

**Integrity in Government through Records Management:
Essays in Honour of Anne Thurston**

JAMES LOWRY and JUSTUS WAMUKOYA (eds.)

Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014

278p. | ISBN 978-1-4724-2845-5

£58.50 (website price) | £65 (regular price)

This Festschrift for Anne Thurston, Director of the International Records Management Trust (IRMT), celebrates 25 years of her contributions to records management in the developing world, especially in Africa. Sarah Tyacke, in her foreword, describes Thurston's role as one of 'inspiring and determined leadership', almost an understatement given the picture that emerges in the pages that follow.

The contributions, twenty in all, are grouped into five parts, beginning with four essays on Anne Thurston and the work of the IRMT. The second part focuses on colonial and post-colonial recordkeeping, including a particularly sobering account of archival power in Malawi. The third, 'Records, Governance and Transparency', includes consideration of accountability in Ghana, the management of land records in Uganda, and essays which explore the critical role of records in the right to information, as well as the links between records and open data. The fourth part, on digital records management and preservation, has a very useful analysis by Anthea Seles of the suitability of international standards for trusted digital repositories in developing countries.

The fifth and final section of the book, 'Reflections', contains contributions on education for archivists and records managers, the importance of international networks and the framework provided by the International Council on Archives and the Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers. The concluding essay is by John McDonald, who explores Anne Thurston's vision of creating bridges to channel knowledge and expertise from better resourced nations to those in the developing world. McDonald's reflections are very relevant indeed to us in New Zealand, particularly in relation to the valuable work being carried out by PARBICA.

James Lowry and Justus Wamukoya's introduction provides the most detail about Anne Thurston herself. Like so many others, she entered into the world of archives and records management by a circuitous route. Born in Washington DC, she first went to Kenya in 1970 to visit a friend in the Peace Corps. A growing interest in the country and the effect of colonialism on indigenous peoples led to a doctorate and eventually an

invitation to write the memoirs of Kenyan politician Joseph Murumbi (1911-1990). When Murumbi's papers were acquired by the National Archives of Kenya, Anne Thurston joined the staff to help arrange and describe them. In the course of working at the National Archives she became aware of the deficiencies of current recordkeeping in Kenyan government and could see the consequences for the future.

When Kenya was granted independence (in 1963) records from the former colonial government were taken to Britain so they could not be accessed by the new regime. The director of the National Archives later assigned Anne Thurston and colleagues to visit the United Kingdom and the United States to identify records relating to Kenya. This work eventually motivated Anne Thurston's relocation to London in 1980 to continue the research.

1980 also saw the start of her involvement in University College London's (UCL) masters programme for archival studies. The history of UCL's programme of study is the subject of one of the final essays, by Geoffrey Yeo, Elizabeth Shepherd and Andrew Flinn. Although short (just eight pages in length), this essay provides a beautiful snapshot of the changes in education that have occurred since the programme's inception in 1947. Those changes reflected significant shifts in international relations and society generally, resulting in dramatically changed professional priorities. The authors explain that the first UCL programme made a number of assumptions, including 'that the core skills of the archivist lie in the ability to read and interpret older documents, particularly those of the Middle Ages, in order to support scholarly research by historians' (p.219) and that 'new graduates could expect to find work in the newly established English county record offices' (p.219). Both features indicated an assumption that students would have the expectation of working in England, but from its beginning the programme attracted students from elsewhere, particularly Commonwealth countries. Accordingly, an international qualification targeted at students from developing countries was established in the 1970s.

Anne Thurston's contribution to the UCL programme was very significant. She completely overhauled the international programme, emphasising the need to encompass the management of current records. In addition, she supervised doctoral students from a number of developing countries, including Ghana, Kenya and Swaziland. Despite the progress made in establishing relevant educational programmes, awareness of the on-the-ground difficulties faced by practitioners led to her founding what was eventually named the International Records Management Trust.

It now has three areas of activity: research, consultancy and education and training. IRMT products, such as their training programmes, are freely available from their website, reflecting its ethos of sharing and support.

Many authors mention Anne Thurston's determination and spirit. You get a sense of just what this means in the account of the 'rescue' of the holdings of the National Archives of Zanzibar in the 1980s. At that time, Zanzibar's economy was in such a parlous state that no light bulbs were available, staples such as bread and soap were in short supply, and the archives air conditioning system had been broken for a number of years. Anne Thurston led the rescue efforts, raising the necessary funding from a wide variety of different sources. With a keen appreciation of the need for practical and contextually appropriate strategies, "... [she] convinced the Raleigh Bicycle Company to donate bicycles so that team members could ride back and forth to the archives from their accommodation. She convinced British Airways to transport the bicycles to Zanzibar as a contribution to the project, and she convinced the Westinghouse Electric Company to supply the archives with a new air conditioning system."

Collectively, the essays are an impressive tribute to a very remarkable woman. They also contain much that is relevant and useful for academics and practitioners alike, particularly anyone concerned with development and aid initiatives. Reflections on the disjuncture between international 'best practice' and developing country realities are especially worthwhile. May the IRMT continue to prosper and flourish!

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