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VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES OF ACCESS: THE CASE OF PRIVATE ARCHIVES IN TURKEY

Abstract

Purpose: *Private archives occupy a distinctive position in that they have the capacity to reflect individual lives and actions in an unfiltered and uncensored manner. This study aims to identify and categorise access restrictions applied in private archives by tracing their underlying rationales, and to examine whether the restrictions imposed on personal and family archives are consistent with ethical principles, legal frameworks, and professional standards.*

Method/Approach: *Using a qualitative approach based on document analysis and comparative case studies, the research examines international archival guidelines alongside access practices in five private archives in Turkey to classify restrictions through content analysis.*

Results: *The findings reveal that access restrictions in private archives cluster around three interrelated domains; legal, ethical/privacy-related and operational practices, and that the absence of formal access policies results in inconsistent and opaque implementations.*

Conclusions/Findings: *The study concludes that access restrictions in private archives are multi-layered phenomena and that clearly defined institutional access policies are essential for ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with professional and ethical standards.*

Keywords: *Access restrictions; Privacy; Confidentiality; Private archives; Archival ethics*

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1 INTRODUCTION

Archives function as mechanisms through which authority is established, legitimized, and sustained, thereby raising fundamental questions about access to archival materials. Precisely because of this power, archives have historically been targeted during periods of war and invasion. For example, Baş (2019, 43) emphasizes that most documents from the foundation period of the Ottoman Empire were destroyed as a result of Timur's invasion. In a more recent context, commenting on the Russia-Ukraine war, Arolsen Archives Director Azoulay has compared Russia's attempt to erase historical memory to the use of a weapon, emphasizing that history itself is being targeted as a tool of war (Arolsen Archives, 2023).

The circulation of state's official papers as evidence coincided with the emergence of democracy, namely the French Revolution. Although bureaucratic needs accelerated the publicization of access to archives, institutional organization, particularly in European countries did not begin until the 19th century (Ducheyn, 1983, 3-9). Increased requests for access to state archives led to a noticeable increase in the use of archival material, which was also reflected in historiography. Particularly in the 20th century, with the emergence of historical writing approaches such as the Annales School in France, the use of archives as primary sources became widespread (Hesketh, 2011).

The dynamics have operated differently in the case of private collections. The use of private archives as sources for historiography intersects with feminist, postcolonial, local, and social memory studies. This convergence has also brought access restrictions in private archives into critical scholarly discussion, foregrounding questions of power, representation, and exclusion within ostensibly non-state archival contexts. The private archive materials provide access to a wealth of information about the daily lives, social relationships, environments, habits, and cultural practices of ordinary individuals and these should be evaluated differently from official archives due to their form of creation, content, and manner of transfer to the archives. This is because personal and family archives are of particular importance in terms of privacy, personal data and the confidentiality of third parties. The fact that such sensitivities are directly related to religion, social norms and the sociocultural environment make it difficult for archivists to identify and define these phenomena in archival material. Decisions regarding

access restrictions are often shaped in a manner contrary to the standard-based structure of archiving. Although there are common principles at the international level regarding access to archives, the implementation of these principles varies from country to country and is often incorrectly applied.

The aim of this study is to highlight the visible and invisible rationales underlying access restrictions implemented in archives and to exemplify these rationales through five institutions examined in Turkey. In this regard, the TDV Centre for Islamic Studies (İSAM) Library Archive, Boğaziçi University Library Rare Books and Historical Archives, SALT Research, Koç University Vehbi Koç Ankara Research Application and Research Centre (VEKAM) Archive and Orient-Institut Archive were examined.

Restricting access to certain archival materials constitutes a fundamental component of archival practice, grounded in ethical and legal obligations to protect individuals' privacy. However, the failure to implement such restrictions appropriately can result in significant material and moral harm, including breaches of confidentiality and the erosion of institutional credibility. Although archival procedures are generally shaped by established standards, decisions regarding access restrictions are often made through non-standardised and discretionary practices. In Turkey, the absence of written access policies in institutions that hold archival collections has led to inconsistent practices and widespread misunderstandings concerning access. This lack of formalised policy represents one of the most critical challenges affecting access to private archives.

Based on this problem, the research questions were determined as follows,

1. How is the difference between the concepts of confidentiality and privacy reflected in archival practice?
2. Is there a specific approach in archival practices regarding access to private archives and sensitive materials in private archives?
3. What are the reasons and obstacles that lead to access restrictions on private archive materials?

2 METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. The research is based on a document analysis of archival association guidelines, international identi-

fication standards, and archival software. The databases of six private archives were examined in line with the concepts of ethics, privacy, and confidentiality. The extent to which these concepts affect access restrictions was analysed. Both comparative analysis and case studies of private archives were utilised. The data obtained was analysed using content analysis, and a comparative assessment was made between international approaches and examples.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of access to archives was first discussed in the literature in the 1920s in the context of historians' demands for access to public archives and has since evolved, gaining a more complex, multi-layered and critical approach with concepts such as individual privacy, post-colonial approaches and radical empathy (Geselbracht, 1986; Lawrence, 2016; Bauer, 2023). There are numerous publications by Elena S. Danielson, Michelle Caswell, Menzi L Behrnd-Klodt, Richard J. Cox and others on professional ethics in archiving, the balance between access and privacy in archives, and their legal dimensions.

3.1 THEORETICAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The creation of private archival records in the course of everyday activities inevitably generates concerns related to confidentiality and privacy. Among private archives, personal and family archives hold a special place, as they have the power to reflect the individual's unfiltered and uncensored self. Determining the level of confidentiality, along with selection of the relevant access restriction type, can complicate archivists' decision-making and archival processes. For example, love letters exchanged between a married couple and those related to a secret extramarital relationship may require different archival access practices, as the consent of third parties may be involved. Ethical guidelines have been developed to guide archivists in such dilemmas.

The ICA Code of Ethics, published in 1996, was prepared to provide guidance on matters such as the control, maintenance, preservation, ownership and management of archives. However, since the concepts of confidentiality and privacy may vary across societies and legal systems, national professional guidelines issued by national archival associations are also necessary in addition to international

codes of ethics. It is evident that the Code of Ethics of The Archives & Records Association (ARA, 2024) is among the most up-to-date and comprehensive.

On the other hand, since issues of confidentiality require case-by-case evaluation within their specific contexts, case studies are particularly important in providing guidance to professionals who may encounter similar situations (see Benedict, 2003). The case studies mostly focus on issues that create dilemmas, such as decision-making authority, access to and use of documents, donor-user conflicts and archivist impartiality, which archivists face in the course of their duties.

3.2 GUIDES AND MANUALS

The literature also includes guides, manuals, and recommendations on archival access issued by archival organisations. Among the most important of these are Principles of Access to Archives (ICA, 2012), Technical Guidance on Managing Archives with Restriction (ICA, 2014), ACRL/RBMS-SAA Guidelines on Access to Research Materials in Archives and Special Collections Libraries (ALA, 2006), and Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians (ACRL, 2020). There have been criticisms that the relevant publications and guidelines do not provide sufficient guidance on the application of ethical rules (Cox, 2013; Poole, 2020).

In the 2000 recommendation on access to public archives, the Council of Europe stated that private archives should be organised in line with public archives wherever possible (Council of Europe, 2000). The comparison of the surveys conducted in 2003 and 2023 reveals (Friedewald et. al., 2024) that there has been no substantial progress across Europe in supporting access to private archives; despite two decades of technological and scholarly advancement, a shared and sustained momentum toward improving access to private archives has yet to emerge.

3.3 ACCESS IN TERMS OF STANDARDS, SOFTWARE AND TERMINOLOGY

In the international standards for archival description examined, it is seen that until 2000, information on type of access to materials was reduced to the 'Notes' field and used optionally; after 2000, a separate description/metadata field titled 'Access' was created, which was detailed over time and became a mandatory description field (Özbay, 2025). Among those examined, DACS, which has the most comprehensive description/metadata fields related to access to archival material, differs

from other standards by providing physical deterioration affecting access under the heading ‘Physical Access’ and technological obsolescence under the heading ‘Technical Access’ (SAA, 2022). DACS emphasises that the researcher must be able to see not only what the archivist knows but also what they do not know.

Following the metadata/description field, the terms used in this field should also be carefully reviewed. The field of archival studies lacks a standardised terminology for concepts related to access restrictions, and although English largely functions as a common professional language, the use of different terms to describe similar levels of restriction hinders the development of union catalogues, institutional collaboration, and comparative analyses. To address this gap, the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) have developed access classifications that clearly state the type, reason, and duration of the restriction. The STAR (Standardised Terminology for Access Restriction) terms developed by OCLC and COAR’s controlled access word lists define open access levels such as unrestricted online access, authorised online access, metadata-only access and embargoed access (OCLC, 2007; COAR, 2022). On the other hand, NARA (2024) classifies access restrictions based on legal, physical, and technical grounds. All these examples demonstrate that access classifications must clearly express not only the level of restriction but also the reason for and duration of the restriction.

Lastly, the most vital aspect of archival access management lies in the regulation of online access, therefore, archival software systems should likewise be critically assessed within this framework. The software must be evaluated not only in terms of its online presentation functions but also in conjunction with its restriction mechanisms for access management. While international archive-oriented systems such as ArchivesSpace, Archivematica, LOCKSS, ContentDM, and Access to Memory (AtoM) are designed to accommodate archival standards and access controls, DSpace –widely used in Turkey– offers limited functionality for the digital management of archival materials due to its open access-oriented structure. In contrast, AtoM, presently implemented only at İSAM, enables the assignment of differentiated restrictions at the digital object level through PREMIS-compliant access permissions (AtoM, 2025).

3.4 RESEARCH GAP

The literature reveals a significant research gap concerning access restrictions in private archives, particularly regarding their rationales, implementation, and alignment with professional ethics and legal frameworks, both in Turkey and internationally, where in many countries no specific legislation regulates such restrictions. Academic studies have typically addressed access restrictions on a case-by-case basis, leaving the structural factors that shape their implementation, or non-implementation, largely unexplored. This article contributes to the literature by analysing access restrictions through three interrelated dimensions: legal, ethical, and organizational. Although researchers and the public are generally familiar with restrictions imposed due to legal concerns, they are often unaware of ethical and organizational restrictions.

4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concepts of private and confidential, which constitute the focus of this study, are frequently used interchangeably. Their conceptual boundaries have a direct impact on the access and processing of archival material. Private, at its most fundamental level, denotes ownership and belonging. The word private, defined in Turkish as “*belonging to only one person or thing, special; concerning one person, belonging to the individual rather than the state*” occupies a significant place in archival science (Güncel Türkçe Sözlük, s.d.). A similar framework has been adopted in Turkish archival literature, and the concept of private archives has mostly been defined as non-state archives (Binark, 1980, 10; İcimsoy, 2007, 49). Although these definitions do not directly emphasise confidentiality, it is possible to say that expressions such as private information and private document carry the meaning of restricted access in everyday usage.

The term confidential is used to indicate the level of confidentiality of official documents within or between institutions (Güncel Türkçe Sözlük, s.d.). Moreover, it cannot be denied that confidentiality in Turkish society is also closely intertwined with Islamic religious norms. Confidentiality is most frequently invoked in information and document management in relation to classified documents. These are divided into three levels in the Regulation on Procedures and Principles to be Applied to Classified Documents Law in Turkey; top secret, confiden-

tial, and for official use only (Resmi Gazete, 2022). Terms such as confidential document and confidential archive are also widely used in public discourse and the news media. While these terms describe the document, information or archive as confidential, they imply an illegal act of concealment, creating a negative perception. So pervasive was this perception that, in 2019, Pope Francis replaced the archive's centuries-old name *Archivum Secretum Vaticanum* (Vatican Secret Archive) with *Archivum Apostolicum Vaticanum* (Vatican Apostolic Archive). The change was justified on the grounds that the term *secret* generated public outrage, fostered perceptions that the archive concealed information from society and ultimately undermined the institution's public image, mission, and vision (The Holy See, 2019).

The perception of privacy varies not only between societies but also among individuals, shaped by factors such as religion, culture, social norms, and personal experiences. Warren and Laslett (1977) defined privacy as an area where activities that protect elements valued by society are carried out, withdrawn from public observation and without affecting others. According to them, secrecy is the illegitimate concealment of negative activities that are contrary to social norms and moral values and could lead to the stigmatisation of the individual in society. Guess (2007) addresses the conceptual entanglement among these terms arguing that private is not the sole opposite of public but rather, distinctions between confidential, private, and hidden reveal differing assumptions about intentional concealment, normative access, and the inherent limits of knowability. In a private archive, the privacy of the individuals with whom the archive's creator communicates in social life is also at stake. Therefore, privacy and confidentiality are two phenomena that must always be considered in almost all archival processes, from the donation to its digitisation, otherwise they may lead to legal and moral conflicts.

5 REASONS OF ACCESS RESTRICTIONS ON ARCHIVES

Access restrictions do not always stem solely from concerns related to privacy and confidentiality. In many cases, they are based on direct or indirect reasons of which researchers are often unaware. This study examines these visible and invisible reasons under three main categories: legal, ethical and privacy-related, and organizational. In addition, the study addresses the legal and social problems

that may arise for both archival institutions and donors because of access restrictions that lack reasonable justification, transparency, and proper implementation.

5.1. LEGALLY BASED ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

In most countries, legal restrictions are based on laws concerning the protection of personal data. For example, legal regulations such as Personal Data Protection Law (KVKK) and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) restrict the sharing of information belonging to an identifiable person without the consent of the person concerned. Considering KVKK, a meticulous evaluation is required to determine whether archival materials—such as diaries, correspondence, agendas, photo albums, and audio or video recordings—constitute personal data. Gaudette (2003, 25) defines 'blind donor' as individuals who are documented within a collection but were not involved in the creation or donation of the materials and therefore emphasizes that their privacy must also be taken into consideration. As a case, the Taha Toros Archive, donated from Istanbul Şehir University to Marmara University, made available online without the signing of a new deed of gift or the implementation of a privacy assessment, has been closed to access since 2023, following lawsuits filed against the university by blind donors whose photographs were included in the archive without their consent (Özbay, 2025). This issue is an important and current example demonstrating how crucial it is to obtain the consent of the blind donors. Another example of restricted access concerns the Tille Höyük Photo Collection in the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA) Archive. Photographs taken during archaeological excavations, depicting a woman washing her child in a stream, were closed to researchers due to privacy concerns, illustrating how visual materials may be subject to access restrictions based on the protection of donors' personal rights (Atalan Çayırmezmez and Özger, 2022, 279).

When calculating the duration of access restrictions, the individual's estimated lifespan is taken as a basis. According to the UK National Archives (2021), individuals' lifespans are assumed to be 100 years, and access restrictions are also determined based on this assumption. For identifiable individuals, the known or estimated age is subtracted from this period to determine the restriction length. If the date of birth or death is unknown/unidentifiable, the individual's age is

estimated based on the document's date, content, and context which adults are assumed to be at least 16 years old and children 0. In documents involving multiple individuals, the youngest age should be used for calculation. The nature of the personal data contained in the records may also influence access decisions, as not all personal information carries the same level of sensitivity, and materials related to matters of public interest may be made accessible.

Beyond privacy concerns, copyright can function as a structural limitation on access to private archives. Especially in the case of unpublished writings, correspondence, drawings, and artworks, intellectual property rights may impose long-term constraints on consultation and reproduction. Intellectual and Artistic Works Law (FSEK) emphasises that materials such as letters and memoirs that do not constitute works of art cannot be published without the author's permission, within 10 years of their death, or without the permission of their relatives (FSEK, 1951). As copyright directly affects the use of archival materials, it is essential that users are properly informed. As the only example in Turkey, the policy of the Koç University Suna Kıraç Library states that priority is given to collections without copyright complications. Works whose copyright belongs to the University are accessible both internally and externally; those owned by the author require permission for internal use; and materials with uncertain copyright status are restricted to internal access only (Koç University Suna Kıraç Libraries Digital Collections, s.d.).

Given their legally binding character, deeds of gift constitute one of the primary sources of access restrictions in private archives. Heirs consider various criteria when selecting an institution to which they will donate materials, including institutional proximity, prestige, the quality of care and preservation provided for the materials, the preferences of peer or communities, and public perceptions of trust or distrust toward the institution (Saydam, 2022, 44). Some heirs may be overly cautious about the personal and family archives they donate, requesting unnecessary and inappropriate access restrictions. Sometimes, heirs may not be aware of the contents of the archive and the sensitive, confidential materials it contains (Stein, 2021; İşli, 2017). In both cases, the institution should provide heirs with the necessary information regarding access methods, legal obligations, and the institution's access policy, ensuring the donation is made under the most acces-

sible condition possible. To avoid conflicting with institutional access policies, archival institutions must act in conjunction with ethical and legal counsel during the donation process.

An example of access restrictions imposed for legal reasons in Turkey can be found in the exchange liquidation requests held by the Turkish Presidential State Archives. Documents initially made available publicly online were subsequently closed to access on the grounds that they contained personal data. In Germany, a database containing the identities, addresses, and migration information of tortured and murdered Jews was made available by the Minden Municipal Archives but was later closed to access due to concerns that it could be used for different purposes (Čtvrtník, 2023, 41).

5.2 ETHICAL AND PRIVACY-BASED ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Personal and family archives demand the highest level of privacy consideration, especially when they were not originally produced with the anticipation of public disclosure. Making an individual's or family's life public imposes both ethical and legal responsibilities on the archive as an institution and on the archivist as a professional. Documents in such archives that are deemed unsuitable for disclosure include those relating to informal relationships and children; documents concerning inheritance and property; documents relating to health status; uncensored letters and diaries; photographs taken as family memories; records reflecting an individual's political, religious, or philosophical views; materials that may be related to sexual orientation; documents related to political party, association, or foundation memberships; content indicating physical and mental health; materials revealing criminal matters such as serious or minor, shameful crimes can be considered confidential (Danielson, 2010, 184). Uncontrolled or unwitting access to materials containing such sensitive information may lead to the violation of individuals' rights and freedoms and result in legal sanctions. Restrictions on such materials must be decided in advance to properly regulate access. As this process can be costly in terms of budget and personnel, Greene and Meissner (2005) state that examining the collection at the material level wastes the archivist's time and that access restrictions are absurdly overcautious. They argued that the More Product, Less Process method should be used to make the largest amount

of material available for research as quickly as possible. This minimal processing approach has been criticised in various sources on the grounds that sensitive information may be overlooked and legal issues may arise (Cox, 2010; Stein, 2021). Some privacy-driven access conflicts stem from the blurred boundaries of authorship and the implicit presumption that all produced documents possess potential literary or intellectual value. In this context, it is possible to say that the archive that has attracted the most attention and caused the most controversy in Turkey belongs to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. Disregarding the potential harm to Tanpınar's posthumous reputation, private expressions preserved in his archives, such as erotic reflections and references to cocaine use in his diaries and correspondence, have been subject to sensationalism. While Akbal (1977) deemed the publication of these documents unnecessary, İnci (2017) emphasises that such archives are important for academic research. Perhaps anticipating such conflicts and seeking to safeguard his privacy, Thomas Mann destroyed part of his personal archive and entrusted the remainder to his family, leaving a note that the materials had "no literary value" and stipulating in his will that they be opened twenty years after his death (Danielson, 1989, 55). The heirs' concerns about making the personal documents of family members into the public domain are understandable. For example, as in the well-known case of the Sigmund Freud Archives, heirs may manipulate archival sources, and consequently the historical narrative itself, to protect the reputation of their relatives. Drawing a clear line between the archiving of public figures' public activities and their private lives is, however, another highly challenging task for archivists.

Another concept that should be addressed in the context of ethics and privacy are radical empathy. Radical empathy in archiving means that the archivist approaches the material not neutrally, but with common sense, feeling emotional responsibility towards the subjects covered by the archive, the creator of the document, and the users of the document. When dealing with topics such as ethnic minorities, different religious and belief groups, marginalised communities, and the history of women rendered invisible within patriarchal social structures, archivists are expected to base their evaluation process not on their own cultural values, but on the cultural context of the archive's creators. From this perspective, the question archivists should ask regarding access is: Is the way I preserve and pro-

vide access to this record consistent with the culture of the community in which this document originated? As a case, a suicide note donated to the South Asian American Digital Archive with the words “No one should read this” written on it has been kept inaccessible on the grounds of respect for privacy, even though 85 years have passed since the death and the heirs have given their consent (Caswell and Cifor, 2021, 39). Birrell and Windon (2026) suggest a flexible and customizable communication model that can be applied across all donor relationships, aiming to reduce barriers and cultivate a more compassionate archival practice.

5.2.1 RESTRICTIONS AND BARRIERS FOR POLITICAL REASONS

Restrictions that may be imposed due to political conflicts require specific and separate consideration. There are many private archives possessed by the families or foundations of figures who were active during the early republican period in Turkey. The Latife Uşşakî Archive exemplifies how access to private archives from early Republican period can be shaped by political sensitivities. Latife Uşşakî, who was married to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, for 2.5 years and was at the forefront during the most important years of the country (Çalışlar, 2011). Her heirs donated her diaries, letters, and documents to the Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish Historical Society) in 1979 under a twenty-five-year closure condition. However, as the restriction period approached its expiration in 2005, the heirs decided to convert the temporary restriction into an indefinite one, effectively reasserting control over the archive in the name of reputational protection (T.B.M.M Tutanak Dergisi, 2005). Given Latife Uşşakî’s position, opening her archive to access involves political sensitivities beyond a woman’s privacy.

5.3 ORGANISATIONALLY BASED ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Restrictions on access to materials may also be imposed for operational reasons such as staff and infrastructure shortages and these reasons are usually beyond the user’s knowledge. Unlike library materials, the unique nature of archival documents requires archival processes to be carried out more carefully and slowly. Therefore, the lack of sufficient budget and personnel in archival institutions leads to a slowdown in all processes and sometimes prevents archives from being accessible for years. Due to the increased workload resulting from the uncontrolled donation of archive, it can take a long time for collections to be processed

(Saydam, 2022, 31). At this stage, the most appropriate approach is to share a public announcement explaining that the collection has been transferred to the institution, its access status, and its general content, even if the archiving process has not been completed.

In addition to the requirement for the institution to have competent and sufficient staff, it is expected to have the appropriate physical and digital infrastructure to make archival material available for research and to manage access. For example, not allocating a separate area from the reading room for the examination of restricted materials is a serious shortcoming that limits physical access. Considering users' requests for remote/online access to collections, it has become a fundamental and indispensable part of archival services. The institution must have software that supports these processes to ensure that digital copies and metadata of materials subject to access restrictions can be managed appropriately.

6 ACCESS PRACTICES OF PRIVATE ARCHIVES IN TURKEY³

This study examines the access restrictions applied, or not applied, to personal archives held in five information centres⁴. In addition, it was investigated whether the institutions had an access policy for their archive and each case was evaluated as an example from a different perspective.

6.1 TDV CENTER FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES (İSAM) LIBRARY ARCHIVES: ORHAN ŞAIK GÖKYAY PAPERS⁵

The Special Collections of İSAM are described in accordance with ISAD(G) and managed through AtoM. In this case, it was observed that the archives had not undergone a systematic privacy assessment and that inconsistencies existed in the access and use conditions description fields across collections. In the Orhan Şaik Gökyay Papers, only selected materials digitised upon user request are made available; however, this distinction is not reflected in the descriptive fields, nor is there evidence of consent from the authors of correspondence. Except in one instance (identified during this research) the author of a letter successfully re-

3 For a detailed analysis and evaluation of these cases, see Özbay (2025)

4 This concept is an umbrella term whose usage has increased in Turkey since the 2000s and is used in academic literature to refer collectively to libraries, archives, and documentation centres.

5 See <https://arsiv.isam.org.tr/index.php/orhan-saik-gokyay-evraki>

quested the removal of its digital copy from online access. Such practices risk infringing personal privacy and could potentially give rise to legal proceedings. While the Access and Use Conditions field is absent in the Gökıyay Papers, it is fully articulated in the Ebüziyya Family Papers.

6.2 BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: RARE BOOKS AND HISTORICAL ARCHIVES JALE İNAN ARCHIVE⁶

Boğaziçi University Library uses Dublin Core, and DSpace as software. The digitisation and online access practices of the Jale İnan Collection illustrate common ethical and privacy issues in personal archives. This case demonstrates how archival description can provide contextual information about materials subject to access restrictions due to personal data and privacy concerns, without disclosing their sensitive content. For example, in a document with restricted access to its digital surrogate dc.rights metadata field is marked as ‘Limited Access’ and the statement “The resentment between Jale Ogan and her family and the resentful letter she wrote” included in the dc.description field provides the user with implicit information suggesting that the letter may contain content concerning individuals who could still be alive. Despite shortcomings such as the absence of copyright metadata and DSpace’s limited access management capabilities, these content-based descriptions enhance the contextual depth and user-oriented services.

6.3 SALT RESEARCH ARCHIVE: SAINTS PIERRE AND PAUL CHURCH COLLECTION AND SAATLERI AYARLAMA ENSTITÜSÜ (KUTLUĞ ATAMAN) COLLECTION⁷

The SALT Research Archive presents a multi-layered example of how access restrictions to religious materials held in private archives may be implemented. The Archive has three different types of access: open, local, and permission-based (Gülmez Saydam, 2018, 12). In the Saints Pierre and Paul Church Collection, while metadata is openly available, access to digital copies is conditional upon institutional approval due to the presence of personal data, a condition partially indicated in the dc. rights field but lacking systematic metadata on restriction rationale, copyright, and rights holders. Similarly, although the Saatleri Ayarla-

6 See buarchives.bogazici.edu.tr/en/jale-inan-archive

7 See <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/2572> and <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/1234-56789/984>.

ma Enstitüsü (Kutluğ Ataman) Collection distinguishes between open and local access due to copyright concerns, the absence of explanatory metadata for these restrictions highlights that, despite transparency in access types, insufficient contextualisation at the metadata level may create uncertainty for users.

6.4 KOÇ UNIVERSITY VEHBİ KOÇ ANKARA STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER (VEKAM) ARCHIVES: VEHBİ KOÇ COLLECTION⁸

In the Vehbi Koç Collection, accessed through the Koç University Digital Collections network, is supported by a user guide prepared in accordance with DACS. VEKAM (and Koç University Digital Collections) is one of two solid example that has a policy on its website and prepares a collection-specific finding aid. Comprehensive explanations are provided on issues such as digital and physical access, as well as rights and citation information, in language that avoids complex archival jargon. While some records, such as correspondence, provide only metadata with restricted digital access, the specific reasons for these restrictions (donation agreement, legal regulation etc.) are not indicated at the metadata level. The access restriction statements and the Suna Kıraç Libraries Digitization Policy constitute an exemplary practice for the development of user-oriented, transparent, and sustainable access services.

6.5 ORIENT-INSTITUT ISTANBUL: TRAU GOTT FUCHS ARCHIVE⁹

The Traugott Fuchs Archive, initially processed at Boğaziçi University and later transferred to the Orient-Institut Istanbul following a new deed of gift with the heir. As the archive has not been digitised, materials are accessible only on site, with access conditions defined in a written and publicly available online policy addressing copyright, personality rights, physical condition, consent of living persons, and research needs. Although all parts of the collection are open in principle, records are reviewed only upon request and are made accessible provided that no restrictions specified in the written access conditions apply. As highlighted within the framework of organisational restrictions, this case shows that even with limited staff, large-scale archival collections can be processed efficiently, rather than being held under prolonged and overly cautious privacy restrictions.

⁸ See <https://librarydigitalcollections.ku.edu.tr/collection/vehbi-koc-koleksiyonu/>.

⁹ See <https://kalliope-verbund.info/de/findingaid?fa.id=DE-611-BF-77526&fa.enum=1&lastparam=true#1>.

7 CONCLUSION

This study examines how the concepts of confidentiality and privacy are handled within access practices in private archives in Turkey, focusing on the rationales, modalities, and regulatory frameworks governing access restrictions through international standards and archival software. In this study, access restrictions are examined under three analytical categories: legal, ethical/ privacy-based, and organisational, reflecting their multi-layered nature. However, international guidelines, codes of ethics, and technical infrastructures alone prove insufficient in the absence of transparent, accountable, and user-oriented approaches. Moreover, the influence of social, organisational, and political pressures on access decisions suggests that access management frequently operates according to institutional culture and networks rather than technical and ethical standards, underscoring the necessity of written, policy-based frameworks grounded in national legislation and informed by international professional practice, as democratic access cannot be secured through digitisation alone without ethical grounding and accountability. A comparative evaluation of the case studies further demonstrates that access restriction practices remain inconsistent across collections and are rarely embedded within coherent institutional frameworks, while a limited number of examples provide clear, user-oriented explanations of restriction types and rationales, most institutions rely on vague or absent descriptive statements. This study reveals that such fields are frequently omitted or inaccurately completed, thereby obscuring both the existence and justification of restrictions for users. The findings also indicate that institutions holding private archives in Turkey largely lack written and publicly available access policies, leading to ad hoc practices shaped not by professional principles but by donor intervention, administrative limitations, and institutional preferences.

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