NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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THE PRESENCE OF ARCHIVES ON THE WEB: A WEBOMETRIC STUDY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ZIMBABWE's WEBSITE

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ABSTRACT

Archives are meaningless in their own right, people accessing archives is the existential act that justifies their preservation. Without effective public programming activities, the appreciation, understanding, exploitation and accessibility of archives is compromised, leading to social invisibility of archives. In this regard, a study examining the utilisation of the NAZ's website as a public programming tool was conducted. The study was based on the premise that in a bid to raise social visibility of archives, there is no one public programming strategy that can be wholesale, thus, a need to utilise web outreach as a supplement to the already existing traditional public programming activities, for example, exhibitions. The records continuum model formed the theoretical foundation of the study, as the elements of the framework include outreach issues with regard to the public archives. Data was derived by the researcher using research objectives as a guide. The data was further derived from questionnaires administered to 5 employees and 5 researchers at NAZ. The findings revealed an underutilisation of the NAZ website as a public programming tool, as evidenced by: the lack of public programming activities on the NAZ website, the lack of knowledge on the existence of the website amongst researchers, lack of use of Social Networking Sites (SNS's) and lack of online services which are essential in enhancing service delivery through facilitating remote access. The study revealed that NAZ is currently using a ministerial website, in which control over the website is limited. The study revealed the existence of poor links which lead to a dead end, thereby inconveniencing users in the navigation of the NAZ website. The major recommendation made by the study was that NAZ should have an institutional website. The study further recommended the use of essential online services and SNS's in raising awareness of archives. The study also raised the need for convenient links on the website in order to facilitate easy navigation of the NAZ website.