



International Federation of
Library Associations and Institutions



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LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES HAVE ENRICHED THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES FOR OVER A THOUSAND YEARS

WHAT DO LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES DO?

Libraries and archives are the memory institutions of society, preserving and providing access to our cultural, scientific and historical record. Libraries and archives support education, learning and creativity, and underpin the idea of civilisation itself. They enable intellectual freedom by providing access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and to all members of society. This mission has not changed over time, despite many changes in the way in which information is transmitted and accessed. Library and archive collections include a wide range of formats including written, photographic, moving image and sound in diverse digital and analogue formats. With the advent of new technologies libraries and archives have expanded to be more than just physical stores for information – they are now gateways to the Internet and digital resources.

The unique role of libraries and archives is that they respond to the particular questions and needs of individuals. This complements the general transmission of knowledge by the media and makes libraries and archives vital to a democratic and open information society. Over 650,000 professional librarians and archivists worldwide manage the provision of library and archive services, and these individuals are skilled in not only the use of diverse information resources but are also able to understand the context in which an individual seeks information. Library and archive professionals are governed by codes of ethics that emphasise a respect for users' privacy and a responsibility to serve all members of their communities, regardless of an individual's means or status. The vast majority of libraries and archives are non-commercial and not-for-profit and, although funding models are different all over the world, numerous return of investment¹ studies have shown that the value of return is at least 4-6 times the investment. Libraries and archives drive access to knowledge wherever they are found, whether in a village, a school, a company or a city.

1 <http://archive.ifla.org/III/wsis/AlexandriaManifesto.html>



WHAT IS A LIBRARY?

Libraries operate in a variety of contexts:

- Academic Libraries are an integral part of colleges, universities, or other institutions of postsecondary education, administered to meet the information and research needs of students, faculty, and staff.
- National Libraries are funded by national governments to maintain comprehensive collections of the published and unpublished written output of the nation, including government publications. Most serve as the legal depository for works protected by copyright in the country.
- Public Libraries provide access to library resources and services to the residents of the library's service area, usually supported by public funds. Because public libraries have a broader mandate their collections are diverse and inclusive.
- Research Libraries contain comprehensive collections of materials in a specific field, academic discipline, or group of disciplines, including primary and secondary sources, selected to meet the information needs of researchers. Their primary emphasis is on the accumulation of materials and the provision of access services to scholars.
- School Libraries are found in a public or private elementary or secondary school. They serve the information needs of students and the curriculum needs of teachers and staff.
- Special Libraries are part of commercial firms, private associations, government agencies or non-profit organizations designed to meet the information needs of employees and members in accordance with the organization's goals. The scope of the collection is usually limited to the interests of the host organization.

Globally, libraries spend over \$23 billion each year on books, journals, audio-visual and digital content². This expenditure is often on the critically important but not necessarily commercially successful works which form the foundation of our culture. For example, libraries play a significant role in providing access to the vast majority of copyrighted works no longer commercially available long before their copyright expires. They are often the only institutions that preserve public domain materials. Librarians organise, manage and provide access to all of this content, and develop it into collections responsive to the changing needs of their users.

² Outsell: 2010 Library Market Size, Share and Forecast Report

WHAT IS AN ARCHIVE?

An archive is a collection of print or digital documents, preserved as an historical, informational, legal, or evidential record, permanently or for a finite period of time. Archives are an irreplaceable witness to past events, underpinning democracy, the identity of individuals and communities, and human rights.

Archivists' core mission is to ensure that an authentic record of knowledge created and accumulated by past and present generations be selected, preserved and made available. With this record, citizens and researchers may understand what government and other bodies have done on their behalf and may construct a new body of knowledge to build an informed and better future for the world at large. In support of this, archives spend millions of dollars acquiring, arranging, describing, and preserving documents in all information formats so they can be accessible by scholars and students, as well as by members of the general public.

WHO USES LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES?

There are over one billion registered library users on Earth, and many millions of individuals use the resources of archives. Libraries and archives serve all segments of our populations. Today, the use of libraries and archives is no longer limited by physical proximity to a collection. In the global information society, library and archive users are increasingly demanding remote access to information resources anytime, anywhere and via multiple conduits. Librarians and archivists understand the technology to make this possible, but we must have the appropriate legal frameworks to enable us to fulfill our obligations to our users and to society.



Libraries and archives provide services that:

- **Preserve and make available the historical record** to enable understanding of the past and inform the future.
- **Support scientific research and development** that nurtures innovation and facilitates successful enterprise – university and research libraries are key in enabling this.
- **Rebuild the economy** by helping people to learn new skills, and providing information and support for the unemployed and new immigrants.
- **Bridge the digital divide** by providing computers and access to the Internet, and teaching how to use it. They also provide special equipment to help those with disabilities.
- **Enrich the lives of individuals** by putting them in touch with creative works and ideas, factual information and genealogical materials.
- **Inspire a love of reading** in children and develop emergent literacy skills, an essential foundation to higher education.
- **Improve the health and well-being** of individuals and communities by supporting medical research and giving people information on which to base health and life decisions.
- **Facilitate a democratic society** by helping people of all ages to document and exercise their civil, political and socio-economic rights.

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