

# Analysis of the Role and Impact of the Mpumalanga Provincial Archives

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## Abstract

The aim of the article was to analyse the role of the Mpumalanga Provincial Archives (MPA), South Africa, in society in compliance with the Mpumalanga Archives Act (MAA), 1998 (Act No. 14 of 1998). The qualitative study employed document analysis, interviews and observation as forms of data collection. The population for the study was drawn from a few selected departmental representatives in the province as well as MPA representatives. The key finding was that there was non-compliance with the MAA, which has serious implications on national memory and identity. The key recommendation was for the provincial archives to appoint an advisory council to advise the provincial archives on issues of archives management. The researcher concluded that archives play an essential role in the preservation of history, culture and societal heritage.

**Keywords:** archives; archival legislation; provincial archives; institutional memory; Mpumalanga

## Introduction

The article aimed to assess the role of the Mpumalanga Provincial Archives (MPA) in the public affairs and its impact on society, specifically on the preservation of the provincial departments and municipal records, the archives' role in society, and the accessibility of institutional memory. The key mandates of the MPA are outlined in the Mpumalanga Archives Act (MAA 1998). The MPA was established to manage and protect public and non-public records; the preservation and accessibility of provincial archival heritage. In this article, the term "archives" as records is interchangeably used with institutional memory.

Institutional memory is defined differently by different scholars. In this paper it is perceived from different contexts. Brown (2014, 137) defines institutional memory as a

cultural practice of constructing a self-image of a community. The scholar further refers to institutional memory as collective memory. In contrast, Franks (2013) defines institutional memory as collective heritage, encompassing every human artefact from architectural monuments to books.

It was further cited by Lihoma (2008) that institutional memory distorts the past because of individuals within the organisation who play a central role in shaping institutional memory. Institutional memory is maintained and handed on by written and printed documents. Institutional memory has always played an important role in the formation of consciousness and self-understanding of a society and the construction of its future. In the context of this study, the concept of institutional memory refers to the records that are of archival value in terms of the MAA.

## **Problem Statement**

African countries are still experiencing the existence of weak legislative, organisational and policy frameworks on archives management (Katu and Van der Walt 2016; Ngulube and Tafor 2006, 61). In South Africa, the reluctance to revise the MAA and the inability of institutions to implement the legislation led to records being lost (Marutha 2018; Nsibirwa, Hoskins, and Stilwell 2014, 55). This assertion is supported by Lihoma (2008, 6), Ngoepe (2016), and Ngoepe (2017) who indicate that the lack of a proper legal framework that supports records and archives management programmes is a major challenge in South Africa. Records of marginalised communities were not incorporated in the history of South Africa. Looking at the provisions of the records and archive management laws in most African countries, it appears that there is a lack of policy statements on archives' institutional role in the public affairs and their impact on society.

Even though the nine South African provinces established provincial archives in terms of the National Archives and Record Service of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996), the MPA appears to be ineffective in the management of the governmental records, and the preservation and accessibility of provincial archives (Netshakhuma 2017). Obviously, it became evident that the archival heritage management in South Africa, particularly, the Mpumalanga province, needed to be urgently revised.

## **Aim**

The purpose of the study was to assess the role of the MPA in the public affairs and its impact on society, and to make recommendations based on the findings.

## **Background**

Archives institutions have long developed efficient methods adapted to their holdings that have played a role in the building of society's memory (Franks 2013). The

development of an archives collection requires the archival institution to identify records which are valued by societies. Failure by the archives institution to identify archives materials led to contestation by groups within the society. This notion is supported by Brown (2014, 149) who said that archives could be contested outside the archives.

Archives are preserved by the provincial archives as a basis for collective memory (Brown 2014, 149). This means that provincial archives are expected to preserve societal records irrespective of factors such as colour, race, gender, and culture. Before the dawn of the democratic dispensation in 1994 in South Africa, the mandate of collecting archives was the sole responsibility of the State Archives, which is now known as the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (NARSSA). The NARSSA previously focused on collecting archives from the dominant societies (Rodrigues, Van der Walt, and Ngulube 2014, 93). This means that the history and culture of certain groups, especially white communities, were well preserved as opposed to those of marginalised South Africans. In a nutshell, the histories of the marginalised communities were not documented and preserved as societal memory. This argument is acknowledged by Rodrigues, Van der Walt, and Ngulube (2014, 96) who cited that only the privileged and prominent societies' archives were considered for preservation in the State Archives. This anomaly led to a situation where the marginalised people fought for the proper preservation of their records in accordance with the National Archives and Record Service of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996). Despite the above-mentioned challenges, efforts were made by the NARSSA (2007) to collect and preserve the neglected histories of the marginalised societies. The MAA emphasised the issue to fill the gaps by bringing into the archives the stories and narratives of the marginalised societies.

It seems that South African archives were shaped by the apartheid system of which the history of the marginalised society was not regarded as social memory of the nation. The apartheid government failed to comprehensively document the development and history of the marginalised societies. This observation is supported by MacNeil and Eastwood (2017, 60) who pointed out that the creation and ownership of archives became important in the context of the political power struggle.

Since the establishment of the Mpumalanga province in 1994, the amount of records generated increased despite the lack of compliance with archives legislation to control the flow of records, and this consequently led to the loss of archival records (Lihoma 2008, 4). This poorly documented history posed a challenge to public affairs and its impact on society (Cook 2011, 181). Hence, there is a need for a documentary heritage to be preserved to meet the peculiar heritage needs of South Africa and its citizens. The legacy of poor record-keeping continues in the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, and therefore the archives management should be implemented in order to bridge the content divide to bequeath present and future generations the treasures of a nation for their socio-economic development.

The MAA plays a role in the establishment of the MPA, the proper management and protection of the records of provincial governmental bodies, the preservation and use of a provincial archives heritage, and the provision of a connection with the heritage of the province (MAA 1998). The mandate of the MPA is informed by the MAA (1998) as follows:

- preserve public and non-public records with enduring value for use by the public and the state, with special emphasis on documenting the lives and experiences of previously marginalised and disempowered people and communities;
- make communities' records accessible and promote their use by the public;
- ensure the proper management and care of all public records;
- collect public records with enduring value of provincial significance which cannot be preserved more appropriately by another institution, with due regard to the need to document aspects of the province's experiences which have been neglected archives in the past;
- promote cooperation and coordination between institutions with custody of non-public records with enduring value;
- promote an awareness of archives and records management programmes and encourage archival and records management activities and organisations;
- promote empowerment through archival usage of previously disadvantaged people and groups; and
- promote the preservation and use of the provincial archival heritage.

## **Brief Conceptual Reflection**

The research objective was explored using the records life-cycle theory. The records life-cycle theory involves five stages, namely the creation, maintenance, use, disposition, and retainment of records. Each stage of the life cycle of records presents challenges that must be dealt with, such as the transfer of records from public sectors to the provincial archives. The theoretical framework was aimed at ensuring that archival records must be taken care of after the end of the life cycle of records. The records life-cycle theory is significant because the introduction of the life-cycle theory into several stages indicates that records are managed as objects (Yusuf and Chell 2005, 61). In this article, the MPA is central to the preservation of records.

## **Literature Review**

The literature was reviewed according to the objectives of the research emanating from the research objective. The objectives of the study are the preservation of provincial departments' records, archives' role in society, and the accessibility of institutional

memory. Legislation for the management of records and archives plays a role in shaping the preservation of the history and memory of the nation (Kaisa 2016, 444). Archivists engage in discussions about the preservation of history. The selective and restrictive archival policies limit researchers' possibilities of identifying records with archival value. The screening of permanently archived documentation may restrict the possibilities of the preservation of historical research. This happens because archivists identify records with historical and archival values. Occasionally records with historical and cultural significance are destroyed through the appraisal processes.

### **The Preservation of the Provincial Departments and Municipality Records**

The role of the provincial archives is to prevent the destruction of evidence of government corruption and wrongdoing by establishing effective records management that supports the public interest in government accountability (Cox and Wallace 2002, 309). This implies that archival and historical records are supposed to be protected from destructive processes.

A concern of appraisal in any form is the political changes, institutional agenda and evolving notions of value that occurs (Brown 2014, 51; Ngoepe 2017). Changes raised the importance of reappraisal as a mechanism for checking the effectiveness of the original appraisal decision and assessing whether the preserved records continue to merit retention. This was important to consider because record-keeping led to the appraisal of social, cultural and political contexts.

The archival institution is revealed as a vital player in the preservation of government records, most especially in authorising its efficient disposal of records when no longer required for organisational operations (Cox and Wallace 2002). This implies that the MPA is seen as the government's own memory of what it had done.

The protection of archives is the role of the state because public records are public property (Ngulube and Tafor 2006, 61). However, the review of literature showed that national archives, such as the National Archives of Zambia, was not taking a lead on the preservation of archival materials, hence it is obliged to preserve documentary memory in terms of the National Archives Act, 1969, of Zambia. Similarly, the National Archives of Namibia was also obliged to preserve national heritage in terms of the Archives Act No. 12 of 1992 (Nengomasha 2013).

### **Archives' Role in Society**

Archives institutions are not just repositories of historical sources for researchers to use to understand the past. The institutions preserve archival materials to document the history and political development of the province. Archives institutions are shaped by economic, social and political conditions (Schultz 2013, 4). Archives materials are perceived as political manifestations of domination cultures of society (Cox and Wallace 2002, 38). Moreover, the collection of archives reflects political ideas and

power relations. Archives materials are created as a result of a more or less conscious selection and screening process (Kaisa 2016, 434). Based on economic, social and political development, archivists shaped the collections based on the political situation of the time. Therefore, it is essential for archivists to select archival materials which will contribute to the building of a nation (Wamukoya 2015, 18).

Archives institutions play a role in the social memory and national identity in the sense that they were established to fulfil a societal role as a collector and guardian of the social and cultural records (Delaney and De Jong 2015, 85). Therefore, archival materials must be preserved to provide evidence of the cultural activity and contribute to the cultural identity and collective memory of the nation (NARSSA 2007, 1).

The state has a responsibility to safeguard citizens' rights and entitlements (Cox and Wallace 2002, 310; Nengomasha 2013). Safeguarding citizens' rights and entitlements can be achieved through accountability and transparency. Records management ultimately involves a concern with what records are created (Cox and Wallace 2002, 311).

It is the role of provincial archives to appraise archives created by societies. In this context records appraisal is done to select records of historical or archival value. According to Franks (2013, 96), archival value should be identified during the appraisal process to ensure proper maintenance until such time as a record is transferred to the provincial archives. Archives are essential for interpreting the history of a nation. The archival development provides evidence of the lives and activities of people (Horton 2006). Furthermore, these records must document the development of communities and business. According to Brown (2014, 34), the preservation approaches undertaken by archivists or society determine the value of records. This implies the following:

- There is an overabundance of available documentation.
- Not everything that is created merits being retained.
- Certain phenomena remain under-represented in archives and underdocumented overall in society.
- Archivists make appropriate choices about what should be preserved and what additional documentation should be created.
- The development of appraisal frameworks and value principles that provide the “how, why and what” for those faced with making appraisal decisions.
- The significance of records for research.
- The significance of the source and context of the records.
- The uniqueness of the records.
- The cost considerations for the long-term preservation of records.

- The purpose of records as finding aid to other permanent records.

It is essential to assess that compliance with the MAA (1998) was ensured to preserve records of historical significance. Preservation of records guarantees long-term preservation of documentary heritage for enduring access, use and reuse (Mkuwira 2015, 55). The MAA is a fundamental document for the proper preservation of the archives materials. However, some of the storage facilities which keep records were not suitable to preserve heritage materials because of the size (Freeman 2014, 95). These were storage facilities that were not in compliance with national and international standards such as the standards on the preservation of records and archival materials of the International Council on Archives. Furthermore, failure by archivists to identify records with archival value leads to the loss of documentary heritage (Freeman 2014, 93).

Missing archives and gaps in the documentation can be indicative of the concerns of those who compile and store records (Kaisa 2016, 433). Similarly, Cox and Wallace (2002, 38) state that missing records were not simply the result of dispassionate historical research, but rather of sensitive controversial acts for which archivists can be held accountable in courts of law. There is a need for an institution to have human and financial resources to develop and implement the archives management programmes as millions of crucial documents are lost (Nsibirwa, Hoskins, and Stilwell 2014, 62).

Archival institutions should preserve cultural heritage through the development and implementation of national records preservation strategies to ensure that societal memory is preserved (Fresa 2014, 110). The institutions should migrate from existing practices to appropriate preservation practices, and the use of policy-based approaches can make this possible (Fresa 2014, 121).

Archivists shape societal memory as they determine what is to be preserved for posterity in a transparent and accountable manner. Societal memory can function as an archival mechanism to ensure accountability (Garaba 2007, 59). Similarly, Cox and Wallace (2002) stated that archival records' fulfilment is that they serve as instruments of accountability of collective memory. Without records evidence of accountability, society cannot trust its public institutions (Mukwevho 2017).

Archives institutions play a role in society to preserve records with historical, research and cultural significance. This is alluded to by Whorley (2011, 168) who said that archives materials serve as instruments of accountability. The preservation of records of significance creates a platform for a connection between archives institutions and communities. Societies rely on archives as the basis of valid information. Communities retain archives as a means of remembering and connecting with their past (MacNeil and Eastwood 2017, 56).

Archives are valuable to the local community, because they provide continuity of a memory in society (Freeman 2014, 97). Archives materials serve as a means of

understanding historical development and a focal point of patriotic pride (Freeman 2014, 97). Historians rely on archives materials for cultural resource management (Franks 2013). Recognition of the archival value and efforts to preserve historical records is essential for societal memory (Freeman 2014, 97). However, the assessment of records of archival and historical values requires professional archivists to identify records of archival value. Archivists have to conduct professional historical research to perform functions of archiving (Gillian and Konsa 2012, 99).

Archiving is linked to culture because it involves the preservation of cultural heritage (Cook 2011, 178). Cultural heritage includes aspects such as artwork and historical records. All archives records created have their own story, context, and history. The community is at the core of embedded archives (Lynne and Cesar 2016, 301) in

- building strong working relationships with others in the community,
- aligning with the work and goals of the community,
- adopting shared goals with the members of the community, and
- making customised, highly valued contributions to the community.

### **Accessibility of Institutional Memory**

The MPA is tasked with the responsibility of providing access of information to various stakeholders (Segaetsho 2014, 175). The challenge faced by archival institutions in Africa is to provide access of archival material to society (Ngulube and Tafor 2006, 73). This statement is supported by Wamukoya (2015, 18) who said that access to archives in Africa remains a challenge, because most of the African states determine what should be made available for public consumption. According to Section 5(1)(c) of the National Archives of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996), the NARSSA is obliged to make archives accessible to all people (Ngulube and Tafor 2006, 73). Archival materials play an essential role in the education of the nation about their culture, history and memory (MacNeil and Eastwood 2017, 57). Archival materials are created to inform, enlighten, educate and entertain. The role of the archives service was thus closely associated with the provision of historical information resources, serving the needs of education and research (Horton 2006, 505). There is therefore a need to support and control storytelling about the past and origins of a society. This statement is alluded to by Mukwevho (2017, 116) who found in his study that provincial archivists have a responsibility to make public and non-public records accessible and to promote their use by the public and the office of origin.

### **Methodological Issues**

Following the literature review, a qualitative research method was adopted to explore the issues of societal implications emanating from the loss of institutional memory.

The first part of data collection consisted of interviews. Unstructured interviewing was the main data collection method, which although time consuming has worked in this



article. Data were collected through interviews, documents analysis and direct observation that aimed at finding out if there is any implication for the provincial government not complying with the MAA.

A total of three provincial departments and two municipalities in the Mpumalanga province responded to the interviews. Interviews with key provincial records managers and archivists were conducted at the MPA office during the quarterly Mpumalanga Provincial Records and Archives Management Forum, held on 7 February 2018. Follow-up interviews were done on 5 March 2018 with the MPA and the Mpumalanga Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation (DCSR) (see Table 1).

The second part of data collection concentrated on document analysis. Documents in the form of annual reports and legislation were reviewed. The review of records and audits was essential for institutions as it provided detailed information about the institutions (Ngulube and Tafor 2006, 6). During the assessment of the records in the departments, it was found that there was a lack of archival documentation meaning that the majority of people files were not located. Increasing numbers of communities seek access to their records. Most of the files were unavailable (Mutula 2014).

**Table 1:** Participants and interviews

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number of personnel interviewed</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date of interview</b>
Department of Social Development	1	Records Officer	27 February 2018
DCSR	4	Records Officers	5 March 2018
Department of Agriculture	2	Records Manager	27 February 2018
Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality	1	Records Officer	27 February 2018
Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport	1	Records Manager	27 February 2018
Bushbuckridge Local Municipality	1	Records Manager	27 February 2018
MPA	3	Archivist	5 March 2018

The third part of data collection concentrated on the direct observation of the above-mentioned departments and municipalities. The researcher observed how staff members from these departments and municipalities preserve and document institutional memories. Besides the staff members who were interviewed, the researcher observed that members of the communities were not visiting the MPA to conduct research. The evidence from the interviews, document analysis and direct observation suggests that there was negligence by the MPA to preserve institutional memory.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was done according to the research objectives. The data were also analysed using verbatim statements from the participants.

## **Presentation and Findings**

The following section presents the findings based on the objectives of the preservation of the provincial departments and municipalities' records, archives role in the society and the accessibility of institutional memory.

### **The Preservation of the Provincial Departments and Municipality Records**

The participants acknowledged that the lack of the preservation of documentary heritage for the future generation contributed to the gap in understanding the heritage of the province. Some participants said the following:

The history will be lost and be distorted if records were not properly preserved.

Policies regarding heritage management were not preserved by their executive management and staff.

Records are essential because they are memory of the nation.

Cultural policies that recognise and aim to preserve particular musical practices increase the risk of commodification and exploitation.

There is lack of procedure to transfer records of historical and archival value to the MPA.

The participants were also asked about the role of the MPA in fostering records and archives management in the province. The participants were aware of the role of the MPA with regard to the preservation of the heritage of the province.

Some participants said the following about role played by the MPA:

To promote access to information.

Records of historical and archival value are preserved and documented.

Appraisal of policies and Procedure Manual, approval of file plan.

Future information required, archive, assess, appraise, and grant authority to dispose non-archive records.

Inspection of records.

## **Accessibility of Archives**

The respondents were asked questions that required information about their access to information. The participants frequently mentioned that they were not aware of processes and procedures to be developed to promote access to information. Some of the participants said that records cannot be transferred to archives.

Difficult and constraints of accessing archival records.

Department should develop an access procedure for referencing the collections or records.

The participants emphasised the need for external support and training with regard to records and archives management.

Lack of capacity to provide access to their collection.

This means that lack of provision of information had negative impact with regard to improving compliance with the MAA.

Most of the employees and societies were not aware of the legislation governing records and archives in the province such as the MAA.

## **Archives' Role in Society**

The participants were asked about the role of archives in society. Some of the participants stated that it is necessary for organisations to comply with the MAA to preserve the heritage of the country.

Some of the participants said the following regarding organisations that failed to transfer records to the MPA:

The lack of properly recorded of the history of the provinces.

The province may lose information about the development and improvements and challenges faced by the organisation.

The history within the province will be lost and be distorted.

The province will lose historical events records.

The participants were also asked questions related to the role of archives in the development of the nation.

Some participants said that there was a link between archives and the integrated development plan programmes of the municipalities.

The fundamental development of archives.

The missing link in the development process is the neglect of archives as a factor of development (Akinyele 2003, 4).

Preservation of archives plays a role on the societal development.

The crisis of development interpreted in its broadest sense.

These findings are similar to those by Wamukoya (2015, 16) who indicated that public officials used public records and archives to redefine national development priorities.

The respondents were asked to indicate if the loss of institutional memory has implications on education. The purpose of this question was to get a view from the participants as to whether records contribute to the enlightenment of society. Some of the participants agreed that archives materials contributed to the quality and empowerment of nations through education.

Some participants said the following regarding the importance of education:

Educational activities like educational syllabus of History is to be based on archives and records materials.

Building an informed and educated nation requires interpretation of archives materials and access to records.

Effective change regarding an educated and informed nation require policymakers, managers, archivists.

These findings were alluded to by Fresa (2014) who said that archives play a role in developing an informed and educated society.

The participants were also asked about the challenges encountered by their institutions on the preservation of national heritage. The purpose of the question was to get a sense of the kind of challenges to the preservation of heritage in the province. Some of the participants said the following:

MPA experienced challenge of the dysfunctional organisation, which is the custodian of provincial records, due to lack of resources.

The shortage of staff and it was a challenge to monitor records and archives of all the institutions and report immediately.

MPA was not receiving recognition it deserves like other organs of the state. This was so because most of the public institutions did not recognise MPA as institutional repository of archives.

Human capital and lack of space for archival material preservation and lack of security management was a challenge to the organisation.

The participants were also asked questions regarding the role played in the preservation of heritage and archives in the province. Some of the participants said the following:

MPA was the custodian of the archives materials.

Records manager played a role on the preservation of the history and heritage of the province.

MPA played a role on the preservation of heritage of nation.

Archives institutions played an essential role on preservation of history of the country.

It was the responsible of all departments to preserve historical records.

The participants were asked whether they have archives and records management skills and knowledge to preserve archives in the province.

Some of the participant indicated that “archives and records management skills were essential for the preservation of records and archives”.

## **Discussion**

The discussion of the research was organised according to the research theme or objectives.

### **The Preservation of Provincial Departments and Municipality Records**

The analysis of the preservation of the provincial departments and municipality records found a lack of strategy to transfer records from the departments to the MPA. This finding is contrary to Section 11 of the MAA (1998), which stipulates that “a public record under the control of a governmental body shall be transferred to an archives repository, destroyed, erased or otherwise disposed of, only with the written authority of the provincial archivist.” Section 11(b) of the MAA (1998) indicates that “it is the role of the Provincial Archivists to determine records classification systems to be applied by governmental bodies and determine conditions to which electronic records should be managed and the Provincial Archivists shall inspect public records which is necessary for the performance of his or her functions under this Act.” Despite the challenges faced by the province and municipalities, efforts were done by the provincial archivists to establish the Mpumalanga Provincial Archives Forum to raise awareness on the importance of the preservation of archives and records management.

The researcher observed that records of archival and historical value were not taken into consideration by the MPA and municipalities because of the lack of a vital register to

administer archival collections. The analysis found that there was no register to identify records transferred by the departments. The review of the records in the departments showed that there was a gap of documentation left by the previous administrative government. A lack of archival documentation means that many people's records cannot be located (Jones and O'Neill 2014, 114). The researcher observed that there was no systematic disposal of records departments.

The departments failed to build proper records centres to prepare for the transfer of records to the MPA. According to Lihoma (2008, 7) such negligence poses a threat to the long-term preservation of archival materials. The only institution which has proper archival storage is the MPA. Its records and archives storage equipment adheres to the international and national standards of the International Council of Archives.

### **Archives Role in Society**

It seems that the expectation of the province is that the MPA should engage communities on issues of preservation of culture and history. The community also feel that the MPA lacks openness, relevance and transparency in dealing with them. This finding is contrary to Section 2 of the MAA (1998), which stipulates that "the provincial archivists will co-operate with organisations interested in archival matters or the manager records by means such as exchanges and joint projects and provide training in archival techniques and the management of records". Furthermore, Section 15 of the MAA (1998) stipulates that provincial archives will ensure that records of enduring values are acquired. Section 3 of the MAA (1998) indicates that "the Provincial Archivists shall maintain a provincial register of non-public records which have enduring value, in consultation with the persons or institutions having such records". However, the observation conducted by the researcher found that there is no register of community archives. It has become clear that some communities do not know that they need to deposit their archives to the MPA to preserve their history and culture. This is a concern because records constituting the role of society were not deposited and preserved in archives.

Archives are not fully used as an educational tool for schools. There is a lack of school visits to the provincial archives. Besides the advertising boards, most of the people are not aware of the role of the archives. However, the provincial archives started with the outreach programme to inform the community about the role of archives in society, and the archives weeks and oral history conference are conducted on a yearly basis.

### **Accessibility of Archives**

The researcher found that most of the archival materials in the MPA repositories are inaccessible by researchers. The research observed that even though the MPA constructed purpose-build archives to preserve archival materials, its archival repository is empty. There are a few archives preserved by the MPA. It seems that most of the provincial institutions have not embarked on an archival process to transfer archival

material to the MPA. This finding is contrary to Section 14 of the MAA (1998) which stipulates, “A public record in the custody of the Provincial Archivist shall be available for public access if a period of 20 years, since the end of the year ending on 31 December in which the record came into existence, has elapsed”. This finding implies that the MPA is not complying with the MAA in terms of providing access to the public. It was also found that the MPA lacks finding aids to assist the users to access the list of archives in the repository. The legislative analysis discovered that the MAA provided guidelines for the accessibility of information.

The provincial archivists embarked on a project to find a way of enabling the ordinary citizen to more easily obtain access to the vast quantities of archives that the MPA has in its possession. This finding is confirmed by Mukwevho (2017, 135) who found that multiple projects on awareness of archival programmes were conducted at district municipalities such as Ehlanzeni, and Gert Sibande. The MPA has declared its desire to become accountable to the citizens of Mpumalanga. It was found that the measure was taken by the MPA to give broad-based support to the community through the community outreach programme such as taking archives to the community. The MPA developed a clear and well-established consultative process that involves the inputs of citizens as various stages.

## **Recommendations**

- Prioritise the preservation and documentation of heritage information in the society for the national history and culture.
- Allocate space, budgets, equipment and materials to the preservation of institutional memory to be shared with the next generation.
- Encourage partnerships between the MPA and the provincial departments to identify records of historical and cultural significance to be preserved.
- Develop a model for the preservation of societal memory.

## **Conclusion**

The results of empirical research allow me to draw the conclusion that, besides the MPA having enacted the MAA with the aim to improve public affairs and its impact on society, there is non-compliance with the legislation. The researcher concludes that there is a need for continuous awareness and outreach on the role of the MAA, and collaboration between the MPA, provincial departments, and communities at large. Archives play an important role in society because history, culture and heritage are preserved.

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