

## Archival Futures in Swaziland



Three generations of passionate archivists and historians, popular and professional, local and foreign, pose for an historic photograph on the occasion of the FHYA stakeholder meeting in Swaziland.

Two members of the Five Hundred Year Archive (FHYA) project team, Professor Carolyn Hamilton and Dr Grant McNulty, recently made a trip to Swaziland at the invitation of the University of Swaziland and the Swaziland National Archives. They were accompanied by Professor Emeritus, Philip Bonner, of the History Research Group at Wits University, whose contribution to the history of Swaziland was celebrated in the course of the visit.

The aim of the visit, coordinated by the enthusiastic and indefatigable Dr Nhlanhla Dlamini of the University of Swaziland, was to promote and discuss the Five Hundred Year Archive Project and, in particular, the holdings of one of the project's partner institutions, namely materials from the Swaziland Oral History Project (SWOHP), housed at Wits University Historical Papers.

The bulk of the SWOHP material dates from the 1970s, collected by Bonner, and the 1980s, collected by Hamilton, both working with a number of Swazi-speaking researchers and assistants. Some parts of the SWOHP collection were undertaken at the behest of the then Swazi King, Sobhuza II, and others were recorded by the Swaziland Broadcasting Corporation.

At a variety of government, media, and seminar engagements, Dlamini, Bonner, Hamilton and McNulty discussed the FHYA exemplar currently in development, which aims to bring together materials relevant to the past before colonialism in southern Africa.

The visit, the subject of huge media attention in Swaziland, highlighted the richness of the recorded Swazi material and its capacity to contribute unique insights into the history of the wider region before European colonialism. The visit drew attention to ongoing work in Swaziland on the recording of further materials, notably by Musa Simelane at the Swazi National Archives, and was the first step towards building what are likely to be enduring connections between historians and archivists in Swaziland and South Africa. One immediate outcome in this area is that Simelane and Dlamini joined the KwaZulu-Natal provincial archivists for the workshop on clan histories that the FHYA ran in Durban in mid-February 2016.