

**MAPPING ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES (SLIS), UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES: IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

**Mary Grace P. Golfo, MLIS**

*Graduate Student  
Archival Studies  
University of Manitoba*

*Assistant Professor  
School of Library and Information Studies  
University of the Philippines*

**Abstract**

*Elective courses in archival studies have been offered as part of the Library and Information Science Program course offering of the School of Library and Information Studies as early as 1954. Although, research on the field only started in 1978, a total of sixty-six (66) studies on archives and records management related topics were already conducted by both the graduate and undergraduate students as of 2014. This paper looks into the typology of research done by students both in the graduate and undergraduate levels and use it as one component in the identification of the areas which need to be considered in the development of a graduate curriculum in Archival Studies.*

**Keywords:** archival studies, archives research, research typology

**Introduction**

**Importance of Research in Education**

Some practitioners, managers and policy makers may not recognize the value of research. They perceive it as an academic activity conducted by others – to the profession, not with the profession. However, on the contrary, the value of research can never be underestimated when it comes to deepening the understanding of any field of knowledge. Research is a learning aid which enables the application of theories and principles in realistic circumstances or tracing its influences on phenomenon that actually happened. Vockel (n.d.) describes research as a tool which enables a practitioner, a researcher or an educator to think better, develop and understand principles, and make increasingly broad and accurate generalizations. Practitioners of different fields, including educators,

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are always learning, finding out things, analysing information, adapting their behaviour according to information received, looking to improve and adapting to modern demands. Effective research helps increase the quality of learning. However one looks at these, all these activities contribute to the dictum of research.

### Importance of Research in Archival Studies

The importance of research in archival studies is very much reflected in the Master in Archival Studies Program being offered by the University of Manitoba. According to Nesmith (2007), the archival, historical, conceptual, and research dimensions of the program's approach [help] cope with the challenges of archival education- "the expanding knowledge base and limited resources available to educators- by educating students to learn how to learn about any problem affecting archives across their careers." The changing archival landscape, which currently expands and covers a multidisciplinary arena, requires a pragmatic approach in the training of would be archivists. The emphasis on research is one key aspect of the program which provides this venue for learning where both factors are addressed. Nesmith (2007) further explains that such research approach that "reflects the view and development of the student's research abilities, is not only needed to educate an archivist, but also because an archivist's work is research oriented." Accurate, reliable recorded information, being its primary product, entail various uses which affect how these are processed, arranged, described, preserved and made available. Every archives and every user present an entirely unique case that requires deeper study. The role of research in archival studies is to understand these varied cases, and be able to find solutions or learn new strategies that these cases bring.

The same is true with the archival studies program offered by other universities like the University of British Columbia. Although the thesis writing course was no longer a required component of the program, it was replaced by courses such as Archival Research and Scholarship, and Research Methodology (Eastwood, 1983, p. 46). These courses introduce students to the basics of research and the different social science research methodologies which they can adopt when they start writing short, guided research for other courses such as Professional Experience Course (Eastwood, 1983). This strategy only proves that research is an indispensable aspect of archival studies. As Eastwood (1983) further opines, "graduate programs, at least those in North America, are judged to a significant degree by the quality and quantity of the research produced by faculty and students."

The importance of research in archival studies is further strengthened by Couture and Ducharme (2005, p. 43) in their article entitled *Research in Archival Studies*, when they opine that "research in archival science is unique...it takes place within a multidisciplinary environment encompassing records management, history, management, computer science, and library science." All these interrelated disciplines are concerned about how information is created, used, manipulated, maintained, recorded and preserved. Although, every issue or new idea in any of these fields has direct, or indirect impact on each other, the specific application of the research findings become very critical

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to the study and practice of the specific profession and in setting the boundaries for each field.

The unique standards and rules, including the archival processes demand research which are specific to the archival study and the practice of it. However, whatever the officially stated and promoted goals and objectives of the research, in actual practice, research is often done in the academic environment, where both the students and the archival educators are conducting the studies. Among the reasons identified by Stephenson (1991) are because students, particularly those who continue to pursue doctoral program of studies, are trained to conduct research for academic purposes and who, eventually, by virtue of the training also join the academe. Secondly, while in the academic environment, these students, who decided to become educators, instead of practitioners, are further encouraged to conduct research as a requirement of their tenure. (Stephenson, 1991). Another reason which has been observed is the fact that those students who choose to become practitioners in the archives find no time to conduct research beyond their working hours. These reasons, thus, contribute to the concentration of research in the academic setting. On top of the new ideas, concepts, and solutions or practices which are discovered in the conduct of research, the necessity to come with the research further intensifies the importance of research in the archival studies. Research is critical to the development of archival knowledge. Moreover, the quality of research has also become a criterion in assessing the quality of courses being offered in a program.

This paper looks into the research in archival science conducted by students from the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) in the Philippines. The paper has three-fold objectives. First objective is to identify the typology of the research topics that the students have undertaken. Second objective is to come up with a typology of research topics and compare it with identified archival research typologies, particularly those identified by Pederson (1994) and Couture and Ducharme (2005). Lastly, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the archival tract that SLIS offers based on the research that were produced which will be considered in the development of a proposed graduate program in archival studies. The study, however, does not look into the methodology undertaken by each researcher, thus, no qualitative analysis of the research is done in the conduct of the study. Moreover, due to the lack of access to the complete copies of the research, data and analysis are only based on the bibliographic data available from the online library databases of the SLIS Library.

### **Academic Research in Archival Studies and Records Management in SLIS<sup>1</sup>**

As early as the 1954, archives courses were already offered in SLIS. However, the very first student research which looks into archives and records management was conducted in 1978. From 1979 to 2014, a span of 35 years, a total of sixty-six (66) academic research on records management and archival science were conducted by students of SLIS. Twenty-six (26) of these research are on

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<sup>1</sup> The list of studies is based on the online library databases of the SLIS Library which was accessed in February 2014.

records management and forty (40) are on archives practices and issues related to archives. Topics on records management include comparative study and/or assessment of records management practices of different types of institutions (14 studies), study of records retention and disposition practices (3 studies), assessment of records management program (3 studies), records management system (1 study), development of classification scheme for records (1 study), education and training needs assessment of records and archives employees (1 study), development of document tracking system (1 study), as well as assessment of existing document tracking system (1 study) and data management and archiving practices (1 study). The earliest of these records management studies was conducted in 1981.

On the other hand, the topics on archives include analysis of the whole archival practices of an agency (13 studies). Studies on specific archival function such as preservation practices (6 studies), digital archiving (1 study), outreach and promotion (2 studies), arrangement and description (2 studies), access and reference service (1 study), reference services and outreach (1 study), and acquisition (1 study) are also included. Other archives related studies such as feasibility study on setting up an archives laboratory (2 studies), compliance to law and related legislation (1 study), occupational health hazards in the archives (1 study), employability of graduates of SLIS who has specialization on archives (1 study), user needs satisfaction (1 study), disaster management (1 study), archives and museum (1 study), conservation collaboration (1 study), information seeking behavior towards archives (1 study), student perception on archives courses (1 study), study about the National Archives of the Philippines (1 study) and about archives and records management standards (1 study) were also included. The first research in archives was done in 1978. Classification of research topics is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*Classification of SLIS Studies*

Topics	Number of Studies
<b>Records Management</b>	
Comparative study and/or assessment of records management practices of different types of institutions	14
Records retention and disposition practices	3
Assessment of records management program and system	4
Development of classification scheme for records	1
Education and training needs assessment of records and archives employees	1
Development of document tracking system	1

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Assessment of existing document tracking system	1
Data management and archiving practices	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Archives</b>	
Institutional archival practices	13
Preservation	6
Digital archiving	1
Outreach and promotion	2
Arrangement and description	2
Access and reference service	1
Reference services and outreach	1
Acquisition	1
Feasibility study on setting up an archives laboratory	2
Compliance to law and related legislation	1
Occupational health hazards in the archives	1
Employability of graduates of SLIS who has specialization on archives	1
User needs satisfaction	1
Disaster management	1
Archives and museum	1
Conservation collaboration	1
Information seeking behavior towards archives	1
Student perception on archives courses	1
Study about the National Archives of the Philippines	1
Archives and records management standards	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>

According to Ann Pederson (1994), there are six major categories of archival research namely, 1) nature of information and of historical documentation; 2) the history of society in and its institutions; 3) archives in society; 4) issues and relationships (including ethnics, information technologies, and other problems inherent to archives); 5) archival functions; and 6) the management of archival programs. Following these categories, studies conducted by students in SLIS, both in records management and archives, are re-categorized. Details of the mapping of categories are summarized in the table below:

Table 2

*Re-categorization of Topics based on Categories by Pederson*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Number of Studies</b>
1) <i>Nature of information and of historical documentation</i>	0
2) <i>History of society and its institutions</i>	1
Study about the National Archives of the Philippines	
3) <i>Archives and records in society</i>	3
Compliance to law and related legislation	
Archives and museum	
Student perception on archives courses	
4) <i>Issues and relationships (including ethnics, information technologies, and other problems inherent to archives and records management)</i>	10
Education and training needs assessment of records and archives employees	
Development of document tracking system	
Assessment of existing document tracking system	
Occupational health hazards in the archives	
Employability of graduates of SLIS who has specialization on archives	
User needs satisfaction	
Disaster management	
Conservation collaboration	
Information seeking behavior towards archives	
5) <i>Archival/ records management functions/practices</i>	48
Comparative study and/or assessment of records management practices of different types of institutions	
Records retention and disposition practices	
Development of classification scheme for records	
Data management and archiving practices	
Institutional archival practices	
Preservation	
Digital archiving	
Outreach and promotion	
Arrangement and description	
Access and reference service	
Reference services and outreach	

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Categories	Number of Studies
Acquisition	
Archives and records management standards	
Feasibility study on setting up an archives laboratory	
<b>6) Management of archival/records management programs</b>	<b>4</b>
Assessment of records management program and system	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>

### Analysis and Interpretation of the Quantitative Data on Archival Studies

For the past thirty-three years, a very slight development can be reflected on the categories of research topics on records management and archives that students have undertaken. Table 1 shows that the study on the overall records management practices of institutions is the most popular topic. This is probably due to the broad scope of the study which covers the processes involve in records life cycle, such as creation, receipt and capture, use and maintenance, access and security, retention, protection and disposition. Another factor is, the uniqueness of each study to the organization or institution it is conducted for. Other topics are more specific or detailed to the study of specific records keeping concepts such as document tracking system, data management and one on training needs assessment.

The same observation may be said with the archives topics. Majority of the studies are on the overall archives practices of different institutions. Studies on specific archival functions were undertaken sparingly, with studies on preservation as the highest with six (6) studies conducted. This does not include the two studies on the feasibility of setting up an archives laboratory which may also refer to a conservation laboratory. Two studies were also conducted respectively, for outreach and promotion and arrangement and description. The rest of the studies that were conducted are on fourteen (14) different topics including other archival functions such as acquisition, reference and outreach, disaster preparedness, among a few and digital archiving.

If the results of the survey of research based on the quantitative distribution of the topics of the studies is to be used as the basis of assessment, a general statement can be made that the level of awareness of current archival issues and concerns is low. However, such analysis cannot be readily taken at the outset. In order to come up with a more accurate assessment of the level of knowledge, a qualitative analysis of the methodology applied in the study and the assessment of the depth of analysis of the findings and recommendation are recommended.

The re-categorization based on Pederson's general categories, would show that no study was undertaken about the nature of information and of historical documents. Ironically, the topic which is about the very basic component of both archives and records management and is supposed to give

foundational knowledge about the fields have not been undertaken. Although, there is one (1) study conducted about acquisition, which may include an analysis of the nature of information, the most possible focus is on the tasks involved in acquisition. Only one (1) study was undertaken about history of society and its institution which is the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP). Although there is one study about disaster preparedness of NAP, its history has been studied only once. As summarized in Table 3 below, only four (4) studies were conducted on archives/records in society. These studies include assessment of compliance to existing legislation, perception of students on archives courses, ten (10) studies are about issues and relationships (including ethics, information technologies, and other problems inherent to archives and records management). Of these ten studies, three (3) studies have direct application of information technology such as document tracking system and digital archiving. However, all of the studies do not imply the archiving or management of born-digital records, which is one of the most pressing issues that needs to be addressed by the archival community. Consistently, archival and records management functions/practices studies have the highest number of studies at forty-eight (48) and studies pertaining to management of archival/records management program with four (4) studies.

Table 3

*Summary of Re-Categorization of Topics based on Pederson*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Number of Studies</b>
<i>1) Nature of information and of historical documentation</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>2) History of society and its institutions</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>3) Archives and records in society</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>4) Issues and relationships (including ethnics, information technologies, and other problems inherent to archives and records management)</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>5) Archival/ records management functions/practices</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>6) Management of archival/records management programs</i>	<i>4</i>

Couture and Ducharme (2005) also came up with categories or fields of research in archival studies. Their fields of research are as follows:

- a. *Object and Aim of Archival Science*. This field also includes the study on the uses of archives.
- b. *Archives and Society* refers to archival science as a discipline and a profession.
- c. *History of Archives and Archival Science* refers to the history of archival institutions and the evolution of archival principles.



- d. *Archival Functions* refers to studies on records creation, appraisal, acquisition, arrangement, description, preservation and accessibility.
- e. *Management of Archival Program and Services* covers all current issues relating to the management of archival programs and services.
- f. *Technology*. This field focuses on computer science as it applies to archives, information systems and telecommunications in general.
- g. *Types of Media and Archives: Electronic Records*. This category is not included in the field of research but the use of certain types of media can present a wide variety of topics for study.
- h. *Archival Environments* refers to the global archival environment or landscape.
- i. *Specific Issues Related to Archives*.

Mapping and re-categorization of the topics based on these fields also shows almost similar results as the re-categorization based on Pederson's general categories. Table 4 summarizes the re-categorization based on the nine fields of research.

Table 4

*Re-categorization of Topics Based on Couture and Durcharme*

Field of Study	Number of Studies
Object and Aim of Archival Science	0
Archives and Society	3
History of Archives and Archival Science	1
Archival Functions	48
Management of Archival Program and Services	4
Technology	3
Types of Media and Archives: Electronic Records	0
Archival Environments	3
Specific Issues Related to Archives	7

No specific study was conducted for the object and aim of archival science. Similar with the category of Pederson about the nature of information and of historical documentation, this field is also a foundational field and should be explored to be able to understand the underpinning philosophy of archival studies. Another field which has not been explored is the Types of Media and Archives: Electronic Records. The field specific to archival environments, which is not included in Pederson's categories yields three (3) studies. These studies are about disaster preparedness, occupational health

hazards and archives and museum. The other fields have direct counterpart with Pederson's categories and which therefore yield the same number of studies.

It is evident that the fields of archival research, both by Pederson and Couture and Ducharme are not yet fully explored and studied. Foundational fields of research are not yet explored and there is a limited studies done on application of IT in archives. However, the fields pertaining to practices or functions are the common areas of studies in the archival research.

A direct correlation can be established between the most common fields of research and the courses currently being offered by SLIS. Almost all the archival courses offered in the graduate and the undergraduate levels are specific on archival practices and records management. Preservation which has the second most number of studies, is an elective course offered in both levels. Since courses on the application of IT are required components of the library and information science programs, it is possible that the dearth in the study of this topic as applied to archives is due to the fact that most of the studies undertaken are about the application of IT in LIS. Studies on other archival practices such as appraisal, which is a commonly studied area of archival science is not yet explored. Likewise, no study has been made on promotion of archives. The studies on reference and access and reference and outreach reflect an ambiguity on the association of reference service to access and to outreach. Other specific topics such as perception on archives courses and user needs analysis are studies which are aligned to existing studies related to outreach and promotion.

Although, a glimpse of the status of archival education can be inferred based on this quantitative study, it is still necessary that a more qualitative analysis of these existing studies be made.

## **Conclusion**

### **Implications of the Findings to Archival Education**

Based on the analysis of the findings, the components of the current archival courses offered by SLIS is in need of a thorough assessment and re-evaluation. Consistent with the recommendations made by Punzalan (2005), other areas of study in archival science which are specific to the Philippine archival requirements should also be included. Given this, an assessment of the unique archival requirements of the Philippines should also be considered in the design of the new program. The identified fields of studies which are not yet explored but are very critical in the preparation to the challenges posed by the new archival landscape should also be taken into consideration. It is also noteworthy, that the very basic and important foundational field of study are neither taught nor being studied. Among these are the history of the records and role of archives in the society.

Given that this initial study offers a representative view of the archival education in the Philippines, it is further reiterated the need to conduct a more thorough analysis of the existing studies

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on archival science including records management by other students and practitioners in the field. Moreover, since the study was not able to look into the methodology undertaken by each researcher, no qualitative findings of the research is done, thus, the need for a restudy of these research.

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