Records Management Standards and the Good Governance Agenda in Commonwealth Africa[1]

Alistair Tough[2]

Alistair G Tough is a Senior Research Fellow in the Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute at the University of Glasgow, UK. He is also the Archivist and Records Manager of the National Health Service Greater Glasgow Board. He serves on the British Standards Institution's sub-committee on records management. In 1999 and 2000 he was seconded to the Civil Service Department in Tanzania as an adviser to the Public Sector Reform Programme. He has undertaken records management consultancy work in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Zambia. He has held research fellowships at Balliol College, Oxford and the universities of Michigan and Stanford. In 2002 he received the Annual Award of the Records Management Society of Great Britain.

This paper reports on the results of research carried out by means of questionnaires sent to Directors of national archives and by email 'interviews' of educators and consultants in the Commonwealth Africa region. National standards (mainly in the form of policy and procedure manuals for the public service) and both international and external standards are discussed. The responses of Directors of National Archives to ISO 15489 and their plans to make use of it are reported, as is the role and impact of 'Public Service Reform Programmes' and other major projects in Commonwealth Africa.

The objectives of the investigation into records management standards were:

- *To gauge awareness on the part of Directors of national archives and other key players of ISO 15489 and any other relevant standards available to them.*

- *To obtain their thoughts and opinions about ISO 15489 and any other relevant standards available to Directors.*

- *To gather information about concrete steps being taken towards and/or plans being drawn up for the implementation of records management standards.*

- *To prepare the way for further investigations of the impact of standards in the Commonwealth.*

Background

The purpose of this study was to establish the level of current awareness and utilisation of, and attitudes towards, records management standards in the African countries of the Commonwealth.

There were seventeen African countries that were members of the Commonwealth when this investigation was carried out. Of these, two had joined comparatively recently: Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, in 1995 and Namibia, formerly administered by South Africa, in 1990. Even more recently, Zimbabwe ceased to be a member. The remaining 14 countries (Botswana, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) were all under British administration at some point and in some form or another. These countries have tended to develop similar administrative procedures. Formal rules for recordkeeping were an aspect of early administrative development.[3] One of the shared administrative patterns was a 'top-down' insistence on thorough recordkeeping. Accountability for the use of money and equipment was a major concern. The importance of this in the everyday lives of colonial officials is dramatically illustrated in the novel *Mr. Johnson* by Joyce Cary, himself a former District Officer. The insistence on meticulous recordkeeping, including detailed quarterly and annual reports, was widely resented by district and provincial officials. An antipathy towards 'paperwork' became one of the shared administrative traditions of the colonial civil service. This was well expressed by PDL Guilbride:

> I rarely had the opportunity of practising my profession … veterinary medicine and surgery. I was far too busy buying cattle, buying food … building houses, filling in

forms and compiling statistics. The Medical Officer complained bitterly in the same vein but he, at least, had a full day's medical work in addition to all the office drudgery. Even so, he once sent the following telegram to his Director 'Needed urgently, one Medical Officer' and signed himself 'Chief Clerk'.[4]

Developments in Zimbabwe diverged significantly from the overall pattern. As Southern Rhodesia, the country was internally self-governing and therefore did not follow instructions circulated from London, nor did it employ the common cadre of expatriate colonial civil service officers. In the 1930s the settler administration decided to establish a national archives. This is in contrast to the lack of such initiatives in most of the colonial office territories.[5] The Central African Archives developed into an outstanding centre of expertise in records management. Sophisticated systems for the management of records were developed. The creation of the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953 both gave a major impetus for the development of systems and ensured that they were transferred north of the Zambezi to modern day Malawi and Zambia. The Central African Archives also provided a service to modern day Botswana.[6]

During the decade of independence, 1957-67, it was generally true that the Commonwealth African countries inherited effective recordkeeping systems. These, however, were strongly top-down in nature. Either shortly before or shortly after independence a national archives was established in every country. These were generally given a responsibility for records management in the public service, though often without any effective means of enforcing compliance. They faced a range of challenges in meeting their responsibilities. In the 1960s and 1970s these included a massive growth in the public service; a gradual slackening of work discipline and orientation to outputs; corruption; and the emergence of patronage networks.[7] Public service growth was reflected in a major increase in the volume of records created. As Baxter has expressed it, 'expenditure and production of paperwork are closely linked'.[8] At the same time, the recruitment of so many staff so quickly, coupled with the rapid promotion of inexperienced personnel, tended to dilute the established traditions of good recordkeeping. The slow decline in work discipline had an important impact on recordkeeping, not least because the level of compliance had previously depended on

the threat of sanctions from above. At the same time, the Central Africa Archives — the best source of good practice within the continent — was removed from the equation by Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965.[9]

During the last ten to fifteen years there have been several instances of effective records management programs being implemented in Commonwealth African countries. As Nathan Mnjama expresses it, 'examples abound within the African continent (for example, Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana and Tanzania) where national archives have been transformed into national records services with responsibilities for managing the entire records life cycle'.[10] Botswana has changed out of all recognition since independence by revenues from the diamond mines. The improvements in records management have taken place against this background. The Gambia, Ghana and Tanzania have benefited from packages of donor aid delivered through the International Records Management Trust (IRMT). The Trust has been proactive in promoting the case for improvements in records management and has had to address the widespread misconception that the introduction of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) will, of itself, resolve all records management issues.[11] In carrying out its work the Trust has enlisted support, inter alia, from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank, senior members of the Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers and the Government of Canada.[12] One of the characteristic elements in any package of reforms advocated by the Trust has been a procedure manual, in effect a proto-national standard[13] and have generally been accompanied by revised training programs. Interestingly, the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service intends to used the title 'Records and Archives Standard' for a two volume procedure manual currently under preparation which Koo Ombati says will be 'not a substitute to either of the international standards, but rather a tool to facilitate their adoption in Kenya'.[14]

Methodology

The primary study population for the research undertaken consisted of the seventeen Directors of National Archives or equivalent records agencies (DNAs) of Commonwealth African countries. This group was chosen because of the role that it is believed that they play in public

service records management. A self-administered questionnaire was utilised to gather data from the DNAs. The questionnaire was designed to enable those who have little or no knowledge of the International Standard to make responses in respect of national best practice guidelines. It included a number of questions that had previously been used by Julie McLeod in a parallel study in the UK, so that some comparisons could be made.[15] After the questionnaire had been distributed by post, a substantial period was allowed for completed questionnaires to be received. Thereafter, non-respondents were sent the questionnaire in the form of text incorporated into an email message. Ten completed questionnaires were received which is a comparatively high figure for a postal survey. The work of data gathering for this study was carried out entirely in English as the investigator was not confident about fully understanding responses in other languages. As Strauss and Corbin express it, 'the difficulties of accurate, let alone nuanced, translation are legion'.[16] Language may have been one of the factors influencing the response or lack of response from DNAs. Non-respondent countries included three where the main languages of public administration are French, Portuguese and Swahili respectively.

The secondary study population consisted of records management educators and consultants working in Commonwealth Africa. There are a number of well-established training centres, including those at Moi University in Kenya and the University of Botswana. In addition there is at least one leading records management consultancy based in Africa and three records management consultancy organisations based outside Africa but specialising in work in the continent. The cooperation of senior staff in each of these organisations was sought. Interviews conducted by email were utilised to gather data from the educators and consultants. This is a comparatively recent methodological innovation. As Fiona McColl says of her research, which faced similar constraints and challenges:

> As many of the respondents were located overseas and the researcher had limited time to conduct the interviews, face-to-face interviews were considered impractical. In certain time zones ... telephone interviews are also difficult to conduct at a mutually convenient time. Consideration was,

> therefore, given to the use of an experimental interviewing process using email. This allows an interview to be conducted through a series of email exchanges allowing respondents to reply at their own convenience[17]

There is at least one drawback to the use of email, as opposed to face-to-face, interviews — the loss of verbal communication. There are, however, several advantages. The challenge of achieving neutrality in tone of voice and facial expression, for instance is overcome. Also the need to capture responses is fulfilled without any need for tape recording or transcription. The technique of member checking was used. As Colin Robson explains, 'this involves returning ... to respondents and presenting to them material such as ... interpretations you have made [of their responses]. It can be a very valuable means of guarding against researcher bias'.[18] Member checking was supplemented by sending out a summary of interim data analysis for comment by the whole group. It was hoped that this would replicate some of the advantages of a focus group by moving one step away from relying solely on a series of one-to-one communications.

In practice, the experience of conducting interviews by email proved rather disappointing. The majority of the second study population responded at some length to the initial approach. Thereafter the response to supplementary questions tended to be brief. Even member checking, where respondents were being invited to check the accuracy with which their own words had been used, tended to elicit only sparse responses. The distribution of the summary of interim data analysis with a request for comments and observations received a similarly muted response.

In mid-November 2003 the International Records Management Trust announced that they had secured funding from the Commonwealth Foundation and the World Bank to mount an electronic discussion. The formal title given to the discussion was 'Electronic government and electronic records: e-records readiness and capacity building'.[19] Clearly standards are an issue in a discussion of this kind. The discussion commenced on 19 November 2003 and continued until 12 December 2003. This was a development which was not factored into the original planning for this study. Nonetheless, by subscribing to the list and reading the messages posted, our research group has had access to a

rich and unexpected resource. From a methodological viewpoint, the e-readiness discussion has provided a valuable additional tool for triangulation.

De facto national standards for the public service

The questionnaire sent to Directors of national archives sought information relating to records management manuals and standing office instructions as de facto national standards for the public service. This information was supplemented by interviews with educators and consultants conducted by email.

Eight out of ten DNAs responded that their organisations do have policy and procedure manuals for records management in the public sector. Some have several complementary manuals. All eight DNAs confirmed that most registry staff have access to the relevant manuals. They also stated that the guidelines and regulations for records management are used for staff training. Training, however, emerged as a cause of concern. There have been widespread changes in civil service training colleges that tend to undermine the promotion of good and uniform practice in records management. Courses that were previously offered free of charge for registry staff must now be paid for and, as a consequence, seldom run at all. This leaves some DNAs facing the challenge of providing training from their own resources. From the universities that offer courses in records management, there is some evidence for the value of public sector manuals, both for practical teaching purposes and to demonstrate top-level support for the function.

Seven of the eight DNAs who had reported the possession of manuals said that they were aware of ministries, departments or agencies that disregard the guidelines and regulations for records management. The additional comments offered on this topic included two which appear to attribute the situation to lack of knowledge or understanding on the part of the non-compliers and two that implied some measure of faith in enforcement, as opposed to persuasion, on the part of the national archives. The South African response suggested that even where persuasion is backed up with sanctions, difficulties in achieving compliance may arise: 'Despite a strong statutory regulatory mandate, a policy framework and support services, problems with compliance by governmental bodies are experienced'.[20]

The questionnaire results demonstrate that Public Sector Reform Programmes (PSRPs) are ubiquitous and have major implications for records management. Nine of the ten respondents affirmed that at least one major project is currently underway in their country. In Uganda four major projects were listed by the Commissioner for Records and Information Technology and the investigator has subsequently identified a further two. Five respondents reported that payroll management projects are currently underway in their country. Many of these projects are supported by donor countries as part of the NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development) initiative.[21] So the stance of donors in relation to standards for records management may be of some importance. NEPAD has also been embraced by the leading records professionals of Eastern and Southern Africa, as a vehicle for promoting 'good records management, in order to improve the efficiency of government agencies, to promote the principles of good governance and to enable citizens to exercise their right to information'.[22] In October 2003, twelve ministers, deputy ministers and provincial ministers responsible for national archives in East and Southern Africa adopted a 'Declaration on Archives in Africa' addressed to the African Union, specifically referring to and recognising the work of NEPAD.[23] This may serve to strengthen the position of recordkeeping professionals in the public sector. The speech made by Sir Ketumile Masire at the International Round Table on Archives in which he said: 'I learnt, through my experiences as Vice President, then as President of Botswana, that keeping accurate records of the activities of Government is fundamentally important for the effective functioning of a democratic Government' and may be regarded as significant in this context.[24]

The evidence gathered during this investigation suggests that whereas one single procedure manual or a set of complementary manuals for the public service was once regarded as the norm, it is now increasingly common for several different sets of manuals to be in use simultaneously, in an uncoordinated and even competing manner. It is possible that project-based approaches to public sector reform may have played a role in accelerating this trend. Kimberley Barata has observed that 'external consultants and government ICT staff often ignore the statutory obligation of the National Archives to manage records whether they are paper based or electronic'.[25] Information provided by two consultants about separate projects carried out in the same West African

country indicates that both projects developed manuals without reference to each other or to the generic guidelines for recordkeeping that had been developed with input from a third consultant and issued for use in the public service as a whole. In Uganda two United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded registry rehabilitation projects are underway in which the use of TRIM software has been recommended on the basis that the DoD 5015.2 standard will be introduced with the software.[26] It would be possible to criticise, or at least question, this development. Julie Gable has asked: 'Is it realistic to assume that software configured to a federal department's specification applies just as well to commercial enterprises?'[27] One might extend this to ask if is it realistic to assume that software configured to the American defence department's specification applies just as well to quite different Ugandan departments. This, however, is not the critical point. What appears to be crucial, in this analysis, is that DoD 5015.2 has not been adopted as a standard for use throughout the Ugandan public service. So its introduction into two key registries runs the risk of creating inconsistency and confusion — the phenomena that standards are generally supposed to exist to prevent.

There would appear to be a danger that something akin to the 'transport pool' phenomenon is emerging in the field of records management in Commonwealth African countries. The 'transport pool' phenomenon refers to the practise of donor countries of bringing vehicles manufactured in their own country for development project purposes and then handing them over to the host government. Thus developing countries find themselves in possession of a mixed collection of second-hand Land Rovers, Toyotas, Jeeps, etc and this creates considerable problems in terms of maintaining stores of spare parts and tools — and manuals — and in training mechanics. In terms of records management, difficulties arising from this development include: staff transfers between Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) that use incompatible systems; the movement of written guidance materials between MDAs; and, the consequent difficulties in developing appropriate training materials.

There are, however, other possible interpretations. It would be possible to argue that a 'one size fits all' approach is too inflexible and too slow to respond to change. Pitt Kuan Wah, of the National Archives of

Singapore, has indicated one possible way of understanding the challenge facing records professionals in the developing world:

> Archives and recordkeeping legislations usually only cover macro control (policy) aspects of archiving and give archives the mandate and authority to deal with record creating agencies. For effective enforcement we need to translate policies into procedures (workflow) and most important of all, with practical and easy to implement solution(s).[28]

In understanding the nature of the challenge it is helpful to look at the contents of one records management manual, the Zambian *Government Office Instructions*, and consider to what extent this provides a statement of basic principles and/or practical solutions. Before proceeding, it should be acknowledged that this guidance has now been superseded. Nonetheless, it is still in use.[29] The manual states:

> The administration of public business is largely based on papers. The task of classifying and filing papers, and supplying them in an acceptable and convenient form to administrators and executives is, therefore, of fundamental importance ... it has been decided to adopt a common system of classification ... of subject papers in all ministries ... The system ... will be used as a basis for training courses in registry duties held at the National Institute of Public Administration .[30]

and

> The basic functions of a registry may be summarised thus:
> 1)   Classify, index, number and file all incoming correspondence;
> 2)   Maintain records of registered mail ...
> 3)   Distribute files for appropriate action;
> 4)   Receive, record and re-distribute files circulating between officers;
> 5)   Put away files in cabinets ...
> 6)   Maintain a Bring Up system ...
> 7)   Take a periodic census of files ...
> 8)   Search for missing files.[31]

and

> Officers opening mail addressed to them personally but which is on official business ... should normally pass such correspondence ... to the registry so that ... its receipt can be recorded before being filed and submitted for action.[32]

Taken at face value, the last paragraph quoted would appear to require the recipients of email to print off incoming messages and attachments and send them to a central registry for filing before any action is taken. Quite clearly this does not happen. Senior officials (the only ones with ICT equipment) may print messages for filing after the necessary action has been taken. Some may even call for the relevant file to be produced, so that they have full information on the matter in hand before making a decision. In any event, the arrival of ICT clearly tends to undermine the procedure described. It also tends to make the basic functions of a registry described in the second paragraph appear rather quaint and old-fashioned. There are, it seems, some good practical ideas in the first paragraph with its emphasis on classification as the basis for comprehensive file plans and the reference to common classification schemes implying a degree of uniform practice. What is lacking, of course, is a statement of basic principles. This may be an area where external standards have a part to play.

ISO 15489 and other external standards for records management

The questionnaire sent to DNAs sought information relating to ISO 15489 and other external standards for records management. A number of the questions were framed so as to enable comparison to be made with data gathered from a variety of study populations by Julie McLeod in the UK.[33] Once again, interviews with educators and consultants conducted by email were used to supplement the information.

Seven out of the ten respondents to the survey had heard of ISO 15489. There is a remarkable match between my findings and McLeod's on this question — 70 % in my survey and 69% in her surveys. All seven come from countries in East and Southern Africa and it became apparent that many had heard of ISO 15489 at an East and Southern African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) conference. All seven had seen a copy of ISO 15489. Five (71%) indicated that their organisation already possesses a copy. This compares with

44% of the British respondents in McLeod's study. The remaining two (29%) indicated that their organisation intends to obtain a copy, as compared with 22% in McLeod's study. Asked for their initial reactions to the international standard, six of the seven gave positive responses. The usefulness of the standard for benchmarking and training were identified by respondents. The value of ISO 15489 as external evidence for the value and importance of good records management was referred to also. In the McLeod study, 90% of respondents were characterised as positive. She commented that this is 'extremely encouraging for those involved in the development of the standard'.[34] The same may be said of the 85% figure produced by this survey.

Six of the seven respondents who had heard of ISO 15489 (85%) do have plans to use it, as compared with 51% of McLeod's British study population. The National Archives of Malawi is using it in preparing their first manuals.[35] Two are using the standard in re-writing existing manuals and both intend to make explicit reference to the International Standard to boost the standing of their own manual. Another National Archives surveyed, plans to use ISO 15489 in drawing up policies and procedures for electronic records.

Table 1. Summary of data: those who have heard of ISO 15489

	Possess a copy of ISO 15489	*Intend to obtain a copy*	*Have plans to use ISO 15489*	*Positive reactions to ISO 15489*
Commonwealth Africa, heads of record services, public sector	71%	29%	85%	85%
British records professionals, all sectors	44%	22%	51%	90%

Asked about other records management standards that their organisation is using or plans to use, one DNA referred to the ISO 9000 series for quality management. One university teacher and one records management consultant referred to this standard as being particularly valuable for export industries in developing countries. This reminds us of the origins of ISO 15489 as an initiative of Broken Hill Proprietary in Australia, starting with ISO 9000. It is quite likely that there are other records-related applications of the ISO 9000 series in the private sector in Commonwealth Africa. The South African respondent indicated that consideration is being given to using and adapting both the US DoD 5015.2 and UK National Archives functional requirements for electronic records management systems.

Questionnaire respondents who had not heard of ISO 15489 were asked four questions about their attitudes to standards, in an attempt to obtain detailed responses. In practice, this did not produce the degree of detail hoped for. Questions were asked about guidance standards and compliance standards. None of responses indicate that the respondents had any preference for guidance over compliance standards or vice versa. Indeed, none of the respondents appear to perceive any significant difference between guidance and compliance standards.

Asked if they regard standards as being appropriate for use with electronic records only, all of the three respondents answered in the negative. One respondent added that 'standards should be integrated, however sections of the standard must relate specifically to e-records'.[36] Asked if they could envisage any obstacles that might hold back the use of standards in their country, two main themes emerged: lack of senior management support and lack of sufficient resources, particularly financial resources. These themes — lack of resources and lack of top management support — have been reiterated in the e-records readiness discussion list, as the Moderator of the Discussion pointed out in her summary of the first week's discussion.[37] The issue of lack of resources has been amplified by Mr Shadrack Katuu who states that 'among the foremost problems is the lack of knowledgeable and adequately trained personnel to handle electronic records'.[38]

Concluding thoughts

There would appear to be a consensus amongst the Directors of National Archives and other records specialists working in Commonwealth Africa that standards are desirable, even necessary, and that the international standard represents an opportunity to promote and benchmark improvements. Postings to the e-records readiness discussion list would suggest that this consensus may extend much more widely. Zodwa Simelane of Swaziland has related standards explicitly to basic records management principles:

> [National] Archives should facilitate the establishment of policies, procedures, standards and practices designed to assist records creators to create and retain authentic reliable records that can be managed over time.[39]

This, of course, is easier to say than to do.

From the e-records readiness discussion list it is apparent that there is some anxiety in developing countries about their exclusion from international decision-making processes, including those by means of which international standards are created and amended. Cheryl Stanborough of Yap Archives expressed these anxieties by saying that 'international organisations have a very important role to play but ... it's the smaller places, less developed places that are overlooked by these organisations'.[40] Segomotso Keakopa of Botswana believes 'we in the Africa or at least the ESARBICA region are not represented'.[41] In point of fact, Kenya became a participating member of ISO/TC 46/SC11 — the sub committee responsible for the international standard on records management — in May 2002. Yet it would appear that the Kenyan Bureau of Standards (KEBS) has not nominated experts to serve on any of the working groups currently in existence nor attended any plenary meetings, to date. Email messages sent by the investigator have not been answered, so it is not possible to know how KEBS' participation may develop in the future. It would be possible to argue that participation from one or more developing countries would be beneficial to all concerned in the further development of ISO 15489. Unfortunately the funding model utilised by the ISO militates against financial support to enable such participation.

One theme that emerged from a variety of sources is the importance of external validation of the value of good records management. 'Buy-in' from those in high authority is clearly valued. Both of the national archives that are currently using ISO 15489 to guide them in revising their manuals expect that the resultant guidelines will have an enhanced authority because they bear the stamp of international approval. The emergence of multiple, competing standards would appear, however, to threaten this aspiration to high-level endorsement.

Classification schemes represent one area in which collaborative effort might achieve real progress in Commonwealth Africa. The international standard states:

> Classification systems reflect the business of the organization from which they derive and are normally based on an analysis of the organization's business activities. The systems can be used to support a variety of records management processes. Organizations need to determine the degree of classification they require for their business purposes.[42]

There would appear to be a consensus that classification systems are required to support the business of public administration in Commonwealth Africa. Classification schemes are referred to in the Zambian guidelines quoted previously. Uganda and South Africa both have model classification schemes available.[43] The South African scheme has much in common with the Australian Keyword AAA scheme, in terms of scope and design principles.[44] In Ghana, classification schemes are being created in order to cope with the challenges of electronic recordkeeping. Cletus Azangweo states that the keyword classification system used in the registries of target model-driven architectures (MDAs) is being considered for restructuring to meet the needs of the electronic file directory structures.[45] In the context of donor aid, and given the pre-eminence of Australia in this area of expertise, there may be an important role here for Australian records professionals.

Another national archives service with the potential to play a major role is the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (NARSSA). They have the most comprehensive range of policy and procedural guidance available within the African continent. Crucially, this includes a model classification scheme. They are also ahead of the

game in that consideration is being given to using or adapting the US DoD 5015.2 and UK National Archives functional requirements for electronic records management systems. In addition, they have been invited to serve on a new South African Bureau of Standards' committee charged with creating a formal national standard for records management. All in all, NARSSA has the potential to become a leading force in the promotion and implementation of records management standards. It is symptomatic of the energetic approach that the NARSSA is taking that in November 2003 they launched a Provincial Records Management Capacity Building Project with support from the National Archives of the UK.[46] Postings to the e-records readiness discussion list show that there is willingness, even an expectation, that the NARSSA will take what Segomotso Keakopa calls 'a regional lead'.[47]

One consultant made the point in an email interview that:

> The reason it [ISO 15489] is not being used more widely is probably a) lack of awareness b) the fact that it is not a compliance standard, and therefore, as it stands has limited value as a means of assessing the technical effectiveness of a project.

It is possible that one of the 'spin-off' products associated with the International Standard may go some way towards filling this perceived need. The British Standards Institution has recently produced a publication on Performance Management in relation to records management, specifically addressing ISO 15489.[48] This may provide a means of assuring African governments and donors that their money is being spent effectively. If this happens then the appeal of the US DoD 5015.2 standard may be dissipated.

Another promising development is the Records Management Capacity Framework project being developed by the IRMT. As Andrew Griffin expresses it, this project:

> Aims to assess records and information systems, identify strengths and weaknesses and support improvements ... the framework uses benchmark requirements, or recommendations for good practice, that are based in part on ISO 15489. We have already begun testing elements of the framework in a small way and have involved colleagues

from Commonwealth African countries ... We anticipate
that the framework and supporting software will be ready
for use next year and we hope that many Commonwealth
African countries will use it for assessing records and
information systems in human resource management,
financial management and judicial functions, or use it
generically for any records system.[49]

One way of expressing a major challenge facing most Commonwealth
African countries in respect of standards for records management would
be to say that they are struggling to find ways of making commonality
and uniformity consonant with flexibility and appropriateness for
purpose. If they are to be successful then they will almost certainly need
assistance from outside the continent and regional leadership from
within.

Endnotes

1 The 'Good Governance Agenda' addresses the need to re-orient the public
service to serving the public and promotes the restoration of ethical conduct.
The Public Sector Reform Programmes referred to in this article are practical
manifestations of the Good Governance Agenda.

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3 See, for instance, Government of Zanzibar, *Classification and Filing of Correspondence*, Government Printer, Zanzibar, 1914 (British Library shelfmark C.S.C.284/2). I am grateful to Michael Moss for drawing this to my attention.

4 Extract from the diary of PDL Guilbride for the year 1943, Rhodes House Library, University of Oxford, MSS.Afr.s.1315, quoted in A Tough, *African Medical History: A guide to personal papers in Rhodes House Library, Oxford*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 1997.

5 N Mnjama, 'Archives and Records Management in Kenya: problems and prospects' *Records Management Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2003, p. 91.

6 T Baxter, *Archives in a Growing Society, a Report by the Director for Period 1 July 1954 to 30 June 1962*, National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Salisbury, 1963, pp. 2-18 and 29.

7 Useful publications on these developments include: BJ Berman, 'Ethnicity, patronage and the African state: the politics of uncivil nationalism', *African Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 388, 1998, pp. 305-341; and, CS Gray, (ed.) *Inside Independent Nigeria. Diaries of Wolgang Stolper, 1960-62*, Ashgate, Abingdon, 2003.

8 Baxter, p. 17.

9 Having returned to lawful government in 1980, Zimbabwe hosted a meeting of the International Records Management Congress in 1993. This may be regarded as reflecting the country's continuing high standing in respect of records management.

10 Mnjama, p. 100.

11 The website for IRMT's 'Evidence-based Governance in the Electronic Age Project' can be found at <http://www.irmt.org/evidence/index.html>.

12 See, for example, A Lipchak, *Information Management to Support Evidence-based Governance in the Electronic Age*, Public Policy Forum, Canada, 2002, available at <www.forumpp.ca/bbg/bbg.htm>.

13 For example, United Republic of Tanzania, Civil Service Department, Archives and Records Management Division, *Registry Procedures Manual*, 2000.

14 Koo Ombati 'Domesticating ISO 15489 and ISAD(G) at the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service', *ESARBICA Newsletter*, 2004 (2), p. 5-6.

15 Julie McLeod, 'Assessing the Impact of ISO 15489 – a preliminary investigation', *Records Management Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2003, pp. 70-82. This research is continuing, with financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Board of the UK. See this edition of *Archives and Manuscripts* as well as J McLeod and S Ferguson, 'Assessing the impact of ISO 15489 – the first international standard for records management', *Records Management Bulletin*, no. 118, 2004, p. 35.

16 AL Strauss and J Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, Sage, London, 1998, p. 285.

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