



MARITIME ARCHIVES ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: A BLUEPRINT

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ABSTRACT

Maritime archives are warehouses of past water based activities which have been recorded in various forms and are considered to be valuable for both present and future references. They are storage of valuable marine related records and documents that speaks about the hardware and software of water transportation of a country from the earliest date to the last date of all the records kept. Maritime archives therefore reveals about the historical endowment of a country's water transport from crude to sophisticated infrastructure, boat, yacht and ship building and repair evolution and developmental stages, education and training, shipping trade and policies, people, etc.

This Paper proposes principles or blueprint for maritime archives administration in Nigeria that will guide decision making process regarding the establishment, structure, staffing and functions as well as funding of maritime archives in the country by using deductive reasoning out of general archives literature and personal interviews with maritime administrators on their perception about maritime archival services and their expectations on what should be collected and kept in ideal maritime archives.

The Paper observes that maritime archives materials can be collected from the national archives, States history and culture bureaus, archives of the old regional formations, research centres of tertiary institutions, palaces of Emirs, Obas, Obis and other traditional chiefs as well as museums and libraries overseas.

The paper therefore recommends that maritime archivists must have industry knowledge and cognate work experience while funding can be done through cost sharing between major institutional stakeholders.

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The paper concludes that sustainability of maritime archives lies in a comprehensive document policy for electronic data that stipulates the retention policy as it affects back-up by all maritime organisations in the country and duration or age within which to transfer documents to central collation domain at the maritime archives.

The views expressed in this Paper are entirely those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency.

Keywords: Maritime archives; blueprint; sustainability archives

INTRODUCTION

Maritime is a broad based water related activities while maritime archives are warehouses of such past activities which have been recorded in various forms and are considered to be valuable for both present and future references. Consequently, archives are historical domain; and, maritime archives are storage of valuable marine related records and documents that speaks about the hardware and software of water transportation of a country from the earliest date to the last date of all the records kept.

Although maritime archives may contain pictorial and nongraphical information about different water resources and their utilization and development, the records and documents are generally concerning water transport and transportation system. Maritime archives therefore reveals about the historical endowment of a country's water transport from crude to sophisticated infrastructure, boat, yacht and ship building and repair evolution and developmental stages, education and training, shipping trade and policies, people, etc.

This Paper proposes principles for maritime archives administration. It sets a blueprint that would guide decision making process regarding the establishment, structure, staffing and functions as well as how to fund maritime archives in Nigeria using deductive reasoning based on general archives literature. Interview was employed to get maritime administrators' perception about maritime archival services and to know their expectations on what should be collected and kept in an ideal maritime archives.

This Paper is a pioneering work in Nigeria because local articles on maritime archives were not available. Consequently, the Author relied heavily on articles from internet sources, the National Archives Act, 1992 and the Public Procurement Act, 2007. These sources together with the information gathered from personal interviews resulted in the proposed Blueprint or the principles of maritime archives administration in Nigeria.

The Paper therefore attempts to answer questions on the structure of archives and what kind of maritime archives best suits Nigeria? What calibre of staff should work in maritime archives? What should be their duties? What records and documents should be kept in Nigeria's maritime archives? What are the financial implications?



STRUCTURE OF MARITIME ARCHIVES

Maritime archives are places where maritime public records or historical documents are collected, gathered, kept, preserved and accessed. The nature and number of records and documents may change from time to time depending on the “add and destroy” policy that guides the operations and management of the archives.

The basic function of maritime archives is to educate in the area of history with specific reference to water transport. Maritime archives therefore preserve the collections of materials about yachting, the boats, the waters and people who, at one time or the other, were part of the history within the range of years which the archives management considered valuable to the public.

Usually, what is kept in maritime archives is determined by history, the development processes which a country had passed through and the perception of policy makers as to what is relevant. However, the collections would consist of literary materials, works of arts, transcript of meetings and tapes, letters, laws, edicts, bylaws, manuals, reports, newsletters, photographs, films, video and sound recordings, electronic data files, cartographic records and maps, motion pictures, historic objects including buildings, sites and records of immigration in their original forms and in copies.

Invariably, the structure of maritime archives would be influenced by the number and size of records and documents collected and to some extent, the space available as well as the training and specialization of staff. Maritime archives may therefore consist of Collection, Preservation and Conservation (CPC)¹ section; Appraisal, Description and Arrangement (ADA)² section; Access and Information Management (AIM)³ section; Research, Liaison and Outreach (RLO)⁴ section; and Administration, Standard and Training (AST)⁵ section. In contrast, the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNA & DS) has 6 Sections which

¹ The duties of the CPC Section will be guided strictly by the principles of “add and destroy” (A & D). The A & D principle is the standard policy that determines the type of historic materials and artifacts to search for and collect; their method of preservation and the duration as well as how such items may be replaced either by substitution or destruction.

² The ADA Section is responsible for ensuring that the Archives is stored with the prescribed items. It is also its duty to describe each item in a manner that information users will find it easy to understand. The ADA Section must adopt a standard retrieval system so that items can be traced without difficulties.

³ Access and Information Management (AIM) Section is the real archives in the public eyes because it is responsible for providing access to the items collected in the archives. It manages the utilization of the archives' collections and recommends additional items to be gathered based on enquiries from the public.

⁴ The RLO Section is responsible for identifying collectable items through historical research efforts. It liaises with the public to know what they want, how they value what is gathered as well their views on what need to be replaced. The Section also reaches out to volunteers, institutions and bodies where archival items can be obtained.

⁵ Budget preparation and implementation, establishment of working policy, quality of service delivery and training of staff, volunteers and inter-archives collaboration are part of the duties of the AST Section.



are divided according to specific and specialised functions namely: Searchroom and Education Service, Microfilming, Conservation, Repository Services, Information Technology and Audiovisual⁶.

Maritime archival is an enormous and essential service if the spirit of gathering, describing and providing material and artifacts are sustained. There is no overlap in the functions and responsibility of each of the Sections where their duties are properly described.

It is pertinent to note that due process mechanisms must be applied to all archival procurements⁷. In fact, it is required that procurement entity, like the maritime archives, shall plan its procurement by identifying the goods, works or services required⁸ and all bidders shall possess the necessary professional and technical qualifications to carry out particular procurements⁹ in order to archive value for money and fitness for purpose¹⁰.

Consequently, where archival procurements are to be undertaken by non-staff, the maritime archives must advertise and solicit for bids in order to enhance openness, fairness and transparency so that confidence can be enhanced in the procurement process by all stakeholders and the general public. The advertisement must also be explicit by indicating the qualifying requirements, the scope and location as well as providing adequate tendering periods¹¹.

MARITIME ARCHIVISTS

Every staff working in the maritime archives is an archivist. The staff may have different academic qualifications but every staff should have an additional qualification in maritime or related areas. Although library is part of archives, a qualification in library science does not give an upper hand to someone without training and understanding of the maritime environment. This is because maritime archives do not just gather books, journals, periodicals and other reference materials of general nature. It is a specialised historical service domain which, however, cannot also be equated with museum. Maritime archives are broader than both maritime museum and a library in any maritime body or institution.

Maritime archivists are professionals who assess, collect, organise, preserve, maintain control over and provide access to information determined to have long-

⁶ See, www.kenyarchives.go.ke/archives_administration.html.

⁷ Kingibe A. B. G. (2008): "Circular"; Ref. No. SGF/OP/1/S.3/VII, Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

⁸ See *Public Procurement Act, 2007*, Section 18 (b)

⁹ Ibid. Section 16 subsection 6(a(i)).

¹⁰ Ibid. Section 16(1e).

¹¹ Kingibe A. B. G. (2008): "Circular", Ref. No. SGF/OP/1/S.3/VII, Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, page 2.



term value. Maritime archivists keep records that have enduring value as reliable memories of the past; and, they help people to find and understand the information they need in those records. It is challenging to determine what records have enduring value. Such records must justify the costs of storage and preservation as well as the labour expenses to arrange, describe and provide reference service.

The preferred qualification for maritime archivist is a master's degree in archival studies and records management plus at least a postgraduate diploma in maritime studies. However, persons with master's degree in marine engineering, naval architecture, transportation studies, history, archaeology, library science, arts or science are trainable as maritime archivists if they have cognate work experience in the maritime environment. Such candidates need training in archives interpretation, source studies, records preservation and management, documentation policy, dealing with electronic and digital records as well as archives service management.

Although the structure of maritime archives may differ from one setup to another; and, from one country to another, the duties or functions of the director of the national Archives is spelt out in Section 2(2a–2m) of the National Archives Act of 1992. Some of the functions include giving advice on all matters relating to records and archives, appraisal and selection of permanent preservation, periodical publication and microfilming of archives, research, duplication, lending, training and establishing relationship with foreign or international organisations on all matters relating to records and archives.

STRUCTURE OF MARITIME ARCHIVES FOR NIGERIA

Nigeria is yet to have maritime archives despite her rich water based activities spanning several centuries. With big and small rivers in all the States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the public would appreciate to have a one-stop place for maritime heritage.

However, maritime administrators¹² differ in their views and perception about collectible items for the maritime archives and the cut-off age. Whereas some believe that every activity is undertaken in the first instance because it is important in the maritime environment and therefore records and documents about everything should be kept, others opine that there should be criteria for sorting out what is relevant for archival service from what is not. For example, Gunwa (2008) suggests that maritime archives should contain reports, photographs, project studies and draft legal documents filled in alphabetical order with cross index and referencing like a library which can be considered as having a reference value in the future. On the other hand, Olokoba (2008) emphasises on capturing everything in the maritime

¹² See, References for names of selected maritime administrators interviewed about the subject matter of this Paper.



operation because what is not valuable today may be important in future just as Ofodile (2008) also posits that the archives should keep everything about the past in order to assess the present and plan for the future. Edward (2008) however asserts that maritime archives should have different categories of information that may be grouped according to headings such as “Accidents”, “Registered ships”, “Scrap/Dead ships”, etc. He adds that the archives should contain information about conventions, instruments of ratifications, IMO Resolutions and proceedings of meetings. He relates archives service to library services.

Alim (2008) perceives maritime archives as a place for collection of discharge book on-board ships, survey records, particulars and activities of ships, agents, chandliers as well as records and documents of shipping masters and the white paper of every seaman. Balogun (2008) suggests that maritime archives should store milestone of events such as the first Europeans to visit Nigeria, where they went, who they met; the first passenger vessel, who were the passengers, where did they go; the first indigenous vessel acquired, for what purpose and similar epoch making events about the Nigerian maritime. Since maritime archives is to keep records of history for the purposes of education, Olopoenia (2008) recommends that what is kept would be determined by the type of materials institutions within the sector have. He also suggests the National Museum and Archives as sources of materials.

Age of Archival Materials

Generally, maritime administrators suggest a cut-off range of ten to fifteen years for all closed files and documents to be transferred to the archives.

By and large, Section 12 (1a, 1b & 1c) of the National Archives Act declares public archives materials to be “All non-current public records of the age of twenty-five and above which contain evidence of the organisation, function, policies, procedures and transactions of the public office in which they were originally made or received; or evidence of public or private personal property rights or civil rights; or historical or general information”.

Notwithstanding the prescribed age cut-off for archival items given in Section 12(1a, 1b & 1c) and the reiteration in part of Section 35(4) of the National Archives Act, the Act also allows for early transfer of records and documents to the archives¹³ which invariably respects the wish of the maritime administrators because of the significance and historical interests attached to maritime activities in Nigeria. Furthermore, in this digital age when a lot of government functions using e-mail and electronic documentation have increased dramatically, it becomes necessary to determine for how long the mass information being generated would be held before it is

¹³ See, Section 14 and Section 35(4) of the *National Archives Act*, Cap N6, 1992 No 30, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria.



archived. Apparently, the twenty-five year cut-off age for paper documents can not apply to electronic data.

Legality of Maritime Archives

Some maritime administrators also question the legality of establishing maritime archives separate from the National Archives. For example, Dirisu (2008) asserts that all public records not in circulation should be domiciled in the National Archives. However, the provisions of Section 20 (1 & 2) of the National Archives Act unambiguously recognize special circumstances which may warrant the establishment of place of deposit in lieu of the National Archives thereby lending support for the establishment of other categories of archives such as the maritime archives.

Staffing of Maritime Archives

While the qualification of the head archivist is not explicitly stated in the National Archives Act, some administrators feel that any librarian can serve. Gunwa (2008) opines that a librarian/archivist that knows filing and data processing should work in the maritime archives. Balogu (2008) on the other hand differs in his opinion. He suggests someone with information technology background and should also be conversant with the maritime industry. Although Alexander (2008) believes that any staff of NIMASA¹⁴ can be deployed as maritime archivist, he also prefers research officers to work there.

However, the National Archives Act provides that for the purpose of ensuring permanent custody, care and control of archival materials in the country, under circumstances of a different category of public archives, such as the maritime archives, the head shall be appointed in consultation with the Director of the National Archives¹⁵. Nevertheless, this Author expects that the position would be filled by someone with the requisite academic and professional qualifications that is blended with cognate industry experience.

Funding of Maritime Archives

In terms of the financial implications for establishing and operating maritime archives, Gunwa (2008) notes that space, archivists pay, computer with data software for archiving documents, racking, shelve and box files are the major cost centres in maritime archives. Balogun (2008) however argues that based on the supervisory role of the Federal Ministry of Transportation, financing of maritime archives can be made to be contributed by water related parastatals under the ministry.

¹⁴ Referring to the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency.

¹⁵ See, Section 21(1) of the *National Archives Act*, Cap N6, 1992 No 30, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria.

It is obvious that the costs of establishing and sustaining archives are huge particularly when it involves storing conventional records digitally. In the United States of America (USA) for example, \$411.1 million was approved for funding the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 2008 (as against \$341.1 million in 2007) out of which \$315 million was for operating expenses covering energy, security and staff costs¹⁶. The sum of \$321.291.000 and \$316.322.000 were respectively also approved in 2005 and 2004¹⁷ for the Agency's activities. These funding figures show increases on annual basis as a result of expansion, new recruitments and research and publication activities.

It follows therefore that in order to establish, operate and sustain standard maritime archives in Nigeria, there must be consistent funding, strong commitment to archives upgrading in the face of other competing projects, sincere commitment to records retention and link between current records, information management and the archives.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This paper reviewed the principles of general archives and discusses the views of maritime administrators regarding archival materials, legality, funding and staffing of an ideal maritime archives for Nigeria.

Nigeria is endowed with several water based resources such as 210.900 kilometers of maritime waters including the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)¹⁸; 853 kilometers of coastline and 8.600 kilometers of inland waterways stretching the lengths of Niger and Benue rivers, Niger Delta, Lagos Lagoon, Cross River and other small rivers and creeks¹⁹. The country also has had continuous inward and outward cargo flows including dry, wet and LNG cargoes that constitute modern trade. There were also trade records on cocoa, timber, rubber, groundnuts, hide and skin, cotton, palm oil and palm kernel during the colonial era. Presently, Nigeria has 8 international seaports, 11 oil terminals, 124 private jetties, about 15 shipyards, various floating production storage of take vessels (FPSO) etc.²⁰ where various shipping services are undertaken by many maritime service providers.

¹⁶ The National Archives (2007): "Press Release" at www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2008/nr08-41.html, accessed on 14th July, 2008.

¹⁷ The National Archives (2004): "Press Release" at www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2005/nr05-26.html, accessed on 14th July, 2008.

¹⁸ A. V. Amire (2008): *Monitoring, Measurement, and Assessment of Fishing Capacity: The Nigerian Experience*, www.fao.org/docrep/006/y4869e/4849e0c.html, Accessed on 8th July, 2008.

¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency (2007): *Nigeria* www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html, Accessed on 8th July, 2008.

²⁰ See, David Oladimeji (2008): "Chandelling business 'll stem capital flight"; *New Age Newspaper*, 8th July, 2008, page 24.



This shows enormous opportunities for water based activities in the country for both Nigerians and foreigners. Accordingly, the following recommendations are made in respect of sources of archival materials, staffing and funding of maritime archives.

Sources of Archival Materials

There are various sources of archival materials that can be collected to equip a maritime archive for the country. These sources depend on whether the archival being sought is for traditional maritime activities, colonial era or post independence. The following are identified amongst others:

1. Retired mariners, naval officers and seafarers: Nigeria has had six generations of mariners that traveled round the oceans²¹.
2. Government agencies²² responsible for maritime activities including government owned shipping lines²³.
3. Maritime and related training institutions²⁴.
4. Associations, individuals and families of traditional shipping operation, search and rescue activities as well as boat building²⁵.
5. Regional and international maritime cooperation and ratified international conventions.
6. Domesticated maritime conventions²⁶ and various enactments²⁷ for the regulation and promotion of maritime activities.

²¹ Apart from conducting personal interview with retired mariners to document matters of historical value based on oral tradition, which is within the provisions of the National Archives Act, Section 27 (3 & 4) of the Act also stipulates that where archives are voluntarily deposited by private companies and individuals, public access to them must be based on the conditions given by the archives depositors and written permission. It is therefore expected that this protection would encourage mariners and other experienced maritime personnel to deposit personal archives and grant interview about their private lives.

²² These include the Federal Ministry of Transportation (FMoT), Nigerian Port Authority (NPA), Nigeria Shippers' Council (NSC), Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Nigerdock Shipyard, National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) and National Clearing and Forwarding Agency (NCFA).

²³ The government established the Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL) as a national carrier which was liquidated after 3 decades and replaced by the Nigerian Unity Line (NUL) which could not compete in the market and therefore went under.

²⁴ Maritime and related courses are being run by over thirty universities, polytechnics and specialized training institutions offering diploma, higher national diploma, bachelor, masters and doctorate degrees in the country. There are also some private training institutions apart from centres for artisanship.

²⁵ Boats are still being built by artisans who learn the art from their parents. There are also search and rescue families in all the places where water based activities are taking place. In fact, water transportation in the rural and coastal areas are generally traditional.

²⁶ The United Nation Convention on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was domesticated through the National Shipping Policy Act of 1987.

²⁷ Example includes the Merchant Shipping Act and the Coastal and Inland (Shipping) Cabotage Act.



7. Records and documents of companies carrying out all manners of maritime activities in the country.
8. Research and publications on Nigeria's maritime sector.
9. Portuguese and British explorations of the Niger²⁸, slave trade and commodity trade before the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates.
10. Colonial maritime policies²⁹, shipping companies³⁰, trade and cargo throughput.
11. Colonial maritime training centres and policies in Nigeria and the activities of foreign shipping companies in post-independence.
12. History and Culture Bureaus (HCB) of all the States in the Federation and the FCT where local and state-wide documents about past activities are kept.
13. There are also archives of the old regional formations of the country like the *Arewa House* in Kaduna which store records and documents especially of the former Northern Region. Similarly, research Centres of many universities such as the *Mumbayya House*³¹ in Kano have valuable records and documents concerning the past of Nigeria and people.
14. Above all, the National Archives is the major custodian of all records and documents about people and Nigeria.
15. Complementary to the National Archives are the palaces of Emirs, Obas, Obis and other traditional chiefs that maintain records, documents and artifacts of the fabulous indigenous maritime activities during centuries of pre-colonial days through colonial era and the nation's post-independence times.

Apparently, there are many established sources for collecting maritime archives materials. Furthermore, information about past maritime activities can be gathered through oral tradition since the National Archives Act recognises oral tradition and oral history as one of the sources for archival documentation³².

Staffing and Duties of Maritime Archivists

Based on our discussion on the nature of maritime archives, it is obvious that staffing must take cognizance of relevant qualification and cognate industry experience. The

²⁸ The records of and documentations on Major Daniel Houghton, Mungo Park, Hugh Clapperton, Isaac, Richard Lander and Thomas Park would be valuable.

²⁹ It may be necessary to visit British and Portuguese libraries and museums to source for archival in this regard.

³⁰ These include Elder Dumpsters and Palm Line.

³¹ The *Mumbayya House* is a research and documentation centre of the Bayero University, Kano which was established in the Late Mallam Aminu Kano's house as a symbol of respect for his political leadership.

³² See Section 44 (1, 2 & 3) of the National Archives Act, Cap N6, 1992 No. 30, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria.



job of archivist is quite challenging that quality of staff in terms of relevant educational and professional background should not be compromised. While it may be necessary to employ people without masters degree in archives studies, prospective senior staff of the maritime archives should have at least bachelor degree with post-graduate qualification in maritime studies and 5 years work experience. Employment of the junior cadre should also be guided by the task they are expected to perform.

We can then deduce the general and specific duties of maritime archivists as follows:

1. To promote a broader understanding of maritime history defined by the scope of the maritime archives in terms of period, sequence and size of collections.
2. To identify, collect and preserve original and copies of records and documents relating to the history of water based activities.
3. To provide detail description of all materials in the archives and how to access them.
4. To sort and list separately records and documents of mixed sources or those lacking clear originality and arrangement.
5. To describe, catalogue, index and analyse materials and objects for the benefit of researchers and the public.
6. To organise and/or coordinate educational and public outreach programmes such as tours, workshops, lectures and classes.
7. To liaise with other archives and maritime institutions to design and administer maritime archives plans and policies.
8. To research into topics or items relevant for maritime archives collections.
9. To maintain control over the range of information by adding and substituting records and documents as stipulated by policy.
10. To create and maintain searchable database.
11. To identify and recommend sources of aids and other forms of support for archival activities.
12. To prepare budget for archival activities and ensure compliance to due process in archival spending.
13. To keep financial records of all receipts and expenditure concerning archival activities.
14. To establish archives rules and regulations and make policy recommendation concerning membership registration, fees, working hours, use of parking space, group visits, affiliation, taking pictures, etc.
15. To prepare schedules for archival collection surveys and recommend archival restoration projects.
16. Prepare situational, monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports of the activities of the archives.



17. To make periodic review of filing system in maritime institutions in order to recommend transfer of outdated records and documents to the archives.
18. To define and establish retention period for vital historical and/or permanent records and objects.
19. To train library officers and other personnel in maritime institutions on the fundamentals of archival system.

The wide range of duties enumerated above is to be discharged by maritime archivists working in different sections of the archives. This explains why every staff in the maritime archives is an archivist. When these duties are apportioned appropriately to the various Sections of the maritime archives it becomes the functions of the respective Sections.

The performance of those duties also requires maritime archivists to have certain skills in order to function effectively. Maritime archivists need to:

- I) Have knowledge of water based activities.
- II) Be good with people so as to help them with their research.
- III) Have basic knowledge of conservation in order to extend the useful life of maritime artifacts.
- IV) Be logical, organised and pay attention to detail and accuracy.
- V) Have research skills and ability to understand the content of documents and the context in which they were created.
- VI) Be computer literate with ability to work with electronic records and databases.
- VII) Have knowledge of records retention systems, organisation and management techniques.
- VIII) Have an interest in history, water based activities and records preservation.
- IX) Have sound verbal and written communication skills, time management and the ability to operate with little supervision, initiative and flexibility.

Funding of Maritime Archives

To identify, collect, transport to designated location, describe, index, catalogue/arrange, prepare rules and regulations for accessing maritime archival materials across the country and abroad is a very big task. Another big task is to recruit and train competent staff with genuine interest in maritime archives administration. There is also the complex task of sustainable preservation and conservation of the archival materials as well as the building structure and space to keep them apart from the infrastructure to be provided.

Overall, it is difficult to set a figure for establishing maritime archives but the total funding commitment may necessarily require cost sharing between the major institutional stakeholders in the country. The minister of transportation may direct all water based parastatals to contribute 1 percent of their annual gross income to



fund the activities of the maritime archives. There should however be take-off grant of at least N2 billion to provide the structure and source for records and documents, recruit staff and provide logistics.

The maritime archives should also be capable of soliciting and receiving archival from individuals, organisations and governments including financial aid that would boost its collections, maintenance and sustainability. Part of the aid may be in kind such as in form of staff training, free participation in exhibitions and access to other archives to copy relevant materials.

Finally, the archives should be able to generate income through its services to the public that would augment income from other sources.

The Future

In a developing country like Nigeria, the future of maritime archives is both bright and dicey. It is bright because with the cabotage regime in place, increased oil and gas activities and the amendment of the National Inland Waterways Authority's Act which now provides wider funding sources for the agency, maritime activities in the country will grow. On the other hand, the future is dicey because organisations are rapidly digitalising their operations without national document policy for electronic data. In the face of viruses, careless deletion of valuable information and lack of policy for back-up and subsequent transfer to archives, most important information would be lost. It is already noted that the twenty-five years cut-off age for paper records and documents transfer to archives is not appropriate for electronic documents.

It is therefore necessary to develop comprehensive document retention and risk management protocols and strong compliance mechanisms that address all electronic documents including e-mails and attachments. It is equally imperative to regulate individual employee document retention behaviour and IT staff behaviour in the back-up of electronic data as well as the rotation of storage media.

There should be a Standing Archives Committee (SAC) in each water based organisation in the country composed of management, IT staff and Research and Statistics officers that would monitor document retention compliance. The SAC must also authenticate that employees properly transfer all data storage devices in their possession when they are redeployed and before leaving the organisation when their service terminates. Payment of staff final disengagement allowance may be tied to the confirmation by the SAC that all documents have been properly and completely handed over.

While the archiving procedure should be periodically reviewed and tested, a computer forensics device should also be installed to assist in document recovery. A third party individual or organisation may also be invited to periodically review and validate that document retention policies are being followed.

Finally, all maritime organisations in the country should be connected to a network with automatic central collation of 3-5 years information at the maritime archives.

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