

"Having new eyes" the changing face of the archive's profession in South Africa

Nkholezeni Sidney Netshakhuma

Department of Public Management, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore the ways in which the archives profession considered inclusivity and diversity in relation to minority groups with the objective to identify how innovation builds an inclusive archives in South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper uses a qualitative research approach that consists of a combination of literature review and expert interviews. The views from the interviewed expert archivists provide valuable insights, which compel this study to raise some important considerations regarding archives management, transformation and innovation.

Findings – The study indicates that there is a significant gap in the education and training of archivists, particularly regarding diversity management, and in archives and information communication technologies. A lack of these essential components in South African universities' curricula limits the possibilities of building a diverse and digital-competent workforce in the archival profession. This gap may hinder the profession's ability to adapt to global trends that include the use of digital archives and inclusivity in collections.

Research limitations/implications – The study focused on a few selected archivists. It would be better to conduct a survey of a larger group of archivists as this yields more data for a more comprehensive analysis of the responses and wider findings.

Social implications – The study will add to knowledge on how to foster diversity management in education and training and information communication technologies in archives management. This is an area of a high priority for the archives profession in South Africa.

Originality/value – The paper presents a timely exploration of the evolving landscape of archival practices, particularly regarding inclusivity and diversity. Its value is in the way it addresses critical issues, such as the underrepresentation of minority groups in archival collections, while offering original insights that will add to a proposed new framework, which will push the boundaries of existing literature. The study also explores the untapped areas such as innovative solutions to the challenges archives human resources and management and thus, ensuring a unique and substantial contribution to the discipline of archives management studies and practice.

Keywords Apartheid, Archivists, Minority groups, Archives management, Profession, Mpumalanga Records Management Forum

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This article considers the education and training of archivists, particularly regarding diversity management, archives and information communication technologies. This focus, which is also explored by Masibi *et al.* (2023), is here linked with the question of the inclusion of minority archives and calls for diversity in the archives profession in South Africa. Minority groups are defined, in the context of this article, as a marginalised communities in South Africa and these include South Africans originating from China and Portugal, and the Gay and Lesbian populations. The marginalisation of this group meant that their records were not fully collected nor preserved by the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (NARSSA). Nonetheless, archives address inclusivity and diversity in various ways. Jo and Gebru (2020) argue that this is achieved by being effortful and familiar in defining the minority collection. Inclusivity and diversity are also addressed by opening up the collection, recruitment and access and training and development

to sectors that would have been previously ignored. This brings in power dynamics in that, those in power influence the archive's agenda and the type of records to be collected and deposited in the NARSSA, as well as the type of training offered to archivists.

The archival profession should indeed include elements of inclusivity and diversity for it to develop. This diversity should focus on areas that include demographic profile, collection and acquisition of archive materials, training and development and appointment and recruitment. The researcher is of the view that the NARSSA should play a pivotal role towards the diversification of the profession. As a result, this article discusses the ways in which pluralist approaches assist in achieving diversity in practice and scholarship (The Archival Education and Research Institute

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/2514-9326.htm>



Collection and Curation
44/3 (2025) 99–106
Emerald Publishing Limited [ISSN 2514-9326]
[DOI [10.1108/CC-12-2024-0059](https://doi.org/10.1108/CC-12-2024-0059)]

© Nkholezeni Sidney Netshakhuma. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Funding: The Tshwane university of Technology Research Department for funding this research

Received 1 December 2024

Revised 4 April 2025

Accepted 7 April 2025

[AERI] and [Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group \[PACG\], 2011](#)). It also addresses the concepts, inclusivity and diversity, in archival pedagogy and practice and recommends the best practices to manage the paradigm. However, the study recognises that archivists used power to promote social justice by establishing national archives systems ([Jimerson, 2007](#)). The advent of democracy in South Africa has witnessed positive developments within the National Archives of South Africa through enactment of the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996 that seek to promote inclusivity and diversity in archives ([Griffin and Timcke, 2021](#), p. 12). Thus, this study hypothesises that these National Archives objectives and governmental mandates may contribute to development of inclusivity and diversity of the archives programme in the archives.

Study rationale

The State Archives in the pre-democratic South Africa prior 1994 limited the collection and preservation archives of minority groups as these collections were viewed as indigenous knowledge systems that did not add value to the western culture ([Bhebe and Ngoepe, 2021](#)). The pre-1994 archival content was established to celebrate white narratives of progressive control and understanding ([Griffin and Timcke, 2021](#), p. 9). Nonetheless, some of the existing research notes that the patriarchy of settler representation has not been questioned or reinterpreted ([Schellnack-Kelly, 2024](#)). Further to this, the NARSSA in democratic South Africa sought to redress past imbalances by collecting archives of the minority groups with the view to promote inclusivity and diversity. [Ngoepe \(2019\)](#) argues that archives should be inclusive and diverse to the extent of including minority groups in South Africa. This is affirmed by both in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996.

In practice, the NARSSA collection is not fully transformed. This is because the collection does not include materials from minority groups. The dominant representation of the past is centred on the white colonial archives ([Ngcobo, 2018](#)), which highlights that most archive materials collected and preserved by the NARSSA promote minority groups such as South Africans of Afrikaner and European white ethnicity. There have been attempts by the NARSSA to develop programmes that promote inclusivity and diversity through the enactment of the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996. However, there is need for further research on archives diversity, training and development and information communication technologies. The guiding view here is that the dominant material collections that were guided by past colonial and race-based ideologies and marginalised minority groups need to be challenged. It should not be ignored that the majority of people in South Africa, who constituted the socially, politically and economically marginalised, fought against the apartheid system and hence their collections deserve attention in the post-apartheid and multiracial democratic archives repositories. Archivists must support inclusivity and diversity through means that include awareness programmes on the archives profession and developing and implementing programmes that build and sustain diversity initiatives.

Problem statement

The archives are marked by complexities and yet the notion of inclusivity and diversity in archives has been insufficiently explored ([Flinn, 2007](#)). South Africa has instituted constitutional and legal statutes that express broad political support for inclusive and diversity of minority archives and these have given rise to questions about the future of the archives profession ([Huvila, 2016](#)). The reality is such that, archival education is not inclusive and diversified to attract people from minority groups into the archive profession. This is acknowledged by Verne Harris in his views that the archives are dominated by whiteness rather than the minority group archives presented at an international conference on archives ([Dean, 2018](#)). The diversification and inclusiveness of archives definitely contributes to an increase of minority archives in the profession. Therefore, this study seeks to address the inclusion and diversification of the archives of minority groups in South Africa.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach. This approach drew on available literature related to the study and interview data collected from five expert archivists using focus groups. The limitation of the study is that there were only five participants in the study and as such, the findings may not be generalised to the broader archival community in South Africa. However, the participants were selected from different organisations that strive for robustness and diversity. It should be acknowledged that few people in South Africa choose archives profession as a career.

The researcher used the Annual Mpumalanga Records Management Forum (MRMF) held at Delmas, South Africa, from 7 to 8 November 2024, to identify expert archivist attendees and request them to participate in the focus group interview. Five expert archivists from various organisations attending the annual MRMF conference agreed to participate in the interview. A sample of five out of the targeted population of 20 was selected. The seniority of the participants from the organisations represented in the forum determined the selection of who would participate in the interview processes. The participants' seniority went hand in hand with their familiarity with their organisation objectives. These participants oversee archives management units in their organisations.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process with informed consent secured from all participants. The researcher used a consent form to confirm that the senior archivists would participate voluntarily. The researcher ensured that ethical issues, such as privacy and confidentiality of gathered data and interview identities, was considered during the collection of data. The interview took less than 60 min because of the limited time. However, the time was enough to thoroughly explore the complex issues surrounding diversity and archives practice. This is because questions were based on only two main research objectives.

A literature review also serves as the foundational context for this study. The research used online resources such as Google Scholar to search for the latest articles related to archives inclusivity and diversity and training and the development of archives. The reviewed literature was assessed and synthesised with the existing body of work related to archives inclusivity

and diversity of minority groups. The literature review, which was comprehensive, captured key words such as archives inclusivity and diversity. It was noted that the current literature insufficiently addresses archives inclusivity and diversity and thus, the researcher proposes further research on the issue of inclusivity and diversity. This is because this article may not be fully grounded in the existing academic discourse.

Several (expert interviews) that were conducted with selected archivists familiar with the minority group in South Africa. This strategy of selecting only experts for interview was useful to find out about new development areas in archives inclusivity and diversity. This was necessary as there is an expectation for the archives profession to embrace inclusivity and diversity. The data collection method was also appropriate in that it elicits the views and opinions of a range of carefully selected archivists in South Africa with expert knowledge on archives.

Therefore, a literature review and expert archivists interviews defined this study's research methodology. Both were selected because the archives sector is a small niche of the archive sector (Haunton, 2014).

Objectives of the study

This study's research objectives were to:

- assess whether the archive's profession attracts people from minority groups in South Africa; and
- determine the level of educational training and development on archives inclusivity and diversity in South Africa.

The above-mentioned objectives assist in answering the study's following research questions:

RQ1. How do the archives profession attract minority group in South Africa?

RQ2. What is the level of educational training and development regarding archives inclusivity and diversity in South Africa?

Diversity in South African archives

This section investigates the nature of representation of minority groups in the archives with specific reference to the NARSSA. The existing examples of minority archives include the South African Chinese minority records (Harris, 1997), Portuguese community-based organisations records (Rodrigues, 2013) and the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa (Manion and Morgan, 2011). These collections absent in the National Archives of South Africa.

There is a historical context that explains the marginalisation of minority groups from the national archives. The South African experiences linked to the establishment of first, a colonial and then, secondly, apartheid-based government created staggering social differences whose impact is still felt in the present the archival domain. The foundation of archives in South Africa dates to the 20th century. The early archives established in South Africa were from the former colonies, the Boer Republic and the Union of the Republic of South Africa after 1910 (Conradie, 2012). This was followed by the establishment of state archives, whose function during the apartheid period included the preservation of archives of the white population group (Katuu, 2015a, 2015b; Saurombe, 2018).

Nevertheless, several efforts were done within South African to address the imbalances in representation of minority group. These attempts indicate the start of inclusive and diversity of archives of South Africa heritage. Archives in the post-apartheid era sought to redress past imbalances and offer representations of minority groups (Ngcobo, 2018). This is expressed in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the White paper on Arts, Heritage historical truth and Establish and Culture published in 1996, which states that archives institution should also represent minority groups. A further development is that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was established in 1995 to retrieve and restore the collective memories of apartheid and engender a sense of nation building (McEwan, 2003). A repository of post-colonial archives, in this context describing archives created after the end of apartheid, was established as a result of the TRC. The TRC was significant in ensuring that minority group archives were and continue to be incorporated into the National archives of South Africa. In addition, there has been focus, in the post-apartheid era, to publicise archival materials instead of waiting for the user to find them. The impacts of this strategy include the silencing of the diverse experiences of minority groups. Finally, the impact of the minority archives on learning and scholarship has been significant in that it has enabled the archives to promote the marginalised collection through publications and international research.

This study went on to ask the expert archivists on the attraction of minority group into the archives profession. The participants provided various answers with some outlined below.

The first issue considered related to "Inviting non-archives members to participate in the archives forum and conference influences other professionals to join the archives profession" (Focus Group). The results from an analysis of the responses show that the forum used invitations to attract other professional members such as Chief Information Officers, Legal Officers and audit professionals. The invitation of other professionals to join the forum acted as an awareness strategy. This observation is supported by Mosweu (2021) in the argument that archives must attract professionals from all minority groups through a robust outreach programme (Mosweu, 2021). This implies that professional associations play an important role in the marketing and public relations of the national archives and other archives professional organisation.

The other focus group question was raised though the statement, "There are limited minority groups with archives management qualification" (interview, Focus Group). The results show that there existed a limited people with qualifications in archives management. It was also noted that archives management is ineffective because of staff that lacked archives and records management qualifications. This implies that the profession may not grow if there is still a lack of staff with the required archival management qualifications. As a result, Balogun (2025) highlights the need for improved staff training and development, whereas this researcher calls on archivists to register for Archives qualifications to enhance their skills and knowledge in archives management.

The focus group interview also highlighted other factors that undermined the recruitment and appointment of minority groups in the archives sector. Participant three indicated that, "There is no guideline to employ the minority group during

advertisement and recruitment processes". Most respondents were not even aware of the National Guideline that offers preference to the applicants side lined during the apartheid period and hence the previously disadvantaged groups for appointments into employment. Finally, some respondents acknowledged that they had not yet consulted their Human Resources for guidelines on archives and record management recruitment.

It was also noted that the profession faces competition on remunerations from other professions. The archives profession was viewed as low status in comparison to other professions in auditing and finance and law. In addition, it seems that the organisation's formal processes of archives recruitment and promotion, such as position advertisements and key selection criteria, were less likely to attract females.

The analysis also shows that people were not willing to join the profession. The participants confirmed that there were several awareness campaigns that targeted the minority to join the profession. Nonetheless, as noted by Participant Four, "Most people are reluctant to be attracted to archives management profession because of the low salaries associated". This is mostly because the sector offers low salaries and benefits. Hence, the need for the sector to benchmark with other sectors and for the profession to develop standard guidelines for archives salary structures.

The results also showed that a multidiscipline approach is necessary to develop the archives profession. Participant Five indicated that "we plan to co-publish papers or research with staff from minority group". This implies an increase in research publications. Surprisingly, virtually no articles have been published in archival journals about minority recruitment in the archive profession in South Africa. The researcher hopes that co-publishing with staff from other professions such as history, anthropology and sociology will attract other scholars to join the archives profession.

The interview also considered the importance of relationships between archives and other sectors. Participant 2 indicated that "there is a move from the archives profession to collaborate with other professionals to increase archives visibility". The focus group highlighted the need for relationships between archives and public relations, legal and marketing divisions to increase visibility. Thus, collaboration with Information Communication technology would ensure that people understand the significance of the archive's profession. Some of the reviewed literature, such as [Garaba \(2015\)](#), shows that some archivists were reluctant to embrace new systems and practices and yet the successful application of technologies requires changing systems and practices and the organisational cultures to facilitate transformation.

The analysis of responses from the expert archivists and observations from the literature review shows the need to attract diverse backgrounds and experiences to the archive's profession. There is evidence of a broadening of the demographics in the archives profession from 1991 and how this increases after 1994. This transformation, which also included the incorporation of archives of minority groups in the National Archives of South Africa ([McEwan, 2003](#)), motivated a growth of archives profession. This means that a representation of minority groups is a valuable tool in tracing

the legacy of their belonging and social standing as South African citizens.

It is evident that embracing information communication technology contributes to sharing of data in an electronic environment. This highlights the need for the digital transformation of archives, which in turn calls for professional retraining in digital records management and the management of archives in the future ([Balogun, 2025](#)). The retraining of archivists in South Africa is imperative because archivists were previously trained on the management of paper based records and yet the emergence of digital technologies requires archivists with new skills and knowledge, such as big data, artificial intelligences and other technological artefacts. In addition, records are created in electronic format, which has an implication on the lifecycle of records and demands that archivists adopt a records continuum to manage all digital records.

Digital transformation provides an opportunity for the development of archivists in a new dimension. Archivists should venture beyond traditional archival studies and enter into technical and specialised Information and communication technologies to fulfil their job requirements. This shows that archivists of the future will be recruited from the Information Communication Technologies sector. The incorporation of ICT skills and knowledge has already started to transform the archives profession in South Africa. [Burford et al. \(2015\)](#) note that the ongoing impact of information technologies continues to drive change in the information sector and education for archivists. In addition, [Frances \(2024\)](#) argues that the increasing demand for information technology skills will enable archivists to become versatile, adaptive and forward-thinking. This implies that archivists are now entering into the realm of digital management and as such, they need to keep pace with digital technologies for effective decision-making.

The above discussed results indicate that the NARSSA staff must address research and learning issues of minority groups within the archives and proactively appoint archivists from minority groups. These steps will bring the minority collections closer to establishing a representative history of minority groups at the NARSSA. There is also a need for an initiative to gather minority collections with the view to increase diversity. Traditionally, minority groups have not transferred their collection to the NARSSA and its provincial archives and these gaps significantly affect the diversity of archives in South Africa. As a result, an absence of the minority group archives collection leaves researchers with little knowledge about minority groups.

The archival profession and South African society at large should strive for an increase in diversity for inclusion. Diversity, recruitment, retention and mentoring have received modest attention in the archives profession ([Poole, 2017](#)). However, diversity recruitment contributes to inclusive and diversity of archives. This objective for inclusion and diversity faces the challenge of limited funds. This implies that there should be both awareness campaigns that show the importance and significance of the archives profession and a sufficient budget that would fund these projects.

Unfortunately, a limited budget allocated to the archive's profession reduces the activities of archives recruitment. [Ngulube and Tafor \(2006\)](#) note that archives in Southern Africa are underfunded. The researcher is of the view that archivists must develop a business strategy that clearly states

the archives programme's benefits. This statement is alluded to by [Garaba \(2015\)](#), who indicates that the lack of financial and suitable human resources undermines the operations and sustainability in the archives environment.

The NARSSA and South Africa Society of Archivists (SASA) consider aspects of inclusivity and diversity within the profession. The establishment of the SASA sought to address the issue of cultural diversity, and as per the 2002 SASA resolution, to establish a Records Management forum that would complement the joint committee's efforts to promote the recruitment of minorities into the profession and increase their participation. Their collections also demonstrate diversity to attract people from minority groups ([Adkins, 2008](#)). Thus, archivists share the responsibility of ensuring that the holdings of archives reflects inclusivity and diversity of the society. This is because addressing the challenges of inclusivity and diversity will ensure that archives institutions act as the glue that assists in building of post-apartheid South Africa.

Training and diversity in archives

The past colonial and apartheid governments gave whites preference in their archives training programmes. [Sandeep \(2013\)](#) notes that individuals from the white population group received training archives management during the apartheid era and as such, the State Archives of South Africa did not fully train black people. Thus, black people were not allowed to preserve state records and considered as not belonging to the archival profession ([Satgoor, 2015](#), p. 100). This limited provision of training in archives management and the dearth of professional development programmes for non-white archives management staff was a source of major concern in post-apartheid South Africa ([Schellnack-Kelly, 2017](#))

The focus of this section is to assess the status, trends and challenges of archives management training in South Africa today. The archives management service has gone through a transformation process after the end of the apartheid in 1994 that aimed at promoting inclusivity and diversity in archives ([Saurombe, 2018](#)). Some of the post-1994 democratic South Africa's transformation strategies focused on the training and development of archivists in archives management to create a more inclusive and diverse archives. The transformation projects also sought to redefine the archives and make them relevant to society. Furthermore, archivist acquired skills and knowledge in Information communication technologies and governance, and equipped with knowledge on international standards of archives and records management ([Schellnack-Kelly, 2017](#)).

It should be noted that other African countries also experienced a lack of education and training opportunities after attaining their independence ([Katuu, 2015a, 2015b](#)). The introduction of the Archives and records management qualification commenced in African countries was also affected by a general lack of participants from the minority groups. This lack of interest and that of diversity arose from various factors. [Ngulube and Tafor \(2006\)](#) attribute that lack of inclusivity and diversity in archives to limited funding from governments. [Balogun \(2025\)](#) suggests that the National government, which is responsible for financing the National Archives, should increase the amount of funding to archival institutions. The Archives institution should, in turn, market their work and

services to government authorities so that the government may also realise significance of the archives in the nation and for other matters such as inclusion and diversity.

The priorities of future archives curriculum development in the university should be archives diversity and inclusivity. Advocacy for inclusion and diversity in archives is a component of teaching pedagogy at the Library and Information School Academy of the University of Alabama since 2019 ([Komova et al., 2023](#)). The South African expert participants who audited the programme at the University of Alabama recommended that its application as a benchmark model at all institutions of higher learning to develop programmes in archives inclusivity and diversity. Furthermore, marketing and outreach programmes by the NARSSA compel South African universities to include diversity and archives management in curriculum development ([Burford et al., 2015](#)). These attempts will enhance the nation's understanding of the importance of archives management in areas that include preservation of the memory of the nation and management of records on issues such as land claims and disputes and improve the growth of the archives professional in South Africa.

Some existing studies acknowledge the relevance of initiatives to include diversity in archives in South Africa, as noted at other international universities. [Garaba \(2015\)](#) observes that there is inadequate training and development to deal with archives inclusivity and diversity issues and thus, argues that diversity and archives management training should be part of the archives programme of the future. A study conducted at the *steve.museum* research project by [Trant \(2009\)](#) recommends that curriculum development in archives management should include archives inclusivity and diversity. This implies a curriculum of university programmes to reflect inclusivity and diversity ([Ngoepe and Saurombe, 2021](#)).

Nonetheless, the challenge faced by most archivists is that they are not trained on archives inclusivity and diversity. As confirmed by [Khayundi \(2011\)](#), the training conducted in archival studies did not focus on diversifying the collection. Hence, just as noted above, a study conducted by [Frances \(2024\)](#) emphasises the need for education programmes to incorporate archives inclusivity and diversity. These observations have a bearing on the analysis of expert group responses analysed below.

The expert group was asked about training in the question:

Q1. How is the level of training and development of archives and diversity?

A major response was that "Training on archives inclusivity and diversity is not yet conducted in the archives institutions" (Focus group). This shows that some organisations had not yet started the training. These organisations should establish programmes to train archivists on archives inclusivity and diversity. The researcher holds the view that the training will enhance archivists' ability to embrace inclusivity and diversity and continue to be part of the skills development and training of the archive's profession.

Furthermore, questions about the types of training conducted in the archives were asked. Participant 2 indicated that:

[...] they attended the Basic, Advanced Archives, and Records Management programmes. Such training was organised by the University of South Africa. The training included all the divisions, and units within their organisation.

This response confirm that other institutions had already embarked on training and awareness on archives programmes. Such training and development programmes were organised internally by their Human Resource Management, which also underscores organisations' desire to capacitate staff on archives and records management. Finally, the training programmes also have the potential to promote to attract people to join the archives profession.

A further Focus Group response noted the "need for universities offering qualification in archives management to include archives inclusivity and diversity, and information communication technologies during curriculum development". This highlights that most South African universities are not offering courses in archives inclusivity and diversity and information communication technologies. The proposed training of archivists and records managers in South Africa should include Inclusive management, diversity management, copyright issues, Freedom of Information laws, the management of privacy of information and information communication technology skills. [Frances \(2024\)](#) underscores the role of information technology in the archives in the statement that the integration of advanced digital technologies has necessitated the development of digital skills for archivists. This is because advances in digital, online and information technology transformed nature of archives profession practices ([Burford et al., 2015](#)). Interestingly, it seems that minority groups preferred to digitise their archives materials.

The participants also provided significant responses. Participant 3 indicated their satisfaction with the MRMF over "a plan to establish archives management course." The respondent agreed that the association had matured enough to develop and implement an archives management course that includes elements of archives inclusivity and diversity. However, it was not clear whether the training would be offered in collaboration with an institution of higher learning in South Africa nor whether the course would be accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training. This uncertainty needs attention because the focus of the information profession is to extend to research activity. [Procter \(2017, p. 296\)](#) supports this view as noted in the statement that a recognised body of knowledge or expertise that assists in solving the challenges in society is underpinned and developed through evidence-based research, which is what institutions of higher learning do in their focus on research output, quality and performance. This implies that archivists need to be retrained on archives inclusivity and diversity.

Participant 4 answered as follows "The most important role of archives management training on archives inclusivity and diversity is to understand the significance of archives management. It does not matter as to whether the profession expands or attracts another profession". This implies that other staff members are not concerned about the expansion of the profession. The findings indicated that other professionals did not understand the role of archives management in the training and development of staff.

Other respondents reported that they had never attended any training on archives management at their institutions. One participant noted, during a group discussion that:

I do not remember our department conducting archives management training, I experience only awareness training and development by attending the archives management forum.

In addition, Participant 5 underlined the negative effects of not receiving training in the statement that:

How can we expand the profession to other people while we are not familiar with basic concept of archives? Honestly, almost no staff ever trained me of archives inclusivity and diversity.

The above cited responses show that the profession cannot attract professionals from another sectors if they are not aware of the basic principles of archives and records management. Internal training and development are key for professionals to improve archives management. The minority groups should also be trained in archives management diversity and inclusivity. This means that archivists must first be familiar with the key concepts of archives and the novel ideas on inclusivity and diversity before expanding to other people.

The results from an analysis of the interviews show that some archivists attended training and professional development in archives management and diversity, whereas others had not but recognised the importance of this training. This implies that continuous training and development must be conducted by organisations before expanding to other professionals such as auditors and information communication technologists. It was also noted that digital transformation is reshaping the archives profession and thus, requiring an intelligent integration of digital technologies to enhance efficiency and agility. Hence, the statement by [Balogun \(2025\)](#) that investment and funding be directed towards information and communication technology.

Conclusion

This article provides empirical evidence on archival professionals' views on inclusivity and diversity and their importance in strengthening archives management and the archives profession. The evolution of the post-apartheid era continues to reshape interpretations of the archives and one of the areas needing transformation is in organisations' commitment to recruit staff from minority groups. A further finding from the study is that there is need for a review of the archives education curriculum in South Africa to cater for inclusivity and diversity in archives management as alluded to by [Ngoepe and Saurombe \(2021\)](#). Finally, it was noted that the archives practices and organisations ought to raise awareness on archives inclusivity and diversity in South Africa and all over the world.

Recommendations

The study highlights that the archives profession must change the image of archivist and archival work. The process involves attracting people from minority groups and experiences to the archive's profession. Furthermore, training and development is critical to the archive's profession and this involves making sure that the archivists understand their roles and their service to minority groups. [Fritz \(2019\)](#) argues that archives can play an important role in advocating for inclusivity and diversity initiatives. This implies that organisations must raise awareness of the significance of archive materials of minority groups. A study by [Mukwevho \(2018\)](#) recognised the significance of the National Archives of South Africa in raising awareness of the significance of the archives programmes. In addition, the mandate of the NARSSA is to promote inclusivity and diversity in the archives, hence should also collaborate and incorporate

educators and state departments such as the Department of Education and the Department of Arts and Culture.

There was a considerable lack of awareness of the role of archives in the digital era. The focus group noted that most people only learnt about the significance of archives during the International Archives Week, which is initiated by the International Council of Archives worldwide to promote archives. It is thus recommended that organizations engage in induction programmes that will enable the people to realise the significance of archives inclusivity and diversity. This recommendation is supported by the findings, which show the significance of archives outreach programmes in raising awareness of the archives profession in Southern Africa.

The review of the literature and data analysis shows that archives staff need to promote inclusiveness and diversity of archives by developing guidelines on recruiting staff from minority group. As a result, the archives should select certain records to be advertised worldwide with the view to marketing the profession.

There is also a need to challenge the dominance discourses in archives. The greatest service of archivists is to contribute to the continuity of culture by stimulating connections between the useful information from the past and the challenging needs of the present. As a result, archives management and transformation should be aware of past colonial and apartheid brutalities and the reality that South Africans fought against the apartheid system and gained democratic rights as part of their heritage. This also highlights the need to instil archives inclusivity and diversity. Finally, there is a further need to link archives management systems with educational opportunities to address inequality in education.

References

- Adkins, W.E. (2008), "Our journey toward diversity – and a call to (more) action", *The American Archivist*, Spring – Summer, Vol. 71 No. 1, pp. 21-49, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/40294493
- Balogun, T. (2025), "Preservation digital heritage: assessing the compliance of digital repositories in South Africa with OAIS and TDR standards", *Records Management Journal*, doi: [10.1108/rmj-11-2024-0047/full/html](https://doi.org/10.1108/rmj-11-2024-0047/full/html), available at: www.emerald.com/insight/content/
- Bhebhe, S. and Ngoepe, M. (2021), "Elitism in critical emancipation paradigm: national archival oral history collection in Zimbabwe and South Africa", *Archival Science*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 155-172, doi: [10.1007/s10502-020-09351](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-020-09351).
- Burford, S., Partridge, H., Brown, S., Hider, P. and Ellis, L. (2015), "Education for Australia's information future", *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 458-471, doi: [10.1080/07294360.2014.973380](https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.973380).
- Conradie, B. (2012), "Taking stock: South African society of archivists from 1960s to beyond the millennium", *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, Vol. 45 No. 85, p. 95, available at: www.ajol.info/index.php/jsasa/article/view/85725
- Dean, K. (2018), "Should the Australian society of archivists have a diversity policy?" *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 121-123, doi: [10.1080/01576895.2018.1490982](https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2018.1490982).
- Flinn, A. (2007), "Community histories, community archives: some opportunities and challenges", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 151-176, available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00379810701611936
- Frances, O. (2024), *Exploiting Business Archives in the Era of Digital Transformation*, Loughborough University, doi: [10.26174/thesis.Iboro.26014354.v1](https://doi.org/10.26174/thesis.Iboro.26014354.v1).
- Fritz, A. (2019), "Archivist-in-residence: advocating and managing archival diversity residency opportunities in university archives and special collections", *Journal of Western Archives*, Vol. 10 No. 1 Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency Special Issue, doi: [10.26077/c75b-f2cb](https://doi.org/10.26077/c75b-f2cb).
- Garaba, F. (2015), "Dodos in the archives: rebranding the archival profession to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century within ESARBICA", *Archives, and Records*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 216-225, doi: [10.1080/23257962.2015.1030609](https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2015.1030609).
- Griffin, H.S. and Timcke, S. (2021), "Re-framing archival thought in Jamaica and South Africa: challenging racist structures, generating new narratives", *Archives and Records*, Vol. 43 No. 1, p. 117, doi: [10.1080/23257962.2021.2002137](https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2021.2002137).
- Harris, L.K. (1997), "The South African Chinese: a community records of a neglected minority", *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 316-325, doi: [10.1080/02582582479708671284](https://doi.org/10.1080/02582582479708671284).
- Haunton, M. (2014), "Archives are our business – The national archives blog, the national archives", The National Archives, available at: <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-business/> (accessed 16 November 2022).
- Huvila, I. (2016), "eRemembrance of eOblivion? International conference on society's memory functions in the digital world, university of Tampere, Finland, Tampere 23 – 24 November, 2015", *IR Information Research*, Vol. 21 No. 1, available at: <https://informationr.net/ir/21-1/memo/memo0.html>
- Jimerson, R. (2007), "Archives for all: professional responsibility and Social Justice", *The American Archivist*, Fall-Winter, Vol. 70 No. 20, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40294571>
- Jo, S.E. and Gebru, T. (2020), "Lessons from archives: strategies for collecting Sociocultural data in machine learning", *Proceedings of the 2020 conference on fairness*, pp. 306-316, available at: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3351095.3372829>
- Katuu, S. (2015a), "The development of archives and records management education and training in Africa – challenges and opportunities", *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 96-119, doi: [10.1080/01576895.2015.1050677](https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2015.1050677).
- Katuu, S. (2015b), "Managing digital records in a global environment. A review of the landscape of international standards and good practice guidelines. Managing digital records", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 34 No. 5, pp. 869-894, available at: www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/el-04-2015-0064/full/html?mobileUi=0&fullSc=1&mbSc=1
- Khayundi, F. (2011), "Existing records and archival programmes to the job market", *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, Vol. 44, pp. 62-73, available at: www.ajol.info/index.php/jsasa/article/view/77607
- Komova, M., Petrushka, A., Penchuk, I. and Tarasov, D. (2023), "Digital humanities in the concept of training specialists in information, library and archival science", SCIA. SCIA-2023: 2nd International Workshop on Social Communication and Information Activity in Digital Humanities, 9 November 2023, Lviv, Ukraine, available at: <https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-3608/paper1.pdf>
- Manion, A. and Morgan, R. (2011), "The gay and lesbian archives: documenting same-sex – sexuality in an African context. Empowering women for gender equity",

- Homosexuality*, Vol. 20 No. 67, available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10130950.2006.9674695
- McEwan, C. (2003), "Building a Post-Colonial archive? Gender, collective memory and citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 29 No. 3, available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0305707032000095009
- Masibi, T.J., Mnjama, N. and MazebeII, P. (2023), "Archival silences with the national archival documentary heritage institutions of Botswana", *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 245-257, available at: www.proquest.com/openview/557b6163f64e5d4d77b1ec01bb0cb133/1?cbl=736345&pq-origsite=gscholar
- Mosweu, T. (2021), "The processing of Kgosi Bathoen II private archives collection for increased access to archives", *South Africa Society of Archivists Journal*, Vol. 54, pp. 103-113, available at: www.ajol.info/index.php/jsasa/article/view/216962
- Mukwevho, J. (2018), "Educational programs as an interactive tool for public engagement by public archives repositories in South Africa", *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 309-329, available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01576895.2018.1550426
- Ngcobo, A. (2018), "The politics of representation in South African museums", *ICOFOM Study Series*, Vol. 46 No. 46, pp. 147-166, available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/iss/1058>
- Ngoepe, M. (2019), "Archives without archives: a window of opportunity to build inclusive archives in South Africa", *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, Vol. 52, available at: www.ajol.info/index.php/jsasa/article/view/191336
- Ngoepe, M. and Saurombe, N. (2021), "Africanisation of the South African archival curriculum. A preliminary study of undergraduate course in an open distance e-learning environment", *Education for Information*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 53-68, doi: [10.3233/IEF1-190358](https://doi.org/10.3233/IEF1-190358).
- Ngulube, P. and Tafor, V.F. (2006), "The management of public records and archives in the member countries of ESARBICA", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 57-83, doi: [10.1080/00039810600691288](https://doi.org/10.1080/00039810600691288).
- Poole, H.A. (2017), "Pinkett's charges: recruiting, retaining, and mentoring archivists of color in the twenty-first century", *The American Archivist*, Vol. 80 No. 1, pp. 103-134, doi: [10.17723/0360-9081.80.1.103](https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.80.1.103).
- Procter, M. (2017), "Protecting rights, asserting professional identity", *Archives and Records*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 296-309, doi: [10.1080/23257962.2017.1285754](https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2017.1285754).
- Rodrigues, A.D.S. (2013), "An archival collecting framework for the records generated by South Africa's Portuguese community-based organisations in Gauteng", PhD Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria, available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/43173779.pdf>
- Sandeep, J. (2013), *Fundamentals of Library Administration and Management*, Creon Publications, New Delhi.
- Satgoor, U. (2015), "Celebrating libraries in 20 years of democracy: an overview of library and information services in South Africa", *IFLA Journal*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 97-111, available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0340035215585100>.
- Saurombe, N. (2018), "Decolonising higher Education Curricula in South Africa: factoring in archives through public programming", *Initiatives*, Vol. 18, pp. 119-141, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-018-9289-4>.
- Schellnack-Kelly, I. (2024), "Accessing collective memory: the role of oral history in building an inclusive archives reflecting a people's archives", *Collection and Curation*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 24-29, available at: www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/cc-01-2023-0004/full/html
- Schellnack-Kelly, T. (2017), "Role of public archivists in post-apartheid South Africa: passive custodians or proactive narrators. Opinion pieces", *Archives and Records*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 273-295, available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23257962.2016.1214560
- The Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) and Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG) (2011), "Educating for the archival multiverse, the American archivists", available at: www.jstor.org/stable/23079002
- Trant, J. (2009), "Emerging convergence? Thoughts on museums, archives, libraries, and professional training", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 24 No. 4, available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09647770903314738

Further reading

- Dlamini, J., Hassim, S., Phillips, H.L., Saunders, C., Simpso, T., Thumbran, J. and Magaziner, D. (2024), "South Africa, 1994 =30. A conversation about history after apartheid. History matters", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 65 No. 1, pp. 4-2021, doi: [10.1017/500218537240000070](https://doi.org/10.1017/500218537240000070).
- Gilliland, A. (2011), "Neutrality, social justice and the obligations of archival education and educators in the twenty-first century", *Archival Science*, Vol. 11 Nos 3/4, pp. 193-209.
- Jamerson, C.R. (2007), "Archives for all: professional responsibility and social justice", *The American Archivist*, Vol. 70 No. 2, pp. 252-281.
- Marcella, R. and Oppenheim, C. (2020), "Does education in library and information studies in the United Kingdom have a future? Education for information (online)", *Education for Information*, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 411-440.

About the author

Nkholezeni Sidney Netshakhuma PhD in Information Science at the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. He published extensively on archives, records management and knowledge management. He is currently a postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa. Nkholezeni Sidney Netshakhuma can be contacted at: SidneyNetshakhuma1@gmail.com or NetshakhumaNS@tut.ac.za

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com