

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT

**AN ASSESSMENT OF ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL IN FOSTERING DEMOCRACY: A CASE
STUDY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE**

BY

MHLANGA BERNARD THOMAS

(N006 1668D)

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONOURS DEGREE**

IN

RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

YEAR: 2010

ABSTRACT

Archival appraisal remains one of the critical responsibilities of archivists. Archivists shape societal memory as they determine what is to be preserved for posterity. It is through the process of archival appraisal that information vital for democratic accountability is nurtured and hence there has been a transformation in the realm of archival science whereby archivists are called for to appraise records taking into cognizance the bearing of archives on democracy. As shapers of social memory archivists are then accountable to the people and should focus on documenting aspects of Zimbabwean experience ignored or excluded previously. The present study aimed at assessing the archival appraisal practices at the National Archives of Zimbabwe and their bearing on democracy. The study examined the goals of archival appraisal in fostering democracy, methodologies currently in practice, the effects of politicizing archival appraisal, archival strategies, assessed the competency skills of those tasked with this delicate task and the effects of backlogs in archival appraisal on democracy. The study employed triangulation. The study's gathering tools involved structured questionnaires and face to face interviews. The respondents included the directorate, chief archivists, archivists and other members of the Records Committee. The overall findings revealed that archival appraisal was not being conducted in a professional manner and this fact threatens the future of historical research, corporate memory, and national heritage of Zimbabwe which in turn undermines efforts towards democratization. To compound this problem, the archival methodology currently in practice at the institution is archaic and in urgent need of review. The study also revealed that the lack of expertise to carry out the process constituted an impediment to appraisal. The study's conclusions and recommendations were that there was need to overhaul the appraisal methodologies in order to fully operationalize archival appraisal. There is urgent need to adopt the macro appraisal theory in their appraisal endeavors, an approach that is viewed as a societal model which fosters democratic accountability. In a nutshell, the researcher concluded that archivists at the NAZ should at least "disabuse" themselves from archaic practices of conducting appraisal as these are being overwhelmed by modern archival thinking.