Responsibilities of archivist now and in the future as the result of COVID – 19; Case of ICA-SUV

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies for the preservation of archival materials in the International Council on Archives Section on University and Research Institution Archives (ICA SUV) by the members and to make recommendations for the digital archival preservation to continue its accessibility during the national lockdown because of COVID–19.

Design/methodology/approach – This study is based on the survey conducted on the ICA SUV members during the national lockdown. The study used a survey research methodology through e-mails as data collection instruments.

Findings – The key findings revealed that most of the sections on university and research institution archives lack digitization preservation strategies and most of their records are not accessible online, as most of their collections are still preserved manually through the paper-based system; furthermore, archivists are not fully trained on digital management. The paper recommends universities to develop preservation strategies to migrate records from the paper-based system to electronic records management system.

Research limitations/implications – The population of the study comprised ICA SUV members, who responded to the survey. Therefore, the sample size and geographical spread were inadequate for generalization of the findings. In conclusion, the study demonstrated that accessibility of the archives was dependent on the quality of digitized archives.

Practical implications – This study demonstrates that the development of a preservation strategy enhances access to archival materials during the national lockdown because of COVID–19.

Social implications – This paper highlights the plight of university archives and reiterates the need for urgent digitization of their archives of universities all over the world.

Originality/value – To the best of author’s knowledge, this paper appears to be the first to review the responsibilities of archivists now and in the future as the result of COVID–19. This study is confirmed to be on the positive side of COVID–19 and change the archive sector by adapting to information communication technology.

Keywords Archives, ICA, Records management, Covid 19, Archives management, Universities archives

Introduction and background information

Strategies for the preservation of digital records are essential to ensure continued access to archival material now and in the future because of the national lockdown because of COVID–19. It is therefore essential for archivists to ensure that archival materials remain accessible during national lockdown because of COVID–19. Archivists need to ensure authenticity, reliability and long-term accessibility of permanent electronic records for current and subsequent users (Cloonan and Sanett, 2002; Netshakhuma, 2019f, 2020b). However, there are gaps in the preservation strategy to enable access to archival material by the International Council on Archives (Section on University and Research Institution Archives) (ICA SUV) members.
The ICA SUV was established when 41 archivists from 13 countries attended the meeting of the provincial section in 1992 in Montreal. Marjorie Barritt was appointed as Chair in 1993. The section’s article was approved at the International Council on Archives General Assembly (ICA SUV, 2009). The goal of ICA SUV is to promote communication cooperation between archivists in the universities and institutions, to gather and disseminate information about the creation and administration of archives in these institutions about policies and procedures and role of the archives in relations to the host institutions and society at large, to assist in the development and strengthening of archives through conferences, publications and consultations and to cooperate with other bodies such as International Council on archives.

The institutions that were not taking measures to develop a preservation strategy to preserve archival materials were left out in accessing archival material during the COVID–19 as the result of the national lockdown applied all over the world.

The outbreak of COVID–19 is declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization, which led to various countries to initiate national lockdown. The coronavirus has affected all continents on the levels of infections that also affect the provision of information. Globalization and increasingly interconnected economies mean most countries will be affected by COVID–19. The global effort such as national lockdown was initiated to break the chain of virus transmission. Despite that, the pandemic affects the livelihood of individuals; national lockdown for COVID–19 has affected disseminated archives materials throughout the world, especially organizations that still relied on the manual system to provide information. The COVID–19 emergency has also shown an unprecedented level of interaction and information sharing among scientists. The reliability, accuracy and relevant information is dependent on how such records are collected and preserved by archivists (Netshakhuma, 2019g, 2019h). This reflects the high speed at which information can be delivered to end-users. The provision of information plays a role that could be provided by archivist and archival institutions that preserve records related to previous major outbreak pandemics such as the Spanish flu and Ebola health information system (Impellizzeri et al., 2020). The pandemic outbreak provided opportunities for archivists to network with health officials, collect data and share information that can be used to better inform the community about the COVID–19. The national lockdown highlights the need for the role of archivists to change to include digital archiving to provide information remotely all over the world. There are lessons learned form past pandemic on preservation of archival materials. COVID–19 could be a catalyst for developing robotics systems that can be rapidly deployed with remote access by experts and essential service providers without the need of traveling to front lines.

Various countries imposed national lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus. To contain the spread of COVID–19 and keep infections at a manageable level, many countries have instituted lockdown (Frost et al., 2020; Shenoy et al., 2020). The purpose of the national lockdown is to slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus, so that the government can take a multi-prong strategy to prevent the spread of the virus (Muchaonyerwa (2014); Vaishya et al., 2020). National lockdown implied that business activities such as visiting physical archives were closed to both staff and researchers to limit the spread of the COVID–19. Countries imposed rules and regulations that denied staff and visitors to access archival materials during the national lockdown. During the national lockdown, some users require archival materials to decide on health issues.
Problem statement
Archival institutions without a preservation strategy are having the challenges of keeping their services active for their users virtually during the national lockdown as the result of COVID–19. Because of the pandemic outbreak, archivists have been engaging in new work practices to achieve accessibility of archives from their home offices. During this pandemic outbreak, a key challenge is a lack of qualified staff to swab patients and process test samples in case of the medical process; however, the provision of information was inaccessible (Yang et al., 2019). The experiences with the Ebola outbreak identified a broad spectrum of use cases, but funding for multidisciplinary research, in partnership with agencies and industry, to meet these use cases remains limited. Now, the impact of national lockdown because of COVID–19 may drive further research in the development of a preservation strategy to address the risks of providing access to information. However, without sustained research efforts, information systems will, once again, not be ready for the future pandemic outbreak. And there can be no doubt that specialist skills and understanding – ensuring the retention of evidence for the upholding of rights – are required; it is this function, which needs, explicitly, to be reclaimed (Procter, 2017).

It is against this backdrop that the present study is being undertaken to examine the strategies for the preservation of archival materials in the ICA SUV by the members and to make recommendations for the preservation of continued accessibility of archival materials during the COVID–19. The current paper modifies and extends the earlier papers by Netshakhuma (2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019a, 2016) to a larger group of archivists, using updated data that captures the greater interdependence in the world archives and in particular, the rise of information communication technology which led to the role of archivists to incorporate archivists.

Purpose and objectives of the study
The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies for the preservation of archival materials in the ICA SUV by the members and to make recommendations for the preservation of continued accessibility of archival materials during the COVID–19. The specific objectives were to:

• identify the strategies that the ICA SUV can apply to preserve archival materials;
• investigate the provision of access to archival materials during the national lockdown because of COVID–19 by the ICA SUV members; and
• suggest recommendations for the preservation of records.

The following research guided the study based on the objective of the study:

• What are the strategies the ICA SUV members apply to preserve archival materials?
• How ICA SUV institutions provide access to archival materials during the national lockdown as the result of the spread of the COVID–19?

Research methodology
This study applied a qualitative research approach and adopted a multiple case study design to answer the research questions. The study was carried out on selected members of ICA SUV from various universities all over the world who responded to the survey. The survey’s purpose was to understand whether archivists and records managers developed a preservation strategy during national lockdown as the result of the COVID–19 pandemic, to provide access to archival material. The survey was conducted through the email sent to
ICA SUV members to respond to the questions to identify the strategies the ICA SUV is using to preserve archival materials and establish how ICA SUV institutions provide access to archival materials during the COVID–19 lockdown initiated by various governments all over the world. Ten Archivists from South Africa at the University of Witwatersrand, Spain at the Hocken Collections Collections, Czechoslovakia at the University of Valladolid, New Zealand at University of Otago, and Poland at the University of Posnan. The method for collecting survey data was based on self-reporting, which can contribute to limitations in that the population sample may exaggerate bias. However, responses to the survey were common to eliminate bias. The selection of these institutions was because of geographical spread even though it covered a small sample. It was assumed that what was obtained from each of the participants would be used to give judgment to other institutions in the world. The survey attempted to draw a recent picture of the conditions in which archives operate by assessing responsibilities of archivists now and after COVID–19. This paper summarizes the results of the surveys based on the objectives of the study. The ten participants responded to the survey. Both surveys made use of total population sampling. The surveys were conducted in May 2020. The number of questions, however, still made it possible to assess the role of archives during the lockdown as the result of the COVID–19 pandemic.

**Literature review**

The literature was reviewed based on strategies for the preservation of archival materials and access to information.

**Strategies for the preservation of archival materials**

The pandemic disaster and the development of digital technologies are changing the traditional role of archives from custodians of physical collections to creators of online information resources. The benefit of long term preservation of archival materials requires shift from a paper based filing system to electronic records management system. Faced with fast-changing technologies, archivists will have to become champions of change and embrace the concept of digital preservation of information (Liebetrau, 2005). Myburgh (2005) argued that changes in the archival environment have necessitated changes because of the development of information technology alludes to this statement.

The review of the literature shows that most of the archival material is heavily used for research purposes; hence, there is a need to embark on a digitization programme to prevent archival materials from wear and tear (Garaba, 2016; Netshakhuma, 2019). The effectiveness of archivists is determined by the way society records, uses, stores, preserves and disposes of records (Abankwah, 2011).

The review of the literature shows that archivists lack preservation strategy to preserve most of the archival materials. The neglect of archives by most of the ICA SUV members may be because of a lack of awareness on the preservation of archival materials in most universities (Garaba, 2016; Liboma, 2008). Hence, awareness is critical to ensure archivists are well informed and adequately equipped to meet the challenges of ensuring the accessibility of archives during this digital age (Katuu, 2015). For example, in Malawi, archives management systems in the public service are poor because of a lack of preservation strategy to ensure adequate mechanisms to control the flow of records, limited skills on the preservation of archival materials, limited space, budget, equipment and materials, and this has consequently lead to loss of vital records. Because of limited space owing to lack of an appropriate structure for the national archives, non-current government records are supposed to be transferred to the national archives for public access. The survey conducted by Schina and Wells (2002) alluded that backlog in processing archival records...
and limited budget was a challenge faced by most universities in developed countries such as the USA, Canada, and the UK. The success of an archive management programme depends on the existence of the preservation strategy of archival materials (Netshakhuma, 2019).

Garaba (2007) indicated that the training of archivists needs to be prioritized because of electronic development, as professionals need to keep pace with changing technologies. This is because the processing of digital materials requires professional archivists. This statement is alluded by Kumar and Bansal (2014), who stated that the International Council of Archives and its Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch maintain that staff competencies, skills, and tools are required to manage electronic records.

It appears that most of the institutions used paper-based records systems such as file plans and finding aids to preserve archival materials. Hence, the management of digital records is a special subject area that deserves more details. In this study, digital preservation refers to the materials that are created originally in digital as well as those converted from legacy documents and artifacts. The study conducted by Garaba (2018) at the University of Kwazulu-Natal found that university archives are restrained to the traditional role of focusing on archival custody, and Netshakhuma (2019a) observed that one cannot successfully preserve records if they are not created, managed, stored, and transferred properly. This finding is contrary to the study conducted by Zalewska (2015) in Poland, who found that the university of the Maritime of Szczecin archive keeps recordings correctly and accurately. The archival materials of the university are kept in a paper-based and electronic format. This means that the system of filing is paper-based. The Maritime University archives are housed in three rooms equipped with wooden and compact bookcases.

The study conducted by Mkuwira (2015) found that lack of purposely built infrastructure, limited funding, and understaffing were affecting the preservation of archival materials in the National Archives of Malawi. It appears that limited funding in most of the African countries limited the state to acquire archival materials to preserve archival materials.

The proportion of information on the electronic system is increasing exponentially, and technology is changing the way institutions conduct their business and thus altering the nature of archives being created, disseminated, and preserved (Harris and Van der Merwe, 2009; Asogwa, 2013). The advancement of technology implied that the role of the archivist of preserving archives should change to include digitization of archival materials (Netshakhuma, 2018; Netshakhuma, 2019e). The study conducted by Segaetsho and Mnjama (2012) indicated that the challenge of archival services is to facilitate access to archives materials under their care so that they are accessible for education and research purposes.

However, the preservation of archival materials in universities, especially in Africa, has not received adequate attention such as standardization on the provision of information that requires archivists to adhere to archival management principles (Ramokate, 2006, p. 85; Mkuwira, 2015). This implied that there is a need for proper preservation of archival materials that can guarantee the survival of archival materials for enduring value. Hence, managing records in an electronic environment are not only a challenge but also a strategic issue for universities in Africa (Asogwa, 2013). He further indicated that the organization is to conduct the following to view records as the strategic issue:

- assess e-records management readiness to identify where they are;
- develop a roadmap that would assess where archival materials were stored;
- access the risk management strategy of the institutions;
- appraisal of the physical archives and streamline the classification to meet international standards and advance plans to digitize these records to the electronic environment;
- develop, implement and maintain a codified set of archives management policies; and
- popularize the archival digitization project by creating awareness from staff, faculties, departments and the entire community of records management.

Stout (1995) reported that universities in the USA did not develop a strategy to manage electronic records that implied that initiatives were to build to preserve manual records instead of concentrating on the management of electronic records. The study conducted by Chaterera (2015) in public institutions of Zimbabwe found that the use of Web 2.0 technologies is in the infancy stage. While the study conducted by Pereira (2018) at the Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU) found that most of the archives materials were not accessible because of factors such as backlogs of the processed archives, lack of finding aids and poor physical conditions negatively affecting semi-current records than current records in restricting the public’s access to information. Some EMU units were unable to access records of administrative and enduring value because of the lack of preservation strategy. However, the university developed a database to manage access to archival materials.

Archivists are challenged to adopt information communication technology to manage archival materials in their custody (Wamukoya, 2015). The issue of providing online access to university archives in Africa deserves attention, as most of the archives are preserved manually (Netshakhuma, 2019a). The development of information communication technologies brought a need for the archival profession to engage in the rigorous analysis and encoded archival description demanded by the archival specific information systems, but on the other, it also led to a need for greater standardization of information (Benn, 2019).

It is particularly essential for the engagement of archivists with information communication technologies to acknowledge this focus and how it placed them on the outside of another project of systematization going on at the same time, that of information systems to preserve archival materials.

The review of the literature showed that in the mid-1960s in the UK, archivists did not develop conceptual principles of information communication technology or with how meaning was being represented, structured and manipulated through information communication technology. In some ways, then, the story of the UK archivists’ involvement with computers up to the mid-1980s let down a lack of engagement with various stakeholders. In our, perhaps, understandable focus on the systematization of practice, archivists have failed to engage with information communication technology that, understands how they represent, structure and create meaning. This raises a question, but it is one that cannot be answered here in a retrospective that ends in the mid-1980s. Are archivists more or less engaged with computers now than they were in the 1960s? The answer to that question will shape the future of archival automation for the next 50 years and beyond.

Numerous archival institutions around the world develop preservation strategies that enable researchers to access archival material from all over the world (Molefe and Schellnack-Kelly, 2019). These findings confirm the assertions made by Sulej (2009), who indicated that archives should become accessible worldwide and get involved in documenting local, national and international history. This implied the changes in the role of academic archives from the traditional keeper of university history and its development to an establishment that serves the community at large, both locally and internationally,
offering access of archival materials to any member of the public. This expertise was directed toward supporting historical research, but from the final decades of the 20th century, the speed of social, political and technological change began to radically modify the understanding of the archival contribution to the public good (Procter, 2017).

In a poor economic climate, it is more essential for archive services to articulate value to fight for scarce resources. To ensure, that in the long-term, archives are in a position to meet societal demands for upholding the paradigm of rights currently deemed to have social value. The study conducted by Young (2012) found that the Loyola University of Chicago used fewer resources to plan for the storage of a congressional archive. However, the collection management policy was developed to provide guidelines on the management of resources. This implied that essential records were identified, preserved and made available to various stakeholders.

Archivist’s priority was to ensure that digital assets are preserved and accessible by various stakeholders (Prater, 2019). New technologies encouraged mass digitization to enhance access to archival materials (Procter, 2017). The transparent communication of reliable scientific data among scientists is central to reducing uncertainty and facilitating robust risk assessments (Collins et al., 2020). The effective communication between scientists and policymakers is key to the formulation of evidence-based management strategies.

Preservation of archival materials, however, is new territory, especially to rank-and-file information technologists who count the archives as only one of the many constituencies they serve. Most information communication technology shops strive to standardize processes and infrastructure for all their users, to increase efficiency, reduce duplication of effort and free up time and resources to improve their suite of services and introduce new ones (Procter, 2017).

The preservation and provision of access to primary source materials have the potential to enable public awareness and participation in public health procedures, grounded in historical lessons learned. Advancements in information communication technology led to changes in society, and this is true for archives management. Technology has led to a rethinking of archival concepts, practices and methods and the role that archival institutions play in contemporary societies (Moats, 2018).

Archivists in several democratic countries in central and southeastern Europe function today under intense political pressure, with inadequate and unpredictable funding and constant scrutiny and distrust (Gilliland, 2018). Despite the potential loss of institutional memory and possible large-scale disruption to a large number of people, many governments have been reluctant to invest sufficiently in their archival management system, let alone public health systems in less developed countries where many infectious diseases are likely to increase.

**Provision of access to archival materials during the national lockdown**

Access to information is enshrined as a pillar of a democratic society (Moran, 2016). Online access to archival materials has become an essential requirement, especially for generation users who follow and take advantage of technological innovations (Senturk, 2014; Kumar and Bansal, 2014). The study conducted by Gilliland (2013) found that most institutions lack support to design archival access systems and services that can simultaneously address local, national and transactional considerations. Archival materials no longer need to be inaccessible because of lack of retrieval systems (Cheng and Cheung, 2013). This statement is alluded to by Muchaonyerwa and Khayundi (2014) on the study conducted in the Office of
the Premier of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa who found a lack of infrastructure to ensure that digital records remained accessible.

The role of archive service was thus closely associated with the provision of archival materials, serving the needs of education and research (Horton, 2006; Netshakhuma, 2020c). The review of the literature shows that most of the institutions still used a manual-filing system that prolongs access to information. For example, Garaba (2016) on the research at the Lutheran Theological Institute Library found that because the institution relied on a manual-filing system, most of the records could not be accessible. This means that the adoption of electronic records management systems improves access to archival materials. Garaba’s study recommended organizations to implement digitization strategy to ensure that archival materials are accessible to various stakeholders. Furthermore, organizations raised awareness of records management. The study conducted by Magama (2018) indicated that most of the organizations in Zimbabwe were operating without access policies, digital records disaster management plans and guidelines. An access policy is essential in all preservation efforts because it is developed with sensitivity to striking a balance between the rights to access information. Hence, access to quality information resources and services are factors in any archival services. The ICA SUV members need to increase investment in the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage as a matter of disaster risk reduction.

Data analysis
This research used verbatim as a form of data analysis. Data was categorized according to the objectives of the study.

Data presentations, discussions and findings
Data was presented according to the objectives of the study. The results of the survey are summarized in this section.

Preservation strategies of records management before COVID–19
The purpose of this objective was to investigate the availability of preservation strategy by ICA SUV members. The findings presented are related to the availability of strategies to preserve archival materials. As part of the study, the respondents were asked to identify the strategies their institutions are using to preserve records during the COVID–19. The participants’ responses were grouped according to the universities that develop preservation strategies to mitigate any disaster. Such categories of respondents are as follows:

“Plan is in place to document web archiving webpages and social media”.
“Developed standards to manage records and archives during the disaster”.
“Governance framework to migrate to electronic records management system is in place”.

A majority of respondents who answered the question indicated that their archives were arranged according to the archival arrangements and description standards adopted by their institutions. The study revealed that there were limited archivists who develop and implement archives and records management programmes. These findings are in line with what is spelled in by Netshakhuma (2019b), who indicated that developing records management strategies prepared the organization to implement archives and records management programmes. Hence, there is a need to develop an electronic records system to be managed by putting in place adequate infrastructure (Muchaonyerwa and Khayundi, 2014). The use of technology has enabled institutions to create databases that handle huge amounts of data online.
Many of the respondents to the question of the preservation strategies provided comments as to why the institutions do not develop strategies in place. Some of the respondents stated that their organizations have not put in place the strategies before the national lockdown for COVID–19. Universities’ archivists identified the challenges encountered in implementing information communication technology activities in their archives. The challenges identified largely echoed the findings from archives staff and are outlined and discussed as follows. The select comments include the following:

“Archives are not a priority. Therefore, the university does not provide sponsorship for archives and heritage staff”.

“Lack of preservation strategies to migrate from paper-based to electronic records management filing”.

“Inadequate finances to support development activities of archives”.

“Records and archives were not valued as the assets of the institutions hence there was no need to develop a strategy”.

From these findings, it is evident that archivists showed that some of the universities did not develop a strategy to manage both manual and electronic records. Procedures were not developed by some of the universities to process archival materials from various sources. Preservation of archival materials constitutes a challenge on university archives. These challenges seem to be overwhelming because of lack of a strategy and a general lack of awareness and appreciation of the importance of archival materials. Findings also reveal that a lack of financial resources is the challenge to develop strategies. The challenge of funding archives in universities seems to be intractable given the low priority accorded to the activity by the universities. Without funds, the infrastructure, for instance, the University Archive or Records Center cannot be established as alluded to by Nyathi and Dewah (2017). Adequate funding is essential to enable university archives to offer quality service to users (Nabutto and Hoskins, 2019).

**Provision of access to archival materials during the national lockdown**

The purpose of this objective was to investigate the level of accessibility of archival materials during national lockdown because of COVID–19. The findings presented are related to the issue, which indicate the availability of records in their institutions. The participants were asked as to whether the organizations establish how they provide access to archival materials during the national lockdown as the results of the COVID–19.

The interview was related to questions about the accessibility of archival materials. The participants were asked as to whether they access archival materials during the national lockdown and they answered as follows:

“Czech archives closed for public access during the national lockdown because of lack of Electronic records management system”.

“No access to physical records, these are records preserved in a paper-based format”.

“Most of the archival materials were not accessible because of lack of national strategy”.

Interviews data revealed that most of the archives were filed on paper-based formed, which implied that most of the archival materials was not accessible online during the national lockdown because of COVID–19. The fact that there is a national lockdown implied that staff could not visit offices to perform work activities. This implied that most of the universities lack a strategy to preserve archival materials. Three respondents indicated that they do not have a policy in place that includes electronic records. Some of the universities had adopted manual systems to manage all types of records. The archives management system was not fully effective for archives management purposes.
Some of the respondents when they were asked as to whether they access archival materials during the national lockdown because of COVID–19 responded as follows:

“Their institutions have access to the network i.e. respond to researcher inquiries, work on the cataloging of digitised collections, or other work, such as feeding data to our databases”.

“Working with VPN connections”.

“we have culminated the 2.0 version of our metadata scheme, we worked online”.

“At AMU Archive staff have been working remotely since the start of national lockdowns”.

“Developed SharePoint Platform to access archival materials in their archives”.

“Several blog posts that had been written but not published so they were published”.

“Geotagging locations on an online database that provides access to many of our digitised photographs”.

Based on the results, most of the universities developed a preservation strategy to enable their institutions to access archival materials. Chaputula and Mutula (2018) stated that universities’ archives are increasingly offering services through an online system to enable access to archival materials. The use of online service to provide archival services has the potential to enhance access to archival services beyond the normal opening hours and hence can assist to overcome the obstacles of time and space and bring convenience to archives users. This would also assist to provide access to e-resources by those who do not have access to institutional computer facilities, thereby helping to erase the challenge of computer shortage, which is common in many archives of universities from developing countries. This showed that some of the universities developed a system to preserve archival materials. A majority of institutions make records available through the website. Ross (2006) indicated that digital preservation processes ensure accessible, authentic and reliable evidence to the future. This means that archivists should be advanced in archives and records management skills and act as an advocate for digital preservation activities and maintenance of digital records. Having staff in place capable of successfully managing the papers may well be the deciding factor in whether or not to accept them. Having trained archives professionals on staff is essential to getting the project developed.

**Recommendations**

The strategies for preservation of records in some ICA SUV institutions are compromising the long-term preservation of archival materials. The infrastructure and the resources in departments were not adequate to sustain long-term preservation strategies and show that a thorough cost-benefit analysis and digital readiness assessments were not done before the department started preserving digital records.

Because most of the archival institutions are still handling manual archives materials, it is recommended for institutions to develop a strategy to prepare for the archival materials to be digitized to be made available to various stakeholders worldwide. This implied that universities should migrate from manual-filing to electronic-filing systems to full electronic archiving management systems in assisting archivists to provide timely and effective access to records. On the other hand, the quality of archival management service depends on, among other, quality of archives material that is authentic, reliable, trustworthy, unaltered, not erased or changed, retrievable, usable and accurate. Molefe and Schellnack-Kelly (2019) indicated that more efforts need to be made to open up the archival collections to current and new users of the archives through digitization of the collection.
Conclusion
In a period of ongoing global uncertainty, this paper has provided an early evidence-based reflection on how COVID–19 might influence the accessibility of archival materials based on the current data collection taking place across the ICA SUV members. Effective archives management programme requires the ICA SUV institutions to introduce an electronic records management system because of a pandemic threat of COVID–19. The COVID–19 challenges require organizations to work in a digital environment, with new tools and different work approach. Physical records should be digitized and made available online. There should be a system or mechanism for internal review to determine which records are suitable to be digitized. Archives if properly managed are important assets that assist organizations in meeting their goals.

This study is confined to the positive side of COVID–19 and changes in the archival sector by adapting to information communication technology. The study revealed that most of the university archives were not managing records because of lack of policies, inability to effectively apply the electronic records management system to the management of university records, inability to explore other models to effectively manage digital records and insufficient budget. The findings confirm the importance of the development of preservation strategies to enhance access to information.

This article is important for various reasons, including providing a benchmark resource for the ICA SUV members and the rest of the world, as well as being the basis of establishing a digital programme.

References


Further reading


About the author

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