

Archives in Cameroon: an Overview

by Victor Kamto Kenmegne

Introduction

The concept of business archives is relatively absent from Cameroon's managerial policies. The presence of the Europeans in Cameroon during the colonial and neo-colonial period gave the archives a certain importance but, with independence and the arrival of new priorities on the scene, the value of archives gradually diminished. In the first years of independence, the management of most state companies gave little or no importance to the role of the archivist.

Today, apart from a few multinational groups in which the records management policy is imposed by the leadership, the concept of business archives is far from being a priority for the majority of Cameroonian companies. In privately-owned companies, unlike public ones, fear of the tax office has allowed this topic to be considered, if only marginally.

Despite this new consciousness, there seldom exists any archival policy nor any managerial staff with proper training in order to be able to create this kind of policy. Therefore, the number of workers with necessary skills to carry out archival operations is still far from sufficient.

Legislation

Since December 2000, the programs of the government have concentrated on the urgency of organizing the collective memory of their country. For this reason the National Assembly voted for the establishment of a law on archives: the law N°2000/010, 19th December 2000. In November 2001, the Cameroonian government also signed its enforcement decree N° 2001/958/PM, 1st November 2001. Even if this quite recent legislation doesn't yet enable us to have a global vision of business archives in Cameroon, thanks to the obligations that these new laws have imposed, we are encouraged to notice some new attempts.

Initial Projects

1- National Insurance Fund

⇒ **CAISSE NATIONALE DE PREVOYANCE SOCIALE (National Insurance Fund)**

Head Archivist : *MVONDO Didier Jolinon*

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Thanks to a project conceived and carried out by the International Work Office, the National Insurance Fund restored part of its archives. This made it possible to group 30,000 meters of archives concerning social security in today's biggest repository in all Cameroon. The center is managed by a professional archivist, Mr. Didier Jolinon MVONDO.

2- Agency for the Regulation of Public Markets

⇒ **AGENCE DE REGULATION DES MARCHES PUBLICS (Agency for the Regulation of Public Markets)**

Director : *ELOUNDOU BILOA Alain*

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Telephone : 237 220 00 56

Cell phone : 237 938 67 83

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Website : www.armp.cm

BP : 6604 Yaoundé

The Agency for the Regulation of Public Markets owns all the documents related to the Public Markets of Cameroon. During the setting up of this repository, many efforts have been made in order to ensure proper management.

3- The Fonds Routier of Cameroon

⇒ **FONDS ROUTIER DU CAMEROUN (Fonds Routier of Cameroon)**

Telephone : 237 222 47 52

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The Fonds Routier of Cameroon is one of the state companies that understood the importance of creating an archives. This project began in 2002 and finished in March 2005. Unluckily, despite all the recommendations of CINV-COR S.A. (Director of the works of this project) no professional archivists were hired during the actualisation of this project.

The Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures, as well as the Crédit Foncier, have only just taken the first steps towards the creation of their own archives.

Finally, in the perspective of the creation of an Account Chamber, the Department for the Economy, with the support of the European Union, started a project of filing all the records related to the bookkeeping and the balance of all administrations.

To conclude, it is important to underline that frequently archives are preserved as a financial issue and the notion of historical preservation is still a distant objective of our managers.

All things considered, thanks to the obligation imposed by the law some remarkable efforts are being accomplished.

Two private companies (CINV-COR S.A., KNOW HOW) have sensed the importance of the organisation of a company's memory and they are spending considerable energy and resources on this important goal.

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⇒ **SOCIETE NATIONALE DES HYDROCARBURES**

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⇒ **CINV-COR S.A.**

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