

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON ARCHIVES



Declaration adopted  
by the 36th session of  
the General Conference  
of UNESCO



**Archives** record decisions, actions and memories. Archives are a **unique** and **irreplaceable** heritage passed from one **generation** to another. Archives are managed from creation to **preserve** their value and meaning. They are **authoritative** sources of information underpinning **accountable** and **transparent** administrative actions. They play an **essential** role in the development of societies by **safeguarding** and **contributing** to individual and community **memory**. Open access to archives enriches our **knowledge** of human society, promotes **democracy**, protects citizens' **rights** and enhances the **quality** of life.

## To this effect, we recognize

- **the unique quality** of archives as authentic evidence of administrative, cultural and intellectual activities and as a reflection of the evolution of societies;
- **the vital necessity** of archives for supporting business efficiency, accountability and transparency, for protecting citizens rights, for establishing individual and collective memory, for understanding the past, and for documenting the present to guide future actions;
- **the diversity** of archives in recording every area of human activity;
- **the multiplicity of formats** in which archives are created including paper, electronic, audio visual and other types;
- **the role of archivists** as trained professionals with initial and continuing education, serving their societies by supporting the creation of records and by selecting, maintaining and making these records available for use;
- **the collective responsibility** of all – citizens, public administrators and decision-makers, owners or holders of public or private archives, and archivists and other information specialists – in the management of archives.

## We therefore undertake to work together in order that

- appropriate national archival policies and laws are adopted and enforced;
- the management of archives is valued and carried out competently by all bodies, private or public, which create and use archives in the course of conducting their business;
- adequate resources are allocated to support the proper management of archives, including the employment of trained professionals;
- archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability;
- archives are made accessible to everyone, while respecting the pertinent laws and the rights of individuals, creators, owners and users;
- archives are used to contribute to the promotion of responsible citizenship.

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