

Digitisation of Nyasaland District Administration Reports (EAP1231)

Mr Robert Mkuwira, National Archives of Malawi

2019 award - Pilot project

£8,000 for 2 months

This pilot project surveyed administrative records during the Nyasaland era between 1891 and 1964 in order to arrange for relocation to National Archives of Malawi and digitisation.

Nyasaland District Administration Reports Survey

Nyasaland districts administration reports are important to scholars as they document districts administration. These records have to be preserved to ensure continued use by scholars before they vanish by transferring them to a national archives and digitise them.

Aim of the survey

The overall aim of the survey was to establish the viability of a major digitisation project of the districts administration reports

Objective of the survey

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Establish where districts reports are found,
- Establish the volume of district administration reports and,
- Establish conditions under which these records are kept.

Methodology

In this survey a physical visit of all district councils that were there during colonial era was done. A total of 24 districts were visited; their colonial administration reports observed and assessed by a team of archivists.

Findings

Locations where districts administrations reports are found

The survey found out that these records are still found in 20 out 24 district councils. Those councils that still have these records include:

- Karonga (North Nyasa),
- Rumphu,
- Mzimba,
- Nkhatabay,
- Kasungu,
- Nkhotakota,
- Mchinji (Fort Manning),
- Dowa,
- Lilongwe,
- Dedza,
- Ntcheu (Ncheu),
- Mangochi (Fort Johnson),
- Machinga,
- Zomba,
- Chiradzulu,
- Blantyre,
- Thyolo (Cholo),
- Mulanje (Mlanje),
- Chikwawa and
- Nsanje (Port Herald)

Those districts that don't have these records include:

- Chitipa,

- Salima,
- Ntchisi and
- Mwanza

Volume of district administration reports

The survey established these reports are paper based and organised in form of files. These reports are in four distinct categories and their volumes is as follows:

Report Type	File volumes
Annual Reports	173
Bi annual reports	1
Quarterly Reports	1
Monthly Reports	7
Total	182

From these 182 files it was estimated that 22000 images could be digitised as most of the files had an average of 120 pages.

Conditions under which these records are kept

The survey learnt with deep regret the conditions under which these records are kept. They ranged from:

- Store rooms mixed with blooms, old tires and mops;
- Corridors getting kicked by passing people;
- Verandas getting blown by winds and
- Guard rooms used by guards to start fire to warm themselves during cold nights

Conclusion

The survey established that that there are up to 182 files district reports in different 20 district councils. These records are enough for a major digitisation project. These reports could generate up to 22,000 images as the they had an average of 120 pages. These records have to be relocated as early as possible as the longer it takes the fewer records will be rescued.