

Digital Imaging Project of South Africa



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The Inception



A workshop on Digital Imaging, held at the [University of the Witwatersrand](#), Johannesburg in September 1997, and sponsored by the [Andrew W Mellon Foundation](#), was the starting point of the DISA initiative to undertake an imaging project in this country.

The aim of the DISA project, which is expected to last three years, is to make accessible to scholars and researchers world-wide, South African material of high socio-political interest which would otherwise be difficult to locate and use. In addition the project aims to provide experience and develop knowledge and expertise in digital imaging amongst archivists and librarians in this country. It is intended that DISA be the first in a series of projects dealing with South Africa's fascinating social and political history. If successful, the [Committee](#) hopes to tackle more ambitious projects in subsequent phases.

Much time, creative thought and debate went into the selection of the content, taking into account a number of criteria established by the Committee. Many journals of historic importance, such as [African Communist](#), Azania Frontline, Azanian Worker and Free Azania did not meet the criteria, such as copyright, journal availability, size and format, for selection in this first phase. They may however, be considered, for inclusion in a second Phase.

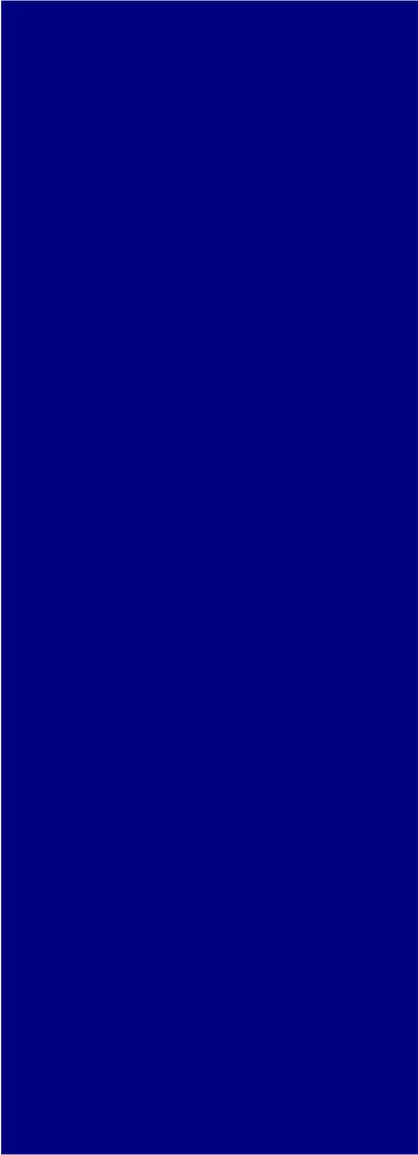
The title of the project chosen is South Africa's Struggle for Democracy: Anti-Apartheid Periodicals, 1960-1990.

It covers the three key decades in the growth of opposition to apartheid rule, a period when the African National Congress (ANC), black consciousness, and other resistance movements were very active. Approximately forty periodical titles have been selected from a very comprehensive list, with a view to presenting not only a wide spectrum of political views published during these years, but also a diversity of subjects such as trade unions, religion, health, culture, and gender. Publications reflecting both black and white viewpoints are included, and an attempt has been made to represent distinctive regional variations. Some of the publications were short-lived and, by necessity, of limited distribution. These factors lend a certain rarity value in that the publications are generally not well represented in research collections. Making digital copies of these periodicals will facilitate access to an important resource on this period of South African history. Difficulties in obtaining original material will be overcome, finding aids and indexes will be linked to bibliographical records and the full text and images of the periodicals, and global access to the broadest possible community of users via the Internet will be facilitated. This will enable researchers to use these publications as never before, on an almost limitless range of topics relating to anti-apartheid resistance in these decades, but also on other topics in social and political history reflected in these publications. DISA will also preserve the original copies through a reduction in the handling of fragile objects. Technical specifications for the project have been compiled in accordance with international standards and best practice for production, storage and access to digital information.

DISA is located at the [Campbell Collections, University of Natal](#), where staff are already engaged in digital imaging technology on an experimental basis.

Responsibility for the project rests with the Digital Imaging Project Committee. This is the first library/archive project in South Africa to be undertaken on a national rather than a regional or institutional basis. An attempt has been made throughout the planning process to elicit ideas and input from interested parties around the country, and although some collections and libraries will of necessity become more involved in the project than others, progress will be widely reported via this web site, so that all are kept informed. Librarians and archivists will be encouraged to visit the project and learn from it.

Please feel free to [email](#) your comments.



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