

## **FAN ABU DHABI 2019 PROGRAMME**

May, 2 2019

Challenges applying digital to a National Archive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Good morning Colleagues,

Before beginning with my speech/presentation I would like to thank the Chair of FAN for giving me the opportunity to share the experiences of the National Archives of Suriname with the colleagues here. I also want to congratulate him with the launch of this FAN meeting and at the same time thank Dr. Abdullah for making this possible.

To be honest, looking at the list of speakers and the institutions they represent, I shared my concerns before the FAN meeting with Jeff and Clarisse. In comparison with UK, UAE, USA, Australia, China and Estonia, the National Archives of Suriname is very small and have limited financial resources.

For the colleagues here who doesn't know where Suriname is: my country is in South America and lies between French and British Guyana (East and West) and in the South, Brazil. Because we have more or less the same characteristics as the Caribbean region, we are also part of the Caribbean.

Archives (and public records) are part of our cultural heritage, they are the sources concerning the actions of government and society as a whole. They are, not alone, essential establish good governance, but also for our identity. Archives are invaluable for the formation of our identity. They can enrich us, provide insight, comfort and make us more self-aware.

Our objectives as custodian of government records is to preserve , manage and make them accessible to the public (before 2010 our work procedures were mostly analog). Although since the beginning of 2000 we began making digital copies with the scanner from ICAM Archives system.

## **SHEET 1**

### **FACTS NATIONAL ARCHIVES SURINAME**

Our collection is about 12km. (about 2.5- 3 km. are digitized) These are not digital born archives.

- 12 km archives in custody (government records, private collection, audiovisual records)
- 70TB digitized
- NAIS (National Archives Information System)
- Social media (website, fb-page, Instagram).
- Staff: 55 persons (2 IT-staff).

Government records (paper based) to be appraised and transferred to the National Archives

What are our objectives as NAS? The strategies to reach our objectives? What are our weaknesses and strengths?

When I began my career at the NAS there was on outdated archive regulation, in 2006 a new archive law was adopted and 2010 we inaugurated our new archive building. Our focus before 2010 was not on developing a strategy with regard to digital preservation whatsoever. It was on our archive building, the training of our staff in archival description and other aspects of archive management. When I was appointed in 2010 as National archivist we then were confronted with several challenges lack of capacity of staff adding metadata, in electronic /digital records management, digital preservation, we had outdated scanners.

Based on our objectives, we developed a strategy to train our staff and at the same time invest in purchase of software. As an institution coming from a country with limited resources our weakness was having limited resources. Our strength was that my team believed in the targets and goals we set out for ourselves. I submitted several project proposals to international organisations for funding and what we did was also submitted a proposal to use the rest budget (unspent money) from the new archives building to purchase and invest in soft- and hardware (audiovisual) Lucky for us the UNESCO we receive funding from the

UNESCO (Communication). My IT staff in collaboration with technician from a IT consultant bureau developed a simple software programme (NAIS-National Archives Information System).

UNESCO project: **Training in Preservation and access of digital and digitized documentary heritage. The project was mainly dedicated on the training of our staff in basic skills in Records Management and Digital Information Management**, Digitization and Access of Information, Information Retrieval, Metadata Management, Trends and Development, Digital Curation.

At that time between 2010 -2017 we also had a collaboration with The Netherlands for the return of our historical records and also digitize these material. In this regards about 1 million documents were digitized and online accessible. On both the website of the NAN and NAS. We also received the digital copies. As a consequence The Netherlands invested in training and infrastructure. It is important as an organistaion with limited resources to build partnership with others who have all the resources. Just a quick note that in our negotiations to clearly define your expectations. In our case The Netherlands were interested in genealogical sources. We collaborated with the Radboud Univerity and the NAN to digitize these material and we manage to receive a ultramodern i2s scanner.

## **SHEET 2**

- Another challenge for NAS at the moment is that the Surinamese government continues to work increasingly in the digital environment. An e-Government commission was installed to introduce the use of information and communication technology within the Suriname Government. Introducing government agencies to work in a GovGRid environment.
- In this regards its becoming imperative that as National Archives have to adjust our strategy with regards to long-term preservation of digital records (as evidence for accountability and the protection of Surinamese cultural heritage in digital form.)

The shift towards electronic record management is unstoppable, government agencies are purchasing software application without training their staff. They need to be trained in basic electronic record-keeping (so that they are able to distinguish between records and other information objects, ensure that they create records that are complete and accurate and) so that they will be able to identify and manage the sources of digital records including emails and shared drives.

Furthermore training in particular aspects of digital curation, particularly digital records systems design, digitisation planning and delivery, and digital preservation.

On the longer-term, it would be beneficial to build this kind of technical capacity within the National Archives of Suriname by supporting one or more members of staff in obtaining a post-graduate qualification in digital curation.

Main question: As an organization with limited resources, capacity and infrastructure how do we keep up with the rapid technological development?

Building partnership/ as a national archivist we have to be bold and not shy away from our responsibility/step up and start to lobby towards policymakers.

Engage new professionals in our National Archives.