

Introduction

I am not the original speaker for this paper. May I thus introduce my humble self first and foremost.

My name is Amela Silipa, Principal Archives Officer in the Archives Unit of the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture in Samoa and also the Project Manager for the German – Samoa Digitization Project.

I have worked in Samoa's public sector for over 30 years. I became the leading unit manager for the Archives Unit of Samoa in the year 2009

I am a proud member of my small but mighty team. In time I will talk about the team but for now, I wish to start the paper with an overview of the Archives Unit of Samoa.

Overview

The aim of my paper today is to introduce you to the archives unit and its exciting and challenging Project. My paper today will provide

- A brief introduction to Samoa
- The Archives Unit of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture.

- The German – Samoa Digitization Project
- Include some successes and challenges.
- Discuss the way forward for the Project

Where is Samoa?

Most of you will have heard of Samoa lately, between the Sevens and the Rugby World Cup.

To give you a fair idea, Samoa is a beautiful island located in the Oceania, about half way through Hawaii and New Zealand. Samoa is made up of 2 main islands, Upolu and Savaii and several small islands.

Our population is just around 220,000. We depend on development aid, tourism, and agriculture, fishing and family remittance from overseas. Samoa is ranked among the world's least developed countries.

Foreign influences play a major role in Samoa from the arrival of the missionaries in the 1820s, through to the German Administration from 1900– 1914 followed by the New Zealand

administration until our independence in 1 January 1962. It is the oldest independent country in the Pacific.

Our Samoan traditional way of life plays a major role in our everyday living, with our deep family ties, village chief system, our religion and oral traditions.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture – Archive Unit

The archives unit was born (so to speak) in the mid – 1980s when the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture established a Museum and Archives Officer position. The position was filled by a German lady Ulrike Hertel who commenced her work from only a desk and few files and a limited budget.

Little progress was made on the archive until 2001 when our Public Memorial Library offered a room for storage of our Archives collection. The same room also became the home of the records of the German Administration. From 2001 the growth of the archives through resources and staff increased.

In 2003 during the government realignment the Archives Unit was relocated to be housed by and developed as a sub-unit of the Culture Division within the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture.

The Archives unit currently consists of three positions for permanent staff whose roles and responsibilities are all attached to the project. Vaveao Toa and I are the two remaining officers as we await the reappointment of a third senior officer to replace Ferron Fruean (senior digitization officer) who has since resigned from the project to take up another position with an international organization.

German – Samoa Digitization Project.

The German collection from 1900 to 1914 is very unique to the people of Samoa as it tells another part of our history. The significant and impact of the information contained in these records does not necessary resemble the pieces of history of Samoa alone but also the history of Germany.

This is a joint project funded by the Federal Republic of Germany, with the technical advice provided through Archives New Zealand and undertaken by the MESC Archives Unit.

The project objective is to digitize, at folio level to meet international standards for digitization, the records of the German Administration dating between 1800s and 1914 that are held by the MESC Archives Unit. These collections compose only about half of the total German Administration Records

collection. The other half are currently in the custody of Archives New Zealand.

Although discussion for this project have been underway for many years, the project officially commenced on 16 December 2008. It was estimated to run for two years, with an option to extend for an extra two years in case of unforeseen fall outs during implementation processes.

The project is divided into two main components. The first component was the establishment of an item listing project. This involved

- Establishing a system of arrangement and controlled based on the series system and compliant with the international descriptive standards.

That said, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ASA for its generous donation of two copies of Keeping Archives which deem invaluable sources.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Liz Nannelli who was an Australian Youth Ambassador for her tremendous contribution to this project by:

- Coordinating sessions on record handling practices
- Dusted and re-housed the records into archive boxes

- Coordinated sessions on methods of archival description and prepared supportive help sheets to sustain the training program.

The second component was the digitization project itself. This included the provision of digitization equipment, training in basic conservation from Stephen Williams of Triptych , metadata training from Archives New Zealand, and digitization training from Andrew Pettengell of AP digital Consultancy.

The outcomes of the project are the production of:

- An 8 bit grayscale TIFFat 400 DPI to meet German Government's requirements
- A 24 bit colour TIFF file for Archives New Zealand, who will provide the main data storage for the project, and
- A PDF version to be retained in Samoa as an access copy.

At the completion of the project, the digitization equipment will become the property of the Archives Unit and will be used to undertake ongoing digitization in Samoa.

Project constraints and issues

One of the issues we noticed was that while the project was and is an excellent idea, it was poorly planned. The role of the Project Manager was not documented in the agreement.

Another difficulty with this project is that of communication. It was several months before clear communication channels were established, and in many ways the exact roles and responsibilities of the various partners are still being worked out, although the distribution of a project scoping documents and project plan have served to clarify some of these issues.

Another difficulty, which has proved to be of great concern, is the maintenance of and technical support for the digitization equipments. While the project has effectively been operating since the completion of trainings, the computer and cameras used by the project have undergone a series of technical difficulties, partly due to lack of storage space and deficient capacity towards using and repairing the said equipment.

Refresher training directed at upgrading the very limited skills of the Archives Unit in operating and managing the software that are being use by the digitization team is another big problem.

Long term storage of digital images from the digitization process is another issue that we are facing at this stage of the project. The digital devices we are using for storage are external hard drives ranging from 1 – 2 terabytes.

They are sufficient at this stage but as the project grows we need to come up with a better storage option that will be able to store the large amount of images.

It was discovered during the process of the item listing that most of the files in this collection is in German dialect. The translation of file titles by a former Principal Archives officer, who was a German national was not a problem until now.

Yet another difficulty in this project is that of access to the records. The records contain various information which are culturally sensitive. The Archives Unit has no access policy in place. We have however requested that the records not become available until Samoa has developed its access policy plan.

Success and achievement of the Project

The Archives Unit is a relatively new section and as such we are gradually improving our general work and services. At the same time we identify strategies to further develop the unit as we

move forward with the establishment of the National Archives Authority of Samoa.

The digitization Project of the German – Samoa records has also equipped staff and future employees of archives in tailoring experience gained from the current project into managing digital records.

The Archives team believes that many lessons have been learnt. The project has opened new doors and enriching ideas for the staff of the Archives Unit of Samoa.

We will ensure that the skills and knowledge gained will be utilized in other similar future projects.

We can proudly say that this part of the German collection is in good hands and are stored in an air condition environment to satisfy archival storage international standards.

FAAFETAI AND TOFA SOIFUA