and the Thomas Baines, Edmund Caldwell and Alice Balfour prints. Old Africa maps on Prints are also part of the testimonies that visitors carry to their countries that they have visited the unique heritage centre in Zimbabwe. Visitors are also interested in taking home the Zimbabwe Epic which has the pictorial history of the country from the stone age up to independence. Souveniering is also a vital access tool as it markets NAZ existence as an important cultural heritage centre.

Access and use to the pictorial collection at NAZ can only be effective if staff is inducted, refresher courses carried out to boost staff morale and having a strong marketing policy which makes us known to the public. If this is effected access and use will be granted to all as without use the whole purpose of having archives is defeated.

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