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**International Scientific Review for Contemporary Archival Theory and Practice**
**36/2**

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**Maruška Nenezić**[1]

# DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN BOKA KOTORSKA: BETWEEN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY ACCESSIBILITY

***Abstract***

**Purpose:** *The paper examines archival documentation related to traditional social and cultural practices in Boka Kotorska, with a focus on their role in preserving elements of intangible cultural heritage and their relevance in contemporary accessibility.*

**Methodology:** *The research is based on the analysis of archival records preserved in the Historical Archives of Kotor, including documents related to traditional games, social events, tombola, lotteries, and bocce playing. The study applies a qualitative approach, focusing on the interpretation of historical sources and their contextual significance.*

**Results:** *The analysis shows that archival documentation provides valuable insights into the continuity of social and cultural practices, even during periods of social and historical challenges. These practices played an important role in maintaining community cohesion, solidarity, and local identity.*

**Conclusions:** *Archival records represent a key source for the preservation and interpretation of intangible cultural heritage. The application of modern information technologies, particularly digitization, enables improved accessibility and broader use of archival materials, contributing to their long-term preservation and relevance.*

***Keywords:*** *archival documentation, Boka Kotorska, intangible heritage, digitization, accessibility.*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Boka Kotorska is a region in which the past is reflected not only in architecture, stone-built heritage and written monuments, but also in customs, traditional games, festivities and various forms of social gathering. Such practices provide valuable insight into the everyday life of the local community, its habits, interpersonal relations and patterns of cultural identity that have been shaped and transmitted across generations.

Archival sources are of particular importance for the study of such phenomena. Documents created in the course of the activities of administrative, social and other institutions often contain much more than the administrative information for which they were originally produced. They may also preserve evidence of public events, traditional games, tombola, lotteries, bocce, festivities and other forms of communal life, thereby constituting a valuable source for understanding the social and cultural history of Boka Kotorska.

On the basis of such archival material, the past can be examined through the everyday life of the population, rather than solely through major historical events. Individual records make it possible to trace forms of entertainment, social interaction, public gatherings and the commemoration of various events, while also revealing the continuity of certain traditions that, although transformed, have survived to the present day. An archival document therefore represents not only a material record, but also an important trace of intangible cultural heritage.

This paper is based on an analysis of preserved archival material from the Municipality of Kotor fonds, held by the Historical Archives of Kotor. Through the examination of different types of records-correspondence, requests, permits, minutes, programmes and notifications, documents relating to social and cultural practices in Boka Kotorska were identified and selected. The archival sources examined cover the period from the first half of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, allowing particular phenomena to be considered over a longer chronological span. Special attention is devoted to lotteries and tombola, traditional games and bocce, sporting and cultural events, dancing, cinema, and the Dance of St. Tryphon. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate, through direct analysis of these sources, how an administrative record originally created for a practical purpose can today serve as evidence of everyday life and intangible

cultural heritage, as well as how modern technologies can contribute to its accessibility and new forms of interpretation.

## 2. THE MUNICIPALITY OF KOTOR FONDS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

The archival basis of this research is the Municipality of Kotor fonds (OK), held by the Historical Archives of Kotor. According to the *Guide to the Archival Holdings* of the Historical Archives of Kotor, the fonds covers the period from 1787 to 1943 and consists of 276 fascicles and 211 auxiliary volumes, amounting to a total of 41.30 linear metres. At the time the Guide was published, the fonds was described as partially archivally arranged (Milošević, 1977, 54). This chronological span makes it possible to trace different aspects of urban life across several political and administrative periods.

The history of the fonds reflects the complex political and administrative changes through which Kotor passed. Although the directly preserved records of the Municipality of Kotor fonds begin in 1787, part of the municipal documentation is also preserved in other fonds created by different administrative authorities. During subsequent archival work, the fonds was supplemented with newly acquired material, among which records transferred from old court deposits in 1974 are of particular importance. These records cover the period from 1787 to 1823 and are predominantly of a non-contentious legal nature (Milošević, 1977, 57–58).

The responsibilities of the Municipality covered a wide range of matters directly related to the everyday life of the population, including the management of municipal property, roads and public spaces, trade and markets, public order, health and sanitary matters, public charity, construction activities and the issuing of permits. Although its name, organization and internal structure changed over different administrative periods, the local administration retained an important role in regulating the public life of Kotor (Milošević, 1977, 59–60).

Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that the *Guide to the Archival Holdings*, in its overview of the fonds, lists documentation relating to municipal music, the development of tourism, municipal taxes, support for singing societies and the Boka Navy, hospitality establishments, and other aspects of public and social life. The fonds also preserves information on the activities of local insti-

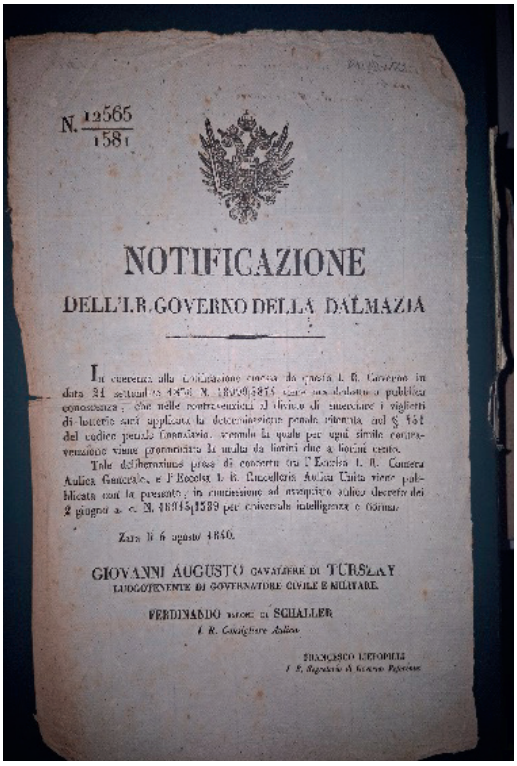
tutions and associations, public order, education, trade and cultural activities, making the Municipality of Kotor fonds an important source for reconstructing the social and cultural life of the town (Milošević, 1977, 56).

The archivist plays a particularly important role in such an approach, as the profession is not limited solely to the physical preservation of documents. Professional identification, description, contextual linking and interpretation of archival material make it possible to understand an individual record within the context of the fonds, the period in which it was created and the circumstances of its creation. Such an approach also highlights the importance of professional archival work and of facilitating researchers' access to archival records (Klasinc, 2015, 45). Only through this kind of professional engagement does administrative documentation acquire broader research value and become a source for reconstructing social and cultural phenomena that were not necessarily the primary reason for its creation.

## 3. ENTERTAINMENT, SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

### 3.1. LOTTERIES AS A FORM OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Among the forms of entertainment and public activity that can be traced through the records of the Municipality of Kotor fonds are lotteries. The preserved documents provide insight into their legal regulation, organization and social function across different historical periods.



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NOTIFICAZIONE

DELL'I.R. GOVERNO DELLA DALMAZIA

In esecuzione alla determinazione emessa da questa I. R. Governo in data 24 settembre 1838 N. 18259|3815 viene colla presente pubblica conoscenza, che nelle contravvenzioni al divieto di smerciare i viglietti di lotterie sarà applicata la determinazione penale ritenuta nel § 451 del codice penale Austriaco, avvenuto la quale per ogni simile contravvenzione viene pronunciata la multa da fiorini due a fiorini cento.

Tale determinazione presa di concerto tra l'Eccelsa I. R. Camera Aulica Generale, e l'Eccelsa I. R. Cancelleria Aulica Unita viene pubblicata con la presente, in conniessione al rescritto aulico decreto dei 2 giugno a. c. N. 18845|1589 per universale intelligenza e norma.

Zara li 6 agosto 1840.

GIOVANNI AUGUSTO CAVALIERE DI TURSZAY
LUOGOTENENTE DI GOVERNATORE CIVILE E MILITARE.

FERDINANDO nobile di SCHALLER
I. R. Consigliere Aulico.

FRANCESCO LUPORINI
I. R. Segretario di Governo Reggente

**Figure 1. Notification of the Imperial-Royal Government of Dalmatia concerning unauthorized trade in lottery tickets, Zadar, 5 August 1840. Source: DACG, IAK, OK, VIII–173. (Photograph by the author.)**

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Austrian authorities had already regulated lottery activities in detail, particularly the circulation of lottery tickets and related tax obligations. A notification issued by the Imperial-Royal Government of Dalmatia in 1840 warned against the unauthorized trade in lottery tickets and prescribed financial penalties for offenders (DACG, IAK, OK, VIII–173). The following year, a decision was issued exempting lottery tickets and certain games from stamp duty (DACG, IAK, OK, IX–80).

These documents do not confirm that a specific lottery was held in Kotor during this period, but they provide evidence of the legal and administrative framework within which lottery activities were regulated.

An interesting example from the period of the First World War is a notice preserved among the records of the Kotor municipal administration concerning a charitable lottery organized in Vienna for the benefit of the "Schwarz-gelbes

Kreuz", an organization intended to provide assistance and public food relief to those in need. A distinctive feature of this lottery was that numbered pocket calendars, priced at one krone each, were issued instead of conventional lottery tickets. One of the principal prizes advertised was a 15-horsepower "Wanderer" automobile valued at 6,000 kroner, while the public drawing was scheduled to take place in Vienna on 12 April 1915 (DACG, IAK, OK, CLXXII–253/1). The preservation of this notice among the records of the Kotor administration does not allow the conclusion that the inhabitants of Kotor directly participated in the lottery; it does, however, show that information concerning such charitable initiatives reached the local administrative authorities.

Within the archival material examined from the interwar period, the humanitarian and social function of lotteries is particularly evident. Documentation of the District Administration in Kotor from 1927 provides evidence of lotteries organized to assist war invalids. A letter dated 2 December 1927 states that the Invalids' Cooperative in Belgrade had been authorized to organize the Second Great Invalids' Lottery, with the drawing scheduled for 17 April 1928. The same document notes that the proceeds from the previous lottery had enabled the establishment of invalids' cooperatives in other parts of the country, as well as the provision of loans and assistance to war invalids and their families (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIX–575).

The character of these events is further illustrated by preserved promotional material relating to the First Great Lottery of the Central Committee of the Association of War Invalids of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The principal prizes included 25 luxury five-seat "Praga" automobiles, while the price of a single lottery ticket was 100 dinars. The announcement emphasized that the net proceeds were intended to assist war invalids, the mothers and children of fallen soldiers, and to support the construction of memorials dedicated to those who had died in the war (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIX–460/1). The preserved material also reveals how the lottery was presented to the public: attractive prizes were used to encourage ticket sales, while the humanitarian purpose of the initiative was simultaneously emphasized.

A similar model can be observed during the 1930s. On 31 January 1936, the Belgrade Regional Committee of Jadranska straža (Adriatic Guard) informed inter-

ested institutions that the main drawing of the Adriatic Guard Lottery would take place on 9 February of the same year. The proceeds were intended for the Adriatic Guard Home on the Adriatic, where schoolchildren from across the country were to be provided with opportunities for rest and recuperation. The letter requested assistance with the sale of lottery tickets, and the preserved copy indicates that 25 tickets had been sent for sale (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXXIII–201).

These examples demonstrate that lotteries represented more than games of chance. They simultaneously served as a form of public entertainment, a means of encouraging public participation, and a method of raising funds for humanitarian, social and other community needs. Archival records therefore make it possible to use the seemingly ordinary practice of selling lottery tickets to examine the broader social context in which such activities were organized, as well as the involvement of local authorities and the population in initiatives that extended beyond the local community.

### 3.2. TOMBOLA AS A FORM OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT AND CHARITABLE ACTIVITY

Tombola occupied a particularly important place among forms of public entertainment in Kotor, while at the same time serving a pronounced charitable function. The preserved archival material shows that it was not merely a game of chance, but a publicly organized event held within the urban space, with the presence and supervision of the competent authorities.

On 4 February 1936, the Commission for Public Charity in Kotor informed the Municipal Administration that a public tombola would be held in St. Tryphon Square on Sunday, 9 February 1936, at three o'clock in the afternoon. The letter requested that, in accordance with established practice, the Municipal Administration appoint a representative to attend the event (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXXII–203). The location itself indicates that tombola formed part of the public life of the town and took place in one of its most important public spaces.

A more detailed picture is provided by the record of a public tombola held in Kotor on 9 February 1941. The event was organized by the Commission for Public Charity on the basis of authorization issued by the Ministry of Agriculture on 27 November 1940, and its primary purpose was to raise funds for the poor (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–150).

The record shows that 3,600 lottery tickets were stamped, of which 3,234 were sold. Each ticket was accounted for at a value of two dinars, amounting to a total of 6,468 dinars, while the tickets were actually sold for three dinars each. One dinar from every ticket sold was allocated to the Winter Relief Fund (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–150).

Three types of prizes were available to participants: a ***terno*** worth 300 dinars, a cinquina worth 500 dinars, and the main tombola prize worth 1,000 dinars. The record also preserves the names of the winners, thereby giving the document additional value for the study of everyday urban life. The ***terno*** was won by Josip Grgurević, an apprentice from Škaljari, and Tripo Niković, a postal clerk, while the cinquina was won by Milema Martinović from Kotor. The main prize – the tombola – was jointly won by Vice Mijan from Tivat and Jovan Ivanović from Kotor (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–150).

These details show that the tombola attracted participants from Kotor and its immediate surroundings, while the recording of the occupations of individual winners provides a more direct insight into the social composition of those taking part. Of particular importance is the fact that the record contains not only the results of the drawing, but also information on the financial distribution of the proceeds. A total of 450 dinars was allocated for the state tax, while part of the net proceeds was designated for the construction of an Invalids' Home (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–150).

The documents from 1936 and 1941 therefore show how public entertainment, urban space and charitable activity were interconnected in the social life of Kotor.

## 4. TRADITIONAL GAMES AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The social life of Boka Kotorska did not unfold solely through formal ceremonies and organized events, but also through numerous forms of communal gathering in which games, song and entertainment played an important role. Traditional games were performed on the occasion of weddings and religious celebrations, as well as during every day and seasonal work, while in certain periods dance gatherings were organized on a regular basis (Šušić, 2021, 35–36).

The study of traditional games provides valuable insight into everyday life and social relations in Boka Kotorska. Their significance lies not only in the manner in which they were performed, but also in their ability to provide information about

ways of life, social development and the cultural patterns of the local community. Research into these practices, which can be traced back to the nineteenth century, has contributed to their documentation and preservation, although the surviving material relating to traditional games is more limited than that concerning songs. For this reason, their study is particularly important for reconstructing social customs and forms of gathering that characterized the everyday life of the population of Boka Kotorska (Šušić, 2021, 17–18).

### 4.1. BOCCE AS PART OF THE SOCIAL LIFE OF BOKA KOTORSKA

Bocce occupies a particular place in the social life of Tivat and the wider area of Boka Kotorska. According to Slavko Krstović in *Sport u Tivtu: Mladost jedne istorije*, its presence in Tivat can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, with one of the earliest recorded examples being the construction of a bocce court in 1903 on the site where the Hotel "Mimoza" is located today. During the first decades of the twentieth century, bocce was played at several locations along the Bay of Tivat, while the surviving records and photographs indicate that the game formed part of the everyday life of the local population long before it developed into an organized competitive sport (Krstović, 2011, 44).

Particularly valuable are the records of bocce courts in Radoševići, Kalimanj, Đurđevo Brdo, Donja Lastva and other locations, which show that bocce was not confined to a single playing field or club, but represented a widely practised local activity. In this sense, the bocce court was not merely a place of sporting competition, but also a space for gathering, social interaction and everyday communication within the local community (Krstović, 2011, 44).

The presence of bocce in the everyday life of Kotor is also documented in a record from 1943 concerning the "Miramare" tavern. Its owner, Stana Raccetta Luković, in a request submitted to the competent authorities for an allocation of sugar to be used in serving coffee, also refers to "giuoco di bocce" (DACG, IAK, OK, CCLXI–199). Although this reference appears within an administrative case concerning supplies, it represents a valuable trace of the presence of bocce in the social life of Kotor during the wartime period.

After the Second World War, bocce gradually developed into a more organized competitive sport. Krstović identifies 1952 as the beginning of a more pronounced

competitive phase, while during the 1960s numerous bocce clubs were established in Tivat and more formal forms of competition were introduced (Krstović, 2011).

### 4.2. SPORTING COMPETITIONS AND ORGANIZED SPORT

The development of organized sport in Kotor is reflected in the activities of the "Primorac" Sports Club. In a letter addressed to the Municipal Administration on 21 November 1927, the club stated that it had been promoting football in Kotor for several years and was also seeking to establish additional sports sections. The document also refers to financial difficulties and requests regular financial support from the Municipality, demonstrating that the development of organized sporting life also depended on the support of the local administration (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIX–506).

A particularly interesting example of an organized sporting event is the bicycle race organized by the "Primorac" Sports Club on 13 August 1927 along the Kotor–Prčanj–Kotor route. The start of the competition was scheduled for 4 p.m., while, in order to ensure that the event could proceed without interruption, traffic involving both vehicles and pedestrians was temporarily prohibited along the relevant section of the road (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIX–88/2). This document shows that sporting competitions were not merely a form of entertainment, but organized public events that required cooperation between sports clubs and the local authorities.

## 5. PUBLIC EVENTS AND CULTURAL LIFE

The cultural and social life of Kotor was shaped not only by major public celebrations, but also by the activities of numerous singing societies, Sokol organizations and other associations, visits by cultural and artistic groups, concerts, public performances, academies and dance events. The preserved archival records show that the municipal administration was actively involved in the organization of such events through the issuing of permits, financial support for individual societies, and cooperation in the preparation and reception of visiting organizations. In this way, archival documents make it possible to examine not only individual cultural events, but also the broader role of the local administration in shaping the public and cultural life of the town.

## 5.1. CULTURAL SOCIETIES AND VISITING GROUPS

A particularly valuable source is the municipal response to a questionnaire concerning the "activities of the town in the artistic and cultural field." The document states that the Municipal Administration provided financial contributions to the numerous cultural societies active in Kotor and also subsidized the local civic band. Together with local cultural associations, the Municipality participated in organizing larger events and in receiving cultural and artistic groups visiting Kotor. The document also records the existence of the museum of the Noble Body of the Boka Navy, which contained a collection of old paintings, distinctive traditional costumes, weapons, flags and other objects. At the same time, it notes that the town did not have its own theatre, library or reading room, although private libraries and libraries belonging to various societies, rich in older literature, did exist, as did the local weekly newspaper "Glas Boke" (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXXIV–136).

This picture of cultural life is further confirmed by individual archival records from 1927. The Serbian Singing Society "Sloga" from Sarajevo, founded in 1889, addressed the Mayor of Kotor concerning a planned tour and concert performances. The Society intended to visit several towns, including Kotor, and in its letter requested information regarding transport, accommodation and the conditions for holding a concert. The planned group consisted of approximately 50 members – 20 women and 30 men (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIII–432/1–2). The document shows that cultural visits involved not only an artistic programme, but also substantial organizational cooperation with the local administration.

A similar example is provided by the announced visit of the Nikšić Singing Society "Zahumlje". On 21 April 1927, the Kotor Municipal Administration informed the public that the Society would visit the town on 26 April "for the purpose of mutual acquaintance and the manifestation of cultural and national unity", while a concert evening was also announced for the same day at the "Dojmi" café (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIII–433).

## 5.2. PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOKOL ACTIVITIES

Public spaces in Kotor were also used for events of a different character. On 9 September 1927, the Sokol Society in Kotor requested permission to hold a public

exercise in front of the municipal building, beginning at 3:30 p.m. For the purposes of the event, a temporary intervention in the area in front of the building was also requested in order to install a horizontal bar, with the obligation to restore the site to its previous condition after the event (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIX–330). This document shows that Sokol activities were also present in the central urban space as organized public events that required the approval and cooperation of the local administration.

In the same year, the Sokol Society in Kotor informed the Municipal Administration that the Belgrade I Sokol Society, which was spending the summer in Đenovići, intended to organize an academy in the park in front of the "Dojmi" café, for which permission from the local authorities was requested (DACG, IAK, OK, CXCIX–56). These examples show that squares, parks and areas in front of municipal and hospitality establishments played an important role in the public and social life of the town, serving as venues for organized cultural and sporting gatherings.

## 5.3. CINEMA AS PART OF THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE OF KOTOR

Preserved archival documentation shows that the cinema in Kotor continued to operate during the wartime period, although its activities were accompanied by economic and administrative difficulties. A particularly valuable document from November 1941 concerns the company "Vuković – Cinematografo, Cattaro". Under the municipal regulations then in force, the cinema was required to pay a municipal entertainment tax of 19 centesimi for each ticket sold. The document states that, for several months, the prescribed obligations had not been settled and the required declarations had not been submitted. Nevertheless, taking into account the exceptional circumstances of the preceding months and the difficulties faced by the cinema, the competent authorities were prepared not to initiate proceedings, provided that the outstanding liabilities were settled and that ticket sales were properly recorded in the future (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLV–255).

Additional information about the cinema premises is provided by a document dated 1 August 1943, in which Trifone Vuković of Kotor requested authorization to obtain four cubic metres of fir timber for urgent repairs to the building containing a space identified as "CINEMA" (DACG, IAK, OK, CCLX–166). Although administrative in nature, this document provides valuable evidence concerning

the physical premises of the cinema and efforts to maintain the building despite wartime shortages.

Considered together, these two documents demonstrate how administrative records created in connection with taxation and building maintenance can provide information about the cultural life of the town that was not the primary purpose of their creation. Records of ticket sales and municipal taxation point to institutional supervision of cinema activities, while the 1943 request for building materials indicates efforts to keep the cinema premises in functional condition during wartime. In this way, seemingly routine administrative records become valuable sources for the study of the cultural and social life of Kotor.

### 5.4. DANCE AND SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT

The presence of organized dance events in Kotor can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. A record of the Kotor Municipality from December 1851 refers to the holding of a "Ballo nazionale", together with information indicating musical accompaniment and the organization of the event (DACG, IAK, OK, XIII–135/1A–2). This document represents a valuable early trace of dance as an organized form of public and social life in Kotor.

Preserved documents from January 1941 provide particularly interesting insight into everyday forms of social entertainment. The "Hrvatski sastanak" Society from Škaljari informed the Municipal Administration that it would hold a dance in its premises on 5 January, scheduled to take place from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–8).

Only a few days later, the Croatian Singing Society "Tomislav" in Škaljari announced a dance to be held on 12 January 1941 in its society premises (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–43). The same society also reported another dance for 26 January, beginning in the afternoon (DACG, IAK, OK, CCXLI–128).

The fact that notices for several dance events have been preserved from a single month indicates that such forms of entertainment were not exceptional, but rather a regular part of social life and the activities of local associations.

These documents illustrate the regular presence of dance events in Kotor's social life and the role of local associations in their organization.

## 6. THE KOLO OF ST. TRYPHON: TRADITION, CEREMONY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The study of the traditional games and dances of Boka Kotorska contributes to a broader understanding of the way of life, social relations and cultural development of the local community. Interest in recording these practices can be traced back to the nineteenth century, while the documentation of traditional games has played a particularly important role in preserving and transmitting knowledge of earlier forms of social and cultural life (Šušić, 2021, 17–18).

Traditional games in Boka Kotorska developed within a distinctive cultural environment and preserved a number of local characteristics in their performance. In the scholarly literature, they are classified within the Adriatic dance zone, with particular emphasis on the characteristic Boka style of performance and a division into circle dances, couple dances and imitative dances. Among the circle dances, the kolo of the Boka Navy occupies a particular place, situating it within the broader corpus of traditional dance practices of Boka Kotorska (Šušić, 2021, 29–30). Such a classification makes it possible to understand the kolo not merely as a dance form, but also as part of the local ceremonial and cultural tradition.

Traditional games were closely connected with the social and ritual life of the community. They were performed during weddings, religious celebrations and other gatherings, as well as on occasions associated with the everyday and seasonal life of the population, such as grape harvesting and olive processing. In certain periods, dance gatherings were organized very frequently, demonstrating that dance was not only a form of entertainment, but also an important setting for social interaction and communal participation (Šušić, 2021, 35).

The kolo of the Boka Navy is distinguished by both its composition and its manner of performance. It is a male dance performed by an even number of participants. A particular feature is the way in which the dancers are connected to one another, holding handkerchiefs during the performance. These characteristics reflect the clearly defined structure of the dance and its strong connection with the ceremonial tradition and cultural identity of Boka Kotorska.

A particularly significant archival trace of this tradition dates from 1838. In documentation created in preparation for the journey of the King of Saxony through Dalmatia, the programme planned for Kotor includes the phrase “Ballo così detto

di S. Trifone", together with a regatta in the bay and the presentation of persons wearing various traditional costumes (DACG, IAK, OK, VII–130/2). The very fact that the Dance of St. Tryphon was included in a planned programme intended to present the town to a distinguished guest indicates that, as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, it was recognized as a characteristic element of the local ceremonial and cultural tradition. The document is therefore particularly valuable because it records not only the existence of this practice, but also the way in which it was incorporated into the public representation of Kotor's cultural distinctiveness.

During the twentieth century, forms of entertainment and social gathering gradually changed. Traditional games were performed less frequently at dances and celebrations, while modern forms of dance increasingly took their place. Šušić points out that some formerly widespread games gradually almost disappeared from living practice, making their recording and documentation particularly important for the preservation of cultural memory (Šušić, 2021, 43). In this context, archival documents constitute an important source for tracing the continuity, transformation and former social significance of these practices.

## 7. FROM ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS TO CONTEMPORARY ACCESSIBILITY

The contemporary development of archival practice is increasingly connected with the application of information technologies in professional archival procedures. Novak points out that, in modern archival institutions, a substantial proportion of professional processes is already supported by technological solutions, whose implementation depends on technological development, the standardization of professional procedures and an understanding of the importance of new technologies in archival practice (Novak, 2025, 107). The digital environment therefore creates new possibilities for accessing, searching, linking and using archival material.

Contemporary technologies also make archival material accessible beyond the traditional framework of the reading room. Modern archives increasingly address different categories of users and the wider public, while digitization and online access contribute to the greater visibility and use of archival sources. Previous

research on the role of archives as intermediaries has emphasized the importance of broader access to archival material, communication with users and the adaptation of archival activities to contemporary social needs (Nenezić, 2025, 218–219).

Documents concerning traditional social and cultural practices can be linked into thematic units and presented through digital collections, virtual exhibitions and educational content. In this way, records relating to games, festivities and public gatherings acquire new possibilities for interpretation, contextualization and presentation to contemporary audiences.

Digitization, however, should not be understood merely as the technical creation of a digital copy. To retain its archival and research value, a digital record must be linked to an appropriate archival description, reference code, information on its creation and its historical and social context. Without this professional framework, a digital copy remains an isolated image, whereas archival processing enables it to be properly understood, connected with other sources and used for research, educational and cultural purposes. Contemporary technologies therefore do not replace professional archival work, but expand its possibilities and accessibility. Top of FormBottom of Form

## 8. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the selected archival material demonstrates that the social and cultural life of Boka Kotorska can be explored through a range of seemingly routine administrative documents that today possess a much broader research significance. Correspondence, permits, minutes, programmes and notices relating to lotteries, tombola, bocce, sporting competitions, cultural events, dance, cinema and traditional games make it possible to reconstruct different forms of gathering, entertainment and public life. Their value lies not only in the individual pieces of information they contain, but also in the possibility of identifying continuity, change and the social significance of particular practices by linking documents from different historical periods.

It is particularly important that the analysed material shows how many activities that initially appear to have been forms of entertainment or everyday social gathering also fulfilled broader social functions. Lotteries and tombola were connected with charitable and humanitarian purposes, bocce also served as a space

for social interaction and local communication, while cultural societies, public events, dance gatherings, sporting competitions and cinema formed an important part of Kotor's social and urban life. The Kolo of St. Tryphon represents a particularly significant example of a tradition whose archival traces make it possible to examine its place within the ceremonial life and cultural identity of Boka Kotorska.

These examples confirm that an archival document should not be regarded solely as a record created within an administrative or official procedure. Its broader value becomes visible when it is connected with other sources, with its temporal and social context, and with the processes that shaped the life of the local community. This also highlights the importance of professional archival processing, since the identification, description, interpretation and contextual linking of records make it possible to understand an individual document as part of a broader picture of the social and cultural past.

Contemporary information technologies further expand the possibilities for the use of such material. Through digitization, professional description and thematic linking of documents, their accessibility can be increased, research can be facilitated, and new forms of presenting cultural heritage can be developed. In this way, the archival material of the Municipality of Kotor fonds does not remain merely a testimony to the past, but becomes a foundation for new interpretations, further research and the contemporary presentation of the cultural memory of Boka Kotorska.

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## POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava arhivsko dokumentacijo o tradicionalnih družbenih in kulturnih praksah v Boki Kotorski na podlagi gradiva fonda Občina Kotor, ki ga hrani Zgodovinski arhiv Kotor. Izhaja iz predpostavke, da dokumenti, nastali za upravne namene, pogosto ohranjajo informacije, katerih zgodovinski in kulturni pomen presega njihovo prvotno funkcijo. Korespondenca, dovoljenja, zapisniki, programi, obvestila in drugi dokumenti so zato obravnavani kot dokaz institucionalnega delovanja ter kot viri za proučevanje vsakdanjega življenja, družbenih odnosov in kulturnega spomina.

Izbrano gradivo zajema obdobje od prve polovice 19. do sredine 20. stoletja. Analiza vključuje loterije in tombole, balinanje, organizirani šport, javne prireditve, kulturna društva, sokolske dejavnosti, ples, kinematografsko dejavnost in kolo svetega Tripuna. Te prakse so se razlikovale po obliki in namenu, vendar so bile vse povezane z javnim in družabnim življenjem lokalne skupnosti ter so pogosto vključevale sodelovanje z občinskimi ali drugimi javnimi oblastmi.

Dokumentacija o loterijah in tombolah razkriva tesno povezanost zabave, sodelovanja javnosti in dobrodelnosti. Dokumenti iz let 1936 in 1941 kažejo, da so javne tombole združevale družabna srečanja, institucionalni nadzor in zbiranje sredstev v humanitarne namene. Tradicionalne igre in športne dejavnosti omogočajo dodaten vpogled v vsakdanje življenje. Posebej pomemben je dokument iz leta 1943 o gostilni »Miramare«, saj se omemba giuoco di bocce pojavlja v upravni zadevi glede dodelitve sladkorja. Ta primer ponazarja, kako se lahko informacije, pomembne za družbeno in kulturno zgodovino, ohranijo v dokumentih, nastalih za povsem druge namene. Dejavnosti športnega kluba »Primorac« in

kolesarska dirka na progi Kotor–Prčanj–Kotor kažejo na vse bolj organizirano športno življenje.

Arhivski viri o kulturnih društvih, gostujočih pevskih skupinah, sokolskih dejavnostih, javnih prireditvah, plesnih srečanjih in kinematografski dejavnosti razkrivajo raznoliko mestno kulturno okolje. Vključenost občinskih oblasti kaže, da je bilo kulturno življenje odvisno od sodelovanja med društvi, ustanovami in lokalno upravo. Dokumenti o kotorskem kinematografu iz let 1941 in 1943 pričajo tudi o njegovem delovanju, obdavčitvi in prizadevanjih za vzdrževanje prostorov v vojnih razmerah.

Posebna pozornost je namenjena kolu svetega Tripuna kot izrazu obredne tradicije in kulturne identitete. Dokument iz leta 1838, nastal v okviru priprav na potovanje saškega kralja po Dalmaciji, v programu za Kotor vsebuje izraz »Ballo così detto di S. Trifone«. Uvrstitev plesa med vsebine, s katerimi naj bi mesto predstavili uglednemu obiskovalcu, kaže, da je bil že v prvi polovici 19. stoletja prepoznan kot značilen element lokalne obredne in kulturne tradicije.

Raziskava poudarja, da se širša vrednost arhivskega gradiva razkrije s povezovanjem dokumentov iz različnih obdobij in njihovo interpretacijo v zgodovinskem, družbenem in institucionalnem kontekstu. Strokovno arhivsko prepoznavanje, popisovanje in interpretacija so zato bistvenega pomena. Zadnji del prispevka obravnava sodobne informacijske tehnologije in poudarja, da digitalizacije ne smemo omejiti na izdelavo digitalnih slik. Digitalizirani dokumenti ohranijo polno arhivsko in raziskovalno vrednost le, če so povezani z ustreznimi popisi, signaturami in kontekstualnimi informacijami. Tako lahko fond Občina Kotor služi kot vir za upravno zgodovino, obenem pa tudi kot podlaga za nove raziskave, izobraževanje in sodobno predstavljanje kulturnega spomina Boke Kotorske.

**Bogdan-Florin Popovici**[1]

# eIDAS2 AND ELECTRONIC ARCHIVING; ONE STAGE, MANY SCRIPTS

***Abstract***

**Purpose***: This paper examines, from an archival science perspective, the eIDAS2 provisions on qualified electronic archiving, which constitute the first pan-European regulation of a specific recordkeeping process.*

**Methods***: The study employs a conceptual and comparative analysis of the terminology and requirements introduced by eIDAS2, considering them in relation to established recordkeeping principles and practices. Particular attention is paid to how the term "archiving" is understood across different countries and languages and to the essential properties of records that qualified electronic archiving service providers should preserve. The paper also examines the roles and responsibilities of the main stakeholders involved in electronic archiving, including qualified service providers, record-creating organisations, and national archives.*

**Results***: The analysis reveals differences between the understanding of "archiving" within recordkeeping traditions and its use in the eIDAS2 regulatory framework. It also identifies uncertainties concerning the allocation of responsibilities for safeguarding the authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability of electronic records among the various stakeholders.*

**Discussion***: The findings suggest that eIDAS2 incorporates certain elements of a recordkeeping perspective on electronic archiving but approaches the process from a predominantly technical and IT-oriented perspective. A clearer alignment between qualified electronic archiving services and established recordkeeping principles could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term preservation and evidential value of electronic records.*

**Keywords:** *qualified electronic archiving services; electronic archiving; records management*

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In 2011, at a DLM conference in Budapest, Eric Ketelaar advised participants seeking EU support for the implementation of good electronic records management practices to manage the matter within their own countries, as EU institutions were not interested in such regulations. Thirteen years later, *Regulation (EU) 2024/1183 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 as regards establishing the European Digital Identity Framework* (eIDAS2) was issued. Among other trust services, it introduced qualified electronic archiving.

This is a welcome development, reflecting the evolution of perspectives and the needs of European societies. To my knowledge, it is the first pan-European regulation in the field of recordkeeping. I therefore considered it appropriate to examine the relevant provisions of both the Regulation and the principal standard supporting it. The first part of this paper summarises their provisions. The second discusses key aspects, including the activity defined as archiving, the properties of records that eIDAS2 is intended to preserve, and the Regulation's relationship with the principal actors engaged in "archiving". The conclusions assess the results of the analysis against the expectations surrounding these regulatory instruments.

## 1. eIDAS2 AND SUPPORTING STANDARD FOR QUALIFIED ARCHIVING

The preamble of the Regulation explains that "*Many Member States have introduced national requirements for services providing secure and trustworthy electronic archiving in order to allow for the long-term preservation of electronic data and electronic documents*" (eIDAS2, Recital 66). As such, to ensure legal consistency the regulation introduces the trust service of electronic archiving. A trust service, according to the text is "*an electronic service normally provided for remuneration*" (eIDAS2, art. 3, 16), performed under several conditions. The provisions are applied to both born and digitized electronic documents[2] (eIDAS2, recital 66). A special attention is dedicated to those documents containing more qualified electronic signatures or qualified electronic seals (eIDAS2, recital 66). As exception, eISAD provisions may not apply for internal records centres (eIDAS2, recital 66) and memory institutions, like National Archives. (eIDAS2, recital 67)

[2] In spite the fact the text is written in English, the EU office used the term *document* and not *record*, following the term largely used in EU languages. As such, in the present article, the two terms are used interchangeable.

The dispositive part of the Regulation clarifies the legal status of the electronic archiving services. Hence, based on the model of other trust services, "*A qualified electronic archiving service provided in one Member State shall be recognised as a qualified electronic archiving service in all other Member States*" (eIDAS2, art. 24a, 10). Further, electronic documents or data preserved using an electronic archiving service "*shall not be denied legal effect or admissibility as evidence in legal proceedings* (eIDAS2, art 45i, 1) on the sole ground that they are electronic or "*not preserved using a qualified electronic archiving service*" (eIDAS2, art 45i, 2). The four requirements for a qualified electronic archiving services are listed in the article 45j, para 1: they are performed by qualified trust service providers; they provide longterm durability, readability, and integrity of documents; they offer protection against loss or alteration; it generates an automated integrity report for authorized parties.

It is to be highlighted that despite regulating the archiving process, the regulation does not deny the evidential value for those documents that are not preserved in the conditions stipulated by the Regulation (eIDAS2, art 45i, 1).

In 17.12.2025, the Commission issued the *Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/2532*, which indicated the reference standards and specifications for qualified electronic archiving services. The text is somehow ambiguous, since the article one refers only to "*Electronic archiving of documents bearing a qualified electronic signature or a qualified electronic seal"*. This seems misaligned from the text of the regulation, that did not reference in any way only the digital signed documents, but only electronic documents or electronic data. The list of standards and regulation have the bias: while starting the list with CEN/TS 18170:2025, several adaptations of the standard are indicated, referring mostly to Information security, cryptographic algorithms, time stamps etc.

The core standard for the service is CEN/TS 18170:2025 - *Functional requirements for the electronic archiving services*[3]. It is a European standard adaptation of OAIS reference model. In the section 5, the standard specifies that it does not address "the preservation of electronic signatures, seals, timestamps, or certificates", but only "the requirements for the trust service for electronic archiving".

[3] For a larger analysis of relations between eIDAS and other implementing standards see Frederik Rosseel, *From Regulation to Reality: How eIDAS 2, the Implementing Act and CEN/TS 18170:2025 Fit Together* at https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/from-regulation-reality-how-eidas-2-implementing-act-cents-rosseel-vol4e/.

The structure of the standard follows the main lines of the reference model and creatively elaborates on some specific aspects. A first section is devoted to the policies and practices of the trust provider (policy and practice statement, terms and conditions, information security policy, agreements - service agreement, submission agreement). A second one describe trust service provider management and operation (internal organization, human resources, asset management, access control, cryptographic controls and monitoring, physical and environmental, operation, network, vulnerabilities and incident management, collection of evidence, business continuity management, termination and termination plan, compliance, supply chain). A consistent practice is devoted to the Information Packages:

- Submission Information Package (Format, Components, Other metadata in the SIP, Content Data Object Formats, Transfer submission, Receive submission, Audit submission)
- Archival Information Package
  - AIP Generation (Format, Components, Transformation of SIPs into AIPs, Transformation of Content Data Objects into other formats, Map and list of archiving formats for Content Data Objects)
  - Storage infrastructure, localization and security
  - Media migration and format conversion during preservation period
  - Deletion
- Dissemination Information Package

The returning of digital objects is addressed in a separate section (Identification of transfer Requirements, Design of the transfer Interface, Documentation of transfer process, Responsibilities).

The standard also details the traceability of operations (criticality of events-typology, time, initiator, integrity protection of critical events and digital objects-by digital signature or integrity chains) and the requirements for reporting.

## 2. ARCHIVING…

According to the eIDAS Regulation, art. 3, 48, electronic archiving means „*a service ensuring the receipt, storage, retrieval and deletion of electronic data*

*and electronic documents in order to ensure their durability and legibility as well as to preserve their integrity, confidentiality and proof of origin throughout the preservation period*". The same definition is included in para 3.1.1 from CEN/TS 18170:2025.

A first remark is that the term "archiving" has not a generally accepted definition, mainly in multilanguage environment (Popovici, 2023). Secondly, considering the flow of re management and preservation of records, the definition does not clarify in what moment this electronic archiving intervenes: at the registration/ capture of records? At their transfer to organisational records centre? Or transfer to Historical Archives for permanent preservation? The activities indicated may apply to any phase in the life cycle of records, which does not help differentiate between records or archives management and archiving process[4].

In ENGLISH, the SAA Glossary indicates the first meanings of the term archiving as „*all actions relating to the selection and care*" or „*the storage and preservation" of records of enduring value* (SAA Glossary, sub voce). The definitions are somehow expected, since *archives* means in English, originally, historical records. The glossary specifies, however, that „*some archivists avoid the use of the term archiving, possibly in the belief that the word is one that was used first by computer scientists and that is currently used in an archives sense only by an uninformed public"*[5]. Nevertheless, the SAA glossary added a third definition, labelled as *used in computing*: „*the offline storage of data from an information system when that data is no longer required for active use*". The authors identify a possible connexion between the second and three definitions: „*the term is used in archivy in two different senses: one encompassing all of the work of an archives that is focused on records, and the other focused merely on the storage and preservation of those records, that latter use again likely influenced by the computing use of the term*".

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4 CEN/TS 18170 indicates specifically in 6.1, a: "*a) The challenges related to document archiving, regardless of the media, and throughout it(s) life cycle*". The records lifecycle is therefore the underling model and the meaning of archiving is somehow related to the whole life of the document.

5 It may be eloquent in this regard that InterPARES (who developed several ontologies regarding records and processes associated with their management and preservation), does not include this term in their terminological resources (see Interpares trust terminology database). A quite similar reluctance is in some countries, like Romania, where the term archiving was not included nor in the formal dictionary of history special sciences, neither in archival legislation; it can be speculated that the term is rather imprecise, conflating more actions that are better defined and described individually.

FRANCE is a very eloquent example for the polysemy of the term *archiving* (i.e. *archivage*). On the one hand, there is a definition from Archives de France, in their *Dictionnaire de terminologie archivistique*. *Archivage* is defined as "*Transfert de documents qui ont cessé d'être d'utilité courante dans un local de stockage ou dans un service d'archives compétent pour les recevoir.*"(AdF, 2002) That means, the concept is associated with the transfer from current to intermediate phase of the lifecycle. However, in the *Petit glossaire de termes archivistiques* of the Association des archivistes français it is defined the concept of *préarchivage* (that is, *before archiving*) like « *gestion des archives intermédiaires jusqu'à l'expiration de leur délai d'utilité administrative, induisant à terme leur tri, leur élimination ou leur conservation définitive* ».(AAF, 2026). By opposition, it means *archivage* would be rather connected with historical archives. But, in the French translation of MoReq2, edited by the same Archives de France, records management (that is, the management of record by the creators) is translated as… *archivage*! (AdF 2008) According to this translation, the term would encompass the management of both current and intermediate records. Stepping aside of pure recordkeeping, one can notice the French Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés uses the term archiving as synonim with archives and use the terms *archivage intermediare* and *archivage definitive* (for historical purposes) (CNIL, s.d.).
Commenting on this varied understandings, Marie Anne Chabin concluded that "*c'est le monde industriel, avec les prestataires en externalisation de documents et de données (« tiers-archiveurs » papier ou électroniques), qui a imposé « archivage » comme terme professionnel, terme que les archivistes ont fini par reprendre à leur compte(...) Cette cartographie des sens affirmés ou constatés des mots archives et archivage (...) met en évidence une diversification des usages telle que les mots semblent être parfois le seul lien entre les choses différentes qu'ils représentent.*" (Chabin, 2021).

In ITALY there is a more structured position. Even from classical Eugenio Casanova, archiving is the process of transfer from *archivio corente* to *archivio di deposito* (Casanova, 1928, 148-150). Rafaele De Felice defines archiving (archivazione) as „*Operazione con la quale documenti, fascicoli, registri, scritture in genere, vengono ordinatamente conservati nei locali dell'archivio utilizzando scanalature, armadi, classificatori, schedari ecc. destinati a tale uso.*" (De Fe-

lice, 1992, 80) For digital records, however, *archiviazione* is used to describe the process for the management of current records (ACS 2021, 41), but also for those preserved on medium and long term. The term is rather used in the context of management, while another term, *conservazione,* is focusing on the idea or preserving the qualities of records (see AGiD 2021) What in other countries is named *archiving systems*, in Italy they are called *sistemi di conservazione*. It is to be remarked that in a document titled *Manuale della conservazione*, the two terms exist, and their definitions are quite identical, with reference to storing files (Csp 2015).

In GERMANY, the Bundesarchiv glossary of archival terminology indicates that *archivierung* means „*The storage and preservation of documents for an indefinite period*" (Bundesarchiv, 2026), thus connecting the term with historical archives. More than 30 years ago, a guides for archiving stated that "*The term 'archiving' within the meaning of archival law refers to the complex task of public archives to record and evaluate documents from public bodies and to accept them as archival material, as well as to permanently store, preserve, catalogue and make the archival material available for use(...) Archiving within the meaning of archiving law therefore involves a very different temporal dimension to that of archiving within the meaning of information technology*." (Schäfer 1997, 2-3). In a book about electronic archiving, Ulrich Kampfmeyer admitted that, in Germany, "*the term 'electronic archiving' encompasses various components which, in Anglo-American usage, are referred to separately as 'records management', 'storage' and 'preservation'. Furthermore, the academic concept of an archive and archiving is not, in terms of content, identical to the term used by the document management sector or in the context of data backup*". (Kampfmeyer, 2012, 2). Moreover, "*to distinguish it from the general term 'archiving', the term 'long-term archiving' is therefore increasingly used in academic circles, in state archives, and in museums and collections. The term 'long-term archiving' is, in principle, a pleonasm, as archiving already implies the long-term aspect and is understood to extend well beyond a human lifetime"*. (Kampfmeyer 2012, 5) The same line of understanding is presented on German Wikipedia, (archivierung, *sub voce*). Eventually, a German speaking Swiss provider of competence for Records Management (KRM 2026) indicate that *archivierung* means **"***Proper*

*transfer of data/information to an archive repository regardless of the medium; the term is compromised and ambiguous in operational practice, depending on the point of view (business, IT, specialist offices) from which the topic is treated; from an archival point of view, archiving – in contrast to temporary storage – only refers to permanent or permanent storage (secondary purpose of documents and files)*" (KRM 2026)

The other countries in European Union have the term *archiving* covering one of these models. Majority of states, as far as I could retrieve from online documentation, considers archiving as a process associated with the transfer of records from current to intermediate phase. As exceptions, one can quote Finland (Glossary, 2026) or Hungary, where the archiving is rather associated with historical records. Nevertheless, in the IT context, the meaning always covers the move of data/records from active (current) stage (read, primary production systems) to other environment, for medium- or long-term preservation (often cheaper or more secure storage), while keeping it retrievable and controlled.

Apart from the definitions illustrating the IT concepts, it is worth reminding that even in IT industry the understanding of the term archiving may vary. In one sense, „archivers" (like Zip or WinRAR), making the „archives", are software that compress the files, reducing their size; therefore, the archiving is, basically, a space saving (which often it is called *files archiving*). In another meaning, as seen above, by archiving is understood the move of inactive data to a separate „place", to free up active space and secure records (sometime called *data archiving*). It is also a „space" savers, but I would be reluctant to consider that it implies mandatory a move to different storage. For instance, archiving in web Gmail is a move to a different storage, but in the interface the emails are still „there". On the other hand, in MS Outlook for desktop, "archiving" emails move them into a different folder, but they are still on the same storage. But the essential of the process is to save space in production environment, not by deleting the files, but by putting them *aside*, in an ordered and secured way, in order to be retrievable.

As a conclusion, the term "archiving" has several meanings, depending on languages and cultural traditions. It is somehow surprising that in several cases, the term was not produced by recordkeeping profession, but rather it was associated with recordkeeping activities; the explanation may be that the term seems more

imprecise that the regular terminology, reuniting several different activities. On the other hand, the IT industry seems more consolidated in understanding the term, across various jurisdictions.

Under these conditions, the usage of the term archiving in eIDAS2 seems less like a recordkeeping (ad)option and more like an IT one. The definition, in my opinion, does not describe clearly enough the position in the lifecycle of records and processes associated with it. It also does not clearly establish the relations between archiving and records management and digital preservation. The reference to preservation period[6] (see eIDAS2, art. 3, 48) may indicate it is referring to semiactive or inactive records; however, permanent retention may be, in some jurisdictions, be considered as a preservation period itself. In this regard, probably the use of classical recordkeeping names for activities and milestones, like disposition, would have clarified both the meaning and the responsibilities. Also, I find rather challenging to consider that "retrieval" or "deletion" help preserving integrity, confidentiality and proof of origin. The use of new terms while recordkeeping discipline already has clear and standardized terms for various activities (like *disposition* instead of *deletion*-a rather technical term) is not a decision to favour the fully understanding and alignment to the records management standards and practices.

## 3. RELEVANT PROPERTIES OF RECORDS

As presented above, eIDAS stated in the definition for archiving the purpose of the process as to preserve what was considered as essential or significant properties for electronic documents and data: durability, legibility, integrity, confidentiality and proof of origin. CEN/TS 18170 mentions evidential value that consists of proof of origin, integrity, legibility, durability (6.4.2, y). Also, for electronic archiving as a process, the standard mentioned the digital objects (read, electronic data or electronic documents) need to be available, readable, interpretable and reliable (3.3.1.).

These characteristics for records can also be met in other national jurisdictions. For instance, in France, AFNOR, the issuer of NF Z42-013 on *archivage electronique,* specifies the service has as a goal to secure availability, integrity, confidentiality and traceability (https://www.afnor.org/decryptages/cybersecurite/faq-archiva-

[6] The professional standards in English language call it rather *retention period*.

ge-electronique/). It resonates a lot with "confidentiality, availability and integrity", which are the triad of the information security framework. In other industries, there are also other properties presented, for instance ALCOA++[7] or FAIR[8]

Apart from the fact there is no definitions for these terms in eIDAS2 or CEN/TS 18170, the question that arises whether these characteristics of records overlap with those described in the recordkeeping literature, even under the lack of a shared and agreed list of records properties (see Popovici 2017). InterPARES, attempting to define ontologically the trustworthiness of records, finds that it is based on 3 main properties: reliability (based on its turn on completeness and creation procedure fidelity), authenticity (based on integrity and identity) and accuracy (defined by a record being precise, correct, truthful and pertinent) (InterPARES, s.d.). As one can see, these are properties focusing on creation and preservation. ISO 15489 on the other hand, claims that an authoritative record needs to possess authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability (ISO 15489:2016). Its focus is on creation, preservation and access.

The record's properties as outline in recordkeeping field emphasize those characteristics that a record needs to fulfil its role: how a record is created as to be the carrier of relevant content and to produce the intended effects. The preservation process must keep those properties as to maintain the records relevant. On the other hand, the activities covered by archiving in eIDAS2 seems concentrated on management (confidentiality, integrity, proof of origin) and preservation (durability and legibility). However, in the lack of a definition, we can only speculate for instance, whether the proof of origin[9] includes provenance and traceability or only the reference to the authorship of a document. Also, the lack to references to usability may open the possibility as a document to be „lost/misplaced in the archives" while all the other properties are preserved.

The conclusion of this part is that the properties (or characteristics) of documents that need to be archived are focused more on the IT technical aspects and less on the broad recordkeeping properties of records. While it makes sense for implemen-

7 Attributable, Legible, Contemporaneous, Original, Accurate, Complete, Consistent, Enduring, Available, Traceable.

8 Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable.

9 The property of „proof of origin" is a quite an exotic term for recordkeeping The term seems to be borrowed rather from the ETSI standard on electronic signature, meaning „the signer recognizes to have created, approved and send the message") (ETSI 101733, p. 43). Also, see Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/2532, recital 6, connecting proof of origin to the electronic signature or Vigil et al (2015).

tation technical level, this tends to simplify the whole process. As Mariella Guercio wrote, "*...l'archiviazione nel medio e lungo periodo non può, per esempio, limitarsi a replicare in un contesto allargato di archiviazione elettronica le indicazioni, pur fondamentali, degli standard ETSI che si concentrano quasi esclusivamente sul prolungamento del certificato delle firme elettroniche qualificate e dei sigilli. Né può essere sufficiente appoggiare il processo conservativo alla mera applicazione di catene infinite di marcature temporali, considerata la quantità e la rilevanza di informazioni di contesto che devono essere mantenute nel tempo perché i contenuti informativi prodotti siano non solo mantenuti integri, ma resi accessibili e soprattutto intelligibili e riusabili nel tempo*"(Guercio 2023).

## 4. THE SUBJECTS

The recital 66 of the eIDAS2 indicates that the purpose of the regulation is "*To ensure legal certainty, trust and harmonisation across Member States*" in the field of qualified electronic archiving services. Further, "*To the extent that electronic archiving services are not harmonised by this Regulation, it should be possible for Member States to maintain or introduce national provisions, in accordance with Union law, relating to those services, such as specific provisions for services integrated in an organisation and only used for the internal archives of that organisation.*" Eventually, in the next recital, *"The activities of national archives and memory institutions, in their capacity as organisations dedicated to preserving the documentary heritage in the public interest, are usually regulated in national law and they do not necessarily provide trust services within the meaning of this Regulation. In so far, such institutions do not provide such trust services, this Regulation is without prejudice to their operation".*

These texts reveal several aspects. Firstly, that there are requirements for *services*. Corroborating with the provision about the "remuneration", it may be considered that the qualified electronic archiving service is a *commercial service*. By contrast, the text above indicates that it may exist an exception from applying provision of the regulation for the internal archives[10] of the organization, provided it is not performed as a commercial service.

[10] It is about current or intermediate archives, since in English the term *archives* is reserved for historical ones.

The defined goal of eIDAS2 is to regulate the commercial providers of qualified archiving. It is built a framework for a sort of *loca credibilia* from medieval times[11], an independent place where records should be kept and everybody trusted the archives they kept. In contrast with the creator, the commercial provider, whose sole activity is archiving, should act as impartial preserver, and it must prove its neutrality or lack of interest in interfering with the content of records; essentially, to show that it is trustworthy. And this is shown not by some sort of entrusted authoritativeness, like notaries, or by the contextualised chain of custody, but by mere technical procedures, proving the *integrity, confidentiality and proof of origin*.

Since the beginning of times, the role of the archives/records centre of the creator was to preserve the records considered relevant for the creator; not keeping documents for the sake of preserving, but for a purpose. That includes, very often, the records for legal value, which when needed, may be referred or presented in courts. The power of these self-held records was always considered the certainty of the chain of custody and the context of production-the association with the working processes. But, under the new regulative framework, do the records from the creator lose their evidential value in front of a third party? Definitely not, and as shown in the first part, the article 45i, 1 is very clear that "shall not be denied legal effect or admissibility as evidence in legal proceedings". Therefore, the provision of eIDAS, conditioning the different status for records only whether they are *used for the internal archives of that organisation"* is a bit unrealistic[12].

A second aspect is that the architecture of archiving services seems to facilitate and encourage dispersion of records. In regular creator's archives not only, the final records are preserved, but also intermediate drafts or documents that prepared the final, legal document, like a contract. The commercial provider, with its purpose of prove the evidentiality, will be entrusted very likely only with the preservation of the final record-the contract; when it is *commercial*, any extra byte of data stored will cost more. All the rest will be preserved in creator's records centre. And here comes two aspects: on the one hand-the dispersion of ar-

[11] Of course, the fact *loca credibilia* historically disappeared from societies is a topic in itself and may undermine the logic of such providers…

[12] For a tentative case comparing risks in self-archiving vs. commercial archiving see Qualified Electronic Archiving and eArchiving at https://www.docbyte.com/qualified-archiving/.

chives: some parts preserved in trust archiver repository, others (or all) preserved at the creator's; documentary context may be lost. Provider will rather hold a collection of legal pieces rather than the archives (read fonds) of the creator. On the other hand, it is also questionable whether a disposition action, for instance, will be synchronized both for the intermediate (and final) copies of the contract at the creator and the legal version at the provider.

Somehow, the same applies for national archives or memory institutions. The heritage archiving, performed by these institutions are not the same as legal archiving. There are multiple layers of analysis.

The legal archiving is concerned of preserving the legibility of records for the duration of preservation period; it is a finite time span. A National archives would have to preserve the electronic records on an open-ended period of time. National Archives are not notaries. They are not looking to preserve legal validity in the first place, but the documentary memory of the creators (implicitly, by and for society) whose permanent archives it is mandated to keep.

The concerns of legal archiving are to control the access and preserve the confidentiality; except for some initial periods in some cases, the purpose of a memory institution is to grant free access to the records preserved.

The Truth means, for legal archives, the non-repudiation and preservation of digital signatures; for a historical archives, the truth means the content in contexts of its creation.

A risk analysis is also relevant: what happens if the digital archival repository fails? In case of legal archiver, the risk is quite measurable but also limited to the organisations that are contracted: loss of evidentiality of records, legal non-conformity, potential litigations. For a national archives, a failure of the system would destroy irreversibly the cultural memory of the society, and it will erase the possibilities for further research.

Despite idealism, the economics of processes matters. The business model is different in case of national archives and providers. A trust provider for archives needs to have the best tools to solve current needs of their clients. They need to be updated with the technological change. All its investments return by the service fees. National Archives are not a business for the state; they should not spend money for things that are not relevant on the longest term. A national archive

needs to preserve the evidential value of the records, but this is a matter for the next 30-60-90 years, but no more. In this case, a trust service implementation may be an unjustified expense, and legal validity needs may be compensated by procedural and other legal requirements.

The differences are big, but eIDAS2 avoid the clear delineation. The only purpose is that national archives not to deliver services described by the regulation. But, similar to creators' case, remain questionable whether the validity of records held by national archives would have a diminished value only because the legal, procedural and technical requirements of eIDAS2 would not be implemented.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

eIDAS 2 Regulation brings a pan-European certified service of electronic archiving. This should be a step forward in creating a consolidated European perspective over recordkeeping. The analysis of terminology and view on records showed the electronic archiving service is more *electronic* than *archiving*, in the way that it seems more inspired by the IT understanding of the term than from recordkeeping practices and concepts. The regulation is not about records, it is about legal sustainability of electronic records, originally-the electronic signed ones. This approach is not always aligned with the recordkeeping theory and practice, and the efforts of many archivists involved in the process of elaboration of the regulation and accompanying standards seemed not always successful. The future will need to determine whether there will be common specifications and understanding for both administrative/legal archiving and heritage archiving or separate requirements for the two. In any case, it is somehow ironic that, when recordkeeping professionals tend to all phases of records life in a unified continuum, Europe seems to highlight the differences between the management of records in active/semiactive phase, versus historical one. But, after all, records are produced for the needs of their creators in the first place, and records managers or archivists are called to manage those needs, not of the recordkeeping standards. It remains to be seen in the future if good recordkeeping practices will prevail in front of technical consideration and understandings, or the recordkeeping practices will be updated to match the technology.

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## POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava ureditev kvalificiranega elektronskega arhiviranja v okviru uredbe eIDAS2 z vidika upravljanja dokumentov in arhivske teorije ter prakse. Avtor analizira določbe Uredbe (EU) 2024/1183, povezane izvedbene uredbe in tehnične specifikacije CEN/TS 18170:2025, ki temelji na referenčnem modelu OAIS. Osredotoča se na pomen izraza »arhiviranje«, lastnosti dokumentov, ki jih morajo storitve ohranjati, ter razmerja med ponudniki storitev, ustvarjalci gradiva in arhivskimi ustanovami.

Uvedba kvalificiranega elektronskega arhiviranja pomeni pomemben korak k skupnemu evropskemu okviru za zaupanja vredno hrambo elektronskih dokumentov in podatkov. Ureditev določa zahteve glede njihove trajnosti, berljivosti, celovitosti, zaupnosti in dokazovanja izvora ter predvideva priznavanje kvalificiranih storitev med državami članicami. Avtor hkrati poudarja, da dokumentom ni mogoče odreči pravnega učinka ali dopustnosti kot dokaznega sredstva zgolj zato, ker niso shranjeni s kvalificirano storitvijo.

Primerjava angleške, francoske, italijanske in nemške terminologije razkriva različna razumevanja arhiviranja. Izraz lahko označuje upravljanje tekočih dokumentov, njihov prenos v vmesno hrambo ali trajno ohranjanje arhivskega gradiva. V informacijski tehnologiji praviloma pomeni umik neaktivnih podatkov iz produkcijskega okolja ob zagotavljanju njihove nadaljnje dostopnosti.

Po avtorjevi presoji opredelitev v eIDAS2 sledi predvsem temu tehničnemu razumevanju, saj ne določa jasno mesta arhiviranja v življenjskem ciklu dokumentov in ga ne razmejuje dovolj od upravljanja ter ohranjanja.

Podobna vprašanja se pojavljajo pri zahtevanih lastnostih dokumentov. Avtor jih primerja s koncepti projekta InterPARES in standarda ISO 15489-1:2016, ki poudarjajo avtentičnost, zanesljivost, celovitost in uporabnost. Ugotavlja, da ureditev daje prednost tehničnim in varnostnim vidikom, manj jasno pa obravnava kontekst nastanka, dokumentarna razmerja ter dolgoročno razumljivost in uporabnost gradiva. Ohranjanje tehnične celovitosti zato samo po sebi še ne zagotavlja ohranitve vseh lastnosti dokumenta.

Prispevek opozarja tudi na razlike med komercialnimi ponudniki kvalificiranega arhiviranja, notranjimi arhivi ustvarjalcev in ustanovami, ki ohranjajo dokumentarno dediščino. Zunanja hramba zgolj končnih, pravno pomembnih dokumentov lahko povzroči razpršitev gradiva, izgubo konteksta in neusklajeno izvajanje odločitev o nadaljnji hrambi ali izločitvi. Arhivske ustanove pa poleg dokazne vrednosti zagotavljajo trajno ohranjanje družbenega spomina, raziskovalno uporabo in dostopnost gradiva, zato imajo drugačne cilje, časovne horizonte in modele financiranja.

Avtor zaključuje, da eIDAS2 le delno odraža celovit strokovni pogled na upravljanje in ohranjanje dokumentov. Odprto ostaja vprašanje, ali bodo prihodnje zahteve povezale pravne, upravne in dediščinske namene arhiviranja ali jih dodatno ločile. Za nadaljnji razvoj bo bistveno usklajevanje tehničnih rešitev z arhivskimi načeli ter ohranjanje vsebine, konteksta in uporabnosti dokumentov skozi čas.

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# FROM ARCHIVES TO PUBLIC MEMORY: COLLABORATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF LOCAL HISTORY IN GALERI BUMI PARAWIRA, INDONESIA

***Abstract***

**Purpose:** *This research examines the transformation of static historical archives into dynamic public collective memory through collaborative curatorial and artistic practices at Galeri Bumi Parawira in Bogor, Indonesia. It explores how government agencies, archivists, librarians, local history communities, and artists negotiate authority to co-construct local historical knowledge.*

**Method/approach:** *Utilizing a qualitative case study design, the research applies reflexive thematic analysis to data collected from institutional documents, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations across multi-stakeholder groups, including government agencies, librarians, archivists, local history communities, and artists.*

**Results:** *The findings demonstrate that public memory within the gallery is not a passive reproduction of raw administrative records, but an interpretive narrative of local leadership history. This narrative is co-constructed through multi-stakeholder negotiations, field and historical validation, visual artistic representations, and active community participation.*

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**Conclusions/findings:** *The exhibition functions beyond a static archival repository, serving as a living center for public knowledge creation. These results validate the paradigm of "doing history with the public" and reinforce the conceptualization of heritage as an ongoing, dynamic social process.*

***Keywords:*** *public history, collective memory, archives, collaborative governance, gallery, GLAM*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Public memory is an evolving and discursive process in which communities interpret their shared perceptions of history to comprehend the present and prepare for the future (McDermott & Anderson, 2022). GLAM institutions have spearheaded efforts to preserve memories of the past. However, they are currently evolving into interactive places that engage not only with visitors/users but also with communities and other institutions (Majidah et al., 2025). This clearly indicates that preserving knowledge as paper-based documentation or tangible objects alone is insufficient to ensure long-term sustainability and relevance (Foster et al., 2024, 10).

This practice of public history within the institution is now understood as public history, which is telling history to the community rather than making history for the community (Cauvin & Dalal, 2025). Academic historians have interpretive authority over non-academic historians and the community to tell history (McDermott & Anderson, 2022). In practice, however, authority is ethically problematic as communities are authorities in their own experience (Day & Pendharkar, 2024). Furthermore, community participation should strike the right balance among participation, cooperation, and co-creation (Cauvin & Dalal, 2025). Community participation can be hindered by bureaucracy, institutional capability, and divergent interest groups (Giglitto et al., 2024; Jagodzińska, 2023). Therefore, the necessity to demonstrate cooperation between the institutions, appreciate the value of such cooperation, and define the form of cooperation (bureaucratic or co-optation) (Giglitto et al., 2024).

GBP (Galeri Bumi Parawira) in Bogor City Library and Gallery is an empirical case through which we can explore these issues and their relevance in the Indonesian context. GBP was developed as a local government initiative to revitalize the public library and to make it an engaging place to learn about local history. It is a combination of library, archival, and gallery functions within a single GLAM ecosystem. It has been planned and developed by local government officials, librarians, archivists, academics, local historians, artists, and creative communities. At GBP, the history and leadership of Bogor City are not just kept as official government records, but, in a sense, as an archive of the people, the area, and the country. They are identified, investigated during field research, verified, curated,

and turned into interpretive forms. These include narrative paintings, artifact replicas, thematic exhibitions, historical theatre performances, and the publication of a book on the history of Bogor City.

Even when the collaboration seems harmonious, the epistemic authority of the actors in the process remains a significant concern. Questions still remain about who has the authority to determine the themes through which local leadership is represented, to verify historical claims, to select visual forms, and to approve the final narrative. These decisions are fundamental to the development of public history as they define which versions of the past are recognized as historical and accessible. So, they need to be researched in great depth.

Archival processes, in terms of memory, become part of public memory through the sociological notion of collective memory. According to Halbwachs (1992), memory is created in relation to contemporary society. Collective memory is built by social reconstruction and depends on the interests, values, and relations of contemporary society (McDermott & Anderson, 2022). An archive has its meaning and significance in social history only when it becomes reactivated through social processes (Foster et al., 2024; Ketelaar, 2014).

The same logic is present in Nora's (1989) definition of lieu de mémoire, in which cultural galleries serve as material sites for collective memory and its connection to the needs of contemporary communities regarding identity. A similar approach to heritage studies holds that heritage is not an unchanging historical value but a process that unfolds socially and culturally, mediated through participation to foster attachment and identity (Smith, 2006). The GBP has examples of such an approach in massive historical paintings and reproductions that are beautiful but also work as mnemonic markers and stimulate debates about history among citizens themselves (Marsili, 2026; Noy, 2017).

Nevertheless, community involvement in the process of creating public memory within institutional GLAM organizations remains difficult. Research has demonstrated that heritage-based social innovation projects face obstacles such as institutional bureaucratic problems, lack of financial resources, uneven access to information, and poor community relations, which may deteriorate once the project becomes institutionalized (Giglitto et al., 2024; Jagodzińska, 2023). In archival institutions, there may be an emphasis on national master narratives that

favor the political and social elite, disregarding the memories and voices of the local community (Dudman, 2019; Rydén, 2023).

For example, visual and photographic archives are often seen as neutral representations of reality, even though we do not consider the ideological and curatorial beliefs and concerns of the creators and archivists who produced them (Barromi Perlman, 2011; Trouillot, 2015). Worldwide scholarship on public history, collective memory, and GLAM governance has been expanding, but little has been done in Indonesia to examine how administrative archives are transformed into public memory through the interrelation of historical and artistic actors. Most of the studies on Indonesian cultural heritage have focused on physical and archaeological preservation, tourism development, or institutional management. The epistemic mechanisms in which public historical knowledge is made, verified, visualized, and circulated have received minimal academic attention.

Galeri Bumi Parawira provides an interesting case to bridge that research gap. It highlights how a gallery can be more than just a static exhibition space, but an active forum for the production of public knowledge. In this space, scholarly legitimacy, derived from archival and historical knowledge, and social legitimacy, generated through community engagement, are also cultivated through art and artistic expression. The gallery thus provides a context for considering how archival evidence, institutional authority, community knowledge, and artistic interpretation intersect to build a local, meaningful public history.

This article investigates the transformation of archives into public memory through the collaborative construction of local history in the development of GBP in Bogor City. It argues that the public memory produced within the gallery is not a linear factual representation from archival records. Rather, it is a negotiated social and artistic construction by several actors through processes of selection, verification, visualization, and public activation.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating public history, collective memory, heritage, and collaborative governance into a common analysis of local historical knowledge. Empirically, it adds to our knowledge that institutions in Indonesian GLAM are working cooperatively. It also shows that curatorial work, artistic translation, and negotiation are central to the production of public historical knowledge.

# 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 THE TRANSFORMATION OF ARCHIVES INTO PUBLIC HISTORY

Public history is, in part, a revolt against the academically centered and exclusionary lens of traditional historiography. Cauvin and Dalal (2025, 14) define public history as an effort to "do history with the public," rather than merely to broadcast historical knowledge to passive audiences. History is no longer viewed from this perspective as a set-in-motion narrative available only in the academic world. It is also seen as a living and dynamic process through which various social actors interpret the past (Kelley, 1978, 16).

This move from academic history to public history demands a revisiting of the classical custodial paradigm, which treats archives as stationary, neutral, and objective objects to be preserved as administrative evidence (Saffady, 2021). Archival postmodernism also challenges this view of neutrality. Terry Cook points out that archivists and archival institutions are not passive or impartial custodians but active agents in the production, selection, organizing, and preservation of collective memory (Paliienko, 2023, 20). As a result, archival institutions play a significant role in determining which aspects of history are remembered and which are silenced in history's stories.

This archival power is also closely related to the idea of silences in the process of producing history, as offered by Michel-Rolph Trouillot. According to Trouillot (1995, 26), there are four key stages in which silences can emerge in the process of history-making: the making of sources, the archiving process, the making of narratives, and the retrospective making of history. Such structural silencing is generally more privileged, and local community histories remain unremembered. Public history becomes a form of democracy that resists silence to enable the creation of new public space for marginal voices (Dudman, 2019, 22). The use of oral history methodology and bottom-up stories will help build collective memory by drawing on local tacit knowledge and community members' memories (Dudman, 2019, 25; Mazidah, 2018, 10). The archiving process becomes an instrument not for storing the institutionalized narratives but for recovering, narrating, and disseminating community history.

## 2.2 RECONCEPTUALISING ARCHIVES, GALLERIES, AND PUBLIC MEMORY

Public memory is not merely a passive record of historical events, but rather a socially constructed process in which shared historical understanding is constantly being created, negotiated, and re-created in relation to current issues (McDermott & Anderson, 2022, Article 102257). Memory always occurs in social settings according to Halbwachs (1992, 40).

In the digital age, this is evident in "archives in motion" (Røssaak, 2010, 11) and "archives in action" (Opgenhaffen, 2022, Article e00231). These notions represent archives as working as social agents to activate them. Ketelaar (2014, 233) develops a related notion of "archival activations" in which every interaction, interrogation, and interpretation of a user constitutes an activation. Archives move from their "space of latency" (Assmann, 2008a, 103) to a space of connectivity, performativity, and cultural regeneration (Marsili, 2026, 12).

In the present public history ecosystem, libraries, galleries, and museums have emerged as lieux de mémoire, or sites of memory, where collective memory crystallizes as its original social environments, or milieux de mémoire, begin to disappear (Nora, 1989, 7). When exhibits in galleries turn administrative archives into public exhibition spaces, the records are culturalized and translated into emotional triggers or touchstones of memory for visitors (Millar, 2006, 114). The memory created through this process may thus shift from a formalized "sought memory" to a "created memory" negotiated with the public (McDermott & Anderson, 2022, Article 102257).

Visual representation, however, is never neutral. It is embedded in ideology and may be a tool of social control (Sekula, 2011, 2). Images displayed in galleries could reinforce the political hegemony by idealizing the public image of elite leaders (Barromi Perlman, 2011, 4). Historically visualized images, however, when produced collaboratively, can be seen as counter-hegemonic interventions that break out of the monolithic state narrative and restore representational agency back to a local community (Pasternak, 2021, 262). When it comes to the transfer of archives into gallery displays, we need to see the archive as an interpretive and political process to negotiate historical meaning, authority, and public legitimacy.

## 2.3 THE COLLABORATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF HISTORY IN THE GLAM ECOSYSTEM.

The convergence of GLAM has become a new trend in heritage management and knowledge transfer (Given & McTavish, 2010, 7; Majidah et al., 2025, 11). Libraries promote inclusive literacy, archives contain credible sources of information, and galleries and museums offer visualization through exhibitions (Bohumelova & Hvorecky, 2016, 371; Wakimoto & Bruce, 2015, 183). Convergence in GLAM is an indication of a change in paradigm from the traditional collection-oriented institutions to visitor-oriented institutions (Logan & Liew, 2023, 1014).

Simon (2010, ii) distinguishes four kinds of community involvement in cultural institutions: contributory, collaborative, co-creative, and hosted. For participation to be genuine collaboration, academic, archival, and community partnerships must be based on reciprocity and mutual benefit, which Day and Pendharkar (2024, 416) refer to as a "reciprocity ring." This collaboration is more than just curatorial work in the physical world; it is storytelling, collective learning, and institutionalization of new knowledge (Foster et al., 2024, 73).

As Ansell & Gash (2008, 543) have emphasized, collaborative governance needs to be based on personal interaction, trust-building, commitment, mutual understanding, and small wins. On the other hand, the involvement of grassroots movements and social energy from below into the system of government creates tension due to bureaucratization (Jagodzińska, 2023, 467).

As Jagodzińska (2023, 468) pointed out, community participatory agency will decline once a cultural institution is established and participation is institutionalized and formalized. Lack of autonomy in interpretive and epistemic judgment, as well as bureaucracy, are also obstacles to collaboration (Giglitto et al., 2023, 78; Sokka et al., 2021, 4). The central challenge in GLAM is managing bureaucracy to ensure good archival governance, transparency, and equity in curatorial relations. This equilibrium is vital to establish transparency and democratic control over the collaborative management of collective historical memory (Dikopoulou & Mihiotis, 2012, 125).

# 3 METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND INTERPRETIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH

In this research, a qualitative, interpretative, single-case approach was employed to investigate the processes by which archival resources were selected, validated, interpreted, and constructed as collective memories at Galeri Bumi Parawira (GBP) in Bogor, Indonesia. Rather than mere representations of a single objective reality, archives, historical accounts, and collective memories were considered socially constructed and discursively produced by specific actors within a particular institutional setting.

The design was inspired by Yin (2018), who considers case studies a useful way to examine contemporary phenomena in real-world settings. Qualitative methods should be employed to examine the experiences, motivations, and relationships of information professionals, curators, and the communities responsible for managing, communicating, and protecting our cultural heritage (Wakimoto & Bruce, 2015).

GBP, opened in late 2023, combines a public library, a regional archival institution, and a visual gallery of local history. It reflects the convergence of GLAM and the shift from collection-centered to visitor-centered institutions, as well as the need to encourage participation and community learning (Cobo-Serrano et al., 2022; Logan & Liew, 2023; Majidah et al., 2025). GBP is a "GLAM laboratory" where regional archives become public history through collaboration. Historical records are used to analyze, depict and communicate with the public beyond their administrative function. The case allows us to understand how cultural institutions navigate historical preservation and the public in the context of public knowledge (Cobo-Serrano et al., 2022; Marsili, 2026).

## 3.2 PURPOSIVE PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Participants were selected to obtain data from those with experience, authority, and direct involvement in GBP. This method offered different perspectives in the process and provided theoretically rich descriptions (Saffady, 2021; Wakimoto & Bruce, 2015). For participation in GBP to be useful, participants need to be involved in GBP's establishment, the collection of historical data, archival verification, visual curation, exhibition planning, and daily management.

To explore various dimensions of the collaboration process, key stakeholders from institutional and community sectors were included in the research. These include (1) officials from the Bogor City Archives and Library Office having formal authority in this regard; (2) librarians and gallery managers, having access to both information and space; (3) regional archivists, who evaluated and suggested the archives that would be of permanent value; (4) researchers, academics, and historians, who could comment on the source and evaluate it through field experience; (5) local artists who were capable of converting historical narratives into paintings; and (6) local historical communities, such as the Bogor Historia Community, who provided some information through oral traditions. In total, 12 participants were included in the study.

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND TRIANGULATION

Three methods of qualitative data collection include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of institutions (Jagodzińska, 2023; Mazidah, 2018; McDermott & Anderson, 2022). This strategy was used in order to develop a complete and contextually informed understanding of how archival documents are integrated into collective memory.

1. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

   The interview guide's flexibility facilitated communication and reduced the power hierarchy, as per an anti-oppressive oral history study (Dudman, 2019). The interview involved a discussion of the GBP's nine-month development, verification of the historical sources (the Batutulis Inscription and its connection to King Purnawarman), and the negotiation of meaning among the actors. These interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim (Saffady, 2021; Wakimoto & Bruce, 2015).

2. Participant observation

   Observations of the gallery layout, exhibition flow, paintings depicting Bogor's political leadership, curatorial panels, artifact replicas, and hands-on learning activities were conducted. These observations helped to describe how archival materials were formally communicated and collectively reconstructed from the public's point of view (Jagodzińska, 2023; Majidah et al., 2025).

3. Institutional document analysis

Documents were reviewed to contextualize the findings from the interviews and observations. These included the Mayor's Decree establishing the gallery, coordination meeting minutes, the curatorial manuscript, exhibition catalogs and the 2023 Bogor Mayoral Regulation on the Srikandi archival information system, historical research manuscripts, and documentation of Bogor City's history (Mazidah, 2018).

### 3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) developed by Braun and Clarke (2023). RTA is well suited for interpretive qualitative research in the context of "Big Q" methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Unlike post-positivist "small q" coding, RTA treats researcher subjectivity as a creative analytical resource rather than a bias that needed to be eliminated (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Varpio et al., 2021). The analysis was in line with Braun and Clarke's (2023) six recursive phases and McDermott and Anderson's (2022) work on public memory. The phases were not linear, but researchers moved iteratively between data, codes, themes, and theory.

(1) Phase 1: Familiarization with the data

The researchers read the interview transcripts, field notes, and institutional documents over and over again. Early insights and reflections were noted.

(2) Phase 2: Creating codes

The data were broken down into units that could be classified according to the research question. Codes focused on the archiving process, negotiation of historical significance, confirmation of sources, visual evidence, and social validity.

(3) Phase 3: Theme development

The related codes were sorted out by themes. Similar to the RTA case study, themes were interpreted as insights rather than mere topics (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

(4) Phase 4: Reviewing and refining themes

Themes were compared against coded excerpts and the complete dataset to determine their ability to interpret information from participants, institutional documents, and observations.

(5) Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The analytical focus and conceptual boundaries of each theme were clarified. Subthemes were created when appropriate, and appropriate names were given to communicate each theme's central organizing idea.

(6) Phase 6: Thematic Narrative

Thematic analysis was used to interpret data from interviews, observations, and documents, thereby identifying themes including authority, lieu de mémoire, and collaborative governance (Braun & Clarke, 2023; McDermott & Anderson, 2022).

### 3.5 RESEARCH CREDIBILITY, TRIANGULATION, AND REFLEXIVITY

Credibility was supported by source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation compared the opinions of government officials, historians, archivists, artists, and community members. Methodological triangulation dealt with relationships, convergences, and tensions among interview, observational, and documentary data (Denkin, 2010; Mazidah, 2018). Triangulation did not aim to arrive at a single objective reality but to analyze the phenomena from many different angles to develop a deeper understanding of how historical meaning was negotiated.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the study to encourage transparency and situated knowing (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The researchers viewed their position as that of library and archival studies academics with extensive experience in knowledge management. This made them a source of knowledge and professionals in research and knowledge management, as they were insiders with access to disciplinary practices and outsiders distant from municipal policies and institutional interests (McDermott & Anderson, 2022; Tracy, 2019). Several participants reflected on preliminary thematic interpretations. This process increased contextual and theoretical nuance rather than seeking positivist consensus among participants (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Smith & McGannon, 2018).

## 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis of the interview data, field observations, and policy documents proved to be a reflexive process, indicating that the transition of archives to public memory at GBP was not limited to the static preservation of records. The role of

GBP was that of an active archive wherein local history was recreated and actualized through the collaboration of multiple agents. Five major interrelated themes have been identified through the analysis: (1) identification and validation of historical sources; (2) visual embodiment through painting and the reproduction of artifacts; (3) governance and the sharing of power; (4) socioeconomic actualization; and (5) the codification of knowledge through the publication of „History of Bogor City."

## 4.1 IDENTIFYING HISTORICAL SOURCES THROUGH COLLABORATIVE VERIFICATION

The reconstruction of the region's history using the GBP method began with identifying and sourcing historical documents from various institutions. This is in line with the process Trouillot (1995) calls the moment of fact assembly, in which available historical traces are identified and used to reconstruct history. In contrast to identifying the usual set of historical documents that are stored, the GBP method initiated a process in which scholars, the historical community, and archivists were involved in addressing the silence in the archive resulting from the absence of documentation of Bogor's classical era. In the Bogor City Archives and Library Office, there was a structural problem:

> *„The archives were initially in the care of the State Secretariat and Ministry of Information since that was the way the institutional system worked. If we are looking for pre-autonomy archives, we do not have them available. They may be in the possession of the West Java provincial administration or even ANRI itself."* (Ani, interview, 2026)

This case demonstrates how the archives were relocated both geographically and institutionally from the place in which the community's history is rooted. To address these gaps, the municipal government and research team conducted a collaborative search across institutions, including repositories in the Netherlands. Adi, the former Head of the Bogor City Archives and Library Office who oversaw the establishment of GBP, described how a study visit to Leiden University Library became an important moment in developing a vision for the city's archives:

> *"I saw materials from the Dutch archival institute at that time, which included the map of Bogor. It was clear that the Dutch had actually planned the city right from the start, as Buitenzorg was designed in such a way that there would be no cross-roads to avoid traffic jams."* (Adi, interview, 2026)

With the inclusion of the colonial maps and planning documents from *Buitenzorg*, the researchers were able to link the historical documents kept elsewhere to the modern city they pertained to. In doing so, documents that had been physically and institutionally separated were used for educational purposes in Bogor. Field-based verification was also undertaken to examine narratives relating to the Pajajaran Kingdom and King Prabu Siliwangi, for which limited written evidence remained in Bogor. Because much of the material heritage of the Pajajaran Kingdom was destroyed following its collapse, with the Batutulis Inscription constituting one of its most prominent surviving traces, the research team visited other centers associated with the Sunda-Galuh kingdoms. A member of the Reka Bogor community described the process:

> *"Our colleagues were part of the research group. They looked for information up to Ciamis and Sumedang to learn the history. We all were from Bogor, including the artists."* (Doni, interview, 2026)

The team also consulted experts and local knowledge holders in eastern Sundanese regions:

> *"The experts were interviewed from the area of Ciamis, Galuh. One of the lecturers from Galuh University who had been working there had once been the rector of that university. In addition to this, we visited the school and collected their story as well."* (Doni, Interview, 2026)

By way of the process of triangulation of these sources, which linked the inscriptions of the local area, the documents in Sumedang, maps of the colonial era in the Netherlands, and oral history as passed down through customary elders, GBP was able to transform unprocessed archival information into an authentic public historical narrative.

## 4.2 VISUALISING ARCHIVES THROUGH HISTORICAL PAINTINGS AND ARTEFACT REPLICAS

One of the key problems in the area of public history concerns the transformation of the language of the written archive into more visual forms that are both communicative and personal. At GBP, this process was realized through 35 historical paintings and 10 reproductions of artifacts, laid out chronologically across five stages of leadership, from the Pajajaran period to the Reform period.

This approach is in line with the shift in how we view archives, from viewing them as just documents to viewing them as cultural assets (Marsili, 2026; Schwartz & Cook, 2002). The historical paintings did not come from the unrestrained imagination of individual artists. The artists‘ work was always in discussion with the historical research team, who carefully curated it to establish a defensible relationship between visual representations and historical facts. As one of the participants of the community said:

> *„The entire process was quite interesting. The researchers narrated the story of past events to the painters. They asked for the meaning of the story, drew sketches and discussed them with the researchers.“* (Doni, interview, 2026)

This is an example of converging curatorial authority. For the creation of the painting The Coronation of Prabu Siliwangi, no visual resources or real paintings of the king‘s face existed. The artists aimed to create a portrait of a classical Sundanese face through a series of discussions. Details such as whether the king would have a mustache were constantly revised in light of the archival researchers‘ comments. It is clear that the formation of visual material in this case is more about reconstructing history than physically restoring it (Conrad, 2012). Through these large-scale paintings, GBP was able to form a “visual storybook.” An informant from the community stated that:

> *“Bumi Parawira is a visual storybook wherein all paintings have stories to tell. This is what gives Bogor its identity in paintings.”* (Doni, interview, 2026)

The painting had a curatorial caption that explained the historical context. The relationship between image and text was important, as the paintings were not just facts to be known but were presented as matters of interpretation. Barromi Perlman (2011) points out that visual media in archival exhibitions can never be neutral. They are structured representations that affect ideological awareness and collective identity. At GBP, the translation of inscriptions and historical manuscripts into dramatic visual displays broadened access to historical knowledge that would otherwise have required specialist knowledge of Sanskrit or Old Sundanese.

### 4.3 COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND SHARED AUTHORITY

GBP is an example of cooperative governance built on the political commitment of municipal leaders (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The Bogor municipal government

served as the primary facilitator of social and financial resources beyond the regional government budget (Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah, APBD). Adi explained how philanthropic donations and corporate social responsibility funding could fund the project:

> *"When we received the task, there was no budget at all. It was quite an ambitious idea, but there were few resources. We managed to present the project to the philanthropists and sponsors. In general, back then our budget was about IDR 31 billion."* (Adi, interview, 2026)

According to the interview results, non-APBD funding from an independent foundation called Reka Bogor gave the artists and community members more room for action. However, the collaboration process was designed around an almost hierarchical interaction between all the players involved. Community members, researchers, and artists were bringing their knowledge and work to this project, yet it was left to the mayor to decide on the exhibition idea. This point has been acknowledged by Adi himself:

> *„The decision maker in this case was the mayor. It is all the drafts prepared by the external group but the decision had not been made by the mayor yet."* (Adi, interview, 2026)

The exhibition's focus on leadership was highly influenced by the background and interests of the mayor at the time, Bima Arya, an academic trained in political science in Australia. This was because the public memory built at GBP was not independent of the political priorities through which the formal government authority sought to define the city's identity. It also aligns with Bhebhe and Ngoepe's (2021) analysis of how public history programs can become entangled in political legitimation.

GBP therefore complicates the ideal of shared authority. Interpretive authority was shared among several people for research, verification, artistic production, and community programming. But the main theme of the gallery and final institutional decisions were in the hands of the municipal leadership. Participation increased but did not entirely share decision-making power.

With the change in municipal leadership in 2024, this tension was even more evident. The new administration proposed transferring GBP to the Pajajaran Museum, which is run by the Tourism and Culture Office. The archival and artistic

communities, who felt that cultural ownership of GBP was the people‘s and their work, not just the municipal bureaucracy‘s, were vehemently opposed. Doni explained the conflict:

> *„Of course, the new mayor was a deputy of Bima. But just at the start of the year, he suddenly stated that, ‚I wish that Galeri Bumi Parawira should be transferred to the Pajajaran Museum.‘ That raised a lot of issues within the community members. They got disappointed, and they challenged the mayor.”* (Doni, interview, 2026)

The situation described above resonates with Jagodzińska‘s (2023) comment on the institutional vulnerability of participatory cultural projects. The social energy of grassroots communities may dissipate or get repressed when a cultural institution becomes part of a new round of political struggle and bureaucracy. In GBP, however, the diversity of people behind the project ensured collective management of the situation.

> *“Thus, whoever takes over as the regional leader in the future and wishes to alter the concept of Bumi Parawira, he or she must seek permission from the communities that have constructed it, from the artists who created the paintings, and from the donors as well. Bumi Parawira is not safeguarded merely by the leader of the government office.”* (Doni, interview, 2026)

The fact that these stakeholders resisted shows that collaborative production can build ownership that extends beyond the project itself. This ownership may be a non-institutional means of protecting individuals from policy changes. However, the fact that it depends on social connections indicates the weakness of the institutions involved. In the absence of participatory decision-making institutions, community control will depend on political considerations.

## 4.4 ACTIVATING HISTORY THROUGH COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE, PUBLIC LEARNING, AND GLAM PROGRAMMING

GBP did not develop as a quiet archive where archives were separated from daily social interactions. On the contrary, it was used as a space with social, educational, and economic components. Indeed, this follows the trend among modern GLAM organizations, which are transforming from collection-centered to visitor-centered (Logan & Liew, 2023; Majidah et al., 2025). According to the inter-

view data, the administration of Bogor City handed over management of GBP to the Reka Bogor community foundation under a regional asset utilization contract called Kerja Sama Pemanfaatan (KSP). This gave the organization the power to collect fees from the visitors. The reason was stated by Doni as follows:

> *„We did not have any funds after the opening of the gallery for maintaining it. So, we thought about the asset utilization policy of the regional government. It was the first time when it was used."* (Interview with Doni, 2026)

To reduce dependence on the municipal budget, this governance arrangement created new opportunities for the cultural community to generate income for the gallery. Public memory at GBP was further activated with performing arts and participatory educational projects. Local theatre groups regularly staged 30-minute historical acts based on the stories depicted in the gallery's paintings, attracting thousands of schoolchildren and turning visual narratives into memories. GBP also had children's storytelling programs organized by the Patah Hujan Storytelling Community and an interactive program called Dolan Bumi, featuring a treasure hunt at the archive:

> *„They went to Bumi Parawira, and they should be seeking things like in a treasure hunt. They had to answer the questions, they painted heroes, and they wore the crowns."* (Ani, interview, 2026)

All this resulted in turning the library and galleries into a place where learning through direct participation could happen, learning history not by heart but by doing it (Bohumelova & Hvorecky, 2016). In addition, the GBP was organizing historical walks in Bogor and pairing gallery exhibitions with colonial buildings, historically significant locations, and popular restaurants, such as Kopi Liong and Kopi Basimpin in the Empang region. These actions made it possible to relate the galleries' narratives to the city's historical narrative in the contemporary setting. The close relationship between cultural memory and local entrepreneurship suggests that preserving local historical data could foster the city's identity development.

## 4.5 CODIFYING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE HISTORY OF BOGOR CITY

A significant outcome of the collaborative work undertaken at GBP was the codification of oral knowledge and visual documentation through the publication

of the History of Bogor City. The book was collectively prepared by historians, academics from Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, archivists, and librarians. Its preparation drew on primary archival sources to provide a scholarly foundation for the historical narratives visualized within the gallery. Heru, the Head of the Bogor City Archives and Library Office, explained:

> *"We wanted to encourage younger figures to produce a work in the form of knowledge, namely a history book about Bogor. We encouraged artists and cultural practitioners to participate in preparing it because knowledge cannot develop without research."* (Heru, interview, 2026)

This process is in line with what Trouillot (1995) calls "the subsequent phases of history-making," where fluid experiences, oral testimonies, and facts are turned into a relatively stable text. Written codification was regarded by the participants as important to the continuity of public memory because historical knowledge in Indonesia has often been transmitted through oral traditions. Ani explained that the limited availability of written evidence frequently generated competing historical interpretations:

> *"We are accustomed to telling stories. Indonesian society relies heavily on oral transmission rather than writing. Very little can be used as written evidence, which leaves considerable room for historians to imagine."*(Ani, interview, 2026)

Such a notion brings into focus the fact that historically recorded knowledge becomes very fragile without document-based proof of oral accounts. The publication of the History of Bogor City aimed to connect various forms of archives, oral tradition, fieldwork, and visual storytelling exhibited at GBP. Thus, it created a more secure and traceable knowledge source for future generations.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

As this study shows, the transformation of archives into public memory at Galeri Bumi Parawira (GBP) in Bogor is not a mechanical process of moving administrative records into an exhibition space. The archival material that had not been available in government archives became active resources for the creation of public memory through the cooperation of municipal authorities, historians, archivists, librarians, cultural communities, and local artists.

GBP is no longer bound by the institutional tradition based on collection but has evolved into a visitor-based, community-centered space for the creation and dissemination of knowledge (Bohumelova & Hvorecky, 2016; Majidah et al., 2025). Using 35 pieces of paintings from history and 10 replicas of artifacts, the formalized history was rendered into mnemonic media. This was done to challenge residents about the historical roots of Bogor's identity and its evolving traditions of leadership.

The transformation was enabled by a negotiated form of common authority in which academic historians and local historical communities brought written documentary evidence into dialogue with community oral traditions (Dudman, 2019). This process made public knowledge more credible through archival history and social legitimacy by bringing together the communities whose memories were to be recalled (and, in turn, their histories).

GBP also connected historical records from the Pajajaran period to contemporary forms of cultural expression, such as theatre performances, children's storytelling, interactive educational activities, and historical walking tours. Such practices help in understanding heritage as a dynamic and continually negotiated social process, not a single collection of objects inherited from the past (Smith, 2006). The theory and practice of researchers, information professionals, artists, and communities also resembled the "reciprocity ring" (Day and Pendharkar, 2024), as actors brought a variety of knowledge and resources to the community to address the limitations of the local archival collection and build public historical literacy.

Conflict situations may arise from such research, affecting the sustainability of this collaborative ecosystem. If the local history project, developed through flexible social energy in the community, is extended to the city level, bureaucratization will limit the community's ability (Jagodzińska, 2023). The dispute over the proposed relocation of GBP shows that collaborative production can lead to good collective stewardship but also shows how vulnerable public memory is to political succession and administrative change. And the future inclusiveness of GBP will be built on governance structures that institutionalize fair dialogue, provide clarity on the rights and responsibilities of all parties to the dialogue and those of the community, and do not leave the community to a single administrative decision. Public memory is not only to be maintained; it is to be maintained through the participatory relationships by which its content is valued and legitimized.

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## POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava preoblikovanje arhivskega gradiva v javni kolektivni spomin na primeru galerije Galeri Bumi Parawira v mestu Bogor v Indoneziji. Raziskuje, kako predstavniki mestnih oblasti, arhivisti, knjižničarji, zgodovinarji, lokalne skupnosti in umetniki sodelujejo pri oblikovanju ter posredovanju lokalnega zgodovinskega znanja. Teoretično izhaja iz konceptov javne zgodovine, kolektivnega spomina, kulturne dediščine in sodelovalnega upravljanja, pri čemer poudarja dejavno vlogo kulturnih ustanov pri interpretaciji preteklosti.

Raziskava temelji na kvalitativni interpretativni študiji primera. Podatki so bili pridobljeni s polstrukturiranimi intervjuji z dvanajstimi namensko izbranimi udeleženci, opazovanjem z udeležbo in analizo institucionalnih dokumentov. Z refleksivno tematsko analizo je bilo opredeljenih pet povezanih področij: prepoznavanje in preverjanje zgodovinskih virov, vizualna predstavitev zgodovine, sodelovalno upravljanje in delitev pristojnosti, družbeno in gospodarsko oživljanje zgodovinskih vsebin ter sistematizacija znanja z izdajo knjige o zgodovini mesta Bogor.

Ugotovitve kažejo, da javni spomin v galeriji nastaja skozi izbor, preverjanje in interpretacijo virov ter usklajevanje različnih pogledov. Zaradi vrzeli v lokalnem arhivskem gradivu so sodelujoči iskali vire v drugih ustanovah, tudi na Nizozemskem, ter povezovali pisne dokumente, zgodovinske zemljevide, napise, te-

rensko raziskovanje in ustno izročilo. Zgodovinsko znanje je bilo predstavljeno s petintridesetimi slikami in desetimi replikami predmetov, ki prikazujejo pet obdobij političnega vodstva. Umetniške upodobitve so nastajale v dialogu z raziskovalci, spremljajoča pojasnila pa so obiskovalcem omogočala razumevanje njihovega zgodovinskega konteksta in interpretativne narave.

Galerija povezuje arhivske, knjižnične in razstavne dejavnosti ter deluje kot prostor izobraževanja in sodelovanja skupnosti. Gledališke uprizoritve, pripovedovanje zgodb, interaktivne dejavnosti za otroke in zgodovinski sprehodi povezujejo razstavljene vsebine z mestnim prostorom in vsakdanjim življenjem. Izdaja knjige o zgodovini Bogorja dodatno utrjuje in ohranja znanje, pridobljeno s skupnim raziskovalnim delom.

Sodelovanje različnih akterjev kljub temu ni zagotovilo enakomerne porazdelitve odločevalske moči. Končne odločitve o zasnovi galerije so ostale v pristojnosti mestnega vodstva, predlog njene premestitve po menjavi oblasti pa je razkril ranljivost projekta za politične in upravne spremembe. Nasprotovanje skupnosti je hkrati pokazalo močan občutek skupne odgovornosti za ustvarjeno dediščino.

Prispevek zaključuje, da arhivsko gradivo postaja vir javnega spomina skozi sodelovalne družbene in umetniške procese. Za dolgoročno vzdržnost takšnih pobud so potrebne upravljavske strukture, ki zagotavljajo vključujoč dialog, jasno določene odgovornosti in trajno sodelovanje skupnosti pri odločanju.

**Dorota Drzewiecka**[1]

# THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE STATE ARCHIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN POLAND: AN ANALYSIS OF LEGAL, ORGANISATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL MEASURES UP TO 2019[2]

***Abstract***

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this paper is to examine action taken by the Director General of Polish State Archives to support the development of electronic records management systems (also referred to hereinafter as "EZD" – Elektroniczne Zarządzanie Dokumentacją) until the year 2019, with a particular focus on legal, organisational, educational and infrastructural facets.*

**Method/approach:** *The study adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach based on a purposive analysis of legal acts, strategic documents, reports, professional literature and information resources made available by the State Archives. The source material was selected to capture the legal, organisational, educational and infrastructural dimensions of the activities of the Head of the State Archives. Legal acts were examined to identify changes in the normative framework for electronic records management; strategic documents and reports were analysed to reconstruct institutional priorities, implementation directions and reported activities; professional literature and archival information resources were used to contextualise these findings and assess their practical significance. The analysis focused on the period up to 2019 and reconstructed the sequence and interrelations of institutional activities.*

**Results:** *The analysis demonstrates that the Head of the State Archives played an important role in creating the conditions for the implementation and development of electronic records management systems in Poland across four interrelated dimensions: legal, organisational, educational and infrastructural. The*

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[2] This paper describes action taken by the Director General of Polish State Archives until the year 2019; this is when the position was filled by Paweł Pietrzyk, Ph.D., who has since remained in office.

*main outcomes included participation in the preparation of regulations, support for organisational practice and supervision, development of professional competences and dissemination of good practices, monitoring of pilot EZD implementations, and preparation of the Electronic Documents Archive as a tool for the long-term preservation of born-digital archival records.*

**Conclusions/findings:** *Findings indicate that action taken by the Director General of Polish State Archives should be interpreted as a gradual process of developing foundations for a modern public records management model. While the authority did not manage EZD systems directly, it contributed to their development by designing regulations, supporting institutional practice, and preparing archival infrastructure for long-term electronic records preservation. The paper further identifies continuing challenges regarding metadata quality, system interoperability, and the transfer of electronic records for permanent preservation.*

**Keywords:** *Director General of State Archives; electronic records management; EZD systems; electronic records; public administration; archival supervision; Electronic Documents Archive; digital archives.*

Pursuant to the National Archival Resource and Archives Act, the Director General of Polish State Archives is Poland's central National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) body. The Act further outlines the scope of the Director General's responsibilities, with a particular focus on the oversight of collecting, documenting, preserving, compiling, sharing and securing archival resources. Other activities include the destruction of non-archival records, and co-ordination of archival activities on Polish territory. While the Law does not bestow any direct records management competencies upon the Director General of State Archives, the discharge of overseeing and inspection responsibilities affecting units generating archival resources allows the office holder to impact the process of organising documentation-related processes, including those handled in the digital environment. In that sense, the Director General of State Archives is significant to the design of electronic records management practices in Polish public administration.

The research problem addressed in this article focuses on determining how the *Director General of State Archives*, despite lacking direct authority over the EZD systems, influenced their development within Polish public administration.
Accordingly, the primary research question is: How did the activities of the *Director General of State Archives* up to 2019 contribute to establishing the legal, organizational, educational, and infrastructural foundations that fostered the development of electronic document management in Polish public administration?

Existing literature primarily addresses specific aspects of the digitalization of public administration, the implementation of Electronic Document Management systems, or the archiving of electronic records. This study complements that picture by demonstrating how the *Director General of State Archives* helped shape the conditions for their development and the subsequent preservation of electronic records.

The study is qualitative in nature, employing document analysis and a descriptive-analytical reconstruction of institutional activities. Source materials were selected purposively, guided by the research question and the need to capture both the normative foundations of electronic document management and the practicalities of their implementation. The analysis focused primarily on legislation-including the National Archival Resource and Archives Law, the Act on the

computerisation of operations performed by entities delivering public tasks, and implementing regulations concerning electronic records and EZD systems. This was supplemented by strategic documents, reports on the activities of the State Archives, professional literature, and informational materials made available by the *Director General of State Archives*.

Poland's 2004 accession to the European Union influenced the development of Polish public agency digitisation, with new perspectives of international and expanded archival collaboration arising. Poland joined the proceedings of such bodies as the European Board of National Archives, European Advisory Group, and the DLM (Document Lifecyle Management) Forum. Active participation in the operations of all aforesaid institutions – as well as international projects and conferences – was duly reflected in action taken by the Director General of State Archives. That said, the diversity of member state archival practice has precluded options of full archival policy co-ordination, or one-to-one emulation of foreign legislation in Poland (Stępniak, 2011; Wolnicki, 2015).

In analysing member state experience, Poland began implementing legal regulations in support of greater records handling efficacy early in the 21st century. Laws introducing new terms and definitions associated with digitising public authorities and electronic records handling were passed: Act regarding the computerisation of operations performed by entities delivering public tasks (ACOPEPT) in 2005; Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration regarding essential electronic records design components (REERDC) in 2006; and Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration regarding detailed procedures of electronic records handling (RDPERH), 2006; Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of November 2nd 2006 regarding technical requirements for recording formats and computer data storage media used to save archival materials transferred to state archives (RTRRFCDSM) in 2006. The Prime Minister's 2009 *"Poland 2030. Development Challenges"* Report proved an essential point of reference for all aforesaid activities. The major issue of poor interoperability between assorted Polish public administration sources and registers had been identified at that early stage already. It was also pointed out that developing knowledge-based administration should be the ultimate goal, in combination with top personal data protection standards (KPRM [Chancellery of the Prime Minis-

ter], 2009). The report set out rules for diagnosing obstacles to digitising the public administration sector, while outlining a broader context for successive activities in the field of electronic records management.

In terms of planning further action, essential assumptions included securing universal access to public information, and options for its reuse. It was duly observed that information saved with the use of assorted technologies can serve current citizen needs while preserving value tying in with its significance for the future. In such context, it became particularly important to set up mechanisms allowing permanent protection and regular archiving of all records generated. The approach fostered the development of systems combining day-to-day records management with their storage and sharing (Wolnicki, 2015).

Under such circumstances, action taken by the Director General of State Archives ought to be interpreted as a major component of the broader process of digitising the public administration sector. Its significance extends beyond supporting the development of electronic records management systems in Polish institutions into the design of institutional foundations for proper and organised electronic records handling.

The implementation of a pivotal paper – the *"National Archives Strategy for the Years 2010-2020"* (*Strategia ["Strategy"]*, 2010) – was a particularly notable development, the document presenting a long-term action plan and fundamental directions for archival development. First and foremost, the plan was a good match for public administration activities associated with public information access and information society building. It was assumed that the efficacy of all action taken ought to be fostered through the successive implementation of state-of-the-art records management systems over the years (Wolnicki, 2015). The "*National Archives Strategy"* pointed to a number of strategic objectives, one of which with a focus on assured efficiency in records management, electronic records included, at institutions responsible for public task delivery. Once thus defined, the objective was divided into operational activities, the first of which involved state archival services' support for new legislative solutions. Consequently, multiple consultation sessions were held to discuss the drafting of normative records management-related laws. These activities were followed up by the dissemination of good records management practices: training courses, workshops, and instruc-

tion and consultation events delivered by public institutions as part of their standard operations. The new and dynamically changing responsibilities faced by the public administration sector gave rise to a need for these institutions to secure permanent and regular skill improvement measures for their staff. Other directions of activity included overseeing records handling procedures at entities delivering public tasks, said oversight defined as inspection, advice and support for aforesaid entities with regard to disseminating good practices in efficient records management. Supervising the process of records valuation – archives expected to join the process as overseers and active participants in equal measure, in line with their mission – was another operational area. Last but not least, one of the identified tasks concerned human resources development in terms of supervising records handling, electronic records included. State archives staff responsible for overseeing the ever-increasing archival resource were expected to continuously improve their competencies in areas of computerising public authorities, electronic systems development, and electronic records generation. All of the above tied directly in with advising the staff of lower-level organisational units (*"Strategy"*, 2010).

Another strategic objective listed in the *"Strategy"* merits a mention as well. It involved "Securing proper conditions of gathering and permanently storing (preserving) the archival resource in traditional and digital formats". The aforesaid objective focused on the tangible foundations of fundamental state archive task discharge. They included the securing, gathering, preserving and maintenance of archival materials. A significant aspect of that objective, related infrastructural projects included the development of a system to collect and manage digitised archival fonds – what would ultimately become the Electronic Records Archives (Mielnik, 2014; *"Strategia"*, 2010; Electronic Records Archives [ADE – *Archiwum Dokumentów Elektronicznych*], 2026) (Drzewiecka & Drzewiecki, 2025).
The year 2010 marked the beginning of a three-year cycle of delivering priorities outlined for state archives operations by the Director General of State Archives. One such priority concerned efforts to prepare archives for the duty of supervising electronic records (*Sprawozdanie* [*"Report"*], 2010; Kurdyk & Wanic, 2017).

All state archives introduced a professional skills improvement programme for staff responsible for delivering archival oversight tasks; the programme close-

ly reflected *"National Archives Strategy"* assumptions. Moreover, representatives of archival administrative divisions employees had actively joined works to draft the Regulation of the Prime Minister regarding office procedure and archival instructions for central and local government administrative structures. The legislation under design was intended as a foundation for electronic records management at public authorities[3]. The drafting of uniform categorisation-based file plans and defining new record categories required particular commitment. All works were preceded with in-depth analyses of pertinent legal status, and newly-drafted archival expert opinions. All aforesaid operations were delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration. Experience gained when delivering the pilot EZD system at pre-selected regional authorities of Białystok and Rzeszów was significant as well. The pilot project monitoring exercise comprised first-time inspection activities regarding electronic records management solutions applied in EZD systems, archivists from state archives joining the process (*Sprawozdanie*, 2010).

The aforesaid Regulation of the Prime Minister was issued in early 2011. It was the first legal basis to allow central and local government authorities' commitment to electronic records management (ROPIUFPICA). Notably – while the Director General of State Archives had taken prior action with regard to the use of EZD systems, the Regulation was the first one to actually define the system itself[4]. The enactment of the Regulation gave rise to a succession of conferences, training courses and industry-specific meetings organised with intent to disseminate the Regulation's content and clarify practical options of using electronic records management systems. All such activities helped improve computerisation-related competencies of state archive staff, preparing them for the duty of assisting public administration entities. Similar events and projects targeted the staff of authorities generating or preparing to generate electronic records, and/or using EZD systems already (Wolnicki, 2015).

Introducing state-of-the-art solutions in the field of records management was recognised as a key field of activity for the Director General of State Archives in

[3] We consider this piece of legislation groundbreaking in the context of electronic records management by public administration authorities. For more on the topic, see Drzewiecka, 2021 & 2022.

[4] EZD (Electronic Record Management) system – ITC electronic record management solution supporting office procedures, official case proceedings tracking, and the process of gathering and generating electronic records.

the wake of the Council of Ministers having adopted the National Development Strategy for the years 2007-2015. All activities were designed to improve the efficiency of records management processes at entities charged with delivering public tasks, particular attention paid to electronic documentation (Ministry of Regional Development, 2006).

As part of his works on the Operational Programme *Digital Poland*, the Director General of State Archives drafted general assumptions for the *"Electronic Records Archives"* project. The purpose of the endeavour was to prepare state archives for the process of absorbing *"born digital"* electronic records, generated by state authorities during regular operations and intended for long-term preserving. With a view to relieve central and local government bodies of difficulties associated with the long-term preserving of archival materials, the Director General launched initiatives designed to reduce the time of file preservation by record creators (Stępniak, 2013).

System preparation works were contracted with the NASK Research and Academic Computer Network. This Polish research institute was commissioned by the Director General of State Archives, the project specification defined by a team of experts representing the State Archives Head Office and other state archive bodies. System functionality was reviewed in collaboration with selected public administration units of the central and local level who tested the system in case study conditions[5], using electronic record flow-supporting ITC systems. The solution made it possible to assess the compatibility and usefulness of the designed tool. The primary purpose of the pilot phase was to analyse system functionality, including an assessment of compiled metadata quality. The beta testing version was made available online on the National Digital Archives website, which afforded access to other interested entities as well (Wolnicki, 2015).
System tests closed as of the end of 2019. Thereafter, once a training platform had been launched, state archives staff were offered an opportunity to master the Electronic Records Archives system in e-learning format. The education projects coincided with efforts to stabilise the system and secure operational integration with third-party systems (ADE, 2026).

[5] Beta tester institutions included the State Archives Head Office, Municipal Authority of the City of Chorzów, and Municipal Authority of the City of Częstochowa.

Other noteworthy accomplishments include the development of information resources shared on the official State Archives Head Office website. The *"Electronic Record"* tab on the State Archives' site had been active since 2014, its content initially limited to a set of links to legislation regulating the computerisation of public bodies and electronic records handling (Wolnicki, 2015). The subsequent stage of web service development involved the creation of an *"Electronic Records Archives"* tab taking users to reference materials describing the ADE and EZD systems (ADE, 2026). The educational platform was gradually evolving as well, spanning well-organised information and explanations regarding basic record management topics. Designed with public institutions and other entities in mind, the *"Records Management"* tab was of particular importance. It featured resources on electronic record definitions, record management system types, and record manager responsibilities. Other legal regulations were accounted for as well, including provisions regarding records handling in public administration bodies, the destruction of non-archival records, and records valuation. Said content was supplemented with guidelines concerning problematic or ambiguous situations. They also included required office-and-archival procedure samples, drafted both for EZD system units and entities following traditional office models. All resources allowed adaptation for purposes of and implementation at individual organisational units, according to need and the specificity of operations engaged in (*Zarządzanie dokumentacją* [*"Records Management"*], 2026).

When discussing action taken by the Director General of State Archives, one ought to also account for works to amend the National Archival Resource and Archives Act. In 2006, the Act was expanded to include an entry reading that archival materials shall include electronic records. Another pivotal change was introduced in 2011, when the legislator defined *"electronic records management"* for the first time as *"a form of discharging the duty of assuring the registration, preserving and securing of incremental records"*. This meant that solutions produced by the increasingly common IT technologies – usually regulated by lower-level legislation – had secured statutory backing. Furthermore, legislative amendments had introduced a statutory catalogue of required office-and-archival procedures and harmonised the rules of their drafting, providing for the archival administrative bodies' participation in the process (NARA).

In summary, action taken by the Director General of State Archives prior to the year 2019 was of pivotal importance to the process of institutionally preparing public administration bodies for operation in the electronic records management environment. Rather than direct EZD systems management, the Director's role involved the introduction of legal, organisational, educational and infrastructural conditions conducive to their implementation and evolvement. Actions involving the assessment and joint drafting of legislative provisions were of particular importance, just like working to improve levels of competence amongst state archives and public administration staff; disseminate best practices; and design solutions allowing long-term electronic records preservation. In aforementioned context, the Electronic Records Archive ought to be seen as a key outcome of all activities listed: it combines the issue of day-to-day records management with the responsibility of permanent securing archival materials. At the same time, the development of EZD and ADE systems exposed challenges which have remained current also after 2019 – especially in terms of metadata quality, system interoperability, and efficiency of electronic records submission for perpetual preservation. Action taken by the Director General of State Archives ought to thus be assessed in terms of a process intended to gradually build a state-of-the-art public records management model, wherein state archives are more than a resource-preserving institution: they are an active participant of the digital transformation of the administration system.

## AFTERWORD

The analysis described in this paper closes with the year 2019. As indicated in footnote 2, this is when Paweł Pietrzyk took over as Director General of Polish State Archives; he has remained in office ever since. Any reliable assessment of his decisions or performance will be possible once some time has passed; related activities can only be described as recent, making any in-depth or objective evaluation (including direct results or their long-term consequences) unfeasible. That said, selected post-2019 initiatives and actions associated with issues analysed herein can be listed with no precise assessment included. Information presented below should thus not be seen as continuation of the underlying analysis – no more than an addendum, it is intended to highlight the overall direction of changes introduced to state archives in the third decade of the 21st century.

First and foremost, the adoption of the *"National Archives Development Strategy for the Years 2021-2030"* (hereinafter referred to as *"Strategia rozwoju / Development Strategy"*) certainly merits a mention. The Strategy emphasises the need for National Archives to develop new tools associated with overseeing record-generating entities – Electronic Records Management system users. Attention has also been drawn to the demand for improvements to archival staff competencies and adapting their specialisation profiles to the ever-changing conditions of individual task delivery, the shift arising from the computerisation of clerical duties (*Development Strategy*, 2021).

Another operational direction involves the aspect of state archives participating in works to design and implement a uniform Electronic Records Management-class system intended for universal use across public administration institutions. Offered non-commercially since 2022, the EZD RP[6] (*Electronic Records Management for the Republic of Poland*) system is to become a universal and state-of-the-art electronic records management tool intended for general use by Polish public administration. System specification includes comprehensive documentation process handling, including i.a. the generation, flow and management of electronic and hard copy records; individual case file processing; and managing all information gathered. Essential project components include the option of migrating data from other Electronic Records Management-class systems. As reflected in public administration-related digitisation announcements, using Electronic Records Management-class systems by institutions charged with public task delivery shall come into force as of January 1st 2028 (Ministry of Digital Affairs, 2025).

The *Development Strategy* further assumes a boost to the archives' educational role, their offer intended to address users diverse in terms of age and professional communities; archival staff competency expansion; and the use of state-of-the-art educational models, online forms included. The development of a diverse educational offer has been planned, extending to digital forms tailor-made to reflect individual user needs. Related works have also begun with intent to launch an

[6] The Electronic Records Management for the Republic of Poland was developed as part of the *"EZD RP – elektroniczne zarządzanie dokumentacją w administracji publicznej"* (*Electronic Records Management for the Republic of Poland – Electronic Records Management in Public Administration*) IT project delivered by NASK (Scientific and Academic Computer Network) in partnership with the Voivode of the Podlasie Region.

educational archival portal as a state archive educational activity platform (*Development Strategy*, 2021).

One of the *Development Strategy* operational goals involves the development of state-of-the-art legal conditions for state archive operations. The activity schedule includes the drafting of a new National Archival Resource and Archives Law, as well as assumptions and tentative versions of executive regulations. Given the context, the amended National Archival Resource and Archives Law draft approved by the Council of Ministers on July 28th 2026 is of particular importance. Draft solutions embrace the status of digital images (scans) of paper records, principles of handling such records, and requirements for ITC systems, Electronic Records Management systems included (Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland, *Projekt/Draft*, 2026).

In 2026, the Director General of Polish State Archives proclaimed a communication regarding changes to purposes listed in the *Development Strategy*. New operational directions include a concept of state-of-the-art competence-and-training centres designed as institutions offering professional advisory services, knowledge development and qualifications improvement, i.a. in areas of electronic records handling and archiving, and records management (Head Office of State Archives, 2026).

A circular published by the Director General of Polish State Archives merits a mention as well: it lays out guidelines for auditing electronic records handling. These instructions were drafted with intent to offer support to state archives staff responsible for auditing electronic records handling by record-generating entities and facilitate reviews of proper record handling by ITC systems. The document ought to be seen as an example of adapting traditional archival oversight instruments to electronic records environment conditions (Drzewiecka, 2023).

*The Director General of Polish State Archives and Head Office staff attending conferences and other events with a focus on Electronic Records Management systems development remains a pivotal component of state archives operations. Examples include the Forum of Records Management at Public Authorities, a cyclical national conference addressing individuals responsible for information flow, case file compilation, and correspondence handling at public institutions.*

All examples listed herein prove that post-2019 state archive operations include but are not limited to efforts to adapt oversight methods, legal solutions, IT tools and staff competencies to requirements of operating in an increasingly digitised documentation environment. Any evaluation of the efficacy and general usefulness of aforesaid efforts will only be possible in the future.

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## POVZETEK

Prispevek analizira vlogo generalnega direktorja poljskih državnih arhivov pri razvoju elektronskega upravljanja dokumentov v javni upravi do leta 2019. Osredotoča se na pravne, organizacijske, izobraževalne in infrastrukturne ukrepe, ki so omogočali uvajanje sistemov elektronskega upravljanja dokumentov, označenih s kratico EZD. Čeprav generalni direktor ni imel neposrednih pristojnosti za upravljanje teh sistemov, je z arhivskim nadzorom, sodelovanjem pri pripravi predpisov in strokovnim svetovanjem pomembno vplival na pogoje njihovega razvoja.

Raziskava temelji na kvalitativnem opisno-analitičnem pristopu in namenski analizi zakonodaje, strateških dokumentov, poročil, strokovne literature ter informacijskih virov državnih arhivov. Z obravnavo zaporedja in medsebojne povezanosti institucionalnih dejavnosti avtorica pojasnjuje, kako so arhivi sodelovali pri digitalni preobrazbi javne uprave in pripravi na dolgoročno ohranjanje elektronskega arhivskega gradiva.

Na pravnem področju so bili pomembni predpisi o informatizaciji javne uprave, sestavinah elektronskih dokumentov, ravnanju z njimi ter tehničnih zahtevah za njihovo izročanje državnim arhivom. Spremembe arhivske zakonodaje so elektronske dokumente vključile med arhivsko gradivo in elektronskemu upravljanju dokumentov zagotovile zakonsko podlago. Poseben pomen je imel predpis iz leta 2011 o pisarniškem poslovanju, enotnih klasifikacijskih načrtih in delovanju notranjih arhivov, pri pripravi katerega so sodelovali predstavniki državnih arhivov.

Organizacijske in izobraževalne dejavnosti so izhajale predvsem iz strategije državnih arhivov za obdobje 2010–2020. Obsegale so strokovno podporo ustvarjalcem gradiva, širjenje dobrih praks, spremljanje pilotnih uvedb sistemov EZD ter

prilagajanje arhivskega nadzora elektronskemu okolju. Usposabljanja, delavnice, posvetovanja in konference so krepili kompetence zaposlenih v arhivih in javni upravi. Spletni informacijski viri so dodatno omogočali dostop do predpisov, pojasnil, smernic in vzorcev navodil za upravljanje dokumentov.

Ključni infrastrukturni dosežek je bila priprava Arhiva elektronskih dokumentov (ADE), namenjenega prevzemanju in trajnemu ohranjanju izvorno elektronskega arhivskega gradiva. Razvoj je vključeval sodelovanje arhivskih strokovnjakov, raziskovalnega inštituta NASK ter izbranih organov javne uprave. Preizkušanje sistema je omogočilo preverjanje njegove funkcionalnosti, združljivosti z drugimi sistemi in kakovosti metapodatkov. S tem se je vzpostavljala povezava med vsakodnevnim upravljanjem dokumentov pri ustvarjalcih in njihovim trajnim ohranjanjem v državnih arhivih.

Avtorica ugotavlja, da je obravnavane dejavnosti treba razumeti kot postopno oblikovanje temeljev sodobnega upravljanja dokumentov v javni upravi. Državni arhivi so pri tem delovali kot dejavni udeleženci digitalne preobrazbe. Med nadaljnjimi izzivi izpostavlja kakovost metapodatkov, interoperabilnost sistemov in učinkovito izročanje elektronskega gradiva v trajno hrambo. Sklepni dodatek predstavlja izbrane pobude po letu 2019, med drugim razvoj sistema EZD RP, posodobitev nadzornih smernic ter nadaljnje pravne in izobraževalne ukrepe, vendar njihove učinkovitosti še ne vrednoti.

**Mojca Horvat**[1]

# DEVELOPING A MIXED METHODS RESEARCH APPROACH THROUGH ITERATIVE RESEARCH ON ARCHIVAL EXHIBITIONS

***Abstract***

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this article is to present the development of a research approach for studying archival exhibitions from two connected perspectives: those of exhibition authors and those of adult visitors to archival exhibitions. The approach was developed to examine the relationship between authors' intentions and visitors' experiences.*

**Method/approach***: The research follows an iterative approach in which findings and methodological considerations from each stage inform decisions in the following stages. This process allows the research design to evolve as the study progresses and enables quantitative and qualitative methods to be combined in response to the research problem.*

**Results***: The resulting mixed methods approach applies both quantitative and qualitative methods to the perspectives of exhibition authors and visitors. The quantitative component allows the two groups to be compared across a larger sample, while the qualitative component examines authors and visitors of the same exhibitions in greater depth and within the specific context of each exhibition. The integration of the two components makes it possible to compare authors' intended visitor experiences with visitors' reported experiences and provides a more comprehensive basis for answering the research question than either approach alone.*

**Conclusions/findings***: The development of the research design shows the potential of an iterative mixed methods approach for empirical research in archival science. Although the approach can only be fully evaluated after all phases of the research have been completed, it may also be useful for studying archival topics beyond exhibitions.*

**Keywords** *mixed methods research, iterative research design, archival exhibitions, visitor experience*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 ARCHIVAL EXHIBITIONS AND THEIR PUBLIC ROLE

Professional archival literature frequently discusses exhibitions within the broader context of the public role of archives. Based on an analysis of state archives in several German federal states, Lutz (2003, 15–19) found that exhibitions were a regular component of public outreach (*Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*) in all the archives included in her study. In most of these institutions, exhibitions were among the most important means of presenting archives to the public, contributing to their visibility and to their involvement in the cultural life of their communities. Similarly, in the South Korean context, Kim (2009) identifies exhibitions as a central component of archival public programmes and as an effective means of promoting archives to a wider public. Gfrereis (2016, 225) goes further, describing exhibitions as the most visible public presentation of an archive, as they bring archival materials into the public sphere.

More recent research no longer understands the public role of archives primarily in terms of promotional activities but increasingly emphasises the development of more lasting relationships between archives and their communities. Saurombe (2020) examined public programmes in national archives in Eastern and Southern Africa. She identifies archival exhibitions as one form of public programming through which archives present their holdings and services and establish connections with their communities. The purpose of such activities is not limited to promoting archival institutions; they also aim to increase access to archival materials and encourage their use among groups that do not usually visit archives. Public programmes therefore involve more than simply making archival materials available to the public. They can also help archival institutions better understand the needs of their users and adapt their services accordingly (Saurombe, 2020, 35–40). This broader understanding of the public role of archives also draws attention to how audiences engage with and experience archival exhibitions.



**Figure 1: Opening of the exhibition Od urbarjev do fotografij. Photo: Andrej Petelinšek**

## 1.2 RESEARCH ON ARCHIVAL EXHIBITIONS AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Braun (2017) discusses the planning of archival exhibitions. She notes that archivists generally receive little formal training in exhibition development and therefore acquire the necessary knowledge mainly by consulting professional literature, examining practices in other institutions, and gaining experience through their own work. In her view, exhibition development involves defining the objectives of an exhibition programme, preparing exhibition texts, deciding how materials will be presented, and following basic guidelines for their safe display and preservation. The selection of materials is another central challenge. Braun argues that a key criterion should be the story that an individual item can help to tell and what visitors can learn from it (Braun, 2017, 7–11). A more systematic approach to exhibition planning can be found in methodological recommendations developed by Russian archivists. These recommendations treat the archival exhibition as a comprehensive process that includes planning exhibition activities, developing the exhibition concept, selecting archival materials,

preparing the content plan, designing the exhibition space, organising promotion and accompanying activities, and addressing the preservation and protection of exhibited materials (Gerchikova et al., 2024, 42–43).

While the literature discussed above has focused primarily on practical aspects of planning, developing, and presenting archival exhibitions, some studies have also approached archival exhibitions as a subject of empirical research, raising questions about their effectiveness, impact, and visitors' experiences. Howgill (2015) developed a methodological framework for evaluating the effectiveness of physical and virtual archival exhibitions, advocating the use of simple and relatively inexpensive methods such as visitor observation, short structured interviews with visitors, and semi-structured interviews with exhibition authors.

The perspectives of both exhibition authors and visitors are also important in Lester's (2022) understanding of archival exhibitions. He argues that an archival exhibition is not a neutral presentation of archival materials, since the selection, arrangement, and interrelation of documents already involve interpretative decisions by exhibition authors. At the same time, the meaning of an exhibition is shaped not only through its planning and development, but also through the relationship between the exhibited materials and visitors. An exhibition can thus become a space for dialogue, where different perspectives meet and new meanings emerge. Using the example of an exhibition in New South Wales, Lester also suggests that archival exhibitions can have a broader social role, offering the potential to contribute to healing and reconciliation and to empower alternative forms and ways of knowing. In his view, archives gain social significance particularly when they help people develop a sense of identity, belonging, and shared memory (Lester, 2022, 211–216).

Given the limited research on visitors to archival exhibitions, relevant approaches were also sought in related fields, particularly museum and visitor studies. An important framework for understanding and evaluating learning in museums, libraries, and archives is provided by the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO). Originally established in 2003 and updated in 2026, the framework adopts a broad understanding of learning, encompassing six interconnected areas:

- Knowledge and Understanding,
- Skills,

- Attitudes and Values,
- Enjoyment, Inspiration and Creativity,
- Activity, Behaviour and Progression,
- Sensory Engagement.

It therefore extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge to include emotional, value-related, creative, behavioural, and sensory aspects of the visitor experience.

Within museum and visitor studies, several approaches have been developed to examine and understand visitor experience (Pekarik et al., 1999; Packer & Ballantyne, 2002; Thoma, 2009). Drawing on this research tradition, Othman (2011) developed the Museum Experience Scale (MES) using a standard psychometric scale-development procedure. The initial pool of items was derived from previous research on museum and visitor experiences, including the work of Pekarik, Doering and Karns (1999), as well as the Generic Learning Outcomes framework. Following an initial reduction of items, 255 respondents evaluated their recent museum experiences, and principal component analysis was used to identify the underlying dimensions of visitor experience. The resulting MES consists of 20 items grouped into four dimensions:

- Engagement,
- Knowledge/Learning,
- Meaningful Experiences,
- Emotional Connection.

### 1.3 RESEARCH GAP

The literature reviewed for this study did not identify previous research on archival exhibitions that systematically compared exhibition authors' intentions with visitors' experiences. This indicates a need for a research approach that brings these two perspectives together and enables the relationship between intended and actual visitor experiences to be examined. The approach presented in this article was developed in response to this research gap.

### 1.4 AIM AND RESEARCH FOCUS

The aim of this article is to present the iterative development of a mixed methods research approach for the study of archival exhibitions. It describes the method-

ological decisions that shaped the research design and explains the rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative methods within a single research framework.

Archival exhibitions are generally created with particular intentions regarding what visitors should experience, learn, or take away from them. This raises an important question: do visitors experience an exhibition in the way its authors intended and expected? Simply recording visitor numbers cannot answer this question or provide insight into whether an exhibition has achieved its intended aims. The research approach presented in this article was developed to address the following central research question: To what extent do the intentions of archival exhibition authors correspond with adult visitors' experiences and informal[2] learning during exhibition visits?

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

To address the research question, a mixed methods research design was developed combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the initial phase, the quantitative component will provide comparable measures of selected dimensions of authors' expectations and visitors' experiences using the Museum Experience Scale (MES). The qualitative component, which forms the central part of the research, will then provide a more in-depth understanding of how authors plan exhibitions, how visitors experience them, and how informal learning is reflected in visitors' accounts.

The study will follow an iterative research approach in which data collection, analysis, and interpretation proceed progressively, with findings from one stage informing subsequent stages, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009, 77; Busetto et al., 2020).

[2] Informal learning is a natural accompaniment to everyday life and, unlike formal and non-formal learning, is not necessarily intentional. Individuals may therefore not recognise it as learning, although it contributes to their knowledge and skills (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, 8–9).

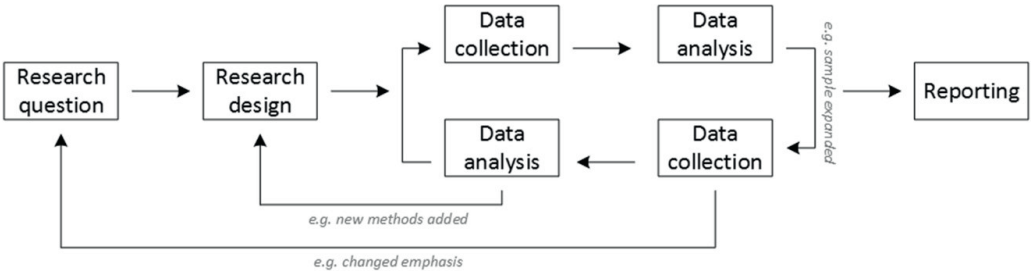



**Figure 2. Iterative Research Approach**
**Source: Busetto et al. (2020)**

The first phase will involve questionnaires for exhibition authors and visitors, followed by semi-structured interviews with both groups and visitor diaries. The study follows an iterative mixed methods design with a sequential structure: findings from the quantitative phase inform the subsequent qualitative phase, while findings emerging within the qualitative phase further guide subsequent data collection and analysis.

The research design was not developed as a fixed framework at the outset but evolved through a series of methodological decisions and adjustments, as described in the following section.

## 2.2 ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH APPROACH

The research focuses and methodological design evolved considerably during the development of the study. The initial research idea concerned the role of emotions in different areas of archival work. This focus was subsequently narrowed to archival exhibitions, which provide a setting in which archival materials are deliberately selected, interpreted, and presented to the public and in which the responses of visitors can be explored.

An early version of the research design therefore focused primarily on visitors' emotional responses to archival exhibitions. During the development of the research approach, however, this focus was reconsidered because of the methodological challenges involved in operationalising and measuring emotions within the planned research design. The focus was consequently broadened from emotional responses to the more comprehensive concept of visitor experience, allowing cognitive, emotional, and meaning-related aspects of the exhibition experience to be examined together rather than treating emotional responses as

a separate phenomenon. This conceptual shift was accompanied by a series of methodological adjustments that gradually shaped the quantitative component of the research.

### 2.2.1 Delphi study

As an initial stage of the research, a two-round Delphi study was conducted with eight experts from Slovenian archives. The Delphi method, which aims to develop consensus among a group of experts, was selected because it is particularly useful in the early stages of research for identifying issues and establishing priorities (Okoli and Pawlowski, 2004, 26). The participants were professionals with several years of experience in developing archival exhibitions and represented different archival institutions in Slovenia: one expert from each regional archive, one from the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, and one from an archdiocesan archive.

The Delphi study was based on an initial questionnaire for exhibition authors developed specifically for this research. It included statements concerning the aims of exhibitions and expected visitor responses, the selection of archival materials for display, the use of original documents or reproductions, and online exhibitions. The experts were asked to review the questionnaire and suggest changes or additions. Their comments were analysed to identify key themes and areas of emphasis, which subsequently informed the revision of the questionnaire. Based on this process, a revised questionnaire for authors of archival exhibitions was developed.

However, this did not make the findings of the Delphi study irrelevant to the subsequent research. The issues and themes identified through the expert consultation were retained and will be used to inform the qualitative component, particularly the development of the semi-structured interviews with exhibition authors.

### 2.2.2 Development and reconsideration of the initial questionnaire

Although the revised questionnaire was grounded in expert knowledge and consensus obtained through the Delphi study, its measurement properties had not been empirically tested. Empirical testing is an important step in questionnaire development, as it provides evidence about the reliability and validity of an instrument and supports the interpretation of the results (Field, 2018, Section 1.6.4). The decision to use the questionnaire as the main quantitative instrument was therefore reconsidered, and it was ultimately not used in the subsequent quantitative study.

### 2.2.3 Adoption and adaptation of the Museum Experience Scale

Instead, the Museum Experience Scale (MES) developed by Othman et al. (2011) was selected as the quantitative instrument. As described in Section 1.2, the MES was developed using standard psychometric procedures and measures four dimensions of museum visitor experience.

An important advantage of the MES for the present research is that it offers a common conceptual framework for examining the perspectives of exhibition authors and visitors, thereby providing a basis for comparison between the two groups. The original MES, developed to measure visitors' experiences in museums, was adapted to measure the experiences of visitors to archival exhibitions. A corresponding version was then developed for authors of archival exhibitions. Both versions retained the same underlying dimensions and corresponding items, while the statements in the authors' version were reformulated so that authors evaluated the visitor experience they intended to create rather than their own experience of the exhibition.

The corresponding questionnaires therefore allow the quantitative analysis to address two questions: whether the individual MES dimensions predict the overall assessment of the exhibition among authors and visitors, and whether authors' intended visitor experiences differ from visitors' reported experiences across the four MES dimensions.

## 2.3 QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT

### 2.3.1 Authors

The adapted MES questionnaire described in Section 2.2.3 was used to examine exhibition authors' intended visitor experiences across the four MES dimensions. The questionnaire was available online in Slovenian and English and was distributed by email to archivists in Slovenia and other countries. Respondents rated the statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire also included a single item on overall satisfaction with the exhibition and questions on respondents' age, gender, country, and previous experience in preparing archival exhibitions.

Participation was limited to respondents who had experience as authors or co-authors of archival exhibitions. Respondents were instructed to select one exhibition

they had authored or co-authored that had remained particularly memorable to them and to answer all MES items with that exhibition in mind. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was provided through completion and submission of the questionnaire after participants had received information about the study.

Participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling, with the questionnaire distributed through professional networks and existing contacts in Slovenia and internationally (Ambrož, 2023, 96). Data were collected between 5 May and 19 June 2026. The initial target sample was 130 respondents; however, the final sample comprised 179 completed questionnaires.

### 2.3.2 Visitors

The adapted MES questionnaire described in Section 2.2.3 was used to examine visitors' experiences across the four MES dimensions. Visitors rated the statements on the same five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and an additional item measured their overall satisfaction with the exhibition. The questionnaire also collected information on visitors' age, gender, education, frequency of archival visits, and the exhibition visited.

Participants were recruited through voluntary response sampling, with visitors deciding independently whether to participate (McCombes, 2019; Nikolopoulou, 2022). Participation was limited to adult visitors. Questionnaires with missing responses to the MES items required for the quantitative analysis were excluded from the final analytical sample. The questionnaire was available in Slovenian in both paper and electronic formats.

Data were collected between 21 May and 11 August 2026 from visitors to nine archival exhibitions, including one online exhibition. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the authors of all nine exhibitions. The initial target sample was 130 respondents; however, the final analytical sample comprised 174 respondents. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was provided through completion and submission of the questionnaire after participants had received information about the study.

### 2.3.3 Statistical analysis

Closed-ended questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values. For each

MES dimension, a mean score was calculated from its four corresponding items and used in subsequent analyses. Overall satisfaction with the exhibition was measured by a single additional item. Descriptive statistics were also calculated according to selected demographic and other relevant characteristics of participants, including age and gender in both groups, authors' country and previous experience in preparing archival exhibitions, and visitors' education and frequency of archival visits. For visitors, descriptive comparisons were also examined in relation to the exhibition visited. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine associations between the individual MES dimensions. The sample sizes exceeded the recommended minimum ratio of observations to predictors for multiple regression analysis (Field, 2017, Section 9.5). Before conducting the regression analyses, relevant assumptions, including linearity, absence of multicollinearity, independence of residuals, and homoscedasticity, were examined (Field, 2017, Section 9.4.1).

Multiple regression analysis was conducted separately for visitors and exhibition authors to examine the extent to which ratings on the four MES dimensions predicted overall satisfaction with the exhibition (Field, 2017, Section 9.9). Differences between authors and visitors across the individual MES dimensions were examined using Welch's independent-samples t-test, which does not assume equal variances between groups (Field, 2017, Section 10.5). Given that the MES dimension scores were derived from Likert-scale items and that some distributions showed asymmetry, the comparisons were additionally examined using the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test (Field, 2017, Section 7.4) as a robustness check.

Descriptive statistics, multiple regression analyses, and Welch's t-tests were performed in Microsoft Excel (Microsoft 365), with the Analysis ToolPak used for the regression analyses and t-tests.

## 2.4 QUALITATIVE COMPONENT

At the time of writing, the quantitative component of the study had been completed, while the qualitative component described below had been designed but not yet conducted. The qualitative component will examine authors' intentions and visitors' experiences and informal learning in relation to the same archival exhibitions. It will combine interviews with exhibition authors and visitors, visitor diaries, and analysis of the exhibitions themselves and related materials.

### 2.4.1 Selection of archival exhibitions

Six archival exhibitions will be selected purposively to provide a diverse set of cases in terms of exhibition format, content, institutional context, and other relevant characteristics. This variation will allow different exhibition contexts and characteristics to be examined in greater depth. In line with the iterative research design, the selection will also be informed by patterns and contrasts identified in the quantitative phase.

To be included, exhibitions will need to be accessible to visitors during the study's data collection period and located in Slovenia. The selection will seek to include different types of archival institutions. No more than one exhibition will be selected from the same institution.

### 2.4.2 Interviews with exhibition authors

Semi-structured interviews of up to 30 minutes will be conducted with authors of the six selected exhibitions. As individual exhibitions may have several authors, the number of author interviews will not be fixed in advance. Where an exhibition has multiple authors, additional authors will be interviewed as needed until further interviews no longer provide substantially new themes or relevant insights, following the principle of data saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Saunders et al., 2018). The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

The semi-structured format will combine predefined guiding questions with open-ended discussion (Mesec, 1998, 80; Ambrož, 2023, 128), allowing authors' intentions, experiences, and reflections to be explored while retaining sufficient comparability across interviews. The interview guide will incorporate relevant themes identified through the Delphi study. Participants will also be given space to introduce issues not anticipated in the interview guide, allowing additional themes and perspectives to emerge.

### 2.4.3 Interviews with visitors

Short semi-structured interviews of up to 10 minutes will be conducted with visitors to the six selected exhibitions after the interviews with the respective exhibition authors have been completed. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and will explore visitors' personal impressions, exhibition experiences, and learning during the visit (Salomão, 2023).

In line with the iterative research design, the visitor interviews will combine a common set of guiding questions with questions developed in response to findings from preceding stages of the research. In particular, issues or themes emerging from interviews with the authors of a specific exhibition may be explored with visitors to that same exhibition. The interview questions will therefore not be identical for all participants, allowing exhibition-specific issues to be examined while retaining sufficient common ground for comparison across interviews.

Approximately 6–10 visitor interviews are initially planned, with at least one visitor interviewed at each selected exhibition. Additional interviews may be conducted where needed to explore emerging themes or contrasting perspectives in greater depth. Visitors will be recruited through convenience sampling based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. Within the constraints of convenience sampling, efforts will be made to include visitors representing relevant differences identified in the quantitative phase and a diversity of demographic and other characteristics (McCombes, 2019; Nikolopoulou, 2022). Participation will be limited to adults and will be voluntary. Before the interview, participants will provide written informed consent.

### 2.4.4 Visitor diaries

Diary entries will be collected from visitors who have previously participated in the semi-structured interviews. The diary method was selected to extend data collection beyond the immediate exhibition visit and to provide additional insight into visitors' experiences and informal learning after the visit (Mesec, 1998, 343–375; Ambrož, 2023, 131; McCombie et al., 2024).

Participants will be invited to complete their diaries in paper or electronic form, according to their preference. Guiding questions will encourage them to reflect on their observations and experiences during the exhibition, their impressions after the visit, and any new knowledge or insights gained. These questions will provide a degree of comparability while allowing participants to express their experiences in their own way. Diary entries will be completed after a time interval following the exhibition visit in order to explore which impressions, reflections, and newly acquired knowledge remain beyond the immediate experience. In line with the iterative research design, the timing of subsequent diary entries may be adjusted on the basis of the initial data collection.

### 2.4.5 Analysis of exhibition content and presentation

The six selected exhibitions will also be analysed through their exhibited materials, exhibition texts, captions, catalogues, spatial arrangement, and other relevant elements. Data will be collected through direct observation of the exhibitions, photography, and documentation of the arrangement and presentation of exhibits. The analysis will include examining the content and meaning of exhibition texts and comparing relevant elements within and across exhibitions (Roblek, 2009, 57). This analysis will provide contextual information for comparing authors' intentions with visitors' experiences and interpretations.

### 2.4.6 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data will primarily be analysed using a grounded theory approach, allowing patterns and categories to emerge from the data (Mesec, 1998, 52–53; Mesec, 2023, 58–62). The analysis will include interview transcripts, visitor diary entries, responses to open-ended questionnaire questions, and relevant exhibition content and presentation materials described in Section 2.4.5. ATLAS.ti (version 25) will be used to support coding, the organisation of categories, and the identification and visualisation of relationships between them. The GLO framework and MES dimensions will then be used as additional conceptual frameworks for interpreting and comparing the categories that emerge from the data, particularly in relation to visitors' experiences and informal learning.

The reporting of the interview component will follow the COREQ guidelines (Tong et al., 2007). A subset of the qualitative material will be independently coded by a second researcher, and inter-coder agreement will be assessed using Cohen's kappa (McHugh, 2012). Systematic documentation of the analytical process in ATLAS.ti and comparison across multiple qualitative data sources will further support the transparency and rigour of the analysis.

## 2.5 INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE COMPONENTS

The research is based on the comparison of two perspectives: those of archival exhibition authors and their visitors. Both perspectives are examined using quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative component provides a broader comparison based on data from a larger number of participants and, in the case of

exhibition authors, extends the study beyond Slovenia. The corresponding MES-based questionnaires enable authors' intended visitor experiences to be compared with visitors' reported experiences across the four dimensions of the scale.

The standardised questionnaire, however, cannot fully capture the specific characteristics and contexts of different archival exhibitions. The quantitative comparison therefore serves not only to identify broader patterns of correspondence and difference between authors and visitors, but also to inform the subsequent qualitative phase. In line with the iterative research design, issues that remain insufficiently explained by the quantitative findings can be explored in greater depth through qualitative methods.

The quantitative findings will also inform aspects of case selection and the selection of participants for the qualitative phase. Relevant characteristics include age and gender in both groups, authors' country and previous experience in preparing archival exhibitions, and visitors' education, frequency of archival visits, and the exhibition visited. Where notable differences or patterns are identified, the qualitative sampling strategy will seek to include contrasting perspectives. Where such differences are not evident, greater emphasis may be placed on other characteristics or contrasts emerging from the quantitative findings. In this way, the quantitative phase will inform subsequent sampling decisions rather than merely precede the qualitative phase.

The qualitative component will focus on six exhibitions as individual cases and will bring together three closely related perspectives: the exhibition itself, including exhibited materials, exhibition texts, captions, catalogues, spatial arrangement, and other relevant elements; its author or authors; and visitors to the same exhibition. Data collection will proceed iteratively. The analysis of each exhibition will inform the interviews with its author or authors, while issues emerging from these interviews may subsequently be explored with visitors to the same exhibition. The six cases will be selected to provide diversity in exhibition types, authors, and visitor perspectives. Following the analysis of each individual case, findings across the six cases will be compared and integrated to identify recurring patterns as well as differences related to particular exhibition contexts.

## 2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participation in all components of the study is voluntary. Questionnaire data from both authors and visitors were collected anonymously. Participants in the qualitative component will provide written informed consent before participation and will be informed about the purpose of the study, the use and storage of their data, and their right to withdraw. Visitor data will be anonymised in the reporting of the findings. Due to the identification of the exhibitions examined in the qualitative component, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed for exhibition authors, who may be identifiable through their association with a particular exhibition. Authors will therefore be explicitly informed of this limitation before providing consent to participate. Audio recordings, transcripts, diary entries, and other research data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and the research supervisors.

## 2.7. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Several methodological limitations should be considered. First, the literature review was constrained by the accessibility and language of available publications. The review primarily included literature in Slovenian, German, English and Croatian. Exceptionally, publications in other languages were considered when their abstracts indicated particular relevance; in such cases, AI-assisted translation was used, with the recognition that this may have introduced inaccuracies in interpretation.

A second limitation concerns sampling and generalisability. Although the quantitative sample sizes were sufficient for the statistical analyses conducted, participants were not selected through probability sampling. The findings therefore cannot be assumed to be representative of the wider populations of archival exhibition authors and visitors. Furthermore, exhibition authors were asked to respond with reference to an exhibition that had remained particularly memorable to them. Their responses may therefore reflect particularly salient exhibition experiences rather than their typical exhibition practice. In the qualitative phase, participation will likewise depend on participants' availability and willingness to take part, which may affect the diversity of perspectives represented. In addition, the six exhibitions selected for in-depth study will be limited to exhibitions accessible in Slovenia during the data collection period. The range of available

exhibition themes, formats, institutions, and settings will consequently influence the selection of cases.

Further limitations arise from the instruments and concepts used in the study. The MES was originally developed for museum visitors and therefore required adaptation to the context of archival exhibitions. A separate limitation arises from the considerable diversity of archival exhibitions themselves. Even after adaptation, some MES items may be less applicable to particular exhibition formats, as not all archival exhibitions include original archival materials or visual elements such as exhibition panels, maps, posters, or other graphic materials. An additional limitation concerns the adapted version of the MES for exhibition authors. While visitors report their own experiences, authors are asked to assess the visitor experiences they intended or expected when designing an exhibition. The two perspectives are therefore conceptually related but not fully equivalent.

The study also addresses phenomena that are inherently difficult to capture. Exhibition experience and informal learning depend partly on visitors' subjective perceptions and retrospective accounts, while informal learning may occur without being consciously recognised as learning. Authors' accounts of their intentions may likewise be influenced by retrospective interpretation or by a tendency to present their exhibition-making decisions in a favourable light. These characteristics require caution when interpreting correspondence or differences between authors' and visitors' accounts.

The qualitative component is intended to address some of the limitations of the standardised quantitative approach by examining six exhibitions in their specific contexts and integrating evidence from the exhibitions themselves, their authors, and their visitors. The purpose of this phase is not statistical generalisation from a small number of cases, but an in-depth examination of how patterns identified quantitatively can be interpreted, contextualised, or challenged within particular exhibition contexts. Comparison across the six cases may subsequently reveal recurring patterns as well as context-specific differences.

## 3. DISCUSSION

Archival institutions in Slovenia regularly prepare exhibitions, yet scholarly literature and empirical research on archival exhibitions remain limited (Potočnik,

2004; Valadžija, 2024; Horvat, 2024). The research approach presented here seeks to contribute to a more systematic empirical investigation of archival exhibitions by shifting attention beyond their preparation, content, and professional principles towards their reception by visitors and the experiences and learning associated with them. This perspective may become increasingly relevant as digital technologies enable a growing variety of virtual exhibitions, interactive presentations, and other forms of engagement with digitised archival materials. Although these formats differ from physical exhibitions, questions concerning visitor engagement, experience, and learning remain relevant across different forms of presenting archival materials.

Against this background, the study also contributes to methodological discussion within archival science by combining mixed methods with an iterative research design. An important advantage of iteration is its capacity to respond to findings and methodological issues that emerge during the research process. Rather than treating individual stages as separate and predetermined steps, findings from one stage can inform decisions made in subsequent stages. This is particularly valuable in the study of archival exhibitions, where a standardised quantitative approach enables broader comparison but cannot fully capture the diversity and contextual specificities of individual exhibitions. Iteration allows these broader patterns to be examined in greater depth in subsequent qualitative research and enables questions emerging at individual exhibitions to be explored from the perspectives of both authors and visitors.

Iteration also provides opportunities for methodological reflection and adjustment. Decisions made at an earlier stage can be reconsidered when subsequent methodological evaluation reveals limitations, as illustrated in this study by the replacement of the questionnaire initially developed through the Delphi study with the MES as the quantitative instrument. The iterative design therefore enables methodological responsiveness while maintaining a coherent relationship between the different components of the research. At the same time, such responsiveness requires methodological decisions and changes made during the research process to be documented transparently.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods provides a further advantage. A quantitative approach alone can offer a broader comparative perspec-

tive but cannot adequately account for the specific characteristics and contexts of individual exhibitions. A qualitative approach can provide in-depth contextual understanding but does not offer the same breadth of comparison across larger groups of authors and visitors. Combining the two therefore provides a more comprehensive basis for examining the relationship between authors' intentions and visitors' experiences than either approach could provide independently.

The research approach presented in this article cannot yet be fully evaluated, as the qualitative phase and final integration of the data have not been completed. Its relevance, however, may extend beyond the specific context of archival exhibitions. Klasinc (2011) argues that the development of archival science as a scientific discipline requires a clear understanding of the subject, reasons, and methods of research, and emphasises the need to distinguish professional activities from scientific research within the archival field. From this perspective, the approach presented here illustrates how a research problem arising from archival practice can be addressed through an explicit and systematically developed empirical methodology. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods within an iterative design may therefore offer methodological possibilities for investigating other research questions in archival science, although its broader applicability would need to be examined in further research.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This article has presented the development of an iterative mixed methods approach for investigating archival exhibitions from the perspectives of both exhibition authors and visitors. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods and allowing findings and methodological considerations from individual stages to inform subsequent research decisions, the approach is designed to examine the relationship between authors' intentions and visitors' experiences and informal learning from both a broader comparative and an in-depth contextual perspective.

As the qualitative phase has not yet been completed, the usefulness of the research approach can only be fully assessed after the integration of all research components. The completed study will allow a fuller assessment of both its contribution to the understanding of archival exhibitions and its potential relevance for empirical research in archival science more broadly.

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## POVZETEK

Arhivske razstave so tradicionalno pomemben del javnega delovanja arhivov, saj omogočajo predstavljanje arhivskega gradiva in arhivskih ustanov širšemu občinstvu. Novejši pristopi jih razumejo širše, tudi kot prostore interpretacije in dialoga, v katerih se srečujejo pogledi avtorjev razstav in obiskovalcev ter se lahko oblikujejo pomeni, povezani z identiteto, pripadnostjo in skupnim spominom. Kljub temu so empirične raziskave arhivskih razstav razmeroma redke, zlasti tiste, ki proučujejo tako namere avtorjev razstav kot izkušnje obiskovalcev. Prispevek predstavlja razvoj raziskovalnega pristopa z mešanimi metodami, zasnovanega za povezovanje teh dveh perspektiv in proučevanje razmerja med izkušnjami, ki jih avtorji želijo omogočiti obiskovalcem, ter izkušnjami, o katerih poročajo obiskovalci.

Raziskovalna zasnova se je razvijala iterativno, pri čemer so ugotovitve in metodološki premisleki iz posameznih faz usmerjali nadaljnje odločitve. Začetna raziskava po metodi Delphi s strokovnjaki iz slovenskih arhivskih ustanov je bila namenjena prepoznavanju pomembnih vprašanj pri pripravi in dojemanju arhivskih razstav ter oblikovanju vprašalnika za njihove avtorje. Čeprav ta vprašalnik pozneje ni bil uporabljen kot glavni kvantitativni instrument, ker njegove merske lastnosti niso bile empirično preverjene, ugotovitve raziskave Delphi ostajajo pomembne in bodo usmerjale tudi kvalitativno fazo raziskave.

Za kvantitativni del je bila kontekstu arhivskih razstav prilagojena lestvica muzejske izkušnje (Museum Experience Scale – MES), prvotno razvita za obiskovalce muzejev. Pripravljena sta bila vsebinsko usklajena vprašalnika za avtorje razstav in obiskovalce, ki omogočata primerjavo istih štirih razsežnosti izkušnje obiskovalcev: vključenosti, znanja oziroma učenja, doživetij z osebnim pomenom in čustvene povezanosti. Kvantitativna faza vključuje opisno statistiko, korelacijske in regresijske analize ter primerjave med avtorji in obiskovalci. Njene ugotovitve omogočajo širši vpogled ter usmerjajo izbor in vsebinske poudarke nadaljnje kvalitativne faze.

Kvalitativni del bo podrobneje proučil šest arhivskih razstav v Sloveniji. Združeval bo analizo vsebine in načina predstavitve razstav, polstrukturirane intervjuje z avtorji in obiskovalci ter dnevnike obiskovalcev. Zbiranje in analiza podatkov bosta potekala iterativno, kar bo omogočalo nadaljnje raziskovanje vprašanj, pre-

poznanih v posamezni fazi, ter njihovo obravnavo z različnih vidikov. Ugotovitve šestih študij primerov bodo nato medsebojno primerjane in povezane s kvantitativnimi rezultati.

Pristop združuje širše možnosti primerjave, ki jih ponuja kvantitativno raziskovanje, s poglobljenim razumevanjem konteksta, ki ga omogoča kvalitativno proučevanje. Namenjen je prepoznavanju podobnosti in razlik med namerami avtorjev ter izkušnjami obiskovalcev, pa tudi raziskovanju, kako se ta razmerja oblikujejo v konkretnih razstavnih kontekstih. Ker kvalitativna faza še ni zaključena, pristopa še ni mogoče v celoti ovrednotiti. Kljub temu njegov razvoj kaže potencial iterativne zasnove z mešanimi metodami za sistematično empirično raziskovanje arhivskih razstav in lahko ponudi metodološke možnosti za proučevanje drugih raziskovalnih vprašanj v arhivistiki.

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ATLANTI+ is an international scientific journal for modern archival theory and practice with an international editorial board, jointly published by the International Institute of Archival Science Trieste – Maribor (hereinafter MIAZ) and Alma Mater Europaea – European Centre Maribor.

The journal ATLANTI + is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes only original scientific articles and is published twice a year.

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The length of the article should not be shorter than 8 typed pages (or 15,000 characters with spaces) and should not exceed 16 typed pages (or 30,000 characters with spaces) including tables, figures, and a list of references.

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The article should contain an abstract and keywords in English and in the author's native language (if the article is written in the author's native language).

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  **Example:**

  **Abstract**

  **Purpose:** Archival science and Museum science in museums are working in close cooperation. In the process of…

  **Method/approach:** The method used in our article is case study, with which we demonstrated the usefulness of archival science in museums in practice…

  **Results:** Description of archival records has an important role in museum archives and storage rooms, since it allows employees to…

  **Conclusions/findings:** Museum and Archival science work closely together in museums and they need each other… Due to this, it is possible for the archivist and curator documentarist to look for common solutions in the field of record/documentation management and storage.

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- **The text of the article** should contain a minimum of 15,000 and a maximum of 30,000 characters with spaces. The text should be written in Times New Roman, font size 12. The level of paragraphs should reflect the organization of the article. The chapters of the contribution can be divided into subsections, the numbering should be in accordance with the SIST ISO 2145 and SIST ISO 690 standards (eg. 1, 1.1, 1.1.1, etc.).
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