MEMORY INSTITUTIONS ON THE REBOUND: TOWARDS NEW APPROACHES IN PROMOTING ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

Worldwide, cultural "memory institutions" play a critical role in preserving society's national intellectual and cultural heritage to prevent national amnesia. National cultural heritage is significant in determining the future and this is why it is crucial to incorporate such institutions in the national development agenda. This paper explores the role of the memory institutions in capturing the nation's collective memory. It also examines the role of the institutions in Social Advocacy. The paper highlights the extent to which memory institutions have been useful in sustaining Zimbabwe's cultural heritage. The authors explore the strategies that are in place to enhance the value of memory institutions amongst the local people. It explores the extent to which memory institutions are utilising partnerships to enhance the value of service delivery. The writers examine the role of the memory institutions in promoting culture, research and education. It will also highlight the challenges and opportunities of providing services as the country gears for the technology driven knowledge economy. The paper examines the extent to which the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) can leverage convergence of libraries, archives and related institutions. The writers also seek to explain how the memory institutions can exploit science and Technology to provide value added services. It also examines the role of memory in repositioning the country on the techno-driven global information landscape.

Keywords: Knowledge economy; Information and Communication Technologies; Digital Convergence; Cultural Heritage; Sustainable development.

1. Introduction

In the Information/knowledge Age, access to Information has become significant for socio-economic development and libraries, archives and related institutions are at the epicentre of sustainable socio-economic development. Dempsey, (et.al) (2000) describes libraries, archives and museums as memory institutions mandated to provide access to information and shape a society's shared cultural heritage . Memory institutions belong to the realm of Information Sciences which by nature is concerned with the processes, procedures and techniques involved in contemporary Information Storage, access and retrieval. Memory institutions are characterised as storehouses and reservoirs to be tapped for many different purposes, from education, recreation, information, knowledge to entertainment.UNESCO states that Libraries, archives and related institutions are essential to the free flow of knowledge and the preservation of cultural and intellectual memory and strengthening social cohesion through socially inclusive policies.

Otlet (1934) predicted the concept of convergence as a reality, and argued that enhanced access to information of all kinds would lead to the development and betterment of humankind. The authors envisaged convergence of memory institutions into a seamless network enabling users to interact simultaneously irrespective of time and space. The second half of the twentieth century resulted in significant developments due to the Information and Communication (ICT's) revolution which ultimately has changed how we content is created, exchanged, stored, organised, accessed, retrieved and shared.

2. Cultural institutions in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's archival legislation dates back to the colonial era but has been revised to suit the post independence dispensation. The National Archives Act of Zimbabwe 1986 prohibits the removal of public archives or public records from Zimbabwe and it also ensures the protection and preservation of historical records by forbidding the destruction of such records without the consent of the Minister of Home Affairs. The National Archives of Zimbabwe was founded through an Act of Parliament in 1935 and operates under the National archives Act of Zimbabwe 1986.It is the official custodian of the country's cultural heritage and this is made possible through a legal instrument which empowers the Director to acquire and preserve records for posterity. Waters (1997) states that a society depends on the quality of knowledge of its own past and any deliberate or accidental falsification of such a priceless heritage will be detrimental to survival against a background of a threatening culture of global homogenisation.

The National Archives of Zimbabwe Act (1986) subsection (13) stipulates that historical records in particular must be protected against any "destruction, defacing, alteration, mutilation or damage". Legislation is essential because it provides National archives with legal foundation to legally and professionally deal with records and archives of public entities. It also covers the legal aspects of destruction, role of national archives in relationship to private records and historical manuscripts and legal deposit. Its mission is to acquire, preserve and provide access to documentation in whatever format that reflects the legal and historical record of Zimbabwe's past and present. The archive collaborates with key stakeholders in fulfilling its mandate as a memory institution of Zimbabwe, for example, content producers, government, publishers, higher education and the community among others.

The enactment of the National Library and Documentation Services Act (1985) led to the establishment of the National Library Documentation Services (NLDS) whose mandate coordinate, promote and enhance the development of libraries throughout the country. Libraries have always been viewed as critical agencies for socio-economic development of the country. The promulgation of NLDS Act (1985) coincided with the decade of socio-economic transformation and nation building since the country had just attained independence after decades of colonial rule. The NLDS started on a good note embarking on grandiose programmes to build libraries and cultural houses, for example, The Murewa Cultural House. However by the end of the first decade after independence the economy faced a down turn, resulting in government engaging the Breton Woods institutions to rebuild the economy. This development led to the adaptation of Economic Structural Adjustment programmes (ESAP).This had an adverse effect on development projects since the IMF conditions demanded that government should cut down on social spending and schools, libraries, archives and health sectors were adversely affected. The situation was worsened by continued economic downturn culminating in the hyperinflationary environments between 2008-2009.

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The Cultural Policy of Zimbabwe takes cognisance of the critical role that libraries, archives and related institutions play in promoting and sustaining the country's cultural heritage. This policy covers the works of libraries, galleries, archives, the arts, music, customs, religion and traditional leaders. This policy readdresses the inadequacies of the colonial background and its cantankerous and vituperative scheme to denigrate anything indigenous thus rendering the locals or indigenes carbon copies of their erstwhile colonial masters. Memory institutions are pivotal to the African resurgence and repositioning of the continent on the global knowledge map amidst threats of cultural homogenisation.

3. Libraries and archives and legal deposit

Made (2009) highlights the legal mandate of the National Archives of Zimbabwe as a legal deposit centre for the country's intellectual and artistic heritage in accordance with the provisions of the Printed Publications Act *12/1975;37/1977;22/2001*. It is mandatory for publishers under to deliver books published in Zimbabwe to the Directors of the National Archives and National Library and Documentation Services(NLDS).The legal deposit of non-print material , for example, sound and audio visuals is made possible through the Broadcasting Services Act (2001) Section 41(b) stipulates that "...*provide a copy of each of its programmes free of charge to the National Archives of referred to in section 3 of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act...*" National Archives Act of Zimbabwe 22/2001 Section 3 specifies that " *The National Archives established in terms of the repealed Act shall, subject to this Act, continue in existence for the storage and preservation of public archives and public records and shall be known as the National Archives of Zimbabwe*."

The National Archives of Zimbabwe also houses material on the Southern African and sub Saharan region that explain or depict the history of, development and any other aspect of the country. National Archives of Zimbabwe serves as the national bibliographic centre of Zimbabwe, responsible for the publication of the Zimbabwe National Bibliography (ZNB) and the administration of the International Standard Book Number Scheme (ISBN). Genge (2008:3) notes that the Bulawayo Public Library also serves a legal Deposit of printed materials considering that it is the oldest, as reflected by its historic reference collection dating back as far as the beginning of the twentieth century.Haymes and Rushby (2009) noted that developing countries were grappling in building infrastructure to maintain depository libraries and exercising effective bibliographic controls. Most of these resources need to be digitized as a means of preservation.

4. Challenges of enforcing legal deposit

Marova and Musoke (2012) note that the challenges facing African countries with regards to Bibliographic control relates to difficulties in defining scope of legal deposit material, in-house publishing and limited cooperation from publishers. Originally legal deposit was limited to formal literature, for example, books, pamphlets and serial publications but now many countries have embraced e-technologies and incoperate grey literature, for example, thesis and dissertations, reports,patents,standards, trade literature, translations, manuscripts and ephemera. Many in-house publishers who use ICT's for publishing are not concerned with legal deposit because they are not registered publishers. The bulk of grey literature is viewed as a primary source of information generated through scientific research Behrens (1990:328). Bibliographic control of such records is hampered by lack of promotion and publicity of such records, their abundance, their specialised distribution, small print runs, different forms and sizes.

5. Libraries, archives and related institutions in the context of information science

Zorich, Waibel, and Erway, (2008) visualized the development of an integrated cultural web to provide users with free access to information. The challenges of providing for the information needs of society are too complex to the extent that they require an interdisciplinary approach that is encapsulated in information science. Trant (2009) states that irrespective of subject matter, professionals in memory institutions should work together to overcome the challenges of digital collections creation, management, use and preservation because the fundamental problems of digital collections management and integrated network use are common.

Frodeman (2010:8) posits that the twenty first century has witnessed a transition from Kantian disciplinary to interdisciplinary or integrative knowledge production and problem solving. The interdisciplinary *leit-motif* justifies the closeness of librarianship and archival sciences and related disciplines, for example, computer science, cognitive science and communication.

Saracevic (1992) defines information science as an evolving field committed to scientific examination and professional application of knowledge and skills addressing the challenges of effective communication with regards to "… knowledge and knowledge records among humans in the context of social, institutional and /or individual users of and needs for information. In addressing these problems, we take advantages of the modern information technology." The author further notes that the base of information science is centered on human communication, designing, managing and using ICT's.In knowledge based society users expectations and engagements with knowledge and information are characterised by a high degree of sophistry, thus making it imperative for information professionals to lead the way according to Rowley (2004:3).

6. International Corporation for Convergence

The International Federation of Library Institutions and Associations (IFLA) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France co-hosted the first meeting of international associations for the cultural heritage sector to advance the convergence agenda from within the Libraries, Archives, Museums, Monuments and Sites community at non-government organizations (NGO) level. Globally, IFLA, in collaboration with the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations (CCAAA) have a enduring relation of cooperation and resolved to strengthen possibilities of cooperation between their organisations in those areas where libraries, archives and museums have mutual interests and activities. The areas of convergence include copyright and intellectual property rights issues, the protection and recovery of cultural heritage worldwide, preservation and collection security and digitisation (including the aspects of digital continuity, the development of global digital libraries and standards) and information literacy.

6.1 Memory institutions blurring boundaries

Dempsey (2000) views libraries, museums and archives as "memory institutions" constituting "an important part of the civic fabric, woven into people's working and imaginative lives and into the public identity of communities, cities and nations". The author further states that memory institutions manage cultural and intellectual record and facilitate access to the memory of peoples, communities, institutions and individuals, the scientific and cultural heritage, and

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the products throughout time of human imagination, craft and learning. Roowley (2004:5) describes libraries, archives and related institutions as information organisations characterised by a social arrangement for achieving controlled performance in "pursuit of collective goals relating to information provision , sharing and management". The author further states that such organisations impact on society in learning, communication, health, economy, governance and social stability.

Dupont (2007:13) argues that libraries, archives and museums can be grouped conceptually around the theme of memory because they all exist to 'make a better future by helping us remember and understand the past'. Trant (2009:369) acknowledges the pervasive nature of the concept of memory institution "The memory institution . . . has captured the imagination of policy-makers as a powerful metaphor for the social role of libraries, archives and museums"

Libraries, archives and museums have been separated from each other because of the uniqueness of the characteristics of their collections in terms of materials, physical form, nature of associated knowledge and users. Cathro (2001); Dempsey (2000; and Gomez (2010) concur that arguments for convergence of libraries, museums and archives are commonly accompanied by a conventional wisdom that brings them under the blanket definition of 'memory institutions' Kirchhoff ,; Schweibenz, and Sieglerschmidt, (2008) state that memory institutions in their bricks-and-mortar form reflect quite different traditions of documentation and organization, even though they share, common goal, with regards to the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage .

Featherstone (2006) views the classification and storage typical of archival work is more flexible than the ordering methods employed by libraries. The author further distinguishes between the alignment of large quantities of documents in record series from the tem-level description and indexing of library items. This validates the view that archives holdings are determined by the principles of provenance unlike libraries that store collective memory in a concrete, pre-existing form.

Lawrence (1990: 103) states that through the interpretation of artefacts, museums provide a tangible anchor for existing notions about the past, and present unexpected narrative insights that can motivate visitors to rethink ideas about history and their relationships to it. Curators assume the role of intermediaries of issues of historical significance through interpreting aspects of material evidence from the past to be retained and represented in meaningful ways for contemporary and future generations These institutions are classified as a form of media with a focus on primarily the use of artefacts and other 'devices' to create meanings for audiences .

6.2 Technology and memory institutions

Liebetrau(2005) states that the ICT Revolution and World Wide Web (WWW) and digital revolution has transformed the traditional role of libraries, archives and museums from mere custodians of physical resources to creators of online resources. The author further notes that such developments have been necessitated by users who are championing the demand for reliable, reusable and verifiable online resources. Cathro (2001) notes that in the contemporary technology driven age users require information services which provide integrated access to physical and virtual information resources, collections, items within collections, and information fragments within those items, both commercial and free information resources, both significant and transient information resources and both local and remote information resources.

The proliferation of ICT's in the wider and encompassing field of digital preservation enabled the disciplines to converge. The ubiquity of online access inspires a dream of a single search cutting across of format, location, and time. Giaretta(2011) states that when museums started digitising artefacts, libraries started to collect e-books and archives started to preserve born digital data, they became part of digital preservation.

The digitization of collections has triggered homogeneity and a drive towards convergence. Cathro (2011) notes that researchers, students and citizens who are seeking access to intellectual and cultural materials do not wish to be constrained by institutional boundaries in their discovery and use of information resources. The author further recommends that institutions and professional associations should reconsider convergence as a way to add value to service provision. Doucet (et.al) (2007: 65) view users' desire to transcend domain boundaries as a parallel force driving the move towards physical convergence. Dempsey notes that libraries, museums and archives, which have always had shared research interests, are now moving into a "shared network space". The internet has become a handy tool for memory institutions to create network spaces through which they deliver databases, collection guides, exhibitions and digital surrogates of their collections.

Deegan and Tanner (2004) state that preservation is central to memory institutions for posterity and continual access to collective memory. The author recommends that libraries and archives should start thinking of preservation of both analogue and digital materials. Moyo (2002) noted that there is a strong correlationship between access and preservation, since the two cannot be divorced from each other. The author views preservation as the holistic scheme that treats not only the indicators of damage but goes further to correct the fundamental causes, thus ensuring continual access. Waters (1997:39) notes that the prosperity and integrity of society is dependent upon the quality of a society's intellectual heritage "Culture, any culture...depends on the quality of its records of knowledge"

Librarians, Archivists and records Managers generally refer to themselves as information managers. Yet traditionally, libraries, archives and museums have occupied different places in our social and informational space. The strategies they have adopted to interact with their users, and the organization and interpretation of their collections, differ and shape the definition of 'education' in and for specific settings.

6.3 Differences and similarities

Katre (2011) states that archival practice regards a collection as the unselfconscious by-product of the activities of a person or organization, museum define objects as the 'thingness of the thing' including the physical properties such as material, dimension, and object or genre classification, while, libraries are more transaction oriented and gather published materials. Initially traditional libraries have always been concerned with providing access to documentary and text information even though modern libraries go beyond to provide access to multimedia technology. Cubitt (2006: 581) states that libraries have concentrated their development on producing sophisticated ways of collection development, organising knowledge and enabling streamlined user access to such collections. The key aspects of selection, organisation and access are central to the function of libraries as memory institutions 'The library is a machine for retrieving information. . . It constructs routes of access, it guides towards results you didn't even know you were seeking..." (Cubitt 2006)

Collaboration between libraries, archives and related institutions has become a key issue as the world moves towards the age of inclusivity. The meaning and methods of access in these institutions have been built upon traditions of gathering, organizing, preserving and presenting acted out in institutions over time and manifested in different historical identities, and distinct corporate cultures. Katre (2011) states that convergence in Libraries , archives and museums is centred on collection management, conservation, preservation, information science and access to users .The author however notes that there is need to take cognisance of divergent and convergent issues relating to Libraries , archives and related institutions.

The strong and distinct traditions of leadership, professional culture, training, career systems, funding streams, and "issues" within these fields make such convergence challenging to comprehend and apprehend as the way forward and also challenge to traditions of such institutions.

Gillian(2010) states that convergence and collaboration between libraries and archives in the digital environment is critical in order to create platforms for resource sharing and best practices especially in preservation and conservation. Convergence is triggered by a number of influencing factors, for example, scarcity of available resources to individual institutions in terms of funding and expertise, ICT's and globalisation. The author further states that the term "convergence" refers to anticipated future worlds whereby technical boundaries between technology and telecommunications would be blurred and content would be delivered in seamless stream to audiences.

6.4 Knowledge economies

It becomes imperative that as developing countries move into the knowledge economy emphasis should be placed on strengthening cultural creativity and innovations which are critical success factors for the new mode of production, wealth creation and economic growth according to Watson (2010). Houghton, and Sheehan, (2000) define the knowledge economy as one in which the generation and the exploitation of knowledge plays a prime role in the creation of wealth.

Effective exploitation of knowledge is now at the epicenter of economic growth and memory institutions as part of the superstructure are strategically positioned to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the digital era. Libraries, archives and museums are helping Zimbabwe to reclaim its global citizenship in the knowledge age. Carr and MacLachlan (2005:199-2003) states that the culture of knowledge generation, coordination and promotion, free knowledge flows, knowledge transfers, knowledge commodification and knowledge sharing are key characteristics of knowledge economies.

Memory institutions contribute enormously to the knowledge economy through supporting education, research, creativity and innovation thus enabling Zimbabwe to be the heart and pulse of the global information /knowledge society. Libraries, archives and museums contribute immensely to the development of society through fostering learning and skills, supporting community cohesion and local identity and strengthening local economies. They also contribute to research and intellectual excellence. Libraries and archives pave the way for scientific research on the culture and history of nations. Through such institutions society develops a sense of belonging and makes a difference to the quality of people's live and the success of communities.

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6.5 Development

Oumas (2012) notes the process of development has since antiquity been the result of the ability to invent, innovate through the creation of new ideas and embodied in products, processes and organisations. Historically, knowledge has been at the heart of economic growth and the gradual rise in levels of social well-being since time. Ssesanga (2009) describes development as a multifaceted subject whose meaning is determined by the context in which it is used. The author defines development as the positive transformation of people's ways of living, attitudes and behaviors as a result of their exposure or access to relevant, adequate and timely information services courtesy of the information (digital) age. Development is an issue that is on the agenda of all nations and it is by nature an enviable goal for all people and nations as the world advances towards the knowledge economy. Malekabadizadeh; Shokraneh and Hosseini (2003) argue that even though the concept is associated with economic progress, there is need to consider, life skills, security, science and technology and access to information among other factors. The authors further state that information science plays a critical role in development and this implies that libraries, archives and related institutions are critical in promoting creativity, innovation through facilitating access to information .

Libraries, museums and archives are critical in the information /knowledge age as they contribute towards continuous learning. These cultural institutions go beyond supporting mere provision of access to information to supporting educational, socio-cultural and economic and personnel progression It is imperative for each society to have original information on itself and access to information on other cultures as a way to develop and retain self-consciousness. Memory institutions are key stakeholders in the development of Polytechnics and Universities, for example, National Libraries, National Archives and Galleries contribute to curricular review and development, provision of opportunities for on the job training and enhancement of competency based training (CBET). These institutions are also involved in reskilling inititiative for staff from Higher and tertiary institutions.

7. Transformation of the human society

Kawatra (2000) notes that human society is undergoing transformation due to rapid development and diffusion of ICT's that now permeate all aspects of our lives. This phenomenal transformation is characterized by large-scale computerization, grandiose development of electronic information coupled by global access to information through telecommunication infrastructure. In the information age information/knowledge has emerged as a critical resource for all activities in education, research and development, industry and commerce and socio-cultural activities among others.

Zimbabwe is no exception as it promulgated its National Information and Communication Technology Policy Framework in 2005.This policy is a major milestone in the drive towards an information society as it acknowledges the greater potential that ICT's play in the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development goals and the United Nations World Summit of Information Science Plan of Action. Memory institutions stand to benefit from a viable ICT policy framework. The policy takes cognizance of the impact of the digital and information divide with regards to access to information for specific groups, for example, the physically and visually disadvantaged. The policy aims to narrow the digital divide through enhancing public awareness and education on ICT's, improving penetration in all socio-economic sectors.

8. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges facing memory institutions at this current moment range from digital divide, curbing brain drain, escalating cost of resources, underfunding, convergence, technological obsolescence, knowledge transfer and globalization. However when challenges are viewed from a dialectical point of view they provide a fertile interlude for creativity and innovation. The opportunities for reinventing cultural institutions include the ICT revolution, convergence, private and public sector partnerships (PPP's), lifelong learning, continuous professional development and an increased demand for information.

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