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Editorial Team,

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Preservation and Conservation of the Archival Materials

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1.0 Abstract

This paper is on the preservation and conservation of the archival materials. An archive is well known as one of the world's primary information sources. Besides, preservation is the activities associated with maintaining and restoring archival materials for continued access, either in their original physical form or in some other usable state. Meanwhile conservation is the use of chemical and physical procedures in treatment or storage to ensure the preservation of books, manuscripts, records, other documents in order to slow their decay and damage. The preservation in the archives is done by providing proper environmental conditions, storage facilities and appropriate packaging materials in order to protect the records from any damage. On the other hand, conservation is done by using chemicals and professional repair techniques to prevent the further deterioration of the records. It is not limited to paper based documents only, archivist also need consider preserving and conserving records in digital format. There are various forms of archival materials such as parchment, vellum, manuscript, microfilm, slide, photograph, machine readable records, and tapes. All these materials need to be preserved and conserved in a right way in order to make it available for continued access.

Keywords: Preservation, Conservation, Archival Materials, Records.

2.0 Introduction

Archives is well known as one of the world's primary information sources and defined as collection of records that have been selected for permanent or long term preservation based on their cultural, historical and evidentiary value. It will be in an archival repository which is a building or a part of building that functions to keep those records and made available for consultation. Records management and archives administration begun in the days of ancient Greek civilization in the early 4th and 5th century in Athens, Greece. At that time the Greeks store precious documents in the churches. Most of the documents stored are letters of agreement for example is government official documents and stored in rolls. Besides, history of archive in France started in the French Revolution of 1786 which is all official government documents formerly stored in archives institutions. Furthermore, history of archive in England begun in the century 16 to 18 in which at that time, England has been experiencing rapid growth of administration and economic. Therefore, each of the colonies must have their own administrative center to record all dealings. History of archives in United State of America started in the 19th century which is the congressional committees started aware of its importance. They felt that if public records are not properly maintained, it will destroy those important documents. In 1833, 1877, 1884, there was a fire occurred at the congress that leads to the establishment of the National archives.

On the other hand, according to ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science, preservation is the activities associated with maintaining and restoring archival materials for continued access, either in their original physical form or in some other usable state. Meanwhile conservation is the use of chemical and physical procedures in treatment or storage to ensure the preservation of books, manuscripts, records, other documents in order to slow their decay and damage. There are various forms of archival materials such as parchment, vellum, manuscript, microfilm, slide, photograph, machine readable records, and tapes. These archival materials are valued by two categories which are primary values and secondary values. Primary value is divided by three which are administration, fiscal and legal value, meanwhile secondary value is divided by four which are evidential, informational, research, and historical/cultural/national value. Administration value is records created by the transaction day administration of the department for examples are organizational structure, affairs department, and police department's functions. Besides, fiscal value is records arising from specific transactions related to the administration of financial matters for examples are budget, policy and monetary policy, cash books, ledger books, and checks. Furthermore, legal value is records containing information about rights and responsibilities of community, agency, and government to investors, customers, citizens and vice versa, for example is document citizenship, land grants, agreement letters, mortgage, and act ordinance. These are the example of records that lie on the primary value. A part from that, evidential value is records generated in a business transaction that was later used as evidence to an event occurring, for examples are the document with evidence, individual rights on the property, the right of government to the island, and evidence of the existence of a society. Informational value is exist by chance when a record produced is the result of an event and then referred back purely for the sake of information, for examples are census information, accidents, and natural disasters. Research value is records containing information used by researchers as a reference, for examples are data on economic indicators, social, research, and technology whether issued or not issued. Historical/cultural/national value is records that appear by chance because agency execution of duties and functions that are considered to have historical or contains events the existence of a nation and country. All these records need to be preserved and conserved in a right way in order to make it available for continued access. It is important to increase the longevity of archival materials. The preservation in the archives is done by providing proper environmental conditions, storage facilities and appropriate packaging materials in order to protect the records from damage. On the other hand, conservation is done by using chemicals and professional repair techniques to prevent the further deterioration of the records. Preservation and conservation are not limited to paper based documents only, archivist also need consider preserving and conserving records in digital format. As the rapid growth of technology, the storage technique of the records also changes, so archivist need to be expert in preserving and conserving the archival materials in various ways. Poor storage will lead to records enemy such as mold, insects, rodents, structural defects, and aging of records in the archives. Thus, archivist must prevent the records kept in the archives from deteriorate and repair damaged records in order to make it available for consultation.

3.0 Current Issues/Challenges

There are several challenges in preservation and conservation of archival materials that should be considered by the archival professionals.

3.1 Evolution of technology

As the world is experiencing the rapid growth of technology nowadays, the archival institution also has rely more and more on the digital technology in preservation and conservation of its materials. Archive is using the digital technology in terms of storing its materials. Besides, there are some records that being created to keep in the archives is in electronic form. This has led archives to use technology in managing its materials. However, Betts (1999) felt that digital information is at risk of disappearing or becoming inaccessible because of the deterioration of storage media like magnetic tapes. In other words, technology is having ever-changing data formats and the software and hardware become outdated quickly. This is because the technology develops very fast. Stephens (2000a) indicated that for many years, archival institutions around the world have operated programs to preserve records processing archival value that are worthy of permanent preservation. Recently, archival institutions are in the process of transition from paper based records to electronic records. In order to execute the digitization process, the specific software and hardware are needed and it is important for the archival repositories to stay updated on the new software and hardware that continuously change to avoid records kept are lost. Thus, evolution of technology is one of the greatest challenges in preservation and conservation of digital materials.

3.2 High cost

Preservation and conservation need a high cost in order to buy the equipment needed and the technology such as software and hardware that will used in the process of preservation and conservation of archival materials in the archives repositories. Besides, archival institutions need to provide the special working area for example a laboratory for the archival professionals execute the preservation and conservation process. This is because the archival professionals need a special work space that separated with storage area to execute the preservation and conservation process. It means that, if there any damage happened on the archival materials, the materials will be brought to the preservation and conservation working room to decay its damage or deterioration. In addition, the digitization process of archival materials also needs a high cost. Digitization of archives requires huge funding due to regular hardware and software upgrades, and increasing cost of subscription to electronic databases. It is because the use of technology equipment needs to be available at the archives in order to ensure the preservation process is done effectively. All these reasons proved that in order to have a good preservation and conservation process, massive funding is needed. Thus, high cost needed for preservation and conservation of the archival materials is one of the challenges that might be faced by archival professionals in managing its materials.

3.3 Lack of technical expertise

Another challenge in preservation and conservation of the archival materials is lack of technical expertise. Asogwa, B. E., & Ezema, I. J. (2012) stated that one of the biggest challenges to preservation and conservation of archives and records in developing countries is educating the community on the best ways to handle archival materials. The archival professionals need to acquire some related skills to be expert enough in preservation and conservation of the archival materials. It is important to ensure only the expert person can handle the archival materials because mishandling of the materials can lead to the damage or deterioration of the materials. Some of the preservation and conservation process consists of the use of the technology equipment and chemical, so that skillful workers are needed to handle the equipment needed throughout the process. It is because the archival professionals is responsible to preserve and conserve the archival materials by monitoring its conditions and take the actions to be done if there is a damaged record in order to ensure the records are in good conditions for consultation. Thus, lack of technical expertise is another challenge in preservation and conservation of the archival materials.

3.4 Environmental conditions

Environmental control is important to facilitate the preservation and conservation of the archival materials. It is crucial to be applied to the preservation and conservation for both formats which are paper based records and digital records. A good environmental condition will ensure the process of preservation and conservation operates well. Besides, there are two aspects of environmental control which are the physical environment of the archival building and the archival materials itself. The physical environment of the archival building is related to location of the archives houses should be secure from natural disaster such as flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, and land slides. Meanwhile, the physical condition of the archival materials is related to temperature, relative humidity, pest controls pollutants, and light. It is important for the archival professionals to consider all these conditions in order to ensure the archival material is in a good condition. High humidity will encourage the growth of mold, insects and rodents. Besides, poor humidity will cause materials to lose their flexibility. Thus, it is important to control the relative humidity in the storage area to avoid the archival materials from deteriorate by any harm.

4.0 Recommended Solutions

In response to those challenges stated, several recommended solutions are proposed to solve that problem.

4.1 Aware of the new technology

As archival institution has rely more and more on the technology in preservation and conservation due to world is having a continuous growth of technology, the archival professionals should be aware of the new technology arise in order to keep been updated. Besides, archives use the technology in terms of storing digital records and digitization from paper based records to electronic records. So that, to avoid the records kept is at risk of disappearing or becoming inaccessible because of the deterioration of digital storage media, the archival professionals is responsible to stay updated with the current technology. This is because the technology develops very fast, and some software and hardware become obsolete quickly due the software and hardware has been upgrades with a new version. It is important for the archival institutions to stay updated on the new software and hardware, that continuously change to avoid records kept is lost or damaged. As the records kept in the archival institutions are the important records on in the other words, it is records that have permanent value on its. The archival institutions should do whatever it takes in order to preserve those records for a long term consultation.

4.2 Adequate funding

Archival institution must have an adequate funding in order to support the preservation and conservation process of the archival materials. It is because the cost needed is very expensive. Archives need to buy the equipment needed and the technology such as software and hardware used in the digitization process. Digitization of archives requires huge funding due to regular hardware and software upgrades, and increasing cost of subscription to electronic databases. It is because the use of technology equipment needs to be available at the archives in order to ensure the preservation and conservation process is done effectively. Besides, archives repositories need to provide a special working area for the archival professionals to execute the preservation and conservation process. The archival institutions need to have an adequate funding by choosing the cheapest technology with the best quality to be applied in the archives repositories. It can save the money funded by the its parental institutions. Other than that, the archives may save the budget allocated to them by avoid doing the unnecessary activities and automatically the budget can be saved and will be used in a useful way which is used to buy equipment for preservation and conservation process. Although high cost needed for preservation and conservation of the archival materials is one of the challenges that might be faced by archival professionals in managing its materials, but by cutting the other costs, archives can still have an effective preservation and conservation process.

4.3 Preservation and conservation training

As stated that lack of technical expertise is one of the biggest challenges to preservation and conservation of the archival materials, here is some suggestion on how to improve on that problem. Since the archival professionals need to acquire some related skills to be expert enough in preservation and conservation of the archival materials, so that training on preservation and conservation need to held in order to ensure the archival professionals is educated enough to handle the process. Besides, it is important to ensure only the expert person can handle the archival materials because mishandling of the materials can lead to the damage or deterioration of the materials. Besides, some process of preservation and conservation need the archival professionals to use the technology equipment and chemical. It is vital for the archival institutions to have skillful of workers to handle this process. In order to comply with established standards and practices for the best care of the archival materials, all the archival professionals involved in the preservation and conservation process need continuously training on that. Training should be exposed the staff on preservation management, characterization of archival deterioration, records handling, environment control, storage media and what actions to be done if there is any damaged on the archival materials. Besides, the highest qualification of the archival professionals is needed in the archive institutions, It is because the records that need to be preserved are the records that carry permanent value.

4.4 Environmental control

Environment control is crucial to be applied to the preservation and conservation for both formats which are paper based records and digital records because a good environmental condition will ensure the process of preservation and conservation operates well. It is important to facilitate the preservation and conservation process of the archival materials. There are two aspects that should be considered in the environmental control which are the physical environment of the archival building and the archival materials itself. The physical environment of the archival building is related to location of the archives houses which means the archival institutions should be located away from natural disaster such as flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, and landslides areas. In addition, the physical condition of the archival materials is related to temperature, relative humidity, pest controls pollutants, and light. There is a special established standard that should be followed by the archival professionals in ensuring the archival materials are in a good condition and secure from any harms that will damage the materials. Bereijo, A. (2004) stated that magnetic materials are very sensitive to storage conditions. It means that the archival professional should be aware of the sensitiveness of each form of the archival materials kept by the archives in order to give a good care to the materials. It will help in avoiding the archival materials from any deterioration.

5.0 Conclusion

In final consideration, preservation and conservation of the archival materials are very important to be implemented in the archives institution. As we know the records kept by the archives are the records that carry permanent value, so it is vital for the archival institutions to make it available for consultation and take a good care of it so that the future generation still can access those records. Besides, all these records need to be preserved and conserved in a right way in order to make it available for continued access and it is important to increase the longevity of archival materials. Furthermore, the preservation is done by providing appropriate environmental conditions, storage facilities and proper packaging materials to protect the records from any harm that will damage the records. Meanwhile, conservation is done by using chemicals and professional repair techniques to prevent the further deterioration of the records and slow the decay and damage on the archival materials.

In addition, preservation and conservation is not limited to paper based documents only, archivist also need to consider in preserving and conserving records in digital format. As the world is experiencing the rapid growth of technology nowadays, the archival institution also has rely more and more on the digital technology in preservation and conservation of its materials. The rapid growth of the technology leads to the changes of storage technique of the records, so archivist need to be expert in preserving and conserving the archival materials in various ways. Poor storage technique will invite records enemy such as mold, insects, and rodents and lead to structural defects, and aging of records in the archives. Thus, archivist must prevent the records kept in the archives in the right way from deteriorate and repair damaged records in order to make it available for continuous consultation. It is to ensure the future generations are able to access those records.

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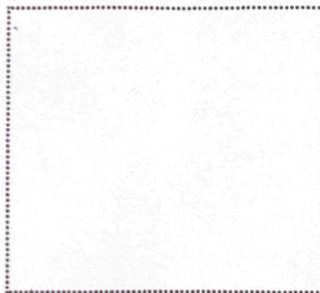
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