



SPEECH

BY

DR. TJAMA TJIVIKUA
RECTOR: POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

AT THE

LAUNCH OF THE MOBILE EXHIBIT OF THE DIGITAL NAMIBIA
ARCHIVE (DNA)

10H00

09TH AUGUST 2011

POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA
(LIBRARY)

WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies, Ms. Judy Grobler

Professor Michael Harper, Utah Valley University

Mr. Werner Hillebrecht, Head: National Archives of Namibia

Representatives of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, I want to thank all our partners, especially Utah Valley University (UVU), which has initiated the concept and has been a critical partner in realizing the **Digital Namibia Archive (DNA)** project. I also wish to recognize the participation and support of the **Directorate: National Heritage and Culture Programmes**, and the **National Archives of Namibia**. We also acknowledge other international partners including the **Mountain West Digital Library, USA**.

The project is based on the realization that Namibia's cultural heritage needs to be protected and, therefore, stored in a manner that would facilitate easy access and retrieval of information now and into the future.

On 30 July 2007, the **Polytechnic** in collaboration with **Utah Valley University (UVU)**, launched the **DNA Project at the Polytechnic**.

This project serves to develop digital capacity through collating, capturing and storing historical and cultural artifacts, documents, maps, slides, photographs and audio recordings. Apart from this component, the project holds significant opportunities for research

and the development of curriculum in digital media. It also serves as a training base for students who specialize in digital media.

To date the following **important milestones** have been achieved in implementing this project:

- a. UVU has, *inter alia*, donated recording equipment and cameras for this project, worth thousands of US dollars;
- b. A workshop was offered to UVU and selected Polytechnic Media students, which included topics such as digital imaging, digital video and audio basics, evolution of web applications and basic DVD authoring;
- c. In terms of technology transfer, the scanning of the negatives, and the installation and configuration of the DNA server for the hosting of the DNA website have been central to the success of this project;
- d. About 8 000 images have been restored through image restoration;
- e. 75 pieces have been restored through the audio restoration component of the project;
- f. About 25 staff members have been trained in video restoration;
- g. About 30 local staff and students and nine UVU staff and students have been involved in the project; and
- h. Three local communities, namely Okangwati and Kamanyab in the Kunene Region, and Maltahöhe in the Karas Region have participated in the project so far.

All in all, the digital archive will make **accessible on the Internet a rich resource that reflects the diversity of voices and cultural stories of the Namibian people.** The **African region** is also evolving into a **digital democracy** and the DNA will thus gather and **preserve images of cultures and traditions, as well as artifacts and photo negatives of the colonial period, documents of historic transitions, the democratic process and other rare artifacts.**

The DNA project is intended not only to counter the loss of oral tradition by capturing and cataloguing oral histories, but also **to develop skills and capacity among Namibians to continue to expand the archive.** UVU faculty do conduct workshops for Namibian students and **professionals on digital capture, restoration, design, and editing and asset management, and it is critical that the required skills are acquired and developed further.**

Traditionally, archives were defined as:

- i. Containing primary sources of information (typically letters and papers directly produced by an individual or organization) rather than the secondary sources found in a library (books, periodicals, etc.);
- ii. Having their contents organized in groups rather than individual items; and
- iii. Having unique contents.¹

That era is over and it is now very clear why digital archiving is important, and technology has all to do with it: it's the main reason, for the **role of paper as the only archiving medium is over.**

1. Experts tell us that **90% of originals used in the average office environment are already digital** but those **10% paper-based documents cause most of the inefficiency.**
2. U.S. studies have shown that **15% of office man-hours are spent on retrieving paper documents and 8.5% of all paper documents are lost through archiving errors.**
3. **Retrieving a wrongly archived document costs an average U\$ 200** while one file of paper documents costs US\$250 a year in man-hours spent searching.ⁱⁱ
4. Digital archiving, in contrast, gets the data moving, not the employee. **Digital archiving speeds up the searching process.** And digital archiving enables simultaneous data access.
5. Not only is it **significantly cheaper to store documents electronically** rather than on paper (*some studies point to 75% cost savings*), **digital archiving also has a very positive impact on corporate space requirements and workflows.** Digital workflows are built around networked

equipments requiring much less floor space – no businessman needs telling how high office rents are.

The technology used to create digital libraries has been even more revolutionary for archives since it breaks down the second and third of these general rules. In other words, “digital archives” or “online archives” will still generally contain primary sources, but they are likely to be described individually rather than (or in addition to) in groups or collections, and because they are digital their contents are easily reproducible and may indeed have been reproduced from elsewhere.

Large scale digitization projects are underway at **Google, the Million Book Project, and Internet Archive**. With continued improvements in book handling and presentation technologies such as **optical character recognition and e-books**, and development of alternative depositories and business models, digital libraries are rapidly growing in popularity as demonstrated by Google, Yahoo etc. Just as libraries have ventured into audio and video collections, so have digital libraries such as the Internet Archive.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming back to the DNA project, this innovative project holds a great deal of opportunity for replication in the Region and further afield:

- a. i. The practical training and exposure of students to digital archiving equipment and techniques;
- b. ii. Providing opportunities for collaboration on the development of curricula on digital media and ICTs, in general;
- c. iii. The establishment of a digital archive, cataloguing and preservation of cultural artifacts;
- d. iv. Opportunities for research, both locally and internationally; and
- e. v. Monitoring and evaluation of various components of the Project.

The DNA is the first of its kind in Namibia and quite likely in the Region. It requires the commitment of leaders, academics, development partners and students in order to bring this innovation to fruition. Let us together recommit to excellence, and commend the academics and students for making this project a reality. I thank all the partners, stakeholders, sponsors and supporters, and now you all for your kind attention.

Ends.

References:

ⁱ www.wikipedia.com (accessed on 07 August 2011).

ⁱⁱ www.konicaminoltaeurope.com (accessed on 07 August 2011).

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.