

Safeguarding National Heritage through Conservation of Oral History Collections at Bulawayo National Archives, Zimbabwe

Natalie V. Nhenga-Mugarisanwa
National University of Science and
Technology, Zimbabwe
vimbayimugarisanwa@gmail.com

Peterson Dewah
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3856-7921>
National University of Science and
Technology, Zimbabwe
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
peterson.dewah@nust.ac.zw/Dewah@ukzn.ac.za

Abstract

Oral history collections are vital assets that represent national heritage. While transcribed collections are kept in a proper archival repository at the Bulawayo National Archives, the audio-visual collections are kept unprocessed and unprotected in unsuitable housing such as cardboard boxes within the Principal Archivist's office. Storage conditions are not conducive and therefore, unbearable. The study, therefore, explored issues relating to how national heritage contained in oral history collections can be protected through conservation at the institution. In this regard, the study opted to employ the qualitative research methodology, using the case study research design. The informants were purposively sampled, while data were collected through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Questionnaires were administered to the chosen respondents through hand delivery. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews that lasted between 20–30 minutes. The Director's Annual Reports from 1990 to 2016 were analysed for the study. The findings of the study indicated that the Bulawayo National Archives captures and stores oral history in paper, cassettes, magnetic tape, and digital formats, and according to various subject areas; which include chieftaincy, minority groups, land question, religion and liberation wars. However, the institution does not have a conservation unit nor an Oral Historian in charge of the collections. In this regard, we recommend that the institution sets up a conservation unit to protect oral history collections, and facilitate the restoration of the already damaged and deteriorated oral history collections.

Keywords: audio-visual records; Bulawayo National Archives; conservation; oral history; oral historian



Introduction and Background

Oral history collections are a vital asset to the memory of a nation—hence they need to be safeguarded from any harm. As these records of both paper and sound nature are created, they, therefore, aid in capturing the voice of the nation. Materials held in national archival institutions are of immense academic, cultural and historical value—yet, due to challenges such as obsolete media, lack of compatible playback technology, the fact that departments have insufficient budgets to preserve the collection, the material remains inaccessible. UNESCO (2013) emphasises that in South Sudan the archive faces many challenges and thus, admits that there is rapid deterioration, due to bad conservation, the effect of the extreme climate and termites, as well as the absence of firm legislation, to mention some of the many obstacles. In facilitating the long-term protection of the documentation against further damage by physical, biological and chemical agents of deterioration, there is need for the process of conservation to be completed.

Oral history can be defined as the recording, preservation, and interpretation of historical information obtained through an interview, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker (Baylor University Institute 2016; University of Leicester n.d.). In this regard, University of Leicester (n.d.) further states that oral history may take the form of eye-witness evidence about the past, but can include folklore, myths, songs, and stories passed down over the years by word of mouth. Nevertheless, History Matters (2016) brings in its own definition to oral history as a term that is used to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past presented by culturally sanctioned tradition-bearers; to informal conversations about "the old days" among family members, neighbours or co-workers, as well as to printed compilations of stories told about past times and present experiences, and to recorded interviews with individuals deemed to have an important story to tell. Oral history can give a voice to individuals and groups who are sometimes marginalised in "conventional" histories, such as the working classes, women and ethnic minorities (University of Leicester n.d.). Thus, oral history can provide new information, alternative explanations, and different insights, which are potentially of enormous value (University of Leicester n.d.). Oral history can, therefore, be collected in the form of transcripts of planned interviews, audiotapes, as well as video tapes, which enable the efficient documentation of oral histories.

Oral history provides a fuller, more accurate picture of the past by augmenting the information provided by public records, statistical data, photographs, maps, letters, diaries, and other historical materials (Baylor University Institute 2016). Hence, in other words, it helps round out the story of the past. Oral history brings about several values in the sense that it helps a society to understand how individuals and communities experienced the forces of history, and that oral history teaches us what has changed and what has remained the same overtime (Baylor University Institute 2016). In turn, historical actors are given an opportunity to tell their own stories, in their own words,

and in the process, round out the story of the past (Walbert 2002). Oral history, therefore, is important to both families and society (Ainlay 1999). It, therefore, enables individuals to tell their own stories in their own words; and furthermore, creates new knowledge in instances where written records were not created at the time, or have been subsequently lost or destroyed (Anglia Ruskin University 2011). Oral history also has value in the sense that it records and facilitates the understanding of failures as well as successes of a nation (Anglia Ruskin University 2011). Bhebhe (2015) admits that oral history is employed as a tool to fill in the perceived gaps, which are part of the historical narrative of the nation of Zimbabwe.

Oral History in Archival Institutions

National heritage is an important part of a country's identity and thus, when a nation appreciates its heritage, it is more likely that this heritage will be sustained (Kamatula, Mnkeni-Saurombe, and Mosweru 2013). National Heritage Council (2012) commends the South African government, which has made strides in strengthening organisations, which focus on the preservation and management of archival records that build a collective memory, which in turn, serves all its citizens. The council further elaborates on how the sector has acknowledged the high risks of some of the historic material that serves as invaluable evidence of the country's liberation struggle. UNESCO (2013) reports that national heritage evidence is important in archival institutions set up by elaborating on the situation in South Sudan. Despite many self-inflicted wounds, resulting in the loss of valuable documentation, South Sudan still has a significant body of archival material spanning over 100 years for government to draw from in order to see what has worked in the past, what didn't work, and the reason things did not work. Hence, if there is no strong commitment to preserve, conserve and access the record of the past, these will be lost through neglect; and their significance as national heritage will vanish (UNESCO 2013).

Transcripts provide a verbatim guide to the audio recording, reflecting the actual words, speech, and thought patterns of the interviewee (Guilford College 2016). Transcripts may be reviewed by interviewees for the accuracy of place names and proper names, but otherwise they remain unedited, unless for clarifications in order to make the interview more accessible to researchers. Shopes (2012) explains that transcripts represent in print that which has been spoken and thus, has long been established as one of oral history's best practices. A transcript emphasises the contents of an interview, the new knowledge communicated by the narrator's words. Library of Congress (2009) asserts that a transcript or transcription is a word-for-word written copy of a taped interview.

While transcripts are extremely helpful and are always welcome with interviews, they are very time-consuming and are, therefore, not required (Library of Congress 2009). Bhebhe (2015) makes remarks on the challenges of transcribing oral history and posits

that the clearing of the backlog of recordings that need to be transcribed has proven to be elusive. He further mentions that transcribing is a labour-intensive process, and that the National Archives of Zimbabwe as a whole has few oral historians to cope with the work load. Bhebhe (2015) admits that failure to transcribe means that oral history collections will go to waste. Furthermore, he reports that if too much time elapses before the recordings are transcribed, some tapes will be affected by print-through, lack of rewinding and general neglect may mean that the recordings will deteriorate beyond transcription. Retrieval of audio-visual materials for either use or migration requires the use of compatible equipment such as playback equipment; and yet most of the audio-visual collections do not have playback equipment for microforms, tape and audiocassettes, reel to reel film, and gramophones records (Khayundi 2013).

Library of Congress (n.d.) avers that audio and videotape formats are both categorised under magnetic tape section. The organisation recommends that magnetic tape should be handled by the outer shell only, and also recommends that the spools should not be touched on the magnetic tape. Tadic (2001) observes that audio tapes are sound archival materials similar to videotapes. Hence both types of magnetic tape have a short lifespan and suffer from the same use and natural deterioration problems that affect all magnetic media (Tadic 2001). Bigourdan et al (2006) state that the generic term magnetic tape covers a wide variety of information-recording systems that have been developed to store sound, images, or data, in either analog or digital formats. That said, they further mention that a magnetic tape can be described by its structure, width, recording system, the nature of the information recorded, or its container.

Conservation of Transcribed Oral History Collections, Records and Magnetic Tape

Smithsonian Institution Archives (2016) posits that conservation is the application of focused attention and techniques to examine, document, treat, and conserve physical objects. Conservation ensures that records of enduring value are preserved for the benefit of present and future generations (National Archives of Mauritius 2016). As such, it is a prerequisite for an archival institution to have a preservation or conservation programme, where all the norms of preservation and conservation are put in place to control internal and external agents of deterioration of archival materials, and to retain records for as long as they are needed. National Archives of Mauritius (2016) lists some of the basic archival conservation techniques; which include encapsulation, fumigation, microfilming, photocopying, and photographing, among others. Conservation activities include bookbinding, book repairs, conservation treatment, emergency preparedness and response (National Library of South Africa 2012).

Videotapes should not be stored below 46° F temperatures as this will cause the lubrication to separate from the binder. Thus, the environmental recommendations for long-term storage should range from 50° F to 60° F (Library of Congress n.d.); Tadic

2001). To minimise the risk of developing problems, the ideal relative humidity for videotapes should be 30 per cent to 40 per cent (Tadic 2001; Wheeler 2002). Bigourdan et al (2006) aver that proper storage at a cool temperature and low relative humidity improves binder stability, but cannot solve the problem of information loss due to format obsolescence.

Conservation allows a tape to realise a full life by implementing proper maintenance, handling, and storage procedures (Wheeler 2002). Similarly, Library of Congress (n.d.) asserts that the packaging and storage containers, as well as the environment in which they are stored also helps in conserving videotapes. Tadic (2001) observes that in order to properly conserve such audiovisual or sound archival material, they need to be stored in an enclosed inert plastic polypropylene cans, and that all paper should be removed from inside containers. Archivists should thus, avoid storing the material in cardboard video home system (VHS) containers. Similarly, videotapes should be stored like books—either on their spines or on their edges. Thus, storing videos in an upright position helps to maintain a good tape pack to prevent increased deterioration (Tadic 2001).

Magnetic media should not be stored below 46° F temperatures—this will cause the lubrication to separate from the binder (Tadic 2001). Audiotapes should not be close to strong magnetic sources; namely motors, transformers, electrical fixtures, loudspeakers, vacuum cleaners, floor buffers, but should be stored in a cold and dry environment. Conservation strategies employed at macro level within an archival institution include minimal exposure to all kinds of light and strong magnetic fields. Storing the tapes further away from radiators, vents and sources of vibration lessens the chances of collections deteriorating rapidly (Library of Congress (n.d.)).

Contextual Setting of the Study

In the context of Zimbabwe, oral history collections are mainly captured and preserved within national archival institutions. The mandate of the institution is to acquire, preserve and provide public access to Zimbabwean documentation in any format. The National Archives of Zimbabwe has been documenting information since its establishment in 1935 (Pindula 2014). The Oral History section was established in 1969 to cater for the under documented and undocumented communities (Manungo 2012; Murambiwa et al., 2012). The main technique, used in a quest to preserve history was through oral interviews with various societies. Native administrators and Native Commissioners during the Rhodesian era were tasked to document tribal histories and chieftainships for ease of governance. Thus, all the audio recordings and written documents were deposited at the National Archives for safe keeping and future reference (Pindula 2014).

At the moment the National Archives of Zimbabwe still withholds audio recordings and written documents, but has, with the changes in technology worldwide, advanced to the

use of videotapes and digital recorders. In order to ensure that oral history collections exist and are captured and preserved nationwide, the department embarked on a campaign of recollecting the history of the Second Chimurenga countrywide (Pindula 2014). This was after Zimbabwe has realised that oral history collections were centrally captured and stored at the institution's headquarters in Harare prior to the campaign. Oral history interviews were done by oral historians, mostly from the University of Zimbabwe at the National Archives of Zimbabwe Head Office, Harare, as well as by archivists in the National Archives of Zimbabwe's Provincial Offices in Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Mutare and Chinhoyi (Pindula 2014). Oral history work in the country involves the collection of oral traditions, which is the information passed from one generation to another, as well as the recording of traditional rituals (Director's Annual Report 2016). Interviews are, therefore, recorded in English and in all local languages, including Shona and Ndebele. The interviews done by the Oral History unit covers a wide range of subjects, which include culture, chieftainships, early pioneer settlers, education, economics, the liberation struggle, politics and urban growth (Director's Annual Report 2016).

Manungo (2012) observes that the Bulawayo office of the National Archives of Zimbabwe started oral interviews in 1981 with people in Matabeleland covering issues of the liberation war and the ordinary history of the Ndebele nation. Bulawayo National Archives as one of the provincial offices under the National Archives of Zimbabwe started its full operations in keeping archival documentation in 2001. In so doing, they embarked on the safekeeping of oral history documentation, following the national campaign on recollecting oral history. The main interest was, therefore, to compliment the written document of the liberation struggle. Their main target in so doing was to capture the silent voices of the minority in Zimbabwe – for instance, the institution captured the culture of the Kalanga in Plumtree. Oral history material is considered a vital asset by the institution as a whole in Zimbabwe. Hence, as any other record stored, oral history material can easily be damaged through its frequent or even no frequent use within the institution. The National Archives of Zimbabwe established a conservation unit within the institution. The purpose of establishing the unit was to restore documents to usable state, and repair documents, which would have been affected by physical, biological or chemical agents, or the combined effects of these (Pindula 2014). However, provincial offices, in particular, Bulawayo, have not yet established this technical section; perhaps due to the costs associated with procuring the conservation equipment.

The National Archives of Zimbabwe, in its strategic plan, set a goal to improve the preservation of the national heritage from 25 per cent to 30 per cent, with the objective to curb the deterioration and loss of archival records (Murambiwa 2013). Hence, efforts were made to conserve oral history collections by transferring damaged documentation to the institution's headquarters in Harare for repairs. However, these were not adequate, as they leave a gap within the Bulawayo National Archives, in terms of the valuable

information the damaged collections entail. These efforts were also rendered ineffective by the fact that there is no dedicated conservation unit within the Bulawayo National Archives to repair documentation and safeguard the national heritage in the process. What adds to the dilemma is that the institution does not have a reference document—(that is a policy) that guides the implementation and preservation of damaged records. In this regard, several factors; such as mishandling of documentation by staff members, exposure to sunlight and heat, humidity, termite accumulation, and dust particles lead to the rapid deterioration of the collections.

The Bulawayo National Archives was established towards the end of 1966 to manage the records of the Matabeleland region. The records centre operated from the Tredgold Building and other rented buildings in the City Centre. The institution was run by Major S.D. Berry from the end of 1966 until 1980 when he retired. Afterwards Mr M. Ncube took over as Head of the institution in 1982—that is when he started the Oral History programme in Bulawayo (Director’s Annual Report 2016). The purposefully-constructed building for Bulawayo records and archives was constructed in 1992 along Harare road in Khumalo North suburb. The building was finally completed in 2001 and has public archives section, records centre, library section, reading room and a mini gallery, which consists of a photographic exhibition. The institution was formerly launched and opened to the public in 2001, and was, therefore, called the National Archives of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo (Director’s Annual Report 2016). It was built with the sole aim of storing records for permanent preservation. As such, the building has been designed to have preservation tools; such as dust suckers, fire monitors and sprinklers to regulate and detect the causes of records destruction, such as fire and dust. The building also has tinted windows with blinds to mitigate ultra-violet radiation—an indication that the building is specifically designed to cater for the safekeeping of records in any format. The institution, therefore, houses records from government departments in paper format, as well as oral history collections captured in different formats, including videotapes. Oral history collections are a vital asset, as they represent documentary heritage and thus, need to be conserved and preserved in order to safeguard them from deteriorating.

Statement of the Problem

Research has revealed that the majority of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have inefficient or no preservation programmes for materials stored on electronic media (Khayundi 2013). Oral history collections at the Bulawayo National Archives (BNA) are at a high risk of deteriorating and getting lost for good, because of the rapid accumulation of dust, which affects the quality of the stored material, and the damaged rooftop (Muchetu 2016). Audiotapes and videotapes are kept unprocessed and unprotected in the archivist’s office in unsuitable conditions, and are exposed to sunlight and heat, humidity and dust particles. The archival institution does not have a fully functional conservation unit to ensure the protection of these vital assets through

restoration in case they deteriorate to unusable state, for future use. Rapid accumulation of chemical and physical agents speeds up the deterioration, which in turn, compromises national heritage within oral history collections (UNESCO 2013). By right, oral history collections are supposed to be stored in archival repositories, which would ensure their longevity and preservation. These rooms have temperature and humidity controls in place. The study, therefore, sought to explore issues related to how national heritage in oral history collections is protected through conservation at the Bulawayo National Archives.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the types of oral history collections captured and stored at the Bulawayo National Archives?
2. What methods are used to ensure the longevity of the oral history collections?
3. What measures have been taken so far to ensure that national heritage is protected for future generations, and is not lost for good, at the Bulawayo National Archives?
4. Does the Bulawayo National Archives have an Oral Historian who specialises in conserving oral history collections?

Research Methodology

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to gather rich and comprehensive data for comprehensive assessment and interpretations. Data were collected using questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Research interviews ensured that participants shared unique forms of experience and expression, which would not have been possible through other related methods. As part of data collection through document analysis, 26 Director's Annual Reports of the National Archives, from 1990 to 2016, were analysed. The focus of the analysis was the oral history unit, conservation unit, as well as the audio-visual unit. The analysis gave a voice and meaning to the topic in relation to the conservation of oral history to protect the national heritage. Due to time constraints, the scope of the study was the Bulawayo National Archives, and targeted only employees at the Bulawayo National Archives, purposively sampling the Chief Archivist and Principal Archivist, the Oral Historian and the Archivist in the conservation unit. The participants were perceived as professionals who could easily cope with the demands and requirements of the questions that the researchers posed, in respects of how the conservation of oral history collections enables the protection of the national heritage evidence from fading or getting lost. This made it possible for the researchers to identify and gather information to establish how national heritage evidence was safeguarded within oral history documentation.

Characteristics of Respondents

The study participants included the Chief Archivist and the Principal Archivist of the Bulawayo National Archives. Both respondents were asked questions pertaining to the section or department in which they worked, as well as the number of years they have worked in their respective sections or departments, as well as their highest qualifications in order for the researchers to attain the biographical data of the study participants. At the onset of the interview, the Chief Archivist revealed that he was the overall Head in charge of the archival institution and that he possessed a Master's degree in Library and Information Science, and have been with the institution for 15 years. On the other hand, the Principal Archivist revealed that "I am currently in charge of the public archives section within the archival institution and I hold a degree in History and hence have been with the Bulawayo National Archives for eight years."

The above information, which the study participants provided, revealed that the selected informants were highly qualified, and thus specialised in the management of documentary heritage for posterity.

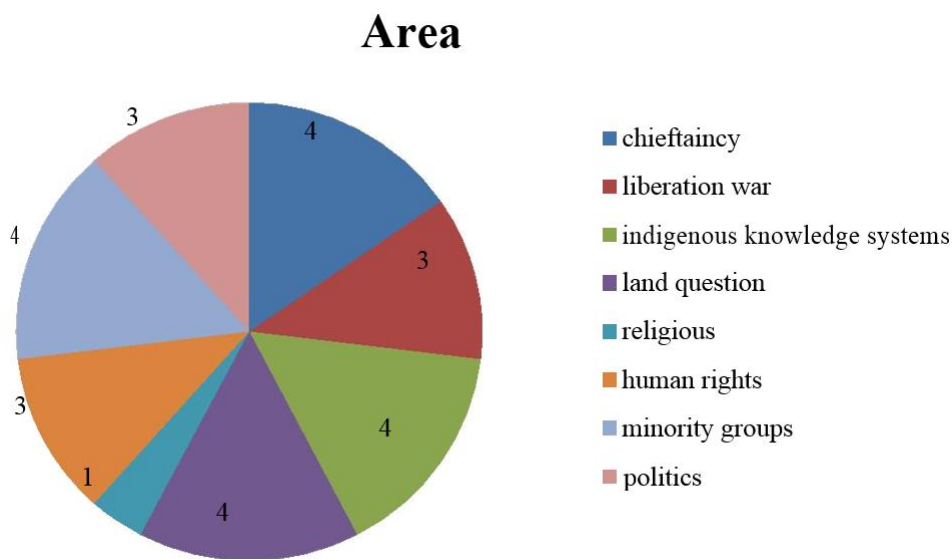


Figure 1: Categorization of areas in which oral history interviews are conducted

The Findings

Types of Oral History Collections Stored at the Bulawayo National Archives

The first objective of the study was to establish the subject areas in which oral history interviews would be conducted. Interviews revealed that the most researched subjects in oral history included chieftaincy, liberation war, land question, indigenous knowledge, genealogy, and human rights.

Figure 1 shows the various subject areas in which oral history is conducted at the Bulawayo National Archives. Of the 26 reports covering the years 1990 to 2016, 4 (15%) reports revealed that the most common subject areas researched were chieftaincy, indigenous knowledge systems, land question, and minority groups. Liberation war, politics, and human rights each appeared in three (12%) of the reports. Only one (4%) report covered religion as a subject area. In this regard, this shows that the archival institution sought to cover subjects of interests to the nation. The collections consist of memories and personal commentaries of historical significance, gathered through recorded interviews in audio or video format (Oral History Association 2017).

Oral history records at the Bulawayo National Archives are available in paper, magnetic tape and digital formats. Table 1 shows the formats in which oral history records are stored at the Bulawayo National Archives.

Table 1: Formats and the specific types of oral history

Format	Specific type	Number	Percentage (%)
Paper	Transcripts	120	67
Magnetic tape	Audiotapes	24	13
	Videotapes	20	11
Digital	Compact discs (CDs)	7	4
	Digital voice recorders	2	1
	Digital versatile discs (DVDs)	7	4
Total number		180	100

From the questionnaires distributed and documents analysed, the researchers established that oral history collections at the Bulawayo National Archives are captured and stored in three formats; namely paper, magnetic tape, and digital format, totaling 180 formats. Transcripts made up 120 (67%) of the total number of formats, audiotapes 24 (13%) and videotapes 20 (11%). Digital formats constituted the remaining 16 (9%) formats. Records that made up the oral history collections included transcripts, tapes and a comprehensive index to most of the interviews (Australian National University n.d.). During the interview, the Principal Archivist revealed that “Oral history collections are captured and stored in the form of tapes which include audiotapes,

videotapes, CDs, DVDs, transcripts as well as digital voice recorders.” The Chief Archivist also gave a similar response, and thus stated that “The Bulawayo National Archives captures and stored documentary heritage in formats which include transcripts, magnetic tape, CDs and DVDs.”

Methods used to Ensure Longevity of Oral History Collections

Another objective of the study was to establish the methods used to ensure longevity of the collections. In this regard, further investigations were conducted to find out whether the area is ideal for the storage of oral history collections. Respondents were asked about the area in which oral history collections were stored. The Principal Archivist revealed that:

Transcripts are stored in archival repositories where all other official documentation is kept and I am currently in charge of the collections. However due to lack of cold rooms which are suitable for audiovisual material, all other formats are currently being stored unprocessed in a cardboard box in my office. Some of the magnetic tape formats are in the process of being transcribed and this is being used as a measure to ensure information is not lost for good.

He further stated that:

The area in which transcripts are stored is safe and secure and has the proper conditions for the management of paper. However, the area in which audiotapes, videotapes as well as digital voice recorders are stored is not ideal for such formats.

NEDCC (2016) reveals that magnetic tape is sensitive; therefore, it should be stored in cold rooms to prevent deterioration. Cold rooms constitute the ideal storage with ideal temperatures and humidity levels, as opposed to where the magnetic tapes are currently being stored at the Bulawayo National Archives, as established by this study.

Measures taken to Protect Oral History Collections

Respondents were asked about measures taken to ensure that the national heritage is preserved for future generations, and that they are not lost for good at the Bulawayo National Archives. The Chief Archivist revealed that:

It is important to conserve oral history collections in order securing that national heritage is not lost for good. Oral history collections are not so much different from the official government archival collections hence are considered very important to fulfill the mandate of the archival institution in document. Thus, they should be closely monitored in case of rapid deterioration and thus restored to usable state.

The response of the Principal Archivist to the same question was, “Oral history is a vital asset hence it represents national heritage.” In so doing, the Bulawayo National

Archives considers the conservation of oral history collections important as a measure implemented to protect national heritage.

Afterwards, respondents were asked about the techniques and practices they used to restore oral history collections. In response, the Principal Archivist revealed that “The Bulawayo National Archives only mends transcripts in paper format. Hence other processes are carried out at the Head Office in Harare.” He further mentioned that:

The institution faces the following challenges: lack of funding to source equipment for the restoration of deteriorated documents; lack of storage for soft copies of oral history captured in digital voice recorders and, last but not least, lack of professional expertise to restore and effect proper conservation on oral history collections.

The same question was directed at the Chief Archivist, who revealed that:

Oral history collections when they deteriorate, we as an institution send them for repairs to the Head Office in Harare. This is where all processes of water bathing, splicing, sewing, de-acidification and tissing are done to restore deteriorated material in all formats.”

He further revealed that “Oral history cannot be restored on site because of the absence of a conservation unit that caters for the documentation, especially audiovisual material.

The National Archives of Mauritius (2016) and the National Library of South Africa (2012) affirm the techniques used in conservation, which include encapsulation, fumigation, photocopying, microfilming, photography and bookbinding, conservation treatment and emergency preparedness, as well as response, respectively. However, data gathered through interviews revealed that the Bulawayo National Archives is lagging behind in as far as the use of techniques such as encapsulation, photography, and microfilming to conserve oral history collections is concerned.

The Presence of Oral Historian and Conservator at the Bulawayo National Archives

Respondents were asked whether the Bulawayo National Archives had an oral historian who specialised in conserving oral history collections. The Principal Archivist indicated that “I oversee the public archives section that holds all archival material including oral history collections transcribed to paper format.” The Chief Archivist indicated that:

At present moment we do not have both an Oral historian and Conservator to aid in the restoration and upkeep of oral history documentation. Hence the Principal archivist is in charge as he has the general knowledge pertaining to the collections

Conclusions and Recommendations

This article is based on the study that aimed to investigate the safeguarding of the national heritage, through the conservation of oral history collections at the Bulawayo National Archives, Zimbabwe. The study sought to address the following research questions:

- What oral history collections are captured and stored at the Bulawayo National Archives?
- What methods are used to ensure the longevity of the oral history collections?
- What measures have been taken so far to ensure that national heritage is preserved for future generations, and that it is not lost for good at the Bulawayo National Archives?
- Does the Bulawayo National Archives have an oral historian specialising in conserving oral history collections?

The study revealed that the most researched subjects in oral history by the Bulawayo National Archives included chieftainship, minority groups, indigenous knowledge systems, the land question, followed by research in subject areas that concern themselves with liberation wars, politics and human rights, and religion. The findings of the study also revealed that the BNA O-H collections are under threat due to a number of factors that included:

- Lack of funding to source equipment for the restoration of damaged and deteriorated documents;
- Not so conducive storage facilities for oral interviews (oral history) captured in digital voice recorders;
- Lack of qualified skilled manpower to restore and effect proper conservation on oral history collections, and that
- O-H that is captured and stored in paper, digital and magnetic media at BNA is under threat of disappearing for good.

In view of the findings and conclusions, we recommended that:

- BNA should capture and store O-H by keeping abreast with changing technologies, conservation techniques and practices to prevent the deterioration of material;
- BNA research should cover a wider range of themes and subject areas. Emphasis should be on a wider range of subject areas that would increase the amount of documentary heritage for future generations to refer to;

- BNA should seek assistance from donors to source advanced conservation equipment, set up cold rooms and a conservation unit to enable longevity and restoration of audiovisual and paper-based O-H material;
- BNA must have an oral historian cum conservationist to ensure the effective restoration of oral history collections into usable state, and fully implement policies regarding the management of oral history at BNA; and
- A study should be conducted on the conservation of oral history collections in all NAZ provincial centres.

References

- Ainly, T. J. 1999. "Why is Oral History Important?" Accessed January 25, 2017. <http://www.lchr.org/a/15/jn/history0.html>.
- Anglia Ruskin University. 2011. "Value of Oral History." Accessed January 25, 2017. http://web.anglia.ac.uk/onet/faculties/alss/miners_strike/oral_history.phtml.
- Australian National University. (n.d.). "Oral History Project." Accessed January 25, 2017. <http://archives.anu.edu.au/collections/university-archives/types-records/oral-history-project>.
- Baylor University Institute. 2016. "Introduction to Oral History." Accessed January 28, 2017. <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/43912.pdf>.
- Bhebe, S. 2015. "Overview of the Oral History Programme at the National Archives of Zimbabwe: Implications for Nation Building and Social Cohesion." *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 3(1): 43–56. <https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/343>.
- Bigourdan, J. L., James, M. R, Santoro, K. and Salesin, G. 2006. "The Preservation of Magnetic Tape Collections: A Perspective." Accessed March 9, 2017. https://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/webfm_send/303.
- Director's Annual Report. 2016. "Oral History Programme." Accessed March 8, 2017. <http://www.archives.gov.zw/index.php/sections/technical/oral-history-programme>.
- Guilford College. 2016. "Oral History Best Practices and Procedures." Accessed March 9, 2017. <http://library.guilford.edu/oralhistory>.
- History Matters. 2016. "What is Oral History?" Accessed March 7, 2017. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/what.html>.
- Kamatula, G. A., Mnkeni-Saurombe, N. and Mosweu, O. 2013. "The Role of Archives in the Promotion of Documentary National Heritage in Tanzania, South Africa and Botswana." Accessed March 9, 2017. <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/esarjo/article/view/95577>.

- Khayundi F. E. 2013. “The Preservation of and Access to Audiovisual Archives in the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre at the University of Fort Hare: Challenges and Prospects.” Paper presented at an Archival Conference on Archives and Records Management Continuity in sub-Saharan Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban, Howard College, 10–12 July.
- Library of Congress. 2009. “Indexing and Transcribing Your Interviews.” Accessed March 9, 2017. <http://www.loc.gov/vets/transcribe.html>.
- Library of Congress (n.d.). “Care, Handling, and Storage of Audio Visual Materials.” Accessed March 7, 2017. <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/record.html>.
- Manungo, K. D. 2012. “Oral history as Captured by the National Archives of Zimbabwe over the Years.” In *National Archives 75@30: 75 Years of Archiving Excellence at the National Archives of Zimbabwe*, edited by P. Ngulube, 64–67. Harare: National Archives of Zimbabwe.
- Muchetu, R. 2016. “Zimbabwe National Archives (Byo) Vital Documents under Threat.” *Sunday News*, 6–12, 2016, p. 3.
- Murambiwa, I. M., Ngulube, P. Masuku, M. and Sigauke, D. T. 2012. “Archival Development in Zimbabwe 1935–2010: Setting the Scence.” In *National Archives 75@30: 75 Years of Archiving Excellence at the National Archives of Zimbabwe*, edited by P. Ngulube, 1–20. Harare: National Archives of Zimbabwe.
- Murambiwa, I. 2013. “National Archives of Zimbabwe: Director’s Annual Report.” Accessed October 26, 2016. http://www.pindula.co.zw/National_Archives_of_Zimbabwe.
- National Archives of Mauritius. 2016. “Conservation.” Accessed March 7, 2017. <http://nationalarchives.govmu.org/NationalArchivesServices/conservation.do>.
- National Heritage Council. 2012. “International Conference in East London 31/10/12 - 02/11/12.” Accessed March 9, 2017. http://www.heritagesa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=308:nhc&catid=2: news&Itemid=9.
- National Library of South Africa. 2012. “Preservation and Conservation.” Accessed March 8, 2017. <http://www.nlsa.ac.za/index.php/preservation-and-conservation>.
- North East Document Conservation Centre (NEDCC). 2016. “Conservation Procedures: 7.5 Conservation Treatments for Works of Art and Unbound Artifacts on Paper.” Accessed January 28, 2017. <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/7.-conservation-procedures/7.5-conservation-treatment-for-works-of-art-and-unbound-artifacts-on-paper>.

- Oral History Association. 2017. "Oral History: Defined." Accessed January 28, 2017.
<http://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/>.
- Pindula. 2014. "National Archives of Zimbabwe: Conservation." Accessed October 21, 2016.
http://www.pindula.co.zw/National_Archives_of_Zimbabwe.
- Shopes, L. 2012. "Transcribing Oral History in the Digital Age." Accessed March 8, 2017.
<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/transcribing-oral-history-in-the-digital-age/>.
- Smithsonian Institution Archives. 2016. "Conservation." Accessed March 8, 2017.
<https://siarchives.si.edu/services/conservation>.
- Tadic, L. 2001. "Recommended Conservation Practices for Archival Audiovisual Material." Accessed March 21, 2017. www.imappreserve.org/pdfs/.../AV_conservation.pdf.
- UNESCO. 2013. "The Role of Archives in Nation Building: Preserving South Sudan's Documentary Heritage." Accessed March 9, 2017.
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/newsandinfocusarticles/allnews/news/the_role_of_archives_in_nation_building_preserving_south_sudan/.
- University of Leicester (n.d.) "What is Oral History?" Accessed March 9, 2017.
<https://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/training/no1.pdf>.
- Walbert, K. 2002. "The Value of Oral History." Accessed January 28, 2017.
<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/762>.
- Wheeler, C. 2002. "Best Practices-Oral History in the Digital Age." Accessed October 31, 2016. <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/762>.