

DIGITIZATION PROJECT - DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES, BAHAMAS

An understanding of the technological age in which we live is an impetus to the development of digitization units within cultural institutions. The Department of Archives, Nassau, Bahamas recognized the global environment and the need to be on the cutting edge of technological development. To this end the leadership of this institution began its digitization project in **2004** with the launching of its website: www.bahamasnationalarchives.bs. As would be expected this required digitized photographs and other materials. This necessitated the preparation of a position paper for the establishment of a Digitization Unit.

The position paper included a survey of the number of records to be digitized, the equipment needed and the training necessary. With over **ten thousand (10,000)** linear feet of records of varying media and a small staff complement, the Department met with a number of independent companies requesting quotations for this project. Unfortunately the cost factor mitigated against the Department's outsourcing the project.

The challenge then was working around this situation in order to remain on the cutting edge of change. To this end the Department acquired two flatbed scanners, one from **UNESCO** in **2001/2002** and the other from a private individual. The **UNESCO** scanner was used for the webpage while the smaller equipment was used to begin scanning the Department of Archives' photographic collection.

The webpage is presently hosted and updated by an independent provider as the Archives does not have adequate human resources to perform these tasks. Needless to say we are unable to deliver the information to the provider as we would like due to the shortage of staff.

Much of our photographic collection was digitized; however we lost the images and had to restart this project due to the fact that we did not have a backup copy of the digitized photos.

We began to implement the training component of our digitization plan in **2004**. To this end **one (1)** staff member attended a Caribbean Digitization Workshop in Jamaica in **2005** and **two (2)** of them attended a workshop in Atlanta, Georgia in **2006**.

We wish to note that the **two (2)** officers who benefited from the training in 2005 and 2006 are no longer with the Department of Archives. Continued staff shortages do not allow for the complete training of persons to carry out the digitization tasks.

In 2007 the Department established the Information Technology Unit and acquired computer hardware for scanning and preparing of **CDs, DVDs** and labels utilized in the electronic media. This unit is also overseeing the digitization of over **five thousand (5,000)** beta tapes containing valuable historical information.

Additionally, **two (2)** officers from this unit attended a local digitization conference at the College of The Bahamas in 2008.

In 2009 the Archives purchased an **ICAM** camera with a digital head in order to move the digital project to another level.

The Department understands that more is needed and plans in its way forward, should funds allow, to continue to acquire equipment and train staff to digitize its holdings.

Collections and Cultural Treasures for Digitization

1. Collection of historical photographs
2. 5,000 Beta Tapes containing important historical information
3. Newspaper collection
4. Rare Book collection
5. Oral History collection
6. Slave Registers