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**Journal of Information Sciences and Computing Technologies**
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# MANAGEMENT OF ARCHIVES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES OF KENYA, KISII UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study sought to establish the management of archives in Kisii University, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population was the staffs of the registry department at Kisii University. Primary data was collected with aid of questionnaires with all members of the staff selected as respondents in a census method of data collection. Qualitative approach was used to present, analyze and interpret the data. The findings of the study revealed that there was no policy guiding the management of archives in the University. The study concluded that archives management has not been given a professional approach.*

## Key words

1. Archives Management

2. Archives

3. Records

## Contents

## 1. Introduction

There exists a big misconception on what archives are. There is a general view that archives as those information materials that have lost value over time awaiting destruction contrary to the reality that archives are information materials whose value is already pre-determined as enduring and deserving to be preserved for posterity (Atherton, 2005). This study aims to investigate the management and use of archives in public Universities-Kisii University and depending on the outcome of the research, recommend on ways to improve the management and use of archives in public Universities. Results from this study will most likely be embraced to give Universities an opportunity to compare their archival practices with the findings of the study with a view to improving if deemed so.

The choice of Public universities was informed by the fact that many Universities generate records of enduring value and owing to preliminary studies; such materials are in a state of disarray. Informed by the fact that archive preserves the memory of any organization and can be of greater use as evidence and against cases of litigation, this study proved imperative. Kisii University has experienced many transitional changes right from its inception as a teacher college up to this time as a full-fledged university.

Through ought the period of transitions, major business dealings have taken place, such transactions have given birth to various

documents, a few of which have archival qualities and deserve to be preserved in order to protect the university against historical ignorance and risks of litigation. It is on this rostrum that this study was carried out to assess the management of archives in public institutions and in turn suggests solutions to the problems that the university archive staffs face in the management of such information. Previous studies indicate lack of proper policies, poor archival procedures, and insufficient information on the importance of archives among many public institutions as a major setback to proper archives management (Kemoni, 2008)

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Kisii University

Universities have information that merits permanent preservation and therefore are under obligation to store and preserve such information for posterity. Archives serves as the central repository for the administration and business records of any university. Kisii University is one of the Kenyan public Universities; it started in 1965 as a primary teacher college and has experienced many transitions over time leading to the current fully fledged Kisii University.

The mission of Kisii university archives, is to document the history of the university ,its predecessor institution ,its board of trustees ,its constituent campuses ,department s and programs and its long term official administration. It is tasked to preserve a number of records like the university policy and the title deeds. Collections of historical record in the Kisii university are generally available to the public for research and administered through the archives programs .The Kisii university archives reports to the in –change registry who in turn reports to the registry administration .

### 2.2 Archives

Archives can either be defined as historical records whose fate is already determined as permanent preservation based on their cultural, evidential or historical value or it could be the hold housing records of the enduring value. Archives are tasked to play

the roles of Jurisdiction, archival administration, records management, enforcement and advisory role to the institutional management to enhance informed decisions, Chinyemba (2005).

As observed by Wamukoya (2005), archives are public institutions mandated to take care of information materials of institutions which they are apart. Many archives are charged with the management of records of enduring value for the mother organization or body. We have public archives at different levels of the government like national and county levels, there are archives started and owned by specialized organizations like research bodies, religious bodies and both private and public institutions. University archives are responsible for records of the university's administration. Archives acquire historical material through the action of law or through internal institutional regulation or policy

Ngoepe, (2004) is of the view that archivists have a role of ensuring authentic and accurate information is available for reference. Proper archives management promote efficient and prompt retrieval of records that are key to informing on previous actions in regard to who did what, how and why hence a basis for sound judgment. In places where archives are poorly managed, there exist quarrels resulting from shifting blames as there is no means of holding individuals responsible for their past mistakes since there is no prove.

### 2.2 Archives Management

Archives management entails capture, arrangement, processing, organization, preservation, maintenance, storage and retrieval of valuable information materials. Archivists do not only identify and provide information materials upon request but they also ensure security of records against unauthorized access through organizing such records into different levels of access (Ngulube, 2006).

According to Kemoni, (2008) archivists and record managers are responsible for all record management processes and aspects ranging from records creation, office management of records to retrieval and access to permanently preserved records. Most records are created as a result of

the day today's business transactions and in most cases they become less valuable and soon invaluable and fit for permanent for destruction.

As observed by Goodman, (2004) there are records that are fit for destruction almost immediately after creation and for the purposes of savings in terms of space, equipment and labor they need to be destroyed immediately though in accordance to the laid down destruction policies and procedures. Most records are created in conduction of organizational business and have a defined lifespan. They can only be destroyed when this value is over. Very few records are preserved archives because they are of enduring value to the organization.

### 2.3 Archival policy

W0rld Bank, (2010) defined a policy as a document which is a broad written statement outlining the purpose, objectives and condition which defines the scope of archival activities, the authority under which they operate and services offered to clients. Based on this, it is important to note that information has become important in modern world for effective running and organizations and solving problems.

According to ARMA, (2013) each administrative office at the University generates unique records in the course of conducting daily business. The intent of a Policy and its associated procedures is to ensure that all University administrative offices, with guidance from the University Archives, take responsibility for the proper management of University Records to ensure compliance with legal and financial requirements, satisfy administrative needs, and identify and preserve permanently valuable records.

A policy forms part of the ongoing work to develop a complete information management strategy at the learning institutions. It is based on the principle that information is one of the Organization's most valuable assets and on the concept of Information Life Cycle Management. Policies that relate to particular areas of work need to include references to record creation and all the management

requirements. Procedures and guidelines should be put in place to help staff manage records to meet the needs of an organization and accountability requirements (Mnjam, 2002).

The effectiveness of policies and procedures will depend on the extent to which supported practices are adopted throughout an organization. Proper training and user education programs should be an ongoing component of an organization's records management framework. An Information and Records Management program requires making policy statements about the creation, use, maintenance, protection, preservation, and disposition of records and information (ARMA, 2013).

### 2.4 Role of archives to public institutions

According to Chinyemba, (2005) archival institutions cannot be passive recipients of records judged by others to be worthy of permanent preservation. As the professionally trained staff who work in the facility, archivists have a direct role to play in identifying and preserving the small percentage of records of enduring value found amid the mass of records generated in the course of daily affairs. To fulfill this role, archivists must be directly involved in the management of records throughout their life, as part of a continuum of care. As well as managing those records transferred to the archival repository for permanent retention, archivists must be involved in the design and implementation of record-keeping systems to ensure that cultural as well as business functions are satisfied.

Neglected records in many countries have become a major barrier to development. Poor record management as argued by the IRMT, (2003) and the World Bank, (2010) has led to corrupt practices, lack of accountability and poor governance structures. There are numerous studies on corruption and lack of accountability by governments in Africa and how that has impacted negatively on development. Records aids to show past mistakes and failures, they provide traces on the activities and behaviors leading to given losses helping managers look back in retrospect, evaluate the present while planning for the future in such a way that the

past mistakes are not repeated besides replicating the routes of past successes (Goodman, 2004).

Records and information play a critical role in fighting corruption; protects citizen's rights in ensuring transparency; accountability and good governance hence sustainable economic development. In spite of their significance, studies by Ngoepe, (2004) suggest that neglected records have become a major barrier to good governance since they fail to support transparence, accountability and the rule of the law.

## 3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design which was considered appropriate because it involved collecting data in order to test hypothesis concerning the status of the subject of the study.

The target population for the study was the Kisii university main campus archives and registry department which was twenty members of twelve members of staff of which eight are trained on the human resource area while the remaining four are trained in the archives and records management area. The study used all the members of staff due to the small and manageable number of stuff hence no sampling was done. The research divided the population into three groups. Top managers, middle level managers and the lower level members of staff.

*Table 3.0*

*Sample Size*

| Management level | Number | Archives and records personnel | Human Resource Personnel |
|---|---|---|---|
| Top manager | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Middle managers | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Lower managers | 9 | 2 | 7 |

**3.1 The study was guided by the following by the following objectives:**
1. To determine policies and guidelines that manage archives in Kisii University

2. To establish the challenges facing the management of archives in Kisii University

3. To recommend the possible ways of improving the management of archives in Kisii University

## 4.0 Results and discussion

### 4.1 Policy and procedures governing management of archives

According to the data collected, there is no clear cut policy governing the management and use of records in the Kisii University however this does not mean that the university operates in a vacuum. The university embraces the use of stringent record management guidelines and procedures that came up from within the department as revealed by the senior archivist through the study.

A well stipulated policy should be in place to ensure that the university archive is given the necessary mandate to control and manage all records of an institution. It should be clearly spelled so that the staff is aware of exactly what is to be done and how. It should also ensure that the archive develops an efficient classification and arrangement system as predetermined by the archival principles.

The research revealed that each administrative office at the University generates unique records in the course of conducting daily business. The intent of a Policy and its associated procedures is to ensure that all University administrative offices, with guidance from the University Archives, take responsibility for the proper management of University Records to ensure compliance with legal and financial requirements, satisfy administrative needs, and identify and preserve permanently valuable records.

The result shows that there are no clear cut policies governing the management of archives in the university. Secondly, the procedures followed in the management of archives were affected by insufficient equipment, staff and space. The study also revealed that the workers experience and abilities in the management of archives was below bar as many members are trained in human resource although they were handling

which were unfortunately placed within their registry department.

*Table 4.1: Availability of archival Policy or guiding procedures*

| | Numbers of respondent | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| No policy at all | 2 | 17 |
| Procedures exist in place of a policy | 8 | 67 |
| There is a clear cut policy | 1 | 8 |
| No idea | 1 | 8 |
| **Total** | **12** | **100** |

A higher percentage of respondents i.e. 67% felt that despite the fact that there is no policy governing the management of archives, there were procedures in place on behalf of the policy. While responding 17% of the total staff seemed aware of the processes and procedures in place and could literally explain them. A few respondents representing 8% pulled a surprise when they responded that there is neither any policy in place nor is there any procedure governing the management of archives. A minimal percentage of another 8% felt that there is a clear cut policy in place governing the management and use of archives.

**4.2 Importance of archives in Kisii University**
The table below shows a summarized view by members of staff in regard to the importance of archives in Kisii University.

*Table 4.2*

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Very important | 4 | 33% |
| Important | 3 | 25% |
| Somehow important | 2 | 17% |
| Not important | 3 | 25% |
| **Total** | **12** | **100** |

**4.3 Challenges facing archives management in the university**
Generally the research showed that the following challenges are rampart in the management and use of archives:

i) Lack of a proper record retention and disposal schedule that promotes identification, appraisal, retention, preservation, and provision of support for the use of documents generated in electronic form.

ii) Lack of proper support from the top management to promote greater resources to non-textual holdings.

ii) Limited scope of collection development priorities

iv) Lack of proper record management policies and priorities.

v) Inadequacy of new methods for describing and providing user access to the ever-expanding volume of contemporary records in all formats

vi) Lack of access to holdings to core constituencies and broaden use to expanded audiences.

**5.0 CONCLUTION**
The researcher concluded that there is need for a clearly integrated and implemented archival management policy governing the management and use of archives to be put in place by the top managers and archivists. Good will and support from the top managers is recommended since for any department in an institution to operate efficiently, there must be support from the top management and therefore the archives department is not an exceptional.

Archives in Kisii University are poorly managed as exposed by the following factors; inadequate archives management policies and legislations, inadequate archives management professionals, inadequate records storage equipment and space, poor security confidential controls hence inappropriate access, inadequate budgetary allocations, lack of constant archives and record management seminars and workshops and the lack of records disposal schedule.

**5.1 Future scope**

The study concerned itself with the management of archives in Kisii University. There is need for studies to be carried out on the management and use of records in Kisii University since some archives were just records before a predetermination that deemed them records of enduring value.

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