



**#PreserveAfricaArchives**

**Industry Forum on:  
Risks And Disaster  
Safeguarding For Audio Visual  
Archives In Africa**

*7 October 2021 - Online | Zoom*

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# Post-Forum Preliminary Report

## Executive Summary

This report summarises the events of the one-day forum on **“Risks And Disaster Safeguarding For Audio Visual Archives In Africa”**, which took place on Thursday 7th October 2021 on Zoom.

The industry forum brought together broadcasters, media practitioners and audio-visual archives professionals to discuss the mechanics for ensuring adequate risk management. In addition, the event looked closely at issues relating to the effectiveness of disaster planning for the preservation of audio-visual archives and the factors that underpin success for holders of audio-visual content.

It also gave a platform to archivists to share with the industry their experiences on disaster management, how archival deterioration occurs and steps that can be put in place to eradicate or delay damage.

Lastly, the panel conceded that financial and human resources are essential in salvaging material following a disaster.

## Key Topics Covered

- Address how archival deterioration occurs and steps that can be put in place to eradicate or delay deterioration
- Showcase how adequate staff training and collection knowledge can prevent a host of potential disasters with audiovisual archives
- Understand and mitigate obsolescence in audio-visual archives
- Illustrate the role that effective building structure and systems play in the safeguarding of archives
- Putting in place executive-led policies and procedures that would ensure adequate

## Summary of Contribution From Resource Persons

### Session One: **How We Did It! Mitigation And Preventative Measures For Safeguarding Audio-Visual Archives Disaster Effects**

#### Introduction

Ms Ilse Assman, the programme partner and Consultant of Apricity Consulting, welcomed everyone to the fourth series of the #PreserveAfricaArchives online forum, which addressed “**Risks And Disaster Safeguarding For Audio Visual Archives In Africa**”.

Ms Assman introduced the topic, “**How We Did It! Mitigation And Preventative Measures For Safeguarding Audio-Visual Archives Disaster Effects**”, providing a snippet into what it means to safeguard audio-visual archives in Africa. She then highlighted how technology plays a massive role in ensuring that libraries are managed and protected against hazards.

#### **Panel Discussion: How We Did It! Mitigation And Preventative Measures For Safeguarding Audio-Visual Archives Disaster Effects**

**Moderator:** Mpho Ngoepe, Associate Professor: Department of Information Science, University of South Africa (UNISA)

#### **Panellists / Contributors:**

##### **Michal Singer, Special Collections, UCT Library**

Ms Singer presented how the UCT Special Collections Library team mitigated a disaster at the Jagger Library in April 2021.

According to Ms Singer, disaster recovery is often restricted due to copyright laws

that prevent libraries from creating original content copies. However, where possible, it has proven valuable to digitise materials that are in storage. Singer further suggested that organisations have a disaster management plan ready for any disaster that may occur. In referring to the extraction of your collections, it is vital to have an emergency referencing as collections are not organised following a catastrophe, added Singer.

Furthermore, Michal advised on how to move swiftly to salvage your materials during and following a disaster. Some of the highlighted solutions included releasing a call for volunteers and reaching out to corporates to assist with boxes and other resources necessary to salvage and implement in an emergency. A referencing plan is of necessity to ensure that all materials have been recorded and saved.

The emergency conservation techniques vary according to the extent of the disaster. Michal demonstrated the method used by the UCT Library during their emergency. The referencing process assisted during the recording of the material after the disaster, but the same procedure is able to be utilised for the digitisation of the materials.

Lessons learned from the Jagger Library fire is that, in some instances, items have to be written off, which is why digitisation is essential. Besides, digital preservation is a factor that needs to be prioritised.

### **Rafael de Luna, Professor, Federal Fluminense University**

Mr de Luna raised the importance of sharing information and successful strategies, especially within BRICS countries. This would assist entities with the development of their plans should they face a similar fate. He noted that organisations report on having a disaster; however, in most instances, they do not share information on how they mitigated the disaster effects.

De Luna observed the various types of disasters ranging from natural disasters to manmade disasters. In all cases, disaster preparedness is essential, he indicated.

Citing to Brazil, Rafael mentions limited financial resources as a hindrance in creating sustainable disaster management measures. Nevertheless, having a competent and experienced team bridges the gap to a certain extent.

Rafael noted that disaster happens not only to physical libraries but also to digital libraries whereby digitised disappear silently without people of the archive realising. Therefore it is vital to safeguard against digital disasters as well. Nonetheless, creating copies in the cloud may mitigate this, but it means investing more financial resources that organisations lack.

### **Caroline Caruelle, Founder Associate, Archive TV**

Ms Caruelle shared her experience in storage and dealing with audiovisual archives. One of her first pieces of advice is to assess the risk factors outside of your building structure and not only inside the building risks. Next, she advised storing your items in a state that would assist with evacuation.

She recommended storing your items in boxes and piling your boxes on shelves so that you can evacuate quicker. Packing in boxes is also practical in case you need to move your items from one building to the next. For film archives, she proposed that all film reels be stored in vacuum-sealed aluminium bags, which would safeguard the reels from deterioration from humidity, dust, flooding, light, fire.

Caroline additionally heeded that digitisation has been purposefully created and utilised to share the cultural heritage with a broad audience. According to Caruelle, digitisation is a great way to safeguard your assets, especially concerning insurance purposes. She highlighted that having your libraries digitised gives you the ability to value the costs of redoing your digitised items in case of disasters.

Her last piece of advice stated that one has to isolate masters from duplicates and separate storage. By doing that, one is separating the risk. Once you have decided which items need to be stored and which storage, you must create a comprehensive inventory of all items. Without a list, you cannot perform the separation of collections successfully.

### **Arpana Tandon, Senior Programme Leader, ICCROM**

Ms Tandon highlighted one of the most significant risk factors to cultural heritage as climate change which has been intensifying with time. She added that one of the biggest challenges is thinking that you are fully prepared for a disaster.

As stated by Ms Tandon, analysing your geolocation and setting is essential when planning mitigation measures. Furthermore, one needs to check their environment to establish what risks may occur based on your surroundings and how the hazard may reach their location. Doing historical research about your area is also as crucial as establishing whether there are previous disasters that may have occurred in the area or other hazards that have been highlighted and pose a risk in the future.

Finally, scenario-based mitigation assists in directing efforts to the route cause instead of doing generic emergency planning. Storage solutions should include keeping copies and keeping the library in separate geographic locations and a cloud.

Arpana called for practitioners to ask for help during a massive disruption from other practitioners in the field. In addition, municipalities should be involved in mitigation plans as they are engaged during disasters.

### Session Summary

- The session addressed how essential it is to plan for emergency evacuation and, based on experiences, what steps to take prior, during, and following a disaster
- The panellists highlighted the importance of seeking help in managing disaster risk and also during mitigation processes
- It was also noted that disasters vary and do not only refer to natural disasters.
- Panellists also brought to light that digitisation also needs safeguarding planning as disaster can strike in the technological sphere

## Conclusions, Take-Aways and Recommendations

- It is important that entities disclose how they overcame their disasters so that should another institution go through the same fortune, they are able to adopt the proven strategies
- Financial resources are still a major hindrance in the archiving space and the rate at which libraries are safeguarded
- Digitisation is an enabler and often assist in the mitigation of disasters, however, it is expensive to maintain and holds its own risks