



A GLIMPSE INTO Archival Practices:

Visit to Sarawak State Repository

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On December 8, 2023, a group of 49 students from Class 5A and 5D, accompanied by two IMD313 (Foundation of Archives) lecturers, Miss Suhaida binti Halamy and Miss Nor Hayati bte Kassim from the School of Information Science, embarked on an academic journey to the Sarawak State Repository. The primary focus of this visit was to provide students with a hands-on experience of the activities within archival institutions, going beyond the boundaries of theories learned within the classroom.

Prior to the academic visit, a comprehensive safety briefing ensured the well-being of both students and lecturers during the visit. The State Repository staff, led by Miss Dorothy, warmly welcomed us and provided an overview of the functions of the state

repository. She emphasized the repository's pivotal role in maintaining, preserving, and safeguarding public records in Sarawak aged over twenty-five years, as well as other documents, papers, instruments, statutes, statutory orders, regulations, or decrees, as directed by the State Secretary. These materials were deemed crucial for their historical value or public importance.



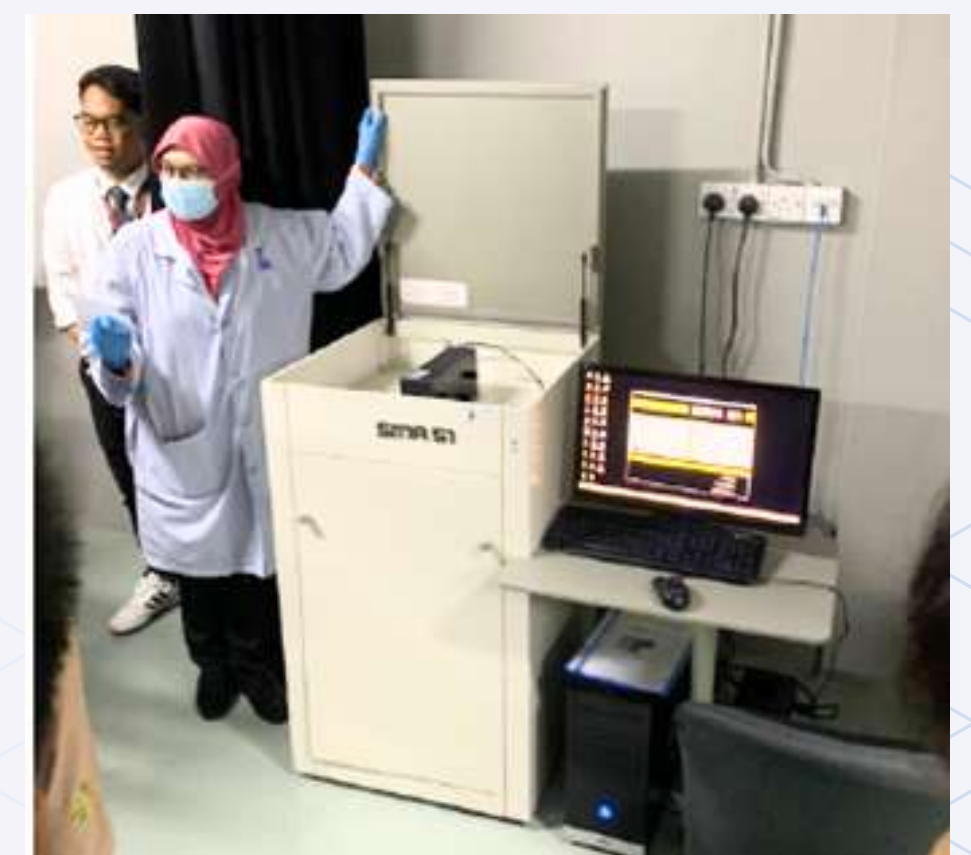
Skilled staff member showed the detailed process of preparing documents for permanent transfer to the repository

The journey began in the Document Preparation room. Here, two skilled staff members demonstrated the intricate steps in preparing documents before their permanent transfer to the repository. The time-consuming process, taking several hours for each document, was explained in detail. Students were introduced to the various tools used in processing records, including folders, acid-free tape, brushes, and paper irons. The students, captivated by the live demonstration, expressed their excitement at witnessing the process firsthand. They admired the staff's dedication and patience in handling these materials. It was revealed that processing a single folder could take up to 23 hours, highlighting the meticulous nature of archival work.

The educational journey continued in the Digitization Room, where records in the archive significantly transformed from physical to digital format. Students were

intrigued by having the opportunity to use the microfilm readers, a technology that excited their curiosity. The staff explained the microfilm creation process, giving students a unique opportunity to experience the darkness of the "Bilik Gelap" or dark room. Inside this room, illuminated only by a single red lamp, the staff detailed the fascinating process of producing images on microfilm. Before the end of the visit, we were brought to the Conservation Unit, where students were introduced to the cutting-edge Bio-fumigator machine. This machine is pivotal in eliminating harmful insects and microorganisms from records, requiring a 22-hour-long process. Students were also exposed to and demonstrated the 14-step conservation process. This process aims to maintain and repair the physical condition of documents, ensuring that the content is preserved for future generations.

After the visit, the students gathered to share their thoughts and experiences. The consensus was unanimous – the visit to the Sarawak State Repository had been nothing short of informative. Students expressed their amazement and excitement at learning in a real-world environment rather than within the confines of classroom walls. Some students even voiced their interest in pursuing careers within archival institutions. The visit to the Sarawak State Repository successfully bridged the gap between theory and practice, providing students with invaluable insight into archival practices and fostering a deep appreciation for the dedication of archival professionals in safeguarding our collective history.



Staff demonstrating the microfilm creation process