A Thematic Analysis of Selected Archives in Metro Manila Academic Libraries For the Establishment of an Institutional Archive

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Abstract: This study aimed to determine the significance of establishing an institutional archive that will facilitate the documentation and safekeeping of different materials that are rare, unique, and valuable to the institution. A descriptive qualitative research approach through case study and purposive sampling methods was implemented to gather data. A total of ten (10) participants were interviewed composed of three (3) archivists and seven (7) librarians from different colleges and universities in Metro Manila. The purpose of the interview was to develop in-depth knowledge and appreciation of the importance of establishing an archive. The interview sessions were conducted virtually via Google Meet and the Viber messenger chat application. Thematic coding was used to analyze the transcript of responses and extract themes that emerged in the study. The research findings revealed that 100% of the participants affirmed that the organization and management of archives is very important and of good advantage for an academic institution. The funding depends on the type of institution: it can be included in the library budget, directly under the school's administration and the provision of a government agency. The study also described multiple challenges cited by the respondents nevertheless there lie various strategies that can be implemented. The outcome of this research was utilized as a basis for the creation of a general institutional proposal for the organization of archives. A further study on the implications and utilization of technologies that will facilitate the accessibility of information and materials in archives was recommended.

I. INTRODUCTION

College and university archives exist to serve their parent institutions, alumni, and then the public (Schmidt, 2011). According to Nesmith (2002, 27, as cited in Hill 2010) it is so deeply ingrained that archives has been treated by some archivists as if it were part of the natural order of human recording and communication. Archives are the raw materials for research, they foster discovery, give voice to previous perspectives and support our ability to learn from the past (Roe, 2016). While many institutions maintain long histories and robust collections, some lack formal archival systems that ensure the safekeeping and accessibility of their unique materials.

Given the longstanding presence of many academic institutions in the Philippines, there exists an accumulation of documents and materials that reflect the identity, mission, and history of the schools. The absence of a formal archive presents a critical gap in preserving institutional legacy. This study was conducted in response to the need for a systematic approach to organizing and managing academic archives. It explores the rationale for establishing a dedicated archival section within an academic institution and highlights the best practices and challenges faced by existing archives in Metro Manila.

The main objective of this study is to address the importance of proposing the organization of an institutional archive that would facilitate the documentation and safekeeping of various materials unique to the identity and history of an academic institution. Additionally, the study aims to create a project proposal that may serve as a model for establishing archives within similar educational settings.

II. EXPERIMENTAL METHOD/S

To meet the objective of this study, the research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research methodology allows a researcher to examine people's experiences through focus group discussions, interviews, observations, field notes, content analysis, visual materials or methods (such as artifacts, photographs, video recordings, Internet sites), and life histories or biographies (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). According to Saldana (2011), the information or data collected and analyzed is primarily (but not exclusively) nonquantitative in character. The study implemented the purposive sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research that enables the researcher to identify or select a group of people as participants. Case Study was used as the tradition of inquiry method for this research. It was employed to discuss the case about the significance of archives in a private tertiary institution and the possible advantages of its establishment and adoption.

The study involved three (3) professional archivists and seven (7) librarians of the selected schools in Metro Manila. They were tapped to acquire firsthand information and thorough knowledge about the organization and management of archives in an academic library setting. A self-made questionnaire was converted into Google form and a link was sent only to the confirmed participants. The one-on-one interview sessions were conducted via Google Meet and Viber messenger chat application. Thematic coding was applied to carefully analyze the interview transcripts and identify passages of text to derive themes.

The research applied an unstructured type of interviews that, according to Sanchez (2014), involve a complex interaction between researchers and interview subjects undertaken for the purpose of collecting data pertaining to cognitive processes, social worlds, and experiences.

A total of 10 respondents were interviewed, identified by participant numbers, and located in Metro Manila.

Due to the challenges brought about by the pandemic, all interview sessions were conducted online. There was no direct observation of the archives facility of each institution and instead, the respondents were requested to provide photos that helped the researcher grasp an idea of the actual arrangement of archival collections in a physical space. After the completion of interviews, all audio recordings were stored in the researcher's database and transcribed verbatim into field texts for data analysis.

All online interview meeting details such as the link, meeting ID, and password were circulated only to the intended participants for every specific schedule. As a strong adherence to the basic principles of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, the participants were not requested or obliged to turn on videos during the interview session.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data gathered and the discussions of its interpretation are presented below.

Table 1. Importance of Organizing Archives

Statement of the Problem	Code	Total No. of Responses
How important is the organization of an archive in an academic institution?	Very Important	10
	Merely Important	1

Table 1 indicates that all ten (10) respondents from the different tertiary schools affirmed that the organization and management of archives in an academic institution is significant. On the other hand, the Participant 5, viewed it as merely important.

Indeed, college or university archives was considered very important because according to Raym Crow (2002, 17, as cited in Yakel, Rieh, St. Jean, Markey & Kim 2008) it often serve two (2) purposes: for one, to manage administrative records to satisfy legally mandated retention requirements; on the other hand, to preserve materials pertaining to the institution's history, activities, and achievements of its officers, faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Table 2. Funding

Statement of the Problem	Code	Total No. of Responses
How is it funded?	Library Budget	7
	School Budget Allocation	2
	Donations	4
	Government Fund	2

Table 2 shows that the majority or seven (7) participants managed their archives as a section under the library's supervision and likewise included in the yearly budget plan. On the other hand, two (2) respondents declared that their university archives function as an independent unit from the library and were directly funded under the school's administration. In comparison, four (4) participants commented that although their archives were funded under the library, it is proper to have a separate budget. While two (2) participants indicated that the donations from alumni and other individuals are other sources of funds for archives through solicitation. At the same time, one (1) of the respondents said that the funding for archives varies on the type of institution it serves.

Nutt and Worrell (2015) emphasized that the literature on planning in libraries, archives, and any business organization will require a high degree of enthusiasm and determination.

Table 3. Benefits of Adopting and Organizing Archives

Statement of the Problem	Code	Total No. of Responses
What is the benefit of adopting and organizing an archive?	Repository of Specific Materials	6

	Primary Source of Information	3
	Goodwill	3
	Recognition	2

Table 3 shows that six (6) out of the ten (10) respondents stated that archives is a designated repository of special collections of materials valuable to the institution. Meanwhile, three (3) participants highlighted that archives or institutional repositories are the main sources of relevant materials and information pertaining to the organization. Moreover, three (3) respondents indicated that having direct coordination with the administration is a good strategy toward the fulfillment of various plans, programs, and activities for archives. While there were two (2) participants who mentioned that having the initiative to organize an archive may indicate an appreciation from the top management.

Archives are our memories (Schwartz & Cook, 2002); without them, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishments fades, and pride in a shared past dissipates.

Table 4. Difficulty of Organizing Archives

Statement of the Problem	Code	Total No. of Responses
What are the factors to consider in addressing the difficulty of organizing archives?	Digitalization and Copyright	4
	Time Management	3
	Technical Skills	3
	Preservation	3
	Inaccessibility	3
	Unprioritized	2
	Technological Obsolescence	2
	Gaps/Missing Records	1

Table 4 indicates that the presence of various challenges were experienced by the participants' among which four (4) of them cited the digitalization and copyright as the most challenging during these unprecedented, trying times. In an equally tabulated result, the following were emphasized by three (3) participants each: time management, lack of knowledge, proper training and skills, preservation, and inaccessibility of archival collections. Additionally, two (2) of the respondents mentioned that being not a priority is likewise a challenge; most schools are focused on enhancing the library's

subscription to different online databases as support mechanism for academic requirements. While two (2) more participants stated another two (2) underlying difficulties concerning the organization and digitalization of archival collections namely: technological obsolescence for one and gaps or missing records on the other.

Despite the existence and efforts of the archives to provide access to a wide range of records and information, there lie various issues and challenges that must be properly addressed.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were formed: (1) all ten (10) respondents of the different private tertiary schools in Metro Manila, that the organization and establishment of archives in an academic institution is of utmost importance; (2) the participants shared different practices in relation to the budget allocation for archives based in the context of their institutions. It can be included in the library's annual budget plan; there is a direct support from the administration and provision of government agencies. Likewise, the institution's general funds, endowment from alumni and individuals are other sources of fund for archives; (3) 100% of the participants asserted that apart from being a repository of official records of the institution and primary sources of information for reference and research, archives can also make greater contributions in the execution, documentation of relevant programs and activities. Hence, an appreciation and goodwill from the administration can create a positive impact towards the attainment of future projects and programs of the archives; and, (4) all participants have been experiencing multiple challenges in relation to the organization and management of archives. The most notable of which are the lack of knowledge, proper training, skills, time management, digitalization, preservation, limited access to the collection, being not a priority, gaps or missing records and technological obsolescence.

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Appendices/Supplementary Data

Appendix 1. Plan for the Establishment of an Institutional Archives

Introduction

The institution currently faces challenges in systematically consolidating documents, files, records, and reports relevant to its operations and legacy. The proposed project for organizing an institutional archive aims to facilitate the preservation and safekeeping of documents and records that are valuable to the institution's history, identity, and future development.

Objective

The archive will serve as a designated repository of non-current records of the institution that may be kept for historical, legal, administration, evidential, research and informational purposes. It will help standardize and strengthen recordkeeping practices across administrative offices, academic departments, and student organizations. Furthermore, it collects records that pertain to the school's legacy and make accessible materials to the community of users.

Table 5. Plan for the Establishment of an Institutional Archives

Program	Strategies/Activities	Person/s Responsible	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicators
Creation of the Institutional Archives	Make a project proposal / plan toward the organization of an Archives Section and seek approval from the administration. Identify space / room that may in-house all received and accumulated archival collections.	Library Director Archivist Librarian Support Staff	A.Y. 2021-2022	None	Designated storage facility for the preservation and sustainability of all enduring records, documents, and materials valuable to the institution.

Formulation of Archival Policy / Operational Manual	Develop a comprehensive archives policy, clearly defining its goals, purpose and the type of material it acquires.	Library Director Archivist Librarian	A.Y. 2021-2022	None	Establish criteria that will administer the overall operations of the Archives Section.

Program	Strategies/Activities	Person/s Responsible	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicators
Funding	Include in the Library's Annual Plan to formally introduce and rationalize the project. Make a budget proposal for the purchase of supplies, furniture, and equipment(s)	Library Director Archivist Librarian	A.Y. 2021-2022	To be determined	Proper preservation and sustainability of the Archives Section.

	necessary for the organization and management of archival collections.				
Staffing	Hiring of a professional Archivist or appointment and training of a Librarian. Assign an additional support staff.	Human Resources Division Library Director	A.Y. 2021-2022	To be determined	Qualified personnel responsible for overseeing the archival functions. Performs clerical tasks, mechanical processing and assists the Archivist or Librarian in the efficient delivery of services.

Acquisition of Archival Materials	Release / circulate a letter to the respective Colleges, offices and/or departments of the institution requesting for the proper turnover of pertinent records to the Archives Section.	Library Director Archivist Librarian	A.Y. 2021-2026	None	All archival collections received will be appraised, processed, arranged, and described in an appropriate and timely manner.

Program	Strategies/Activities	Person/s Responsible	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicators
Processing	Catalog or index all collected materials and provide appropriate description for easy access and retrieval of the resources and information.

Establish administrative, intellectual control and prepare finding aids. | Archivist Librarian Support Staff | A.Y. 2021-2026 | To be determined or as needed | Finding aids provide the nature of materials, locations on the shelf, identifies source / provenance, outlines the general contents, individual collections and summarizes informatio |

					n on a specific topic.
Digitalizati on	Assess the collection that can be converted into digital / electronic format and temporarily safekeep until such time that other means of immortalizing them is made available. Make the materials available in machine-readable format.	Library Director Archivist Librarian Support Staff	A.Y. 2021-2026	To be determin ed or as needed	Ensure the longevity of archival collections. Greatly enhances access for easier and faster retrieval of resources and informatio n. Reduces physical space consumpti on. Generates publicity for an institution by having the opportunit y to showcase its rare and unique collections online in a wider community .

Program	Strategies/Activities	Person/s Responsible	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicators
Preservation	Make a thorough evaluation of the conditions of archival materials. Propose or create strategies and solutions to prolong the life of the collections. Assess the suitability of the building, storage facility, physical condition and state of repairs, security, and maintenance. Conduct pre-survey planning, onsite visits and technical report summarizing the overall findings and areas for improvement.	Library Director Archivist Librarian Support Staff	A.Y. 2021-2026	To be determined or as needed	Ensure adequate protection and access to historical and cultural information of records with enduring value at present and for future generation of users. Enables the Archivist or Librarian in keeping the collection under the best possible conditions and implement appropriate

					treatment methods.
Profession al Training / Staff Developme nt	Send Archivist, Librarian and support staff to in-service trainings, seminars, conferences, lecture series and workshops to keep them abreast of the new practices, trends in archiving and other related fields or topics.	Library Director Archivist Librarian Support Staff	A.Y. 2021-2026	To be determin ed	Provide opportuni ty for the Archivist or Librarian and support staff to keep on learning and honing their knowledg e and skills in various aspects of archiving.

Program	Strategies/Activities	Person/s Responsible	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicators

Marketing and Promotion	Creation of digital contents, informational materials, step-by-step guides on access and use of the archival resources and services, and virtual conduct of exhibits / displays of the highlights of relevant events of the school from the past to the present. Perform other outreach activities by implementing oral history, documentation programs, media events, press releases regarding new acquisitions and develop, collaborate, strengthen external partnerships among other academic archives or libraries. Conduct of workshops, seminars, and meetings by inviting researchers to attend discussions about the different aspects of archiving and share lectures or events sponsored by	Library Director Archivist Librarian Support Staff	A.Y. 2021-2026	None	The academic community and other qualified users will be fully informed of the purposes, functions and type of the collections preserved in the Archives Section. Describe and advertise activities of the Archives Section. Outline the objectives and acquisition policies, provide answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), promote the availability of finding aids, databases and indexes of archival

	professional organizations in the field.				collections. Accessibility and visibility of the Archives Section not only in an institution but also in a wider community of users. Helps the Archivist or Librarian to engage, increase people's awareness and interest in archival works and utilization of archives.

Appendix 2. Research Instrument

Direction: Please supply the necessary information and put a check mark on the option/s that best correspond/s to your answer.

I. **PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT**

Name:

_____

Sex:
     __ Male
     __ Female

Type of Respondent:
     __ Archivist
     __ Librarian
     __ Library Staff

Institution:

_____

Years of experience in library and archives
Please indicate the length of your service in terms of years: a) in the library, and b) in the archives, separately.

Area	Number of Years of Experience					
	0 to 5	**6 to 10**	**11 to 15**	**15 to 20**	**21 to 25**	**25 and above**
Library						
Archives						

II. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
This part of the questionnaire will attempt to consolidate overall knowledge and experiences you have on managing an archive.
     1. How important is the organization of an archive in an academic institution?
     2. How is it funded?

3. What is the benefit of adopting and organizing an archive?

4. What are the factors to consider in addressing the difficulty of organizing an archive?