

The Universal Declaration on Archives Terminology

This terminology was developed by the authors of the ICA online learning course “Understanding and Using the Universal Declaration on Archives”¹ to explain and increase understanding of the statements, undertakings and principles covered in the Declaration. The authors have maintained conventional definitions of the professional terminology wherever possible. The phrasing is original but owes much to the “Dictionary of Archival Terminology” and the online “Multilingual Archival Terminology”. The UDA Terminology is arranged in alphabetical order and mapped to the specific text where it first occurs in the UDA. The following terms, which are not found in the Universal Declaration on Archives but which are important to understanding the subject, are also included:

- Archive
- Archive repository
- Documentation
- Document
- Fonds
- Records manager
- Medium

Term	UDA Definition	UDA Text
Access	The function of delivering archives to researchers, users and other stakeholders for them to consult under conditions designed to protect and preserve them.	Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens’ rights and enhances the quality of life.
Accessible	The ability to find, read and understand the records according to conditions designed to maintain their integrity, to protect and to preserve them.	Archives are made accessible to everyone, while respecting the pertinent laws and the rights of individuals, creators, owners and users
Accountability	The ability to account for one’s actions and responsibilities, either verbally or through adequate documentation and recordkeeping.	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;

¹ See: <https://www.ica.org/en/register-for-the-online-course-understanding-and-using-the-uda> for more details.

Term	UDA Definition	UDA Text
Accountable	Verifiably executed by known responsible individuals or post holders according to a process, policy or decision that is documented and accessible.	[Archives] are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions.
Archive	All the archival records created by a single family, individual or organisation. Also known as <i>fonds</i> .	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Archive repository	Institution with the remit of acquiring, cataloguing, preserving and providing access to archives. The holdings may come from one or more individuals, families or organisations, thus an archive repository often contains more than one archive or fonds.	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Archives	Records of decisions and activities of individuals, organisations, families and societies which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their ongoing value as primary source material providing evidence of the history of the individual, family, organisation or society served by the 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.
Archivist	Professional responsible for managing archives.	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
Authentic	Being genuine, trustworthy, authoritative	The unique quality of archives as authentic evidence of administrative, cultural and intellectual activities and as a reflection of the evolution of societies
Authenticity	The quality of being genuine, trustworthy, authoritative	Archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity , reliability, integrity and usability

Term	UDA Definition	UDA Text
Citizens' rights²	Principles of freedom, entitlement or privilege belonging to an individual by virtue of citizenship, especially those outlined in constitutional and international law, for example the rights to: protection of those laws; freedom from discrimination; freedom of worship; prompt and fair trial; right to vote and run for office.	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
Diversity	Differences, the quality of admitting the full range of cultures and ethnicities.	The diversity of archives in recording every area of human activity
Document (noun)	Single record providing proof of an action or decision.	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Document (verb)	To record an action, decision or memory thus providing evidence of the event	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
Documentation	The body of material providing evidence of status claimed or the basis for a theory or argument.	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Efficiency	The quality of being effective or productive in relation to the amount of effort or resource expended.	The vital necessity of archives for supporting business efficiency , accountability and transparency
Evidence	Anything which provides proof of an action, an event or a decision.	The unique quality of archives as authentic evidence of administrative, cultural and intellectual activities and as a reflection of the evolution of societies
Fonds	See <i>Archive</i>	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Format	Layout or structure of a hard copy record, including size and shape. Organisation of data and metadata in a digital record such that a software programme can recognise, read and display it.	The multiplicity of formats in which archives are created including paper, electronic, audio visual and other types
Heritage	Evidence of the past, such as traditions, languages, buildings or objects which have historical significance.	Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another.

² In the UNESCO text the phrase 'citizens' rights' lacks the apostrophe ('citizens rights'): this text uses the apostrophe as is correct English grammar.

Term	UDA Definition	UDA Text
Information	Knowledge, such as facts, conclusions, ideas, reports or stories, that can be expressed, communicated or exchanged.	[Archives] are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions.
Information specialists	A group of professionals concerned with managing information in any or all of its forms whose expertise may include one or more of the following: librarianship; archives management; records management; document management; data processing; IT systems management.	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.
Integrity	The quality of being complete and unchanged, or if changed the change is evident and documented.	Archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability
Medium	Material and characteristics of the carrier of the information comprising the record.	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Memories	Incidents remembered from the past.	Archives record decisions, actions and memories .
Memory	The mental capacity to recall and retain facts, events, impressions and experiences.	[Archives] play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory .
Record (noun)	Recorded information in any medium which provides evidence of decisions and activities.	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
Record (verb)	To capture text, images or sounds to preserve the facts for future reference.	Archives record decisions, actions and memories.
Records manager	Professional responsible for managing records.	Does not occur in the text of UDA.
Reliability	Being able to depend on the record as trustworthy evidence of the matters testified to.	Archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability , integrity and usability
To select	To assess records for archival value according to archival appraisal criteria.	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

Term	UDA Definition	UDA Text
Transparency	The quality of allowing, either through oral testimony or adequate recordkeeping, stakeholders to verify conduct and actions of organisations and individuals.	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;
Transparent	When conduct and actions of organisations and individuals can be externally verified either verbally or through adequate documentation and recordkeeping.	[Archives] are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions.
Unique	The only one of its type.	Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another.
Usability	The degree to which something is easy to use. This may refer to the records, the metadata or the technical infrastructure.	Archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability

Margaret Crockett

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