Call for papers
Featured section in *History in Africa*:
Archives, the Digital Turn and Governance in Africa

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Deadline for abstracts: 29 September 2017

This featured section of *History in Africa* will address the wave of digitisation of archives in Africa over the last fifteen years. With the rise of information technologies, an increasing part of public – and to some extent private - African archives are being digitised and made accessible on the internet. This wave of digitisation is usually seen as a progress with the help of ambitious initiatives applying new technologies to cultural heritage of humanity such as the rescue of the manuscripts of Timbuktu or the Endangered Archives programme at the British Library. Yet as much as these new technologies raise enthusiasm, they also prompt discussions amongst researchers and archivists, which go from intellectual property to sovereignty and governance.

First, in the digital era, the issue of the ownership of these documents is crucial since the very definition of an archive is being challenged: from unique hard copies of documents, they can now exist in a variety of formats reproducible at will. Second, technical and economic issues at stake are also key to the discussion and intertwined with that of sovereignty: institutions elaborating a digitisation programme may do so under the pressure of donors or non-African scholars. All in all, beyond the discourse of transparency, whether to the benefit of governance or that of scientific research, this matter is eminently political. These archives are thus concerned with negotiations which go far beyond their sole technical and scientific aspect.

In the field of history, archives are usually addressed as sources for research, and questioned as such because of their documentary aspect. More rarely are they approached as historically constructed systems combining intellectual and physical aspects, as archival science theorises it. Yet digital archiving disrupts archival norms and practices, opening up a field of reflection relatively little explored by historians. The digital turn of African archives is therefore an object of study in its own right, located at the crossroads of political and economic interests.

This featured section seeks to reflect on the practices of digitisation of archives in Africa (pre-colonial, colonial or postcolonial) and to engage both with history and archival science.

Submission instructions
If you wish to contribute, please **submit a 500-word abstract** of the proposed paper as well as a short CV by **Friday 29 September 2017** to digital.turn.africa@gmail.com

Notifications of decision will be sent by **Friday 27 October 2017**.

Selected authors will then be expected to send their **full-length paper** (no more than **10,000 words**, including notes) by **Friday 16 February 2018**.
All completed papers will be subject to peer-reviewing process in accordance with *History in Africa* requirements.

Please address any query you may have to digital.turn.africa@gmail.com

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