



The Wits Digitisation Experience: Lessons Learned and Suggestions for National Collaboration

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Outline

- Background to the Wits Digitisation Centre
- What services the Centre delivers
- Sustainability of the Centre
- Integrated Resource Discovery
- Policy at Wits
- Challenges to Collaboration
- Suggestion for a way forward for a South African Digital Libraries and Archives Portal

Background to the Wits Digitisation Centre

- Wits as a hub of academic information
- 2009 – strategic needs assessment
- 2010 Fact Finding mission (visited Cornell, University of Michigan, National Archives, UK, Oxford digitisation Centre)
 - Physical infrastructure and hardware requirements
 - Workflow and digitisation processes
 - Policies
 - Human Resources

Some pictures – fact finding mission



The Wits Digitisation Centre

- Completed and went into production in 2011
- Housed in the William Cullen Library
- Houses equipment, conducts digitisation activities for online access and preservation
- Training Laboratory
- Technical Support

Picture of the completed centre



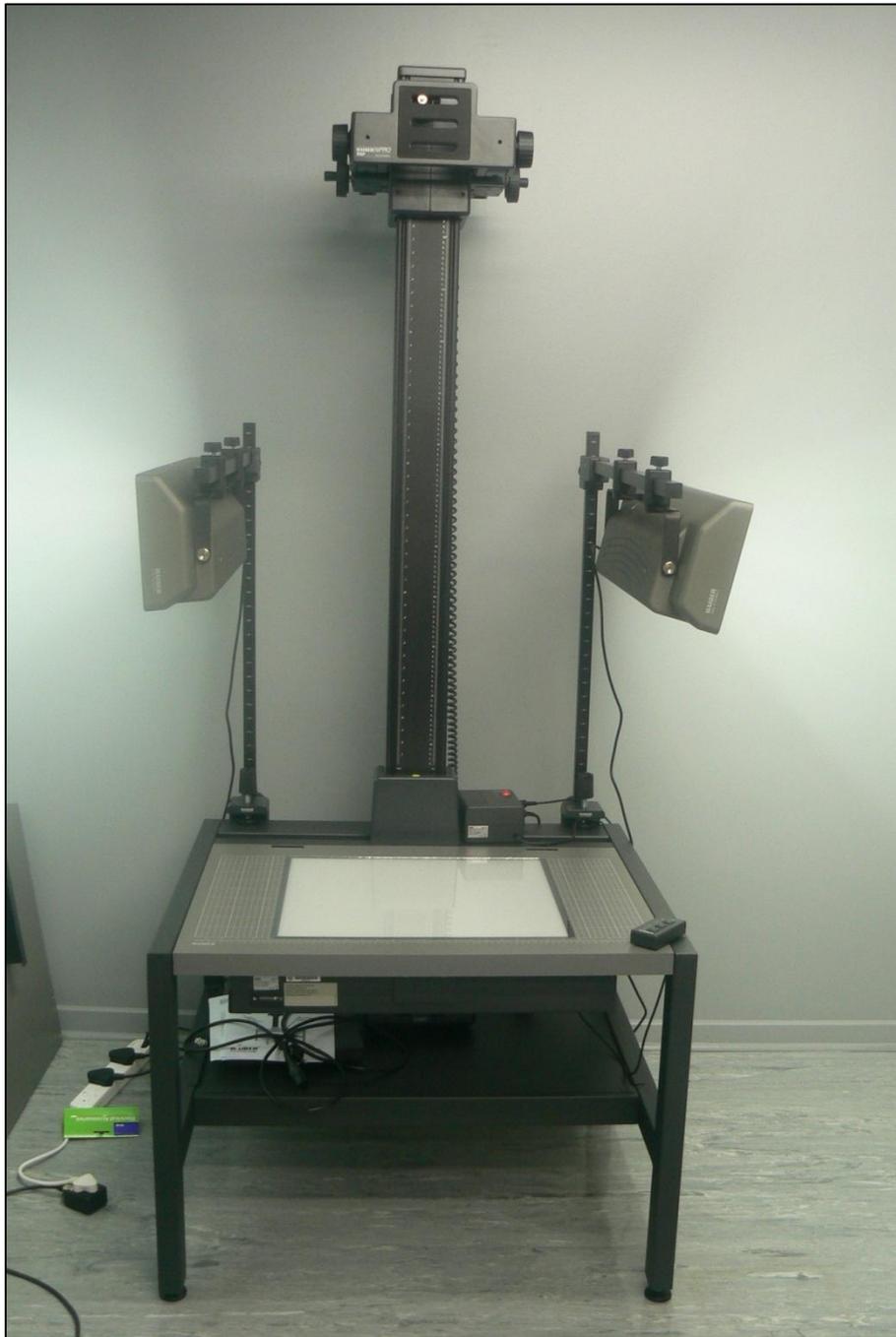
Cont.











The old Bindery



Services of the Digitisation Centre

- Providing quality digitisation and planning for access, research and preservation
- The use of specialised technologies and resources for increased access
- Custom digitisation projects for the university and community
- Project planning and co-ordination

Services provided through:

- State of the art equipment and lab facilities
- New technologies, standards and best practices for preservation and access
- Expertise in text recognition (OCR)
- Expertise in metadata creation
- Essential instructions, processes, specific outputs and quality control procedures expected from service providers (outsourcing is a viable, sometimes essential, aspect of digitisation)

Cont.

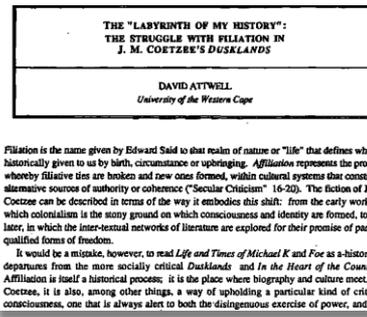
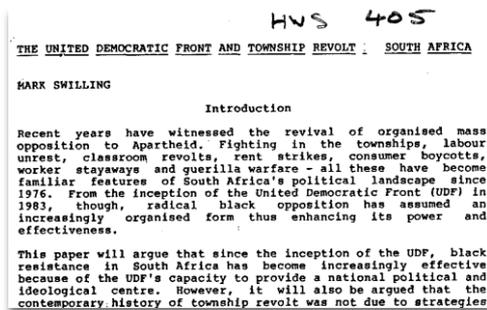
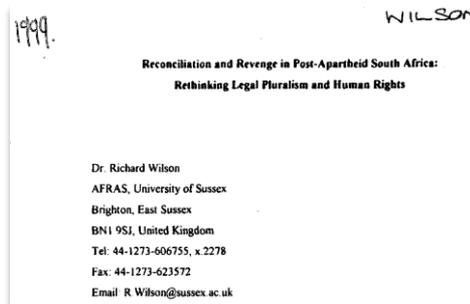
- Expertise in digitisation workflow processes
- Expertise in budgeting and project costing
- Expertise in the handling of fragile manuscript and document handling, as well as the preparation of physical originals
- Experience in digitisation problem solving
- Expertise in content selection, preparation and description

The NRF / Carnegie Digitisation Centre

- Currently a SLA is under discussion
- centre to provide training, workflow and policy development and assist to build digitisation capacity building
- Will be hosted at the Wits digitisation centre

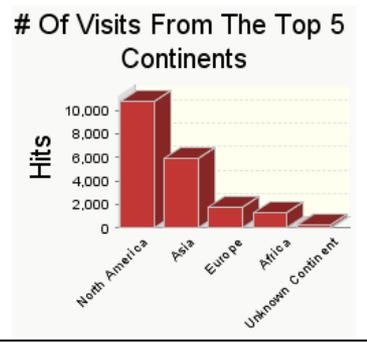
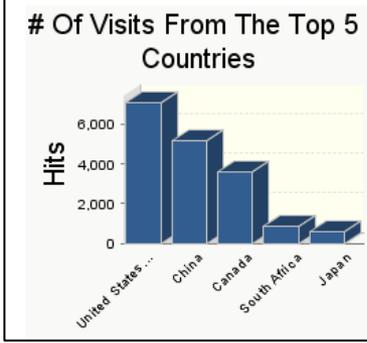
Examples content from WIREDSPACE and Historical Papers at the Wits Library

- WIREDSPACE – Wits History Workshop
Collection



Statistics
Of Visits For the top 5 Items

Items	Views
Problems of democratic governance in Nigeria: the past in the present	273
The United Democratic Front and township revolt: South Africa	129
Reconciliation and revenge in post-apartheid South Africa: rethinking legal pluralism and human rights	88
The 'Labyrinth of my history': the struggle with filiation in J.M. Coetzee's 'Dusklands'	80
The 1920 black mineworkers strike	76



More examples

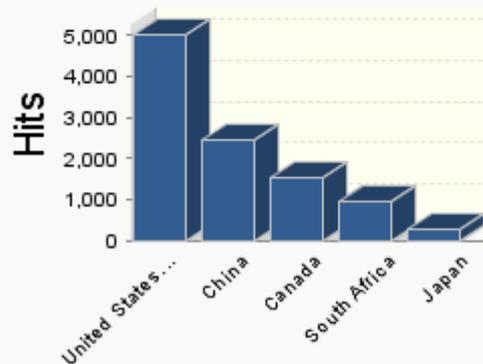
- WIREDSPACE – Architecture Archives

Statistics

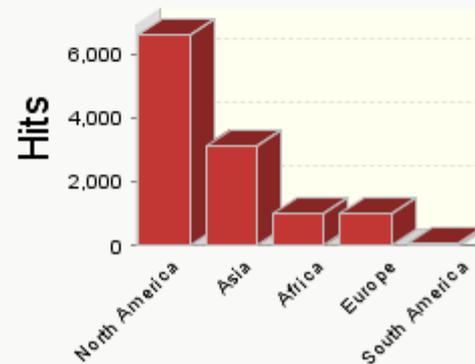
Of Visits For the top 5 Items

Items	Views
Baker, Herbert (Sir) 1905 Union Buildings. Ground floor plan. Elevation and portico plan. Western block elevation, section and plan. South and east elevations. Perspective.	192
Johannesburg Town Hall	130
Standard Bank Buildings	105
Ziman's Building, Johannesburg	99
"Palace of the Mining Magnate"	98

Of Visits From The Top 5 Countries



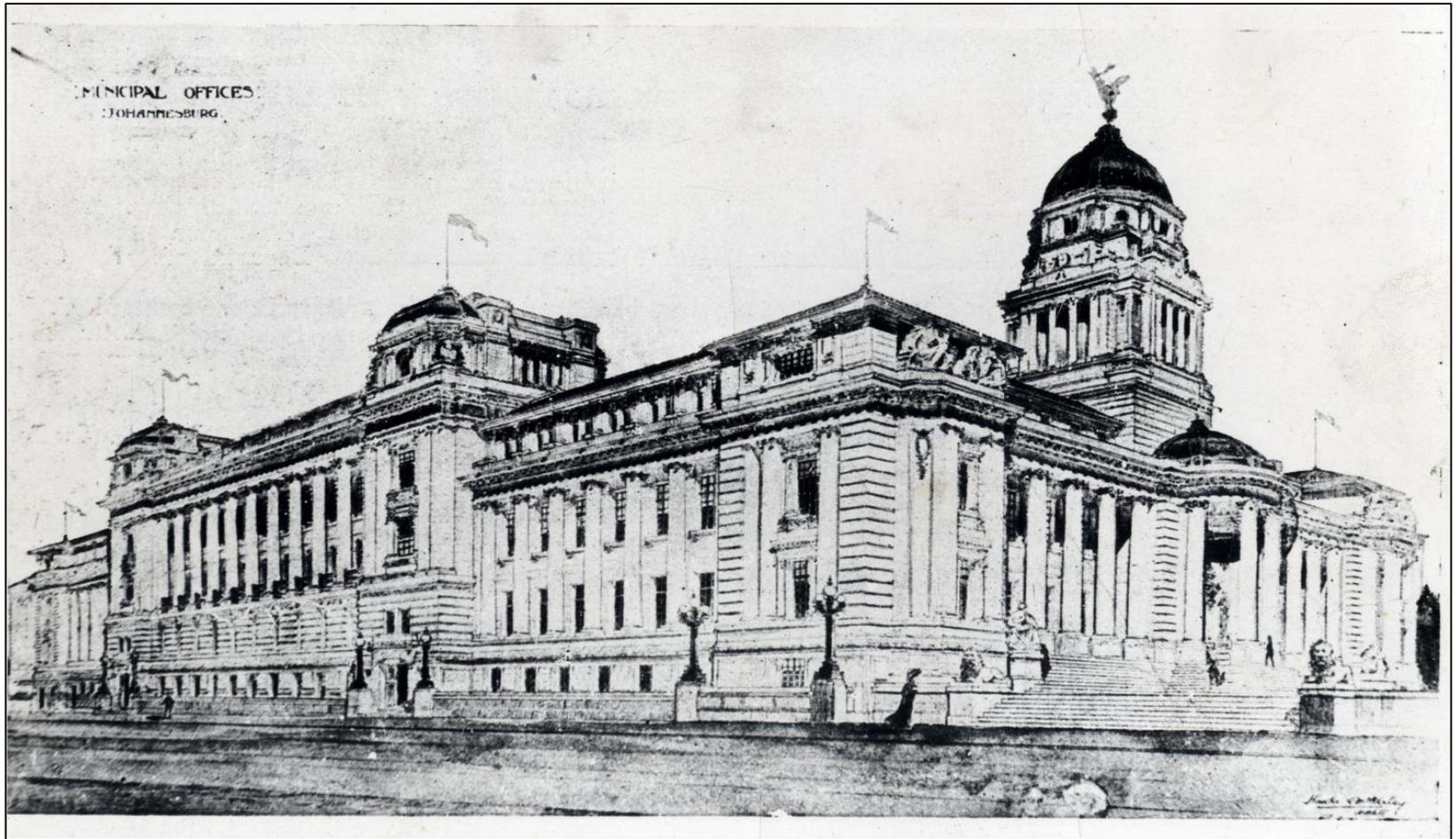
Of Visits From The Top 5 Continents



Architecture Collection examples



Architecture Collection examples



Historical Papers collection

The screenshot shows the homepage of the University of the Witwatersrand's Historical Papers collection. At the top, the university's name and logo are displayed. A navigation bar includes links for Home, About Us, Search, Links, Contact Us, and News. The main header features the text 'HISTORICAL PAPERS' and 'established in 1966' alongside images of historical documents and a photograph of a group of men. Below the header, the page is divided into several sections: 'FINDING AIDS' with a 'QUICK SEARCH' box and a list of 'DATABASES' and 'GUIDES'; a central 'Welcome!' section with a 'You are here: Home' breadcrumb and a 'HISTORICAL PAPERS: A PLATFORM FOR RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT' heading, accompanied by an image of the library interior; a 'NEWS' section on the right featuring a 'South African Spoken Word Conversion Project' and an image of headphones; and a 'TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC) PROJECT' section at the bottom left with an image of a cartoon. The page also includes a 'The ATLANTIC Philanthropies' logo and a 'FAMILYSEARCH' logo at the bottom.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
JOHANNESBURG

Home About Us Search Links Contact Us News LIBRARY Home | WITS Home

HISTORICAL PAPERS

established in 1966

FINDING AIDS

You are here: [Home](#)

QUICK SEARCH

DATABASES

- [Collections Database](#)
- [Digitised Collections](#)

GUIDES

- [Historical Papers Collections](#)
- [Anglican Church Collections](#)
- [Historical Papers Photos](#)
- [Anglican Photos](#)
- [All Photo Index](#)
- [Poster inventory](#)
- [Guide to digitised Audio](#)

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC) PROJECT

Welcome!

HISTORICAL PAPERS: A PLATFORM FOR RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Historical Papers research archive, situated in the William Cullen Library, was established in 1966. We are a friendly, vastly used, valued and popular service as well as unique and accessible hub for human rights research serving civil society, scholars and researchers.

Historical Papers is one of the largest and most comprehensive independent archives in Southern Africa. We house over 3300 collections of historical, political and cultural importance, encompassing the mid 17th Century to the Present.

Our primary aim is to serve the broader community as well as the university and to transform archives into accessible centres for research. Included are the records of many human rights NGOs, trade unions, labour federations, political parties, women's organisations, churches and church bodies, and the papers of human rights activists. We are also home to a huge volume of political trials, photographs, press clippings, oral interviews, and material collected by several research institutions and individual researchers.

Our digitisation activities have been made possible with generous funding from the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. [More](#)

The ATLANTIC Philanthropies

NEWS

South African Spoken Word Conversion Project

Building African Digital Research Content:
In July 2011 the Carnegie Corporation of New York generously provided funding for the digitisation of the 4000 analogue audio tapes which are under the custodianship of Historical Papers. This project has ensured that unique, previously hard-to-find information resources are preserved and are made widely accessible. See our [Guide to digital Audio](#) on this Homepage.

1 2 3 4 5 6 Stop

FAMILYSEARCH

Examples from the Historical Papers website

You are here:

Inventory Item: A2519.8

Collection Name: **Nelson Mandela Papers, 1962-1964**

Collection: **A2519** - click to view

Item Number: **8**

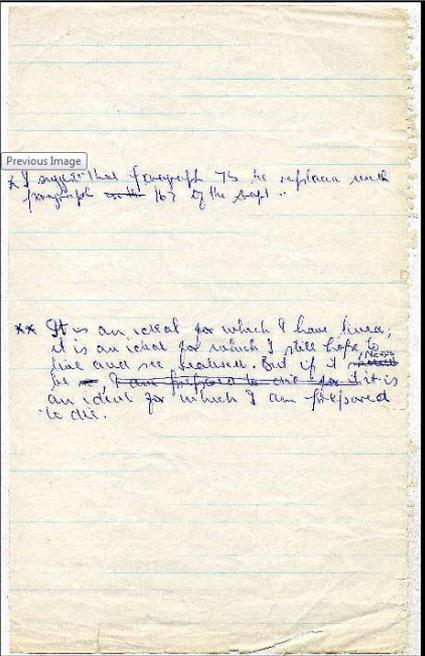
Document: **Final clause of statement from the dock Ms 1p**

DOWNLOADS:A2519-8

• PDF Scanned Document: [A2519-8-01.jpeg.pdf](#) [size: 133.5 kb]

[Return to Collection](#) [Return to Previous Page](#)

2 PHOTOS:



Previous Image

← →

You are here: [Collections Database/collections](#)

Inventory for AD1844

Collection Index: **RIVONIA TRIAL, MANDELA, Nelson and others 1963-1964**

Collection Name: **Rivonia Trial Collection**

Photos: **RIVONIA TREASON TRIAL - Aerial photographs of house and outbuildings** - click to view

[PRINT INVENTORY](#)

AD1844 RECORDS OF THE RIVONIA TRIAL
STATE VS NELSON MANDELA AND 9 OTHERS

Copyright 2006, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Note: This collection is not a complete record of the Treason Trial. Important sections of evidence by the accused are missing or incomplete. These records are the Defence set. Missing volumes are:

- Volume 21 Walter Sisulu's Evidence (vol 2)
- Volume 22 Walter Sisulu's Evidence (vol 3)
- Volume 23 Walter Sisulu's Evidence (vol 4)
- Volume 27 David Goldberg's Evidence
- Volume 35 Exhibit: Plan of Lillyleaf and Rivonia

Incomplete volume:

- Volume 29 Elias Motsoaledi's Statement

A Records of Evidence and Exhibits

Aa MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Aa1 Charge Sheets

Aa1.1 [EM Motsoaledi: Charge sheet](#) South African Police

Aa1.2 [AM Mlangeni: Charge sheet](#) South African Police

Aa1.3 [RM Mhlaba: Charge sheet](#) South African Police

Aa1.4 [GA Muvunwa: Charge sheet](#) South African Police

Aa1.5 [WMU Sisulu: Charge sheet](#) South African Police

Aa1.6 [NR Mandela: Charge sheet](#) South African Police

Aa2 [Nelson Mandela: List of previous convictions](#)

Aa3 Counts against Accused

Aa3.1 [Counts and particulars](#) State Prosecutor, Regional Court, Johannesburg

Aa3.2 [Explanation of charge](#)

Aa3.3 [Reply to Request for Further Particulars](#) State Prosecutor, Regional Court, Johannesburg

Aa3.4 [Indictment](#) Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division

Aa4 [Annexure B to the Indictment \(in Terms of Count 1\): list of acts of violence or sabotage committed in South Africa between December 1961 and August 1963](#)

Aa5 [ANC document: Operation Mayibuye Exhibit number R71 \(copy\)](#)

Aa6 [Summary of monies accepted and received according to the books of James Kantor and](#)

Historical Papers collection cont.

You are here:

Inventory Item: A2550.1

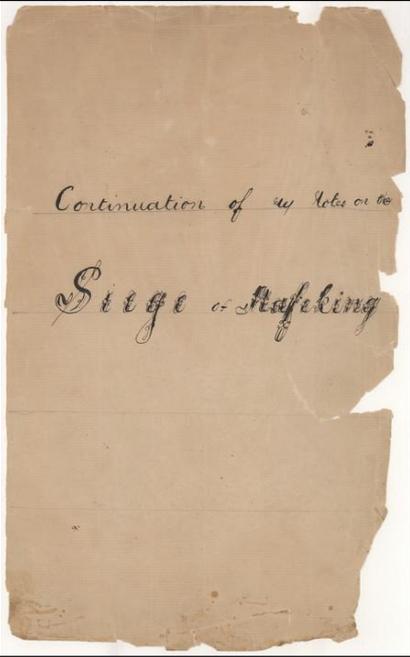
Collection Name: Solomon Tshekiso PLAATJE Diary, 1899-1900
Collection: **A2550** [- click to view](#)
Item Number: 1
Document: **Sol Plaatje Diary (original, handwritten)**

DOWNLOADS:A2550-1

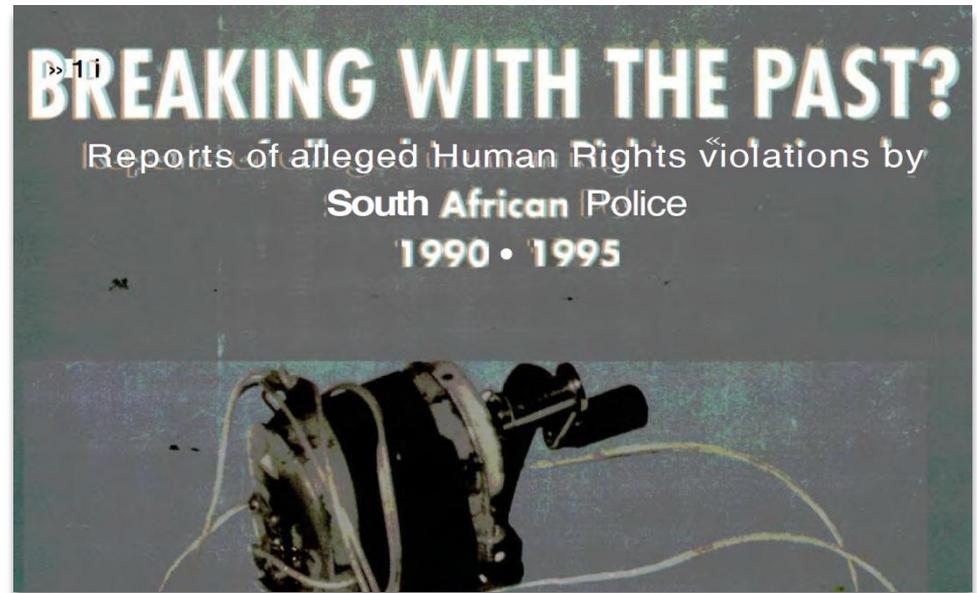
- PDF Scanned Document:
 - A2550-1-01.jpeg.pdf [size: 2730.94 kb]
 - A2550-1-02.jpeg.pdf [size: 2508.77 kb]
 - A2550-1-03.jpeg.pdf [size: 2414.64 kb]

[Return to Collection](#) [Return to Previous Page](#)

181 PHOTOS:



Continuation of my notes on the
Siege of Mafeking



Sustainability plan for the Centre and Digital Content

- Supported by Wits at the highest level, support for:
 - Growth
 - Provision of capacity
- digitisation is a major part of the Wits Library Strategy and Business Plan
- As such it is an initiative which funding is allocated for annually (depending on the financial ability of the University)
- The Library continually reviews staffing structures to allow redeployment for digitisation efforts where needed
- In partnership with CNS – Storage requirements, long term preservation of digital masters

Historical Papers Research Archive

- Conversion of Online Finding Aids
- Compliance with international standards, resources properly searchable and data harvestable
- XML/EAD (Encoded Archival Description)
- Implementing ICA-Atom - <https://www.ica-atom.org/>
 - Web-based, scalable open source
 - Standards based archival description
 - Multilingual, multi-repository environment
 - Supports Dublin Core, MODS and METS
 - Flexible - supports descriptions of various types of cultural materials from libraries, archives, museums, galleries and special collections

Resource Discovery of Institutional Digital Content

- Dynamic, integrated and searchable resource discovery portal for institutional digital content
- Initially library and archival content
- Aggregate and open up our substantial collection of digital assets into a single object store
- Searching and browsing within discrete curated collections and across the entirety of our content

Cont.

- Bring our historical digital content up to date
- Enrich our metadata where necessary
- Provide and an interface for accessing the Open Linked Data
- Roll out Linked Data framework to item level to open up searching across Wits libraries, archives, museums and galleries

Resource Discovery - Example

HOME Search all items... [Google Analytics](#)

Digitised images from the Bodleian Libraries Special Collections


Bodleian Library

Search Digital Images

Subject Categories: All

- All
- Archival collections
- Asian and South Asian collections
- Children's books
- Ephemera
- Exhibitions
- Hebrew collections
- History and politics
- Incunabula and printed books to 1600
- Literature
- Maps and local history
- Medieval and Renaissance collections
- Middle East and Islamic collections
- Music
- Prints and portraits
- Science, medicine, and technology
- Theology and the Bible
- Western books and manuscripts after 1600

Blockbook



Early Printing in Europe



Greek manuscripts



Masterpieces of the non-Western book



Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript illumination (from 35mm)



A Nation of Shopkeepers: Trade Ephemera from 1654 to the 1860 in the John Johnson Collection



Arthur Evans Archive (Knossos excavations)



Bodleian Library/Toyota City Imaging Project



Bringing Laxton to life



Broadside Ballads Online Database



Burmese life and devotion



Citizen Milton



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Policy Development for Digitisation and Digital Content

Wits Library

- institutional Repository Policy
- Electronic Theses d Dissertations Policy
- Wits Library Digitisation Policy

Wits GLAMs Initiative

- *Wits as Memory Institution*
- Responsible and dynamic management of heritage collections
- Support of policymakers
- 2003 – survey/audit of its collections
- Long term strategies and integrated polices for Wits Collections

Cont.

Wits GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) forum - 2011

- Guidance in terms of policy-formation, ethics, joint activities and digitisation
- A vision and strategy for the selection of content and digitisation of Wits' GLAMs materials
- A Wits Digitisation and Digital Preservation Policy
- A Digital Preservation Programme



Challenges to Collaboration

- Institutions at different stages of development
- Using different specs, schemas and methodologies
- Need to develop an agreed upon approach to content selection, the aggregation of metadata and distinct sector methodologies



Content Selection

- Do institutions know what they have and what to digitise?
- Have you done an audit of your holdings for digitisation purposes?
- Have you met with your stakeholders, custodians and other role-players?
- Is preservation of content the main driver? Or is it Access? Or both?
- What about physical preservation of the original – will this be part of your digitisation plan?

Content Selection cont.

- Mass digitisation?
- Digitising entire collections?
- Only items from collections – cherry-picking?
- Will be developing a themed approach to content?
- Or all of these?

Content cont.

- What is physical condition of selected content?
- The format?
- What is the extent of arrangement and description of collections - are there detailed inventories and finding aids or do they need to be enhanced for digitisation?
- Are there Deposit Agreements and do these cover your planned digitisation endeavours?
- Are there restrictions on use of parts of the collections?
- What are the copyright/intellectual clearance issues?



Content Cont.

Whose Agenda? Who Decides?

- Digitisation of heritage material a site of struggle
- Archives, are contested spaces
- Content selection is not a neutral act.
- Decisions about WHAT to digitise and what is digitised speaks to power, ideology and propaganda.
- What role is digitisation playing in framing research agendas, repackaging history and shaping national histories?
- Is digitisation of specific types of content reinforcing the dominant economic and political milieu and a linear nationalist narrative?

Content cont.

Digitisation and the Politics of Memory

- Digitisation projects should enhance public interest, service researchers in the South and promote South-South dialogue.
- The construction and creation of digital content must be interrogated and unpacked.

Distinct Sector Methodologies

- Libraries, museums and archives have different descriptive schemas, methodologies and metadata standards
- Need to unpack these differences if we are to collaborate
- Archival descriptions are not following ICA standards or using international archival community standards such as XML/Encoded Archival Description (EAD), General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD (G), ISAAR (CPF), thesauri etc.,

Metadata and Schemas

We will need to:

- Improve quality of metadata to ensure better search results across all digitised content
- International best practice and lessons - e.g. LIBER, Europeana and the JISC RDTF Project
- Technical architecture and sustainability plan to enable discovery across all media types
- The benefits of Linked Open Data?
- Agree to provide information in a standard, open format and under an open licence
- Develop pragmatic metadata guidelines
- Metadata standards for text, pictures, audio and video for harvesting into a multi-institutional portal
- Agreement of standards for searching and semantic interoperability

Suggestions for a Way Forward



- Scope what a national resource discovery service should, and should encompass
- Undertake a pilot project – tertiary institutions?
- Set up Task Teams which would look at:
 1. A model for Collaboration and Governance
 2. Technical Architecture, including Metadata Standards
 3. Content Identification – including processes and principles.
 4. Licensing, legal, IP and copyright Issues.
 5. Lobbying, Fundraising and Long-term sustainability of the collaborative Resource
 6. Training. Training programmes, including academic curricula, must be developed to provide information professionals with the skills permitting them to implement both digitisation and preservation practices.



An entity such as SADI, in a more re-imagined form, with the inclusion of multi-stakeholders, could be the vehicle to drive this process.



THANKS!!

