



Office of the Special Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor - Mr P Mfazwe

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7 July 2011

Ms S Van Damme
Chief Executive Officer
South African Heritage Resources Agency
P O Box 4837
Cape Town
8000

Dear Ms Van Damme

**CONCERNS REGARDING THE STORAGE, SECURITY AND CONSERVATION OF
THE BROSTER BEAD COLLECTION**

We refer to your correspondence of 21 June 2011 on the subject referred to above.

This will serve to confirm that the said correspondence has been considered and attended to by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. The Office of the Chief Operations Officer, to which it has been delegated, has confirmed that there are processes underway to deal with the concerns. We are waiting further updates on the progress of this matter. We trust that these initiatives will serve to address the issues raised in compliance with your suggested specifications.

On behalf of Walter Sisulu University, we further wish to express appreciation for the commitment and support South African Heritage Resources Agency has demonstrated in ensuring the safe preservation of the Broster Bead Collection in our institution.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Mfazwe', is written over a horizontal line.

P Mfazwe (Mr)

Special Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor

DOCUMENTATION OF HERITAGE OBJECTS AT WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY(WSU) ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY.

PROJECT CLOSING REPORT 00003

SERVICE PROVIDER: DD NGXEKANA TRADING

PROJECT PERIOD : TWO MONTHS

PROJECT START DATE:01-02-12

PROJECT CLOSING DATE:17-04-12

PROJECT TEAM

- 1.Project manager(one of the compilers of documentation information).
- 2.Two compilers of documentation information.
- 3.Two data captures.
- 4.Two experienced bead crafting Thembu matrons.
- 5.Two general assistants.

BACKGROUND

The Africana and special collections division of the Walter Sisulu University (WSU) libraries is a custodian of a vast range of special collections and heritage resources that are of significant importance to indigenous knowledge systems(IKS). Standing out amongst these collections is a prestigious beadwork and clothing collection that was acquired by the University from the late Mrs Joan Broster.The majority of the Africana and special collections at WSU are those that were purchased by the University from Mrs Joan Broster. Mrs Broster owned a trading store at Qebe administrative area, Engcobo, from 1952 to 1966. She admired the beadwork worn by the Qebe community and decided to establish a workshop in her store.She invited community members and supplied them with material to make beadwork for her at the workshop. Most of her collection was never used and is in immaculate condition. The beadwork and garments collected outside Engcobo seem to have been used as can be seen from the red orche patina covering some of the objects.

Alongside the Broster collection at WSU is Professor Masilo Lamla's collection of traditional objects which he used towards his doctoral studies. This collection consists of rare priceless heritage objects that are presently in extinction. Some objects in this collection have been damaged extensively and

others are starting to deteriorate due to their exposure to excessive heat from artificial and natural light in the Seminar room. Some of those collection have been damaged by stress caused by hanging and some were stuck on the display panels covered with velvet material. Non maintenance of good housekeeping procedures at the Seminar room also enhanced the effects of deterioration. The casted molten wax portraits are susceptible to excessive temperatures and as a result they have been damage.

Non-the-less, Walter Sisulu University can boast to be the only institution in the whole of the Eastern Cape that has the best and large antique beadwork and garments collection of the Xhosa speaking people.

DOCUMENTATION PROCESS.

The service provider attended a project initiation meeting at WSU on 31-01-12. The meeting was chaired by professor Obi. Mrs W. Danster (WSU- PROJECTS MANAGER), M. Nkhasi and the WSU team also attended the meeting.

On the morning of 01-02-2012, Head Librarian in the Africana and Special collections division, Mrs V.M Lusu a coordinator of SAHRA documentation project introduced the project team members to her colleagues and also orientated the team around the Sasol library.

The project team held a meeting in its workstation on the second floor of the Sasol library building on 01-02-12. At that meeting every team member was informed of his or her responsibilities concerning the project. The beadwork specialist also taught the project team members on how to handle heritage objects.

The first challenge was that the majority of the team members were staying about fourty kilometers away from Mthatha (WSU). Another challenge was that the experienced bead crafting matrons were reluctant to leave their homesteads and work in the city. I had to persuade them and offered to transport them to and from Mthatha. I had to also provide them with lunch together with other staff members.

The following items were purchased between 01-02-2012 and 02-02-12:

1. WORKING GEAR: duster coats, dust musks and cotton gloves.

2. CONSERVATION MATERIAL: transparent polythene bags, white calico fabric, needles, threads, cleaning material, cardboard boxes, pesticides, feather dusters and scrubbing brushes.

3. STATIONERY: Rims of A4 paper, black markers, pens, cartridge papers, writing boards and pairs of scissors.

The documentation process also started on 01-02-12. It was done by those team members not involved in the purchasing of materials and protective clothing. The collections of heritage objects at WSU are located in the Seminar Room and Africana division of the Sasol Library. We started the process of documentation by removing the collection from the Africana division to our work station. This was done by carefully removing the collection from the display cases and placing them in calico padded boxes to protect them from stress whilst in transit.

At the work-station we sorted and placed similar objects together before attempting to clean those that needed cleaning. Fortunately most of Broaster collections look new and still maintain their original colours.

The team members observed the condition of each object individually. The questions were asked, eg. who made the objects, how objects were made, when, why, where and what materials were used in their manufacture. By answering the above questions we were able to obtain all the essential information required for the documentation of heritage objects. The dimensions of the objects were measured and recorded together with documentation information on the electronic data base. The objects were given their unique codes or accession numbers. The numbers were first captured on the computer before being written on cartridge paper tags and those tags tied with threads onto each object for easy identification of each object. The object was then placed into its transparent polythene bag and packed into padded boxes. Boxes were taken to the photographic studio where each object was photographed by a highly professional photographer (Mr Stein Swanepool). After completion of photography the collection is returned to its original storage. The essential information was recorded by the service provider (DD Ngxekana) and a museum employee Mr T Mgwili. This was done to ensure that all objects are given their authentic names before being recorded into the electronic data base.

The experienced bead crafters belong to the Thembu tribe like the Qebe communities who also belong to the Thembu tribe. Their beadwork is similar or alike. It will be recalled that the community of Qebe (amaQwathi) were Xesibe refugees who settled at Ngcobo (Qebe) in early 1800 and adopted the beadwork, clothing and customs of the Thembu tribe.

It was therefore easy for the experienced beadcrafters in our team to give description of each object. Furthermore they are still holding on custom of wearing the Thembu traditional attire on a daily bases. The project coordinator Mrs V.M Lusu also provided us with the catalogue of the Broaster collection compiled by the university (WSU). Some of the information in the catalogue was incomplete and sometimes questionable and we as museum employees together with experienced bead crafting Thembu matrons made the process of the provision of authentic information about the heritage objects succesful.The project manager and team members visited the following communities to verify the authenticity of the names of heritage objects:

1. Qebe administrative area, Qunu A/A, Baziya A\A. All these areas belong to the Thembu tribe.
2. Nqabarha admin. Area(Gcalekaland), Thuthurha(Gcalekaland)
3. Fingoland(Mahlubini A\A, Tsomo and Tyinira in Ngqamakhwe.
4. Swazini A\A, Port St. Johns(Pondoland) and Noqhekwana A/A Lusikisiki(Pondoland)
5. Mancam A\A Coffebay (Bomvanaland) and Krakrai A/A, Xhora (Bomvanaland)

The labeling of the objects will be done when the objects are on display and that information will be copied from the collection catalogue. The catalogue and accession register will be compiled when the photographer has finished his work. The photographer has photographed 853 objects and my team has completed the documentation and capturing of 1451 objects.

Eight hundred and fifty three objects have been taken to storage at the Africana division of the library.They are safely stored in two display cases that have first been cushioned with white calico fabric.Those display cases have been treated with pesticides and the collection is covered with calico fabrics. All the objects of heritage significance will be stored at the Africana.There are about two empty display cases and three empty standing display cabinets at the Africana.The remaining objects of cultural significance will be stored inside the aforesaid display cases and cabinets. Only the portraits of the heroes of the struggle and other artworks will be stored at the Seminar Room.All those objects at seminar room must be kept in darkness and or covered with calico.. The Africana is suitable for storage since it is cooler in terms of temperature requirements and not exposed to natural light. All the stored heritage objects are covered by the calico fabric.All the display cases and cabinets will be numbered and copies of instructions on how to handle the heritage objects will be displayed inside the display cases, cabinets and the seminar room.

CHALLENGES

The documentation process was originally targeted for completion on 30\03\12 but was interrupted by WSU student protests and malfunctioning of the electronic data base. The service provider applied for an extension up to the 17-04-12.The application was approved by Sahra. The photographer is still continuing his work and that has delayed the inserting of photographes into the collections manager soft wear and the printing of the catalogue and accession registers. The photographer has up to date

photographed 853 objects and processed them all on dvd as at 22/04/12. The service provider is going to continue working after the 17/04/12 until the photographer has finished his work and all the pictures of heritage object been inserted into the collection manager data base and that all the deliverables have been submitted to SAHRA and WSU.

Similar heritage objects in this collection like the brass bangles, grass arm,neck, wrist bands, plastic tubings, brass anklets and arm bands can number 20,40,80 up to 100 objects for each group of objects. One accession number is given for each group of objects. When you add those numbers together the captured objects will increase from 1451 to more than 2000 objects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6 potraits of the struggle heroes at the Seminar Room have been damaged. The portrait of Walter Sisulu has been damaged in its head. The portrait of Oliver Reginald Thambo has a broken neck. The

portrait of Tiyo Soga has a broken neck and hands. The portrait of Chris Hani has broken neck and the side of its face. The portrait of Sarhili has a broken neck. The portrait of King Hintsa has a broken hand. These objects can be repaired by a wax specialist or sculpter. The furred leather battle shields have crumpled probable because of water damage. Some have started to loose furs. It is recommended that


they be repaired by experienced furred leather specialist. The bottled barks and stems of African indigenous trees must be taken to the WSU botany department as study collection. The dolls and boxes of books must be taken to another storage or other wise. The display panels must be also allocated another accommodation. The art works that are not of good quality can be taken to other storage or discarded. I have during the process of documentation noticed a box of human remains and two stone tools at the Seminar room. Inside the box I have also noticed a couple of probable extinct sea shells which suggest that the human remains may have been excavated from along the coast line, especially the wild coast where many prehistoric sites still need to be researched by qualified archeologists. The Albany museum in Grahamstown and or KZNmuseum in Petermaritzburg may be approached for assistance concerning research on the aforesaid human remains. The restorers of heritage objects can be allocated by enquiries to the other museums. It is also recommended that the gas tube lights at the Africana and Seminar room be replaced by conservation friendly spot lights or those areas be kept in darkness when no work is done inside.

CONCLUSION

The project closing meeting was held at WSU on 17/04/12. The meeting was convened by Sahra National Inventory Manager and attended by the service provider and WSU Sahra project coordinator Mrs V M Lusu.

I wish to thank the WSU Sasol library staff for their kind assistance to ensure that the project is successful. I wish to specifically mention the manager of Sasol library Mrs Mpeta. I also wish to specifically mention Mrs Lusu who was the coordinator of the project. Without her help it would be difficult for us to complete the project on time.

The collection of heritage objects at WSU is one of the best and probably the largest collection in this province. A museum is needed to display these objects for use and enjoyment by all the peoples of South Africa. These objects need to be preserved and treated with care and dignity they deserve. A proper display space with controlled internal environment is urgently required for the WSU heritage objects. Suitable staff need to be appointed to curate those collection. The WSU museum should also be a member of the South African Museums Association for its accreditation and future prosperity



DIRECTOR: D.D NGXEKANA

24/04/2012
DATE

APPENDIX

HOW TO HANDLE MUSEUM OBJECTS

Handle museum objects as little as possible.

Handling should be done by properly trained staff.

Do not hurry.

Handle each object as if it were precious.

Cleanliness is essential.

Do not smoke, drink or eat around objects.

If a mishap occurs record the damage in a condition report. Keep and label detached parts.

Cotton gloves should always be used when handling metal, paper, textiles, unglazed pottery, marble and other porous materials.

Cotton gloves should not be worn while handling glass and glazed ceramics. To prevent slippage, hands should be clean and dry or latex/vinyl gloves should be worn.

Examine the object carefully and learn its strengths and weaknesses.

Get help if it is too heavy to handle.

Use both hands.

Never pick it by the handle, rim or a projecting part.

Pick it up by its most solid component.

Handle only one object at a time.

Support all objects while in transit.

Never carry dissimilar materials together (eg metal and paper)

Provide adequate padding to minimize vibration and abrasion.

Never drag an object.

Nothing should protrude beyond the edges of a container.

Small delicate objects should be carried in a padded tray.

Always support flat flexible materials(eg textiles, beaded items etc,) from below with rigid supports or cover a board with a piece of fabric as support.

Avoid folding. Roll the item around a large diameter tube which has been covered with polyethyenesheeting and acid free tissue.