

# Essential Instruments OR Silent Storehouses:

National Archives *As Web* in the  
National Politics & Governance

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ICA FAN Virtual Colloquia on Archival Matters

16 April 2024



# Aims

## Consider

- the spider web as allegory of a National Archives?
- Information in the politics and governance
- Changing role of National Archives
- Changing “information players” in politics and governance
- Reflect on what role/purpose/value is there for the National Archives?

# Spider web?

## Some purposes:

1. Capturing prey
2. Building communities
3. Healing properties
4. Transportation
5. Strength

-<https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/5-fascinating-uses-of-spider-silk>



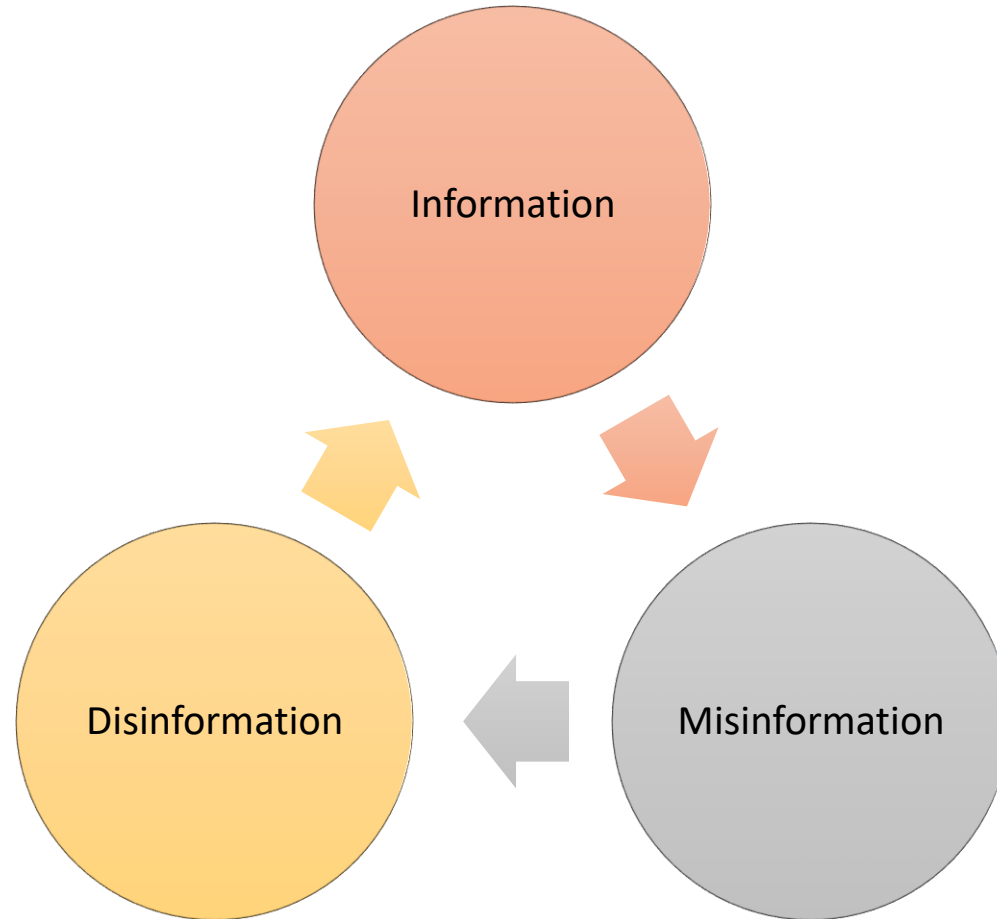
# National Archives as Spider Web?

- **National archives can be likened to the threads of a spider's web within the intricate framework of national politics and governance.**

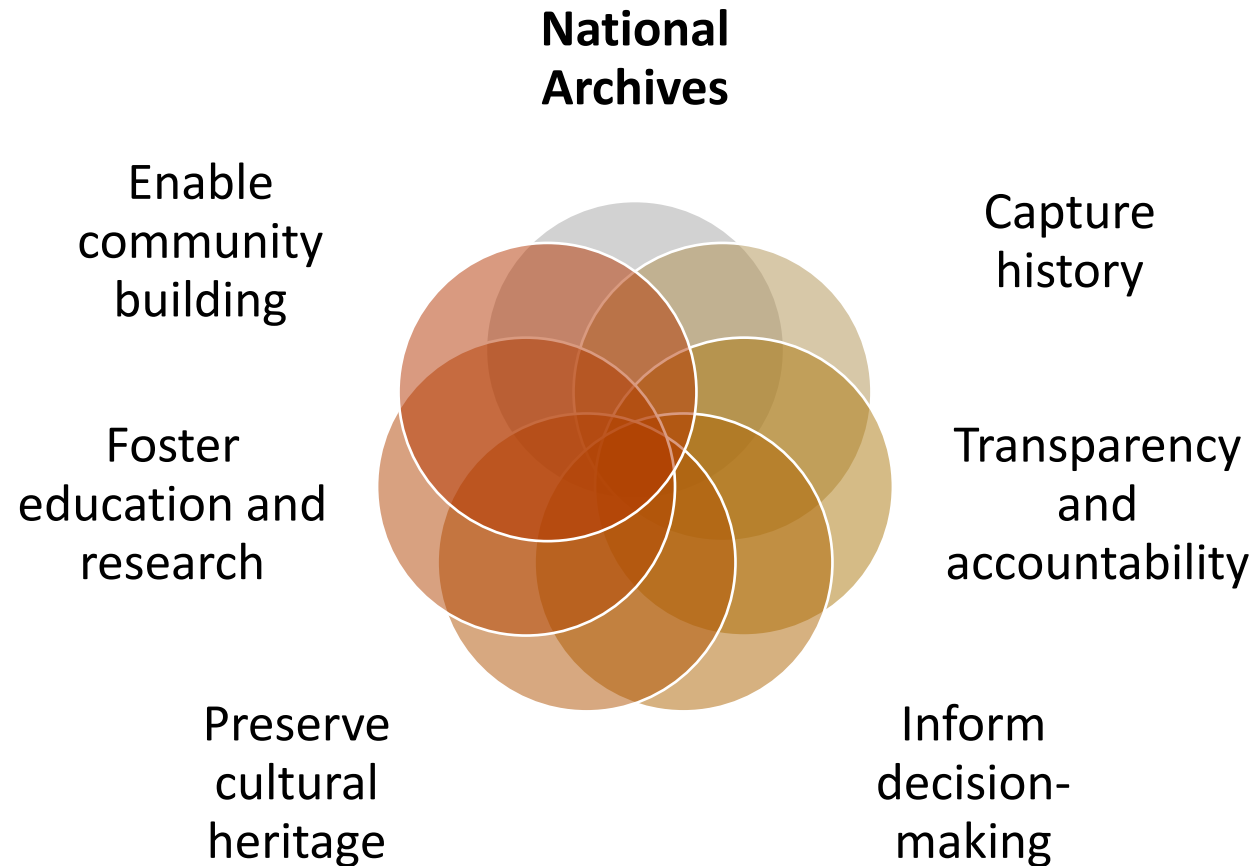
Just as a spider meticulously weaves its web to capture prey and maintain its survival, national archives serve crucial roles in capturing, preserving, and disseminating the records of a nation's political and governmental activities.

-ChatGPT: national archives in the web of national politics and governance

# Web of Politics and Governance

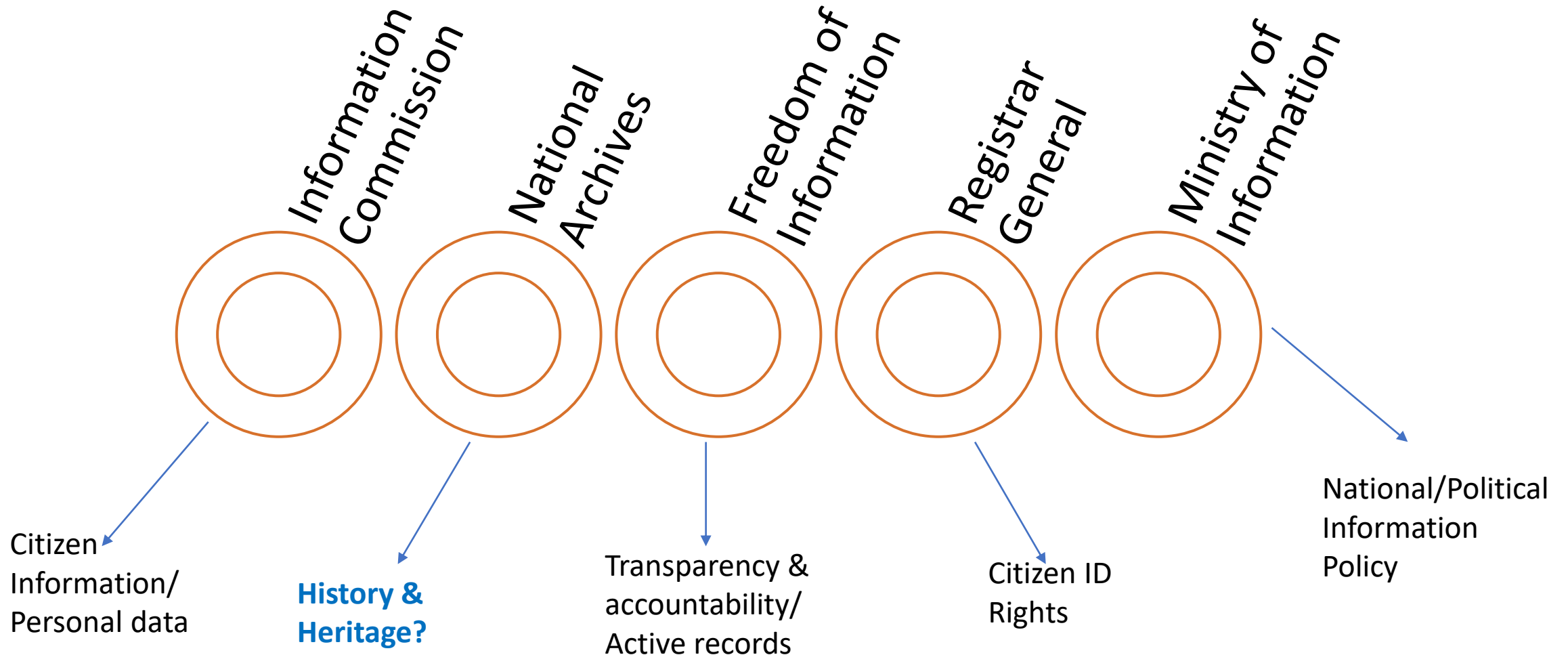


# What do National Archives do?



# Changing 'Voice'/Role of National Archives

Is the Archives now a 'silent bystander/storehouse in the nation's information domain?'



## Some public comments

- Archives having ‘teeth’
- influence over political directorate on the nation’s documentary materials and heritage
- Guardian of transparency and accountability
- Legislated authority

POLITICS

# National Archives retrieved 15 boxes of Trump White House documents from Mar-a-Lago

PUBLISHED MON, FEB 7 2022 4:56 PM EST | UPDATED MON, FEB 7 2022 6:11 PM EST



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## KEY POINTS

- The National Archives and Records Administration retrieved 15 boxes of White House records that had been sent to former President Donald Trump’s resort-home Mar-a-Lago.
- All of those records should have been handed over to the National Archives directly from the White House once Trump left office, as required by the Presidential Records Act, NARA said.
- The documents include a letter to Trump from President Barack Obama, as well as Trump’s self-described “love letters” with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, according to The Washington Post.

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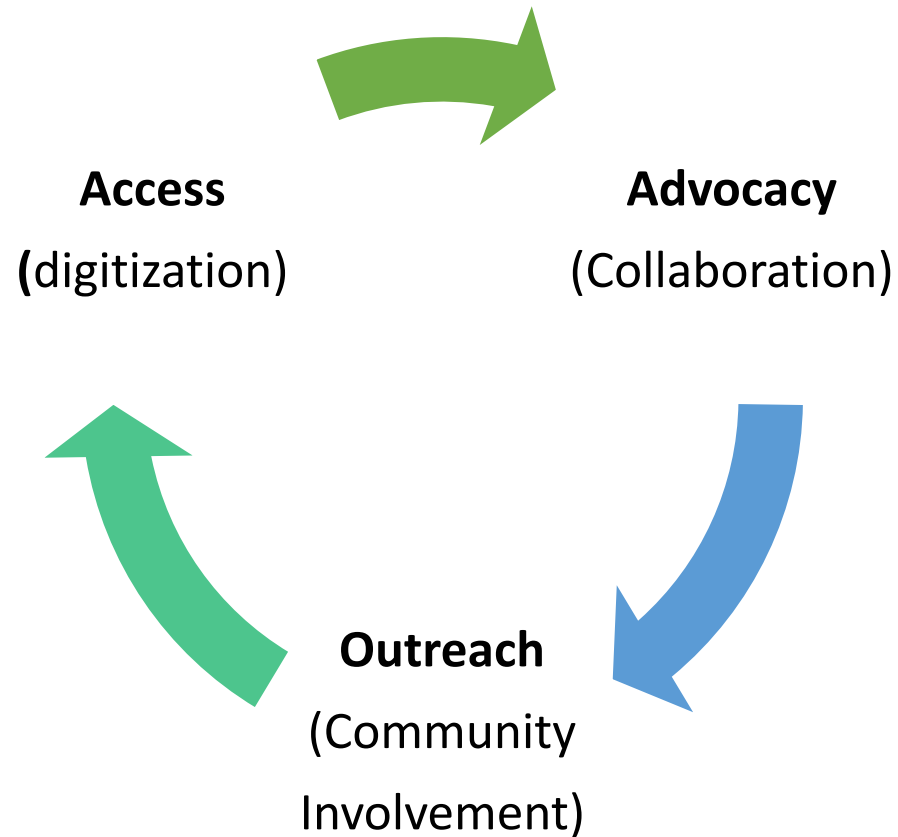
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***NARA: Essential Instrument or Silent Storehouse?***



# What can National Archives do?

*(to move from Silent Storehouses to Essential Instruments,  
especially without legislative 'teeth')*

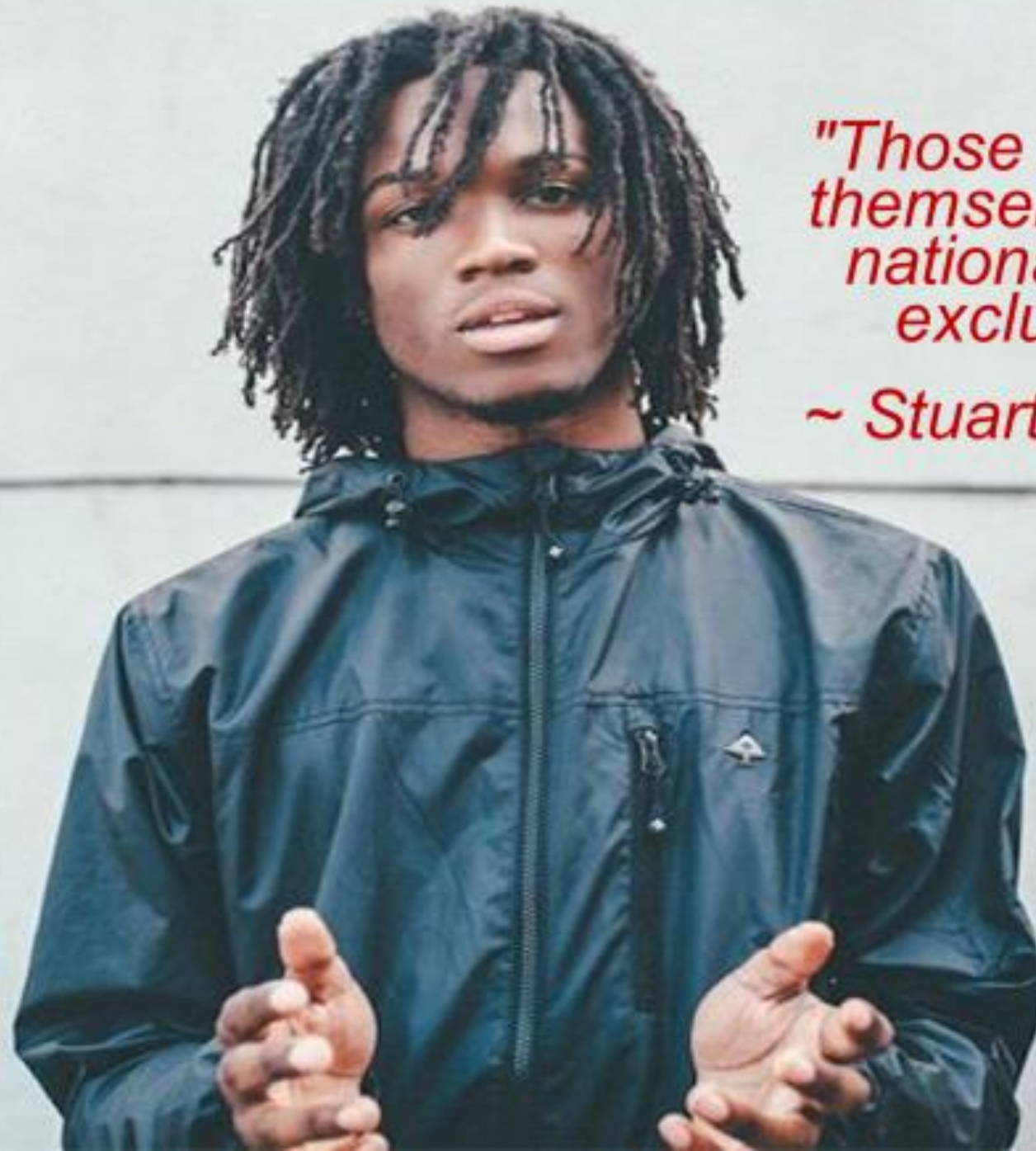


# Spider Web as National Archives



- “A SPIDER’S web is stronger than it looks. Although it is made of thin, delicate strands, the web is not easily broken. However, a web gets torn every day by the insects that kick around in it, and a spider must rebuild it when it gets full of holes.” –E.B. White

<https://quotefancy.com/quote/2806606/E-B-White-A-SPIDER-S-web-is-stronger-than-it-looks-Although-it-is-made-of-thin-delicate>



*"Those who do not see themselves reflected in national heritage are excluded from it."*

*~ Stuart Hall (2002, 65)*

**Thank you!**