FRIENDS OF THE TRANSHET HERITAGE LIBRARY

UPDATE NO 1, NOVEMBER 2014

Dear Supporter

This is the first short communication to those individuals who expressed their concern about the preservation of the Transnet photographic collection. The first invitation was sent out on 20 October 2014 and your positive response marked a good start to the project. Thank you. It is our intention to keep you informed with regular email updates of the project.

Progress report

On Wednesday, 12 November, we were finally able to install a new state-of-the-art computer in the Transnet Heritage Library. The computer is on loan from *Root3 Consulting Engineers* – many thanks! It is a Linux-based machine with a software suite selected for the digitizing project – software for scanning, image manipulation, detection of duplicate images, and a sophisticated database specifically tailored for archival material. It is now connected to two scanners – to an Epson scanner belonging to Transnet, and a donated Canon scanner. This marks an important milestone in the project. The emphasis can now shift to finding five young persons to train as assistants for scanning administration. In this regard, negotiations with a number of parties are currently underway. Should you know of companies who would be willing to sponsor a student during the vacation, please provide us with their contact details.

Why does Transnet host a photographic collection?

The South African Railways (SAR) was formed after the Unification of South Africa in 1910 by amalgamating all the previous railway authorities into a single railway system. The Cape Government Railways (CGR) and Natal Government Railways (NGR) were formed in 1875, as well as the Central South African Railways (CSAR) of the Free State and Transvaal formed after the Boer War in 1902. The CSAR replaced the Imperial Railways which operated during the Boer War which, in turn, appropriated the railways of the earlier Oranje Vrij Staat Spoorwegmaatschappij (OVSS) and the Nederlands Zuid Afrikaanse Spoorweg Maatschappij (NZASM) in 1900. All the photographic records of these earlier authorities, from roughly 1860 to 1910, were transferred to the SAR in 1910. The SAR continued to build the photographic collection with permanent, professional photographers to systematically record the development of railways in Southern Africa, as well as its harbours, lighthouses, airlines, bus services and other transportation infrastructure.

The Transnet Heritage Library (THL) photographic collection is, however, about much more than just trains and rails. From its inception in 1910, it also acted as the official agent of the government to promote tourism to and in South Africa – tourism, naturally, would increase the volume of passenger traffic and bring other economic benefits, as we know all too well today. The marketing of South Africa, in this way, continued into the 1960s, until a separate government department was established for this purpose. The SAR photographers therefore roamed all the corners of South Africa for half a century in their quest to record the industrial development of the country. Moreover, the SAR photographers also strived to capture the natural beauty of the country, its scenery, wildlife, architecture, heritage, the diversity of its citizens and its different ethnic groups. From these thousands of photographs, a constant stream of calenders, photographs, postcards and brochures flowed, with most of the original images still residing in the THL image collection.

The strength and diversity of the THL image collection attracted the donation of numerous other photographic albums and collections from private enthusiasts and collectors. But there are, of course, much more than just images in the THL. Thousands of documents, old reports, surveys and engineering drawings are held, all demanding proper digitization and preservation. But the photographic collection is a priority, as it is unique without replication elsewhere.

Request

If you have not done so before, please remember to forward this email to your friends and others who might share our concern about the preservation of the Transnet photo collection, with a request to ask Yolanda.Meyer@transnet.net to be included in our distribution list, which carries no cost or obligation. An extended list is vitally important to demonstrate a broad public concern when negotiating for further funds and support.

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(Transnet endorses *Friends of the Transnet Heritage Library*)

From the collection / Uit die versameling

Market Square in the centre of Johannesburg, more than 100 years ago.
Die Johannesburg Markplein, meer as 'n eeu gelede.

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VRIENDE VAN DIE TRANSHET ERFENISBIBLIOTEEK

MEDEDELING NO 1, NOVEMBER 2014

Liewe Ondersteuners

Hierdie is die eerste kort mededeling aan diegene wat laat weet het dat hulle ook besorgd is oor die behoud van Transnet fotoversameling. Die eerste uitnodiging is op 20 Oktober 2014 uitgestuur en die goeie reaksie was bemoedigend. Baie dankie. Ons sal julle graag deur hierdie gereelde eposverslaggies op datum wil hou van hoe die projek vorder.

Vorderingsverslag

Op Woensdag 12 November kon ons eindelik 'n moderne nuwe rekenaar in die Transnet Erfenisbiblioteek installeer, uitsluitlik vir die digitalisering van die fotoversameling. Die rekenaar is op bruikleen van *Root3 Raadgewende Ingenieurs* – baie dankie! Dit is 'n Linux-gebaseerde masjien wat toegerus is met die nodige programmatuur – programme vir skandering, beeldverwerking, opspoor van duplikaatbeelde, en 'n gesofistikeerde databasis wat uitsluitlik vir argivale doeleindes ontwikkel is. Dit is tans aan twee skandeerders gekoppel – 'n Transnet Epsonskandeerder en 'n Canonskandeerder wat aan die projek geskenk is. Die verkryging van die rekenaar is 'n belangrike mylpaal om die projek aan die gang te kry. Ons aandag kan nou verskuif om nagenoeg vyf jong assistente te werf en te befonds om die fisiese hantering en skandering van die versameling te begin. Daar is tans onderhandelings met 'n aantal partye hieroor aan die gang. As iemand dalk weet van 'n maatskappy wat dalk bereid sal wees om 'n jongmens vir 'n beperkte tyd (byvoorbeeld vakansiewerk) vir hierdie doel te befonds, stuur asseblief die details sodat ons kan opvolg.

Hoekom het Transnet 'n fotoversameling?

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë (SAS) is met Uniewording in 1910 gevorm deur al die vorige spoorwegstelsels na een te konsolideer, naamlik die Cape Government Railways (CGR), die Natal Government Railways (NGR) en die Central South African Railways (CSAR) wat die stelsels van die Vrystaat en Transvaal sedert 1902 beheer het. Die CSAR het die Imperial Railways in 1902 vervang wat die stelsels van die Oranje Vrij Staat Spoorwegmaatschappij (OVSS) en die Nederlands Zuid Afrikaanse Spoorweg Maatschappij (NZASM) tydens die Boereoorlog in 1900 oorgeneem het. Die SAS het al die fotomateriaal van hierdie vorige maatskappye in 1910 geërf wat van ongeveer 1860 tot 1910 versamel is. Die SAS het voortgegaan om hierdie versameling uit te bou met 'n span professionele fotograwe wat die ontwikkeling van die spoorweë vasgelê het, saam met hawens, vuurtorings, lugdienste, busdienste en ander vervoerinfrastruktuur.

Transnet se fotoversameling gaan egter oor veel meer as net spore en treine. Sedert sy ontstaan in 1910 het die SAS ook die inisiatief geneem om binnelandse en buitelandse toerisme in Suid-Afrika te bevorder, wat natuurlik ook die passasiersgetalle op treine sou verhoog en algemene ekonomiese voordele sou bring. Hierdie bemarking het voortgeduur tot in die 1960s, toe 'n nuutgestigte staatsdepartement die rol oorgeneem het. Die fotograwe van die SAS het vir meer as 'n halfeeu die land van hoek tot kant deurkruis om die ekonomiese ontwikkeling van die land te boekstaaf. Verder het hulle ook ander aspekte van die land vasgevang – sy natuurprag, dierelewe, argitektuur, die diversiteit van sy inheemse bevolking en kultuurgebruike. Uit hierdie duisende foto's het 'n konstante stroom kalenders, poskaarte, brosjures en plakkate gevloei – die meeste van hierdie oorspronklike foto's bestaan steeds in die fotoversameling.

Die gehalte en omvang van die Transnet fotoversameling het gesorg dat meer kosbare private foto-albums en fotoversamelings deur welwillendes oor baie jare aan die Erfenisbiblioteek geskenk is. Die Erfenisbiblioteek bied natuurlik veel meer as net foto's. Daar is derduisende dokumente, ou verslae, opmetings en ingenieurstekeninge, almal kosbaar en netso belangrik is om mettertyd te digitaliseer en te bewaar. Op hierdie stadium word die fotoversameling egter as 'n prioriteit hanteer omdat feitlik die hele versameling unieke beelde bevat wat by geen ander instansie of argief gedupliseer word nie.

Versoek

As julle dit nie reeds gedoen het nie, onthou asseblief om hierdie epos aan julle vriende en kollegas te stuur wat dalk ook oor die Transnet fotoversameling bekommerd is. Indien hulle by die lys gevoeg wil word, moet hulle asseblief vir Yolanda.Meyer@transnet.net laat weet. Daar is geen koste of verpligting wat daarmee saamgaan nie. Hoe langer ons lys van belangstellendes word, hoe meer slaankrag sal ons hê wanneer ons met Transnet en ander partye onderhandel om verdere geldelike en ander steun in die hande te probeer kry.

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