

## Management of Archives

***DR. Swapna Banerjee***

Associate Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calcutta, India

[sbanerjee63@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sbanerjee63@yahoo.co.in)

***Sanjukta Majumder,***

Librarian, Rani Birla Girls' College, Kolkata, India

[sanjukta069@gmail.com](mailto:sanjukta069@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Archiving of documents is essential for the organization, and the management of these archives is necessary. Management means planning, documentation and preservation and other multifarious activities. Management also aims to overview the problems of the archives. The paper summarizes all these aspects in a condensed manner, and also emphasizes the changing role of archivists in the context.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, Knowledge society, Archival documents, Documentation, Digital age, UNESCO.

### Resumen

Archivar documentos es vital para una organización y la administración de estos archivos es sumamente necesario. La administración de archivos implica la planificación, la documentación, la preservación y otras actividades asociadas. La gestión de documentos también tiene como objetivo solucionar problemas relacionados con estas colecciones. El artículo resume todos estos aspectos y también pone énfasis en los cambios en el papel que desempeñan los archiveros o archivistas.

**Palabras clave:** Patrimonio cultural, Sociedad del conocimiento, Archivos, Documentación, Era Digital, UNESCO.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Archives are large centers of information, consisting of preserved records which transmit our cultural heritage from generation to generation. They are important for their cultural, historical or evidentiary value. The documents are normally unpublished and unique.

The person who works in archives is referred as “an archivist”, who organizes, preserves and provides access to information and materials in archives.

Every organization needs to preserve their documents for future planning, effective day – to – day organizational decision making, and even for the survival of the organization.

Usually, an archive, a library or a museum is considered as the same type of institute, having the same objectives. However, there are certain facts, which make these institutes different from each other. The following table shows the differences between a library, an archive and a museum:

LIBRARIES	MUSEUMS	ARCHIVES
Identify, acquire, preserve and provide access to the world’s published knowledge.	Identify, acquire, preserve and exhibit unique, collectible or representative objects.	Identify, appraise, preserve and make available documentary materials of long term value (essentially evidenced) to the organization or public that the archive serves.
Promote equity of access to information.	Promote cultural, community, identity and understanding.	Ensure the accountability of government by preserving public records and making them available to the citizens as is legally and ethically appropriate.
Promote intellectual freedom.	Provide experiences where visitors can make connections between content and idea.	Ensure the accountability of non – governmental institutions to their shareholders, boards and other constituents.

## 2. KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY AND ARCHIVES

Knowledge society creates, shares and uses knowledge for posterity. Archives play the central role in the development of a society as they collect, preserve and disseminate knowledge to the society.

According to the principles of “National Strategy for Preservation of Estonian Cultural heritage, for 2004 – 07”, the Archives of a knowledge– based society should satisfy the following conditions:

- The information contained in it must be accessible, and the cultural heritage treated as an integral part of the knowledge – based society;
- An infrastructure enabling the use and preservation of the cultural heritage collection on the basis of the relevant responsibilities and obligations;
- All relevant institutions must be able to co-operate, and their co-operation should be supported on a national level;
- The corresponding legislation and participating institutions must possess the required administrative abilities;
- Memory institutions must possess the necessary resources;
- The strategy for the preservation of cultural heritage should be linked with the developmental strategies of the society as a whole;
- This strategy focusing on digitally created cultural heritage, is of fundamental importance for all memory institutions as well as for the cultural, public and state authorities;
- In order to ensure the preservation of and access to cultural heritage, the strategy defines the main bodies responsible for implementations and coordinating in the state level: Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, State Chancellery, etc.

### 3. TYPES OF ARCHIVES

There are mainly five major types of archives:

- Academic
- Business (for Profit)
- Government
- Non –profit
- Others, e.g. – Church

**3.1 Academic Archives** – Academic archives exist to preserve and celebrate the history of academic institutions and academic communities. In colleges, universities and other educational institutes, these archives are housed either within a library or in a separate facility.

The academic archive contains paper documents of former professors and presidents, memorabilia related to school, college or university and sometimes rare books or thesis copies.

Examples: University Archives in India.

**3.2 Business (for – profit) Archives** – The business archives are those, which are located in, and owned by private business organizations. These archives contain historic documents and items related to their companies.

These corporate archives maintain control over their brand by retaining memories of the company's past. These archives are typically not open to the public; only used by the employees of the owned company. Sometimes visitors are allowed access with an appointment.

Example: i) Coca Cola archives  
ii) Procter & Gamble  
iii) Motorola Heritage Services & Archives  
iv) Levi Strauss & Co. archives

**3.3 Government Archives** - **The government** archives include those run on a local and state level, as well as those run by the national (or federal) government. To access a government archive, one needs to be the citizen of the country; and foreign visitors can have access with a proper authorized letter.

The users of governmental archives are reporters, genealogists, writers, historians, students and people wanting information on the history of their home or region.

Example: National Archives of India

**3.4 Non – Profit – Not – for – profit** business archives are hospitals, foundations, etc., where the archives are typically set up with private funds to preserve the papers and history of specific person or place. These institutions often rely on grants, funding from government as well as private funds.

**3.5 Other Archives – Church archives** – The most famous church archive is the Vatican Secret Archive. The collections of the Church Archive include Archdioceses', dioceses' and parishes archives in the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian Churches.

#### **4. PRINCIPLES OF ARCHIVES (AS PROPOSED BY WSIS – WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY)**

The International Council on Archives (ICA) / UNESCO Consultation in preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Beijing, 30 and 31 May 2002 stresses the need to take into account the essential role that should be assigned to archives and records management in the development of a global information society, and the preservation of its memory.

Amongst the recommendations made by ICA/UNESCO Consultation, certain principles and actions are highlighted below:-

- Archives are the most extensive and existing sources of publicly available information, and provide free and unlimited use of public domain information by citizens.
- Access to archives and records requires appropriate legislation and implementation.
- Access to archives requires appropriate training for archive users, staff and future staffers.
- Archives promote the preservation and restoration of traditional and born-digital materials in a balanced way.
- Archives promote virtual and traditional access.
- Archives promote cooperation between educational systems and archival systems, including training and curriculum development to introduce teachers and students to the richness of their own heritage.
- Archives promote availability of appropriate educative materials by combining traditional and electronic media.
- Archives promote implementation of effective records management in the public sector.
- Archives and records are crucial in order to have informed citizens :-
  - Promote literacy and wider access to information.
  - Promote access to and sharing of information and communication technologies.
  
- Access to archives requires appropriate training for archive users, staff and future staff :-
  - Promote adequate training for users in accessing archives and understanding them.
  - Promote adequate training and resources to enable archivists in all countries to provide online access to information in their holdings.
  
- Accessible and affordable technology permits global sharing of online information and the development of a global knowledge society :-
  - Promote equitable tariff structure for Internet access worldwide.
  - Promote interdisciplinary cooperation between archivists and other information professionals worldwide.

## 5. PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

Nowadays, information technology is used for creating, managing and providing new ways of accessing our cultural heritage. The archives of today are showing their incessant ability to preserve national heritage, while undergoing constant technological renewal.

The digital preservation and management of archives are connected with a number of technical and organizational problems:-

- The lack of coordination between the central authority and the regions, results in a lack of continuity in the digital preservation of archives.
- Digitization and digital preservation requires additional financing from the parent institution, thus needing a common strategy for purposeful use of additional support.
- Technologically obsolete system provides short-term usability of digitally archived materials.
- Dynamic nature of contents - Digital information is easy to access and easy to tamper also. Thus, making security during archiving enormously important in the preservation of digital cultural heritage.
- Protection of copyright – Different groups connected with digital cultural heritage have different expectations and interests; these expectations should balance without infringing the legal rights of authors, while ensuring that cultural heritage is used extensively.

## 5.1 STORAGE CONDITIONS

If an archival document is destroyed, a piece of historical evidence is gone for good; whereas in case of a library, if a printed book is destroyed, it is sad, but it need not be tragic; other copies usually exist. Therefore, preservation is the heart of archive administration.

The storage is an integral part of preservation of materials, and therefore, necessary measures for storage of archiving materials must be taken into account:-

- Careful handling to prevent damage, in specific compliance with the vulnerability of the various carriers ;
- Optimizing the storage condition to check the chemical and physical deterioration of carriers.
- Production of adequate additional copies of holdings, to minimize the risk of damage and deterioration.

There are two ranges of climatic recommendations:-

- a) Access storage – collections in frequent use – should be kept at around 20°C and 40% relative humidity (RH);
- b) Preservation storage, i.e. safety / backup collections used only rarely, temperature of around 10°C and 30% RH.

## 6. PROBLEMS OF ARCHIVES

There are various types of challenges which the archives, need to cope with the growing production and demand of information:-

- Collection – i) The archive collection should be important and significant;

- ii) Addition of new materials provides an opportunity to redirect the goals of the organization; ensures that there will be a more representative collection in the future.
- iii) Collection requires space and staffing.

- Equipment and storage – i) Preservation standards should be adequate; ii) Serious technical shortcomings should be solved; iii) Space allocated for the archive must not be inadequate; iv) Protection of digital media from dampness, light and heat; v) Better storage provision for longer life of materials.

- Staffing – i) Archives require skilled staff, ranging from – computers to reference work to field research; ii) Successful audiovisual archives require technical savvy staff – training needs will increase.

- Funding - Funding is the largest problem for archives in both developing and wealthy industrialized countries.

- Outreach - Publishing of audiovisual materials is complicated because of changing intellectual property rights over the materials.

- Impact of National Policies - i) National Policies have tremendous impact on Archives; ii) Changing priorities due to cultural tourism; or indigenous rights affecting the budget and prestige of archives; iii) certain archives feel that national policy is supportive; iv) Again, certain archives being threatened by national policies and the larger framework within which they operate.

## 6.1 STRATEGIES FOR ARCHIVES

- i) Archives should be careful about making decisions regarding contracts and equipments;
- ii) Archives should take advantage of each others expertise;
- iii) Archives should follow proper strategies regarding how to choose a technology appropriate for the materials;
- iv) Archives should follow proper strategies regarding funds. They should not limit their search of fund to one or two sources.

## 7. DOCUMENTATION

The documentation of archives can be done in the following process:-

a) Selection of Records – Records can be a governmental document, an agency document or private person's document. The selection criteria of documents are :-

- document should be 30 years / 50 years old.

- document should have historical or administrative value.

- information about private persons should be sent by various persons / agencies to the respective archives.

b) Accession – Accession registers can be maintained by the State Archives in the following way:-

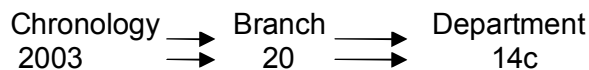
e.g.,

Sl No.	Date	Provenance	File Title	File No./Location No.
01	12/04/1989	Board of Trustees	Founding Documents and Histories 1967 – 1974, Legislative Proclamations	1A1. 1-4

c) Re-accession – Reaccession represents the accession in place of existing accessioned documents. Those documents are usually preserved and the filing part is filled with a duplicate document.

d) Classification – Archives can use a classification system of their own, or they may follow a conventional classification system:

e.g.,



Where 2003 represents the chronology (year), 20 represents a particular branch ( e.g. police) and 14c represents a department ( e.g. Ministry of External Affairs).

e) Cataloguing – Archives usually do not have a standard method of cataloguing. They usually follow a guidebook, or a subject heading list or index. User needs to check the guidebook too.

f) Subject Heading – Every file or document in archive must have a subject heading. The full name of the file is often used as a subject heading.

Example : “Founding Documents and Histories 1967 – 1874 Legislative Proclamations”.

g) Labeling – All files are to be labeled or marked by the number, department, branch and year, just like the classification number.....14c20/2003

h) Display – Presentation of exhibits or displays have become an objective of archives to spread awareness of historical data and foster the importance of archive collections. Therefore, exhibition of these documents must take place on and often in the archive.

Example : In the month of May, 2007, the West Bengal State Archive, India, made a photo exhibition on Sepoy Mutin, i.e. the police rebellion.

## 8. ROLE OF ARCHIVES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Archives need to cope with the growing production and demand of information. Information explosion and advent of new technologies results in the creation and dissemination of information in digital form.



It ensures the archives to move towards digitization of records. Hence, archives need to digitize the analogue carriers stored in their collection, containing valuable information (documents, books, maps, objects, etc.). Digitization of information leads the archives to concentrate on digital preservation of archival data/documents.

## **9. CHANGING ROLE OF ARCHIVISTS**

The role of the archivist in contemporary society is definitely changing. "If you are not seen you don't exist, it is a crude way of saying that archivists have to raise their voices to get their message heard. That is a crucial part of the new role of today's archivists.

Individual archivists need to be a given proper education and training to convince, and to teach the rest of the members of their respective organization too. All archivists of the developing countries must unite to build networks.

Nowadays archivists have a new duty to perform in the knowledge society. Archivists need to define their role in more detail, which helps to understand the world about their competence because in the knowledge society, archival professionalism has an essential role to play.

### **9.1 UNESCO And Role of Archivists**

UNESCO has an important role to play in the management of archival materials of the world –

- Archivist understanding of the need to preserve authentic digital records must be improved. UNESCO must promote programs that educate and raise the awareness of archivists on the issue of preserving records.
- UNESCO has to conduct a survey of the archives of the world on the status of the authenticity of records.
- There is no common agreement among archival professionals on the meaning of terminology. UNESCO must take the responsibility to promote an agreement on terminology.
- There have been so many studies on how to preserve authentic records that some summing up and conclusions are necessary. UNESCO must support the development of guidelines on preserving authentic records.
- UNESCO has to take an initiative to make governments aware of the special archival problems in preserving electronic records in authentic form.
- Recognition of the need for adequate resources and organization to preserve digital cultural heritage is paramount. UNESCO must develop the criteria and models for such an organization.

## 10. RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT (RTI) AND ARCHIVES

Records and document management when dealing with the public needs legislation for its proper distribution. It has been recommended in the World Summit of Information Society, Beijing that access to archives and its records requires “appropriate legislation” and implementation, as it ensures access by citizens on equal basis, and promotes security and privacy.

On the 12th of October 2005, the Indian *Right To Information Act* came into effect that governed all governmental bodies, and government funded agencies to provide information to the petitioners within 30 days.

The Archival Committee of India has decided that information about living persons and national security will not be provided at any cost.

## 11. SUPPORTERS OF ARCHIVES

A number of organizations are active supporters’ of archives, and they fund the various archives of the world.

The Ford Foundation is one of the principal supporters of the professionalization of university – based archives.

National Archives and private archives in many parts of the world are growing and developing. Several national and international organizations provide information and advice for archives.

The Association of Recorded Sound Collection( <http://www.arsc-audio.org/> ), The International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, (<http://www.iasa-web.org/>), and various UNESCO projects related to cultural preservation (<http://www.unesco.org>) are working effectively on the various programs of the archives.

## 12. CONCLUSION

To maintain an archive in a proper manner, the aim is to see to its scientific management, which means at least two things: Good order and ready availability. The pressures of modern society is changing the character of the work of archivists, and is aiming at more and more scientific management. As society becomes more and more information-centered, the importance of archives increases. Therefore, a scientific attitude towards archives is the need of the hour.

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