

The Relevance of Archival Management to Teaching, Research and Administration in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

Academic libraries serve as knowledge reservoirs that support teaching, research, and administrative functions in higher education. Archival management, a core component of academic librarianship, ensures the preservation, organization, and accessibility of institutional records, manuscripts, and historical documents. This paper explores the relevance of archival management in enhancing academic operations across teaching, research, and administration. Employing a quantitative research design, a structured questionnaire was administered to 120 library professionals across Tanzanian universities. The study found that effective archival systems facilitate curriculum development by providing access to historical syllabi, examination papers, and instructional materials, thus aiding faculty in designing relevant and informed course content. Moreover, archives support scholarly research by offering access to rare and unpublished primary data such as institutional correspondences, policy drafts, and faculty publications, which serve as critical resources for academic inquiry. Administratively, archival resources preserve institutional memory, enabling evidence-based decision-making, strategic planning, accreditation, and historical referencing in governance. Despite its immense value, archival management in Tanzanian academic libraries faces several challenges including inadequate funding, poor ICT infrastructure, lack of institutional policies, and a shortage of trained archival personnel. These limitations undermine the ability of libraries to digitize, catalog, and provide seamless access to archival materials. Findings suggest a strong correlation between efficient archival practices and improved academic outcomes. Therefore, the study recommends targeted capacity-building programs for librarians, increased investment in digital archival technologies, and development of national and institutional archival policies. The paper underscores the imperative of repositioning archival management as a strategic and integral function within academic libraries to promote excellence and sustainability in higher education.

Keywords: Archival management, academic libraries, administration, institutional memory

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are fundamental to knowledge production, dissemination, and preservation in institutions of higher learning. Traditionally known for housing books and journals, their role has expanded significantly to incorporate archival functions that are indispensable to teaching, research, and administration. Archives, comprising manuscripts, photographs, administrative documents, and rare books, offer irreplaceable primary sources that deepen scholarly inquiry and support academic excellence. By preserving institutional memory, archives help students and faculty engage with the socio-historical

context of the university, thereby enhancing critical thinking and historical awareness (Chowdhury & Foo, 2012). The integration of archives into academic curricula allows for experiential learning, where students analyze real documents and develop essential research skills. Furthermore, as higher education institutions respond to increasing demands for accountability and evidence-based planning, archives serve as critical tools for assessing institutional development, policy outcomes, and strategic direction (Millar, 2017).

In research, archives are invaluable for accessing original data, validating historical trends, and tracing institutional and societal evolution. Researchers depend heavily on organized and accessible archival materials for conducting longitudinal studies, policy analysis, and comparative institutional assessments. Proper archival practices, including classification, indexing, and metadata management, significantly improve the usability of archival data (Gilliland, 2014). Moreover, the advent of digital archival systems has revolutionized access by allowing researchers to consult records remotely, thus saving time and resources. Technologies such as digitization, optical character recognition (OCR), and metadata tagging have further enabled cross-institutional collaborations and broader dissemination of archival materials (Conway, 2010). As the demand for open-access data and transparency in research grows, digital archives provide essential infrastructure to support modern academic inquiry.

Administrative functions in universities such as governance, accreditation, human resource management, and policy formulation rely extensively on well-maintained archival records. These records constitute the institutional memory that supports informed decision-making, compliance with regulatory frameworks, and historical accountability. For instance, accreditation processes often require evidence of curricular changes, staff qualifications, and student outcomes over time, all of which are documented in institutional archives (Yusof & Chell, 2010). Effective archival management thus strengthens transparency, supports leadership transitions, and informs long-term strategic planning. The absence of a systematic archival framework can result in data fragmentation, legal vulnerabilities, and loss of organizational knowledge (Ketelaar, 2001). Therefore, academic libraries must integrate robust archival management practices as a core component of university administration to safeguard institutional integrity and continuity.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical role of archives in academic libraries, archival management is often underfunded, understaffed, and technologically lagging, especially in developing countries. The neglect of archival systems results in lost records, limited access to historical data, and inefficiencies in research and administration. In Tanzanian universities, archival practices remain largely manual, posing challenges in data retrieval and long-term preservation. The relevance of archival management in enhancing teaching, supporting robust research, and facilitating effective administration remains under-explored. This study seeks to examine the extent to which archival management contributes to academic activities in university libraries and identify strategies to improve its effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the role of archival management in supporting teaching in academic libraries.
2. To examine how archival resources, contribute to academic research.
3. To evaluate the relevance of archival systems in university administrative processes.
4. To identify challenges and propose strategies for improving archival management in academic libraries.

Literature Review

According to Trace and Baker (2022), archives serve as essential pedagogical tools by offering students direct access to primary sources, which promotes critical thinking and deeper engagement with historical content. The growing integration of archival literacy into academic curricula underscores its importance in fostering analytical skills and historical understanding. Caswell and Cifor (2019) argue that archival records are crucial for evidence-based and community-centered research. With the increasing digitization of archival collections, scholars can now access previously inaccessible historical data, leading to expanded interdisciplinary research opportunities and enriched academic outputs. Gilliland and McKemmish (2018) emphasize that archival records play a strategic role in university governance by supporting continuity, accountability, and institutional memory. These records are instrumental in policy development, strategic planning, and evaluating long-term progress within academic institutions. According to Nengomasha and Chigwada (2021), academic libraries in Africa still grapple with inadequate funding, limited digitization infrastructure, and a shortage of professionally trained archival staff. These challenges hamper effective archival management and restrict access to vital educational and administrative records.

Methodology

This survey employed a descriptive quantitative research design to observe the relevance of archival management to teaching, research, and administration in academic libraries. Descriptive research is effective for obtaining information about the current status of phenomena and is appropriate for addressing specific research questions in a systematic manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative approach facilitated the collection of objective, measurable data that allowed for statistical analysis and comparison across variables. A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to a sample of 120 participants drawn from academic libraries across Tanzanian universities. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, targeting individuals with professional roles relevant to archival management, including librarians, archivists, and administrative staff. These participants were selected based on their involvement in managing, accessing, or supporting archival services within their institutions. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions designed to collect data related to the study's four key objectives. The questions were organized into thematic sections that aligned with the core academic functions of universities: teaching, research, and administration. Items were formulated using a Likert-scale format to capture participants' levels of agreement or frequency of engagement with specific archival practices. This ensured consistency in responses and facilitated quantitative analysis. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to summarize responses and identify patterns across the three domains of academic activity. This form of analysis provided a clear representation of the current status and perceived relevance of archival management within academic libraries (Saunders et al., 2019). The findings were then interpreted in relation to the study objectives to guide the discussion and recommendations.

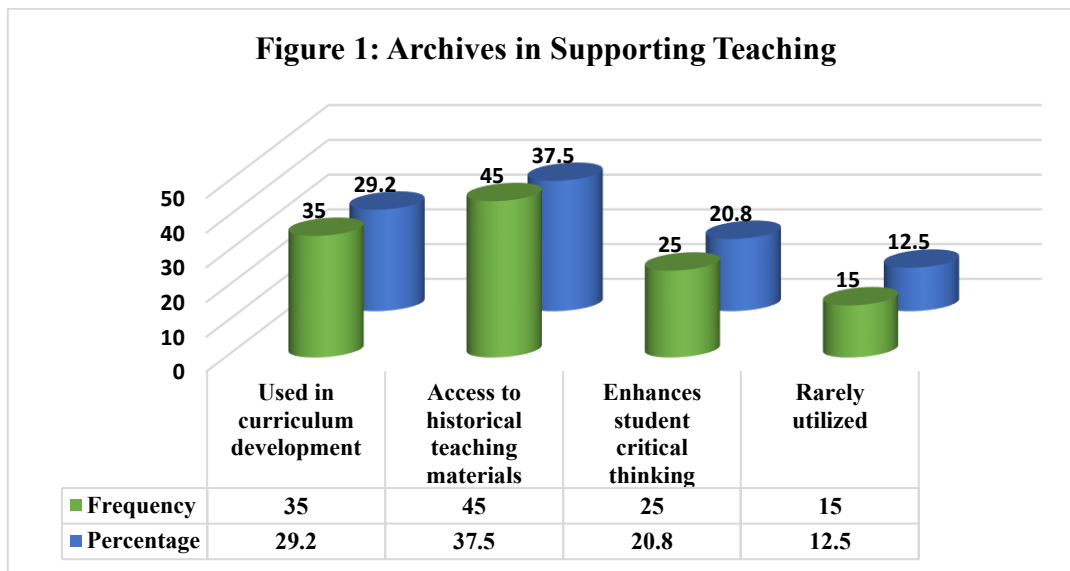
Findings and Discussion

Archives in Supporting Teaching

Particular	f	%
Used in curriculum development	35	29.2

Access to historical teaching materials	45	37.5
Enhances student critical thinking	25	20.8
Rarely utilized	15	12.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=120



Source: Field Data, 2025

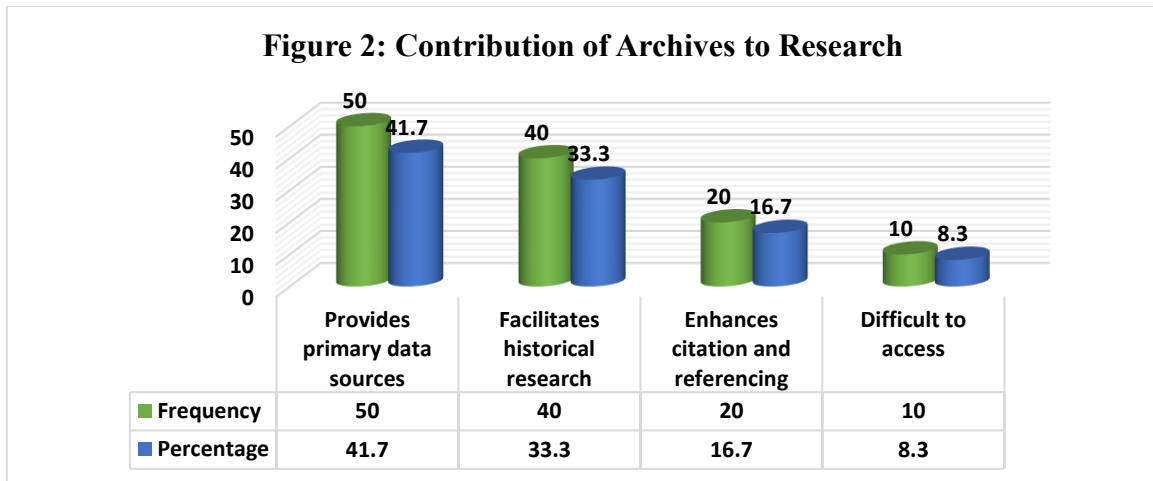
The data on the role of archives in supporting teaching reveals that access to historical teaching materials is the most recognized benefit, cited by 45 (37.5%). This is followed by their use in curriculum development, reported by 35 (29.2%). Additionally, 25 (20.8%) acknowledged that archives enhance student critical thinking, while a smaller portion, 15 (12.5%), indicated that archives are rarely utilized in teaching. These findings suggest that while archives are valued for their educational support, there remains untapped potential for broader integration into teaching practices.

Contribution of Archives to Research

Table 2: Contribution of Archives to Research

Particular	f	%
Provides primary data sources	50	41.7
Facilitates historical research	40	33.3
Enhances citation and referencing	20	16.7
Difficult to access	10	8.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=120



Source: Field Data, 2025

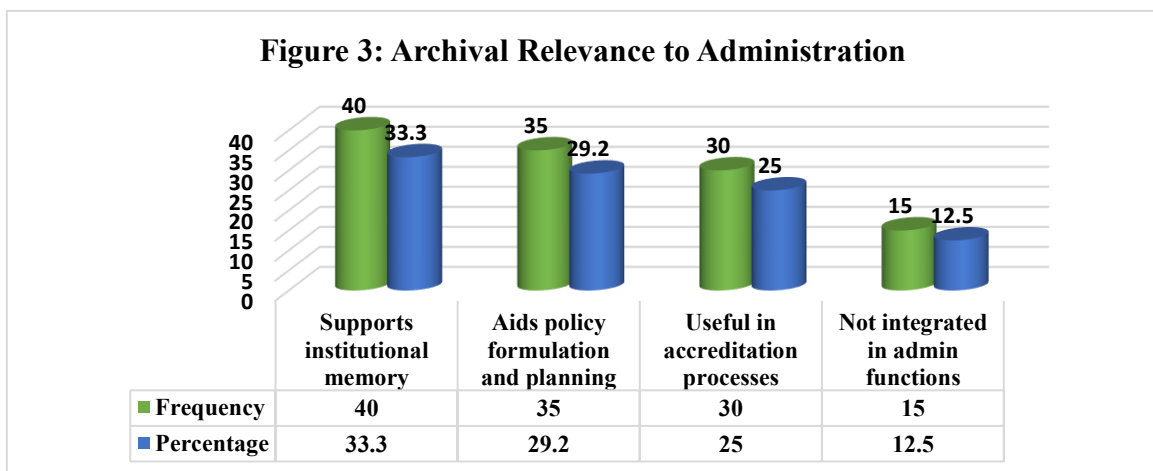
The findings on the contribution of archives to research indicate that the majority of respondents 50 (41.7%) acknowledged that archives provide primary data sources essential for academic inquiry. Additionally, 40 (33.3%) highlighted that archives facilitate historical research, underscoring their value in understanding past events and trends. A smaller portion 20 (16.7%) noted that archives enhance citation and referencing accuracy by offering authentic and verifiable materials. However, 10 (8.3%) reported challenges in accessing archival resources, suggesting the need for improved accessibility and infrastructure.

Archival Relevance to Administration

Table 3: Archival Relevance to Administration

Particular	f	%
Supports institutional memory	40	33.3
Aids policy formulation and planning	35	29.2
Useful in accreditation processes	30	25.0
Not integrated in admin functions	15	12.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=120



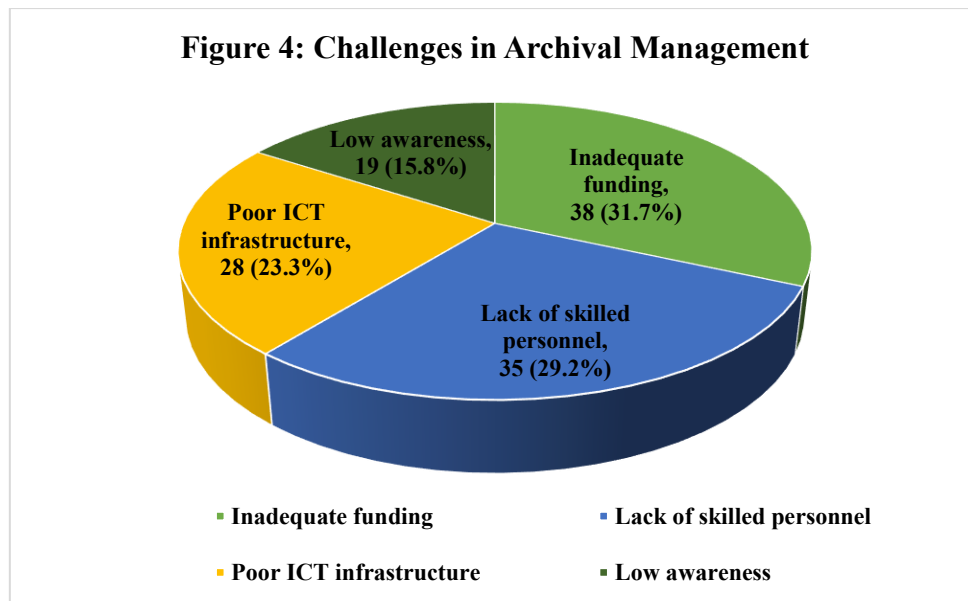
Source: Field Data, 2025

The findings on the relevance of archival management to administration reveal that a majority of respondents 40 (33.3%) believe archives support institutional memory, underscoring their role in preserving key records for reference and decision-making. Additionally, 35 (29.2%) indicated that archives aid in policy formulation and planning, highlighting their strategic value in administrative processes. Furthermore, 30 (25.0%) acknowledged the usefulness of archives in accreditation processes, emphasizing their role in ensuring compliance and documentation standards. However, 15 (12.5%) reported that archives are not integrated into administrative functions, suggesting a gap in institutional utilization of archival resources.

Challenges in Archival Management

Particular	f	%
Inadequate funding	38	31.7
Lack of skilled personnel	35	29.2
Poor ICT infrastructure	28	23.3
Low awareness	19	15.8
Total	120	100

Source: Field Data, 2025; Note: F - Frequencies, % - Percentage; n=120



Source: Field Data, 2025

The study identified several key challenges in archival management within academic libraries. Inadequate funding emerged as the most significant issue, reported by 38 (31.7%), highlighting financial constraints in maintaining and developing archival systems. This was followed closely by the lack of skilled personnel, cited by 35 (29.2%), indicating a shortage of trained professionals in archival practices. Poor ICT infrastructure was another notable challenge, mentioned by 28 (23.3%), reflecting limitations in digital technologies essential for modern archival management. Lastly, low awareness among academic staff was reported by 19 (15.8%), suggesting a gap in understanding the relevance and use of archival resources in academic activities.

Discussion

This paper confirms that archival management has a substantial role in boosting the main mandate of academic institutions, which are teaching, research, and administration. Survey responses of 120 library professionals in Tanzanian universities point to the fact that archival systems are progressively being contextualized as one of the core infrastructures in academic libraries. The role that archival management plays is now not considered marginal activity but a central component to institutional memory, evidenced-based decision making, and accountability to academia. The research also focuses on the fact that in order to maximize the archival effect, organizations need to invest in professional growth, implement a sound digitization process, and mingle archival policies into the wider information management structures. Those interventions play vital roles in adjusting archival practices to the needs of the 21st -century academic reality (Maro & Ntullo, 2025).

Recommendations

To strengthen the role of archival management in higher education, institutions should invest in digital archival systems to enhance accessibility, long-term preservation, and seamless integration across departments. Regular capacity-building workshops for librarians and administrative staff are essential to ensure up-to-date knowledge and best practices in archival processes. Additionally, incorporating archival literacy into academic curricula will raise awareness and promote effective utilization of archival resources among students and faculty. Lastly, the establishment of national policies and institutional frameworks that prioritize archival management will provide the necessary support and standardization to sustain and advance archival practices in academic environments.

Conclusion

Archival management plays a vital role in enhancing teaching, enriching research, and supporting administration in academic libraries. This study demonstrates that well-managed archives are more than historical records they are active agents in educational transformation and institutional development. For academic libraries to fulfill their missions, archival systems must be prioritized through strategic investment, skilled human resources, and digital innovation.

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