

Development of Open Education Resources to Teach Oral History: Perspectives of a Sports Heritage-Engaged Scholarship Initiative in Gauteng, South Africa

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Abstract

Gaps exist in archival practices, and developments are in progress to decolonise and transform archives by supplementing existing archival collections with oral history accounts. This is a recent development in the archival field, requiring archivists and records managers to become aware of how oral history collections should be undertaken to preserve testimonies related to socio-economic, sociopolitical, and cultural events not yet captured by South African public archivists. An open educational resource (OER) was developed in 2022 as part of an engaged scholarship initiative to instruct archivists on oral history research techniques and how to apply research ethics when undertaking such projects. The research paradigm for this study was a postmodernist qualitative study. Action-based research was used in the research design. Action research is a flexible methodology uniquely suited to research and support change. It integrates social research with exploratory actions to promote development. Action research outcomes are both practical and theoretical. The knowledge it generates directly and continuously impacts the changing practices of the participants. Data from participants were collected through recorded project workshops and meetings. The content for the OER was developed from observing online videos showcasing oral history interviews, consulting literature on OER development, and discussions with archivists and heritage collectors at the South African National Film, Video and Sound Archives, the South African National Parks Board, and the Gauteng Provincial Archives. The OER was developed to enable collaboration to ensure that the oral narratives of postcolonial Africa, particularly post-apartheid South Africa, are not lost but

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captured by the public archives' services for the benefit of South Africans and other interested stakeholders.

Keywords: oral history; decolonising archives; open educational resources; ethics; archivists; transformation

Introduction and Background

This article highlights the importance of oral history in preserving indigenous knowledge and safeguarding cultural heritage, particularly concerning oral history projects undertaken by the Gauteng Provincial Archives relating to unsung sporting heroes. An open educational resource (OER) was developed to assist with training archivists and records managers in elements associated with the collection of oral histories. The purpose of this project's OERs is to democratise education and increase the accessibility of oral history resources to decolonise the national and provincial archives, establishments, and collections in South Africa.

Contextual Setting

In 2020, the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa (UNISA) started an archival transformation project at the Gauteng Provincial Archives in South Africa. The Gauteng Provincial Archives is one of the nine provincial archives in South Africa (Matshotshwane 2022). The Gauteng Provincial Archives repository was established in 2018; therefore, it is still a relatively new institution compared to other repositories in the country (Ngoepe et al. 2024). The repository is a modern facility with the amenities required to run effective records management and archival services in the province. Sadly, the records are governmental and colonial, with a very limited collection of communities that make up Gauteng (Ngoepe 2019). It is for this reason that the Department of Information Science, UNISA, and the Gauteng Provincial Archives collaborated to find means of getting more local accounts into the repository (Ngoepe et al. 2024). This aligns with the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act No. 43 of 1996 and the Gauteng Archives and Records Services Act No. 3 of 2013. These pieces of legislation mandate archival repositories to collect non-public records from society and preserve them for posterity, thus contributing to maintaining the nation's memory of various aspects of communal activities. The project embarked on collecting oral testimonies on sports heritage from all over Gauteng, with particular emphasis on "unsung sporting heroes." Oral history research and practice are not common in Gauteng, and therefore, the project's objectives focus on training in oral history methods and research. This was a joint exercise between the repository, the Department of Information Science, UNISA, and the communities of Gauteng. Funding for this project was partially provided by a grant from the National Research Foundation.

In 2021, the project was registered as an engaged scholarship project with the UNISA College of Human Sciences (Ngoepe et al. 2024). UNISA embraces engaged scholarship to serve communities through its expertise. The main aim is to develop

communities while also strengthening teaching, learning, and research. The set outcomes of the project were to strengthen research practice in oral history, seek local accounts from the communities, preserve the collection, and make it accessible to communities. Training archivists on oral history practices was one of the key activities for the project. The COVID-19 pandemic complicated community work; however, the project team could conduct online training sessions. As this was a development project, it was necessary to find ways to make the training material accessible to Gauteng archivists and other stakeholders involved in similar projects. In view of this, including open educational resources offered an opportunity to package the training material and make it accessible. This article outlines the project's experience in developing the OER, which may prove useful for similar projects engaged in community development.

Problem Statement

As contended by Foscarini (2013), records managers and archivists support record creators' past, present, and future accountability by ensuring an uninterrupted and uncorrupted transmission of their collective memory. Records managers, in particular, are responsible for establishing rules and best practices for creating, organising, using, accessing, destroying, and maintaining authentic and reliable records (Touray 2021). Such rules and best practices are embedded in corporate policies, procedures, training materials, available record-keeping systems and technologies (including records classification systems, retention plans, electronic documents, and records management systems), and the records themselves (in the form of metadata) (Foscarini 2013). Memory is linked to record-keeping. Therefore, societies need to keep records of events, transactions, stories, culture, heritage, etc., to ensure that societies now and in the future can remember essential aspects of their lives (Duranti, Eastwood, and MacNeil 2002). Because of South Africa's complicated past, many formerly marginalised communities in this country do not have records of their society's past stored in institutions, such as local libraries and archival institutions (Matshotshwane 2022). Therefore, various organisations, such as archival institutions, launched oral history initiatives to fill this gap (Ngoepe et al. 2024). However, few accounts of best practices linked to how to conduct oral history projects are available in South Africa, particularly for archival institutions. It was thus regarded as necessary to provide an OER to inform archivists and historians on the responsible practices for undertaking such projects and the ethics involved when interviewing participants.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- 1) Explain the pedagogical value of oral history.
- 2) Outline how OERs can play a role in decolonising archival heritage by including OERs related to oral history.

- 3) Identify steps to follow when developing an OER for teaching archivists and the importance of oral history.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is helpful in that it helps the researcher identify the fundamental concepts/constructs that require investigation to solve the identified research problem (Kivunja 2018; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). The constructs for this study were derived from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Recommendation on Open Education Resources (2019). The UNESCO Recommendation on OER highlights the importance of OERs in helping member states develop knowledge-inclusive societies that will achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (UNESCO 2019, 3). There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the United Nations identified as key problem areas that would require intensive efforts to overcome global challenges, such as illiteracy, information poverty, hunger, and others (UNESCO 2019).

OERs have proved to have the capacity to address the following SDGs: SDG 4—Quality Education; SDG 5—Gender Equality; SDG 9—Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; SDG 10—Reduce Inequalities within and between Countries; SDG 16—Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions; and SDG 17—Partnership for Goals (Ossiannilsson 2023). Referring to the study, the project goals are directly linked to addressing SDGs 4, 10, 16, and 17. Memory plays a critical role in the development of society; therefore, the empowerment of archivists through OERs contributes to shaping South Africa into a knowledge-inclusive society (Brown 2013; UNESCO 2019).

The UNESCO OER Recommendation (UNESCO 2019, 6) states that the following should be implemented to help the development of a sustainable OER framework worldwide:

- 1) Building the capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt, and redistribute OERs.
- 2) Developing supportive policies.
- 3) Encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OERs.
- 4) Nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OERs.
- 5) Facilitating international cooperation.

These recommendations are similar to the ethos of engaged scholarship at UNISA, which is one of the main pillars of this institution and is grounded in contributing to socio-economic development on the African continent. “This kind of scholarship is a catalyst for democracy, socio-economic and environmental change, enhanced social

accord and active citizenship, while simultaneously enriching scholarly modalities and increasing the social connectedness and responsiveness of the academy” (UNISA 2023).

The table below outlines the constructs derived from UNESCO’s Recommendation on OER and UNISA’s Engaged Scholarship Principles (UNISA 2023), in alignment with the study’s objectives:

Table 1: The conceptual framework for the study

Objectives of the study	Principles/ Recommendation	Constructs
The pedagogical value of oral history	UNESCO’s Recommendation on OER	Capacity building, Content creation, Content distribution, Content use, Cooperation, Inclusivity
OERs and transformation Planning, development, and implementation of OERs	UNISA’s Engaged Scholarship Principles	Knowledge mobilisation, Transformation, Collaboration, Social responsiveness

These constructs enabled the authors to map out the study’s objectives, which strived to highlight how OERs can contribute to societal change. UNESCO’s Recommendation on OER provides insightful guidelines to strengthen transformation strategies in South Africa further (Ossiannilsson 2023).

Literature Review

Understanding Oral History and Its Pedagogical Value

Oral history collects and preserves historical information through recorded interviews with individuals with personal knowledge or experiences related to specific events, periods or topics (Field 2012). The scholar further maintains that oral history interviews provide students with direct access to primary sources. Listening to individuals recount their experiences offers a unique and authentic perspective on historical events and social phenomena (Field 2012). Thompson and Bornat (2017) contend that first-hand engagement with primary sources can be a powerful learning experience. Oral history can be applied across various academic disciplines, making it a versatile pedagogical tool (Field 2012). In the context of information science, archives, and records management, it can be used to explore the creation, management, and preservation of oral history collections (Schellnack-Kelly 2022). Analysing oral history interviews encourages critical thinking skills (Thompson and Bornat 2017). Students can evaluate the credibility of narrators, consider the context of interviews, and assess the bias or subjectivity that may be present in oral history accounts (Thompson and Bornat 2017). Teaching oral history provides an opportunity to discuss ethical considerations related

to collecting, preserving, and sharing personal narratives (Schellnack-Kelly 2022). This includes topics such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the potential impact of oral history on narrators and their communities (Schellnack-Kelly 2022).

Engaging with oral history often involves researching relevant interviews, transcribing them, and analysing the content. This develops valuable research skills in academic and professional contexts (Field 2012). Furthermore, listening to oral history narratives can foster historical empathy, helping students connect on a personal level with the people and events of the past. This emotional engagement can make history more relatable and memorable (Thompson and Bornat 2017). Schellnack-Kelly (2022) contends that oral history introduces students to the concepts of archival management and preservation of audiovisual materials. They can learn about digitisation, metadata creation, and the challenges of preserving oral history collections (Tuomi 2013). By integrating oral history into teaching archival-related themes, it is possible to incorporate teaching related to creating, preserving, and managing audio recordings, transcripts, and related materials (B. Kotze, interview with authors at National Film, Video and Sound Archives, 10 May 2022). Oral history can be a dynamic and engaging pedagogical approach that enriches archives and records management modules and simultaneously aligns with research interests in archives and records management (B. Kotze, interview with authors at National Film, Video and Sound Archives, 10 May 2022).

Open Educational Resources in Education

By nature, OERs are freely available online, making essential learning materials accessible to a wider audience. This can be particularly valuable for students who may not have access to expensive textbooks or specialised resources (Tuomi 2013). Educators can tailor OERs to suit their specific teaching objectives. This flexibility allows instructors to select and adapt resources that align precisely with the content and learning outcomes of their archives courses (Conole 2012). OER repositories often contain materials created by educators and experts from various backgrounds (Tuomi 2013). This diversity of perspectives can enrich teaching archives, giving students a broader understanding of the field. OERs encourage collaboration among educators. Conole (2012) contends that collaboration may be with colleagues, both within the university and globally, to create and improve OER materials for archives courses. This sharing of resources fosters a sense of community and knowledge exchange. OER materials, as reiterated by D'Antoni (2009), can reach a global audience, allowing educators and students from around the world to access and contribute to resources related to archives management. This global perspective can enrich discussions and research in this field. This approach aligns with modern pedagogical practices and promotes accessibility and affordability in education (D'Antoni 2009).

According to Hylén (2006), there are many critical issues surrounding access, quality, and costs of information and knowledge over the internet and the provision of content and learning material. As it becomes more apparent that the growth of the internet offers real opportunities for improving access to and transfer of knowledge and information

from universities and colleges to a wide range of users, there is an urgent need to clarify these issues, with a particular focus on OER initiatives (Huyen 2006). There is also a need to define technical and legal frameworks and business models to sustain these initiatives. Although learning resources are often considered key intellectual property in a competitive higher education world, an increasing number of institutions and individuals are sharing their digital learning resources over the internet openly and for free as OERs (Huyen 2006).

There is the altruistic argument that sharing knowledge is good and in line with academic traditions, as pointed out by the open access movement. Openness is the breath of life for education and research. Resources created by educators and researchers should be open for anyone to use and reuse. Ultimately, this argument is supported by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2015), which declares every person's right to education (Huyen 2006).

Open Educational Resources as Part of Transformation Strategies

OERs are great tools for advocating transformation, as these tools can be easily adapted cost-effectively to address communities' different cultural and socio-economic needs (Clinton-Lisell et al. 2018). In addition, Bearman (2023) also explains that people find it easier to use OERs because these tools are designed to be accessible in a way that the resource is easy to obtain, use, understand, and appreciate (Bearman 2023).

Similarly, Ossiannilsson (2023) portrays the value of OERs in a changing society, specifically focusing on addressing SDGs. Furthermore, the UNESCO Recommendation on OER (2019) emphasises that the path towards becoming knowledge-inclusive societies can be hastened by implementing an effective OER strategy.

There have been numerous reports on the role of OERs in transforming education. For example, UNESCO (2022) reported on a workshop held for East and Southern African countries in September 2022 on implementing the OER Recommendation to transform education in these countries. Most existing accounts speak of the strides made through the development and implementation of OERs in education (Tlili et al. 2023); however, there is limited information on the use of OERs in community transformation projects, such as the archives project in this study.

Research Methodology

The research paradigm for this study was a postmodernist qualitative study. Postmodernism emphasises the importance of diverse perspectives and voices (Nesmith 2002; Schellnack-Kelly 2014, 25). This can be seen as appropriate in archives management, as it encourages the inclusion of marginalised voices and communities in archival collections (Schellnack-Kelly 2014, 25). This challenges traditional archival practices, which may have excluded certain narratives. The purpose of oral history in

South Africa is to decolonise the narratives preserved by colonial and apartheid dispensations (Schellnack-Kelly 2022).

Action-based research was used in the research design. Halecker (2015) contends that action research is a flexible methodology uniquely suited to research and support change. It integrates social research with exploratory action to promote development (Halecker 2015). Furthermore, this scholar contends that action-based research involves a systematic enquiry process in which researchers collaborate with practitioners or stakeholders to identify and address specific issues or problems in a real-world context. Action research outcomes are both practical and theoretical. Action-based research is particularly valuable in archives and records management, as it allows for the practical application of research findings to improve information systems, records management practices, and archival collections (Halecker 2015). The knowledge it generates directly and continuously impacts the changing practices of the participants. The action case study operates on an interface. It helps interpret a case study in depth through, for example, archival studies or interviews and making interventions (action) via, for example, observation or moderated workshops in past time (case study) and real-time (action) within the distinct environment (such as project, department) of the studied organisation (Halecker 2015). Action research is an interactive process of inquiry that balances problem-solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand the underlying causes and make future predictions about personal and organisational change (Sundarakani, Ajaykumar, and Gunasekaran 2021). In this instance, the project team worked in collaboration with archivists at the Gauteng Provincial Archives and the community to find a means of filling the gap at this local repository. As noted by these scholars, action research is practical and aimed at dealing with real-world problems and issues. After engaging with the archivists and select community members, it was apparent that training in oral history research techniques was necessary.

Information gathered through conversations at project workshops and discussions at project team meetings resulted in a subproject to develop OERs on how to run oral history projects. Content for the OER was developed through observing online videos showcasing oral history interviews on YouTube, consulting literature on OER development, and discussions with archivists and academics at UNISA and heritage collectors at the South African National Film, Video and Sound Archives, the South African National Parks Board, and the Gauteng Provincial Archives.

As mentioned earlier, the study was a subproject of a larger project that focused on transforming the Gauteng Provincial Archives to be more inclusive of historical accounts from formerly marginalised communities (Ngoepe et al. 2024). The project team of 21 individuals comprises various team members from the Department of Information Science, UNISA, the Gauteng Provincial Archives, and representatives from Gauteng communities. Two project team members (one of the authors and an administration assistant) were tasked with the development of OERs. Besides the

observations conducted at the project workshops implemented in 2021 and the literature review conducted during the development of the OER, the rest of the team was consulted during the monthly project meetings. Once the OER was completed, it was vetted by the Department of Information Science (UNISA), the Archives and Records Management teaching staff component, and the librarian in charge of the UNISA Institutional Repository before it was made available to the public.

The two-member task team applied thematic analysis to analyse the information gathered from the recorded workshops, conversations, and project meeting minutes to identify critical areas in which the archivists and community members required further training (Chevalier and Buckles 2019; Pickard 2013).

The first OER focused on empowering archivists from public archival repositories with oral history research skills. The next OER, still under development, will address advocacy strategies and how to raise awareness of collections from oral history projects in communities. The first OER was pivotal in empowering the Gauteng provincial archives to develop the “Unsung Sporting Heroes” collection.

Findings and Discussion

Williamson (2013, 190) outlines that action research is normally an approach in collaborative research projects that is educative, deals with individuals as members of social groups, is problem-focused, involves change intervention, aims at improvement and involvement, and involves a cyclic process in which research, action, and evaluation are interlinked and founded on a research relationship in which those involved are participants in the change process.

The project team comprises six academics and postgraduate students from UNISA, five archivists from the Gauteng Provincial Archives and 10 representatives from Gauteng communities. In addition, there is a smaller project steering committee comprising seven members. Monthly project meetings were held in 2022 to gauge the team’s progress. Meeting minutes, project plans, reports, and recordings are stored on a shared team site. In addition, a WhatsApp group was formed to keep up to date with community sports events, tracing individuals with accounts to share and participate in community events. At the end of the year in November 2022, the project team met to reflect, evaluate, and update the project’s strategic plan.

These discussions led to the awareness that:

- The Gauteng Provincial Archives did not have local content reflecting the lives of the Gauteng communities.
- The focus on starting with the inclusion of sports content was a collective decision, since sports are a phenomenon that all communities could relate to and participate in (past and present).

- Gauteng Provincial Archives staff and select community champions needed training in oral history research techniques and skills. Workshop attendance was insufficient; therefore, OER resources were seen as beneficial as they were asynchronous.
- The collection on “Unsung Sporting Heroes” would help the Gauteng Archives Repository raise awareness about the values of archives in Gauteng communities and beyond.

In 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the team carried out various online training sessions on oral history research techniques. In 2022, it was decided that OERs should be developed based on training content and other valuable information to allow archivists to engage with content. This cyclic process enabled the project team to identify pressing needs, train according to these needs, and implement data collection (oral history interviews). The team successfully developed one OER for conducting oral history projects; other OERs will follow based on advocacy and public programming. This article focuses on interventions through the development of OERs.

Incorporating OERs in Archival Transformation Projects

Caswell et al. (2018) describe archives as “houses of memory.” Public archival repositories allow individuals to relate to past events, transactions, or activities within a community. It further enables communities and archivists to think about and act on how future generations should remember their current actions or events. South Africa’s public archives, such as the Gauteng Provincial Archives, lack local records from previously marginalised communities, which could help citizens reflect on their past and how it affects the present (Ngoepe et al. 2024). Oral history has been identified as a means of tackling this problem in South Africa (Schellnack-Kelly 2022). However, Ngoepe (2019) highlights that most of these oral history projects focus on elite members of society and other political narratives linked to the liberation struggle. The transformation of the archival landscape in South Africa involves addressing multiple issues, ranging from content, infrastructure, skills, and expertise to legislation and policy matters. However, this study focused only on empowering archivists and interested stakeholders to transform the content of the Gauteng Provincial Repository.

Archival use in South Africa remains low (Manganye and Saurombe 2023), and one of the primary reasons for this is the lack of content (Ngoepe 2019). Other projects have featured oral history as a possible means of transforming global archival institutions (Ahmed 2018; Buchanan and Bastian 2015; Ngoepe et al. 2024). Although oral history has been identified as a solution, skill and technicality can become complicated (Klopfer 2001). Thus, training, education, mentorship, and benchmarking may be beneficial. Klopfer (2001) contends that oral history can occur through folkloric, historical, and community approaches. This project followed a community approach. The inclusion of an open educational resource gave the local archivists access to content that helped them sharpen their oral history skills.

As the archival landscape in South Africa strives to change, it is pertinent for archivists to understand and participate in oral history projects. Klopfer (2001) narrates how various archivists from developed countries visited South Africa's National Archives in the 2000s to support and share best practices. Though she lauded the efforts of these colleagues, she also argued for the necessity of South Africa developing its own contextualised approach to conducting oral history projects. The authors believe that this engaged scholarship project provides an excellent avenue for developing training content for local archivists (Ngoepe et al. 2024). Referring to the conceptual framework for the study, including OERs allows communities, archival repositories, and trainers to develop content appropriate for the Gauteng context. This aligns with UNESCO's Recommendation on OER and UNISA's engaged scholarship ethos, which seek to improve society (UNESCO 2019; UNISA 2023).

Development of the OER

Farrow et al. (2023) discuss how supported open learning can be critical in decolonisation and related processes; in their argument, OERs provide an opportunity to diversify curriculum and allow creators to incorporate a broader range of perspectives, voices, and knowledge systems from different cultures and regions of the world. There is an element of access and flexibility, where learners have the freedom to choose what, when, and how they learn, and traditional classroom settings or rigid schedules do not bind them.

The Gauteng Provincial Archives and the Gauteng communities they serve strongly desire to have a collection representing the people of Gauteng. Oral history research was the selected method to fill this gap identified when conducting records management appraisal projects. However, repository archivists were unfamiliar with this strategy. Despite workshop interventions, there was a need for resources that archivists could use as a reference when they implemented the strategy. Therefore, the academic team members developed resources in consultation with the archivists. After completion, the OER was hosted on the UNISA Institutional Repository. The OER was a valuable reference resource to empower archivists to transform their collections.

The following steps, outlined by D'Antoni (2009), were followed to create the OER for teaching oral history:

1) Define Learning Objectives

Clearly outline the learning objectives needing to be achieved through the OER. What specific skills, knowledge, or outcomes should students gain from the material?

The archivists were interested in learning more about how to start and run an oral history project. After conducting various workshops, it became clear that more resources were needed to help project team members enhance their oral history research skills. The learning objectives of the project's OER were to help archivists and other team members

understand oral history research, describe oral history collections, understand the significance of life stories, and develop oral history interviewing skills.

2) Select Content

Identify oral history interviews or excerpts that align with your learning objectives. Consider diverse topics, historical periods, and narrators to cater to different interests and perspectives.

This was very much an introductory resource to help archivists understand oral history research and what goes into planning such strategies. Short videos were included to elaborate on the oral history interviewing skills. It provides the necessary foundation for any oral history research project.

3) Create or Curate Resources

Create oral history interviews or curate existing ones depending on the anticipated goals. Ensure that the content selected is relevant, engaging, and legally permissible for educational use.

The resource was developed as a PowerPoint presentation, with content and visuals to aid learning. A recording accompanied the resource to help guide the archivists through the learning content.

4) Accessibility

Ensure that the OER is accessible to all students. Use accessible document formats and follow accessibility guidelines for multimedia elements.

PowerPoint made the resource more understandable and accessible to use, according to the consulted archivists and the UNISA academic team. The advantage of working with a higher education institution as a project partner was that the project team could host the OER on its repository and make it freely available. This is part of the ethos of UNISA's engaged scholarship, which aims to mobilise knowledge and uplift communities (UNISA 2023).

5) User-Friendly Platform

Choose a user-friendly platform to host the OER.

The UNISA Institutional Repository was used to upload this OER. Therefore, the resource is freely accessible to anyone interested in this content. Project team members from outside UNISA reported that they did not struggle to access the OER.

6) Engagement Strategies

Incorporate strategies for student engagement, such as discussion forums, peer review, or collaborative projects. Encourage active participation and interaction with the material.

Team members had access to the content throughout the project activities. The OER helped the select community members have a better grasp of what the work at hand would entail. The subsequent interactions led to the collection of over 50 accounts of different individuals and sporting codes for the “Unsung Sporting Heroes” collection (Ngoepe et al. 2024).

The team went beyond encouraging the use of the resource by project members and also shared details about this OER at seminars, webinars, and local and international conferences.

7) Community Building

Foster a sense of community among educators who use the OER. Encourage shared feedback, adaptations, and improvements to the materials.

The project team developed the first OER in 2022, and feedback from project team members, other archivists, and UNISA’s Department of Information Science colleagues was referred to in developing the second OER. This OER is still under development at the time of writing this article.

8) Continuous Updates

Commit to updating the OER periodically to ensure that it remains relevant and reflects the latest best practices in oral history.

Two team members led this subproject, and the delegation of these activities to the team ensured that these individuals were actively seeking means to improve and update the learning resources for the project. The project intends to develop more OERs, focusing on other important aspects of transforming archival collections. The team has an action project plan emphasising the need for relevant and up-to-date learning resources such as this OER.

9) Promotion and Sharing

Actively promote the OER within relevant academic communities, conferences, and OER repositories. Share it openly to maximise its reach and impact.

The project team has promoted the OER at the Gauteng Provincial Archives, at UNISA, and at local and international conferences. As an OER, the resource might have impacted archivists or other interested individuals beyond Gauteng. This article, in a way, could also encourage increased interest in using OERs in transformation projects.

These steps enabled the team to develop a resource that is simple and easy to comprehend. Furthermore, it is hosted in the UNISA Institutional Repository and is freely available. The OER can be accessed at the following link: <https://uir.UNISA.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/29430/Archivists%20and%20oral%20history.pdf?sequence=1>.

Referring to UNESCO's Recommendation on OER, the inclusivity and equitable quality of OERs are also essential. For example, a video or audio clip of high-definition quality could be difficult for people to access with a restrictive bandwidth allowance. These were some of the concerns that the team had to consider. UNESCO (2019) also highlights the importance of supportive policies and models.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Transformation in the South African landscape is not a new concept (Caswell et al. 2018; Ngoepe et al. 2024; Saurombe 2018), but the desired change seems to be happening very slowly. Collaborative efforts could be one way to speed up changes in this sector. The engaged scholarship project between the UNISA Department of Information Science and the Gauteng Provincial Archives has proved beneficial in training archivists, academic staff, and community members to conduct oral history projects to develop an inclusive archival collection. Training workshops and adding an OER proved helpful in equipping the local Gauteng archivists with the skills they needed to start a unique collection on "Unsung Sporting Heroes," a sports heritage collection about Gauteng.

This study followed an action research approach and outlined how OERs can make a difference in addressing various SDGs. This was further emphasised by UNESCO's Recommendation on OER (UNESCO 2019), which also helped outline the various concepts (conceptual framework) investigated in the study. Considering these observations, this study recommends the following:

- OERs should be considered valuable tools in archival transformation projects. As experienced in this study, the impact was not limited to archivists from Gauteng only, but archivists from other provinces in South Africa and beyond.
- There have been significant developments in using OERs in education institutions for teaching and learning activities; nonetheless, little is known about using OERs in community engagement projects, such as this project study. Perhaps there are other initiatives, but information about these efforts could be lacking. Therefore, knowledge mobilisation is critical; this could be done through seminars, webinars, conferences, short courses, etc.
- As per UNESCO's Recommendation on OER (UNESCO 2019), supportive policies and models could help ensure that the OERs that are developed are inclusive and equitable. Institutions of higher learning, such as UNISA, through

their engaged scholarship structures, could provide such support and improve the quality of OERs that are produced.

- The OER subproject was successful because of the leader of the subproject (one of the authors) and the entire team's involvement in producing a resource acceptable to the Gauteng archivists and community members. Therefore, action research is a good approach for transformation projects involving communities, as in this study.
- Although the OER was developed for local archivists, the content also proved valuable as an additional resource for students studying the Bachelor of Arts in Archives and Records Management in the Department of Information Science at UNISA. Therefore, the benefits were two-fold. Working on engaged scholarship projects aligned with study programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels also has a desirable impact.

Hopefully, this study will lead others to share more stories and successes in using OERs as part of their community transformation projects. Collaboration can lead to many benefits, including developing inclusive and quality OERs. OERs have opened doors to many educators and can also help empower archivists in South Africa with the necessary skills to continue transforming the archival landscape.

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