

Universal Declaration on Archives

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, audiovisual 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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