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**Archive and Archiving in the Digital Era: a new perspective
for using Museums Archive**

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Abstract:

Archival material has to be exhibited for a visitor who seeks to be given the means for an independent way to interpret the exhibition.

Exhibit of archival materials not only show what repository collects, preserves, and makes available to users, but also they have the potential to educate, communicate, and serve a variety of other functions. They can encourage people to study the past and to save and donate items of historical interest; teach them something about the nature of archival work; inform them of new acquisition; tell an interesting story; commemorate an important event and make a major contribution to scholarship.

The material that any institution leaves behind e.g. – documents, photographs, objects or diaries – mostly just gather dust in the storage of institutions. They have been bequeathed to these institutions for safekeeping and to provide the researchers with valuable sources.

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Our time is in need of new modes to relate to artifact. So, it seems imperative to also change the way exhibitions are made and archival material is included and treated.

Accordingly, this paper will examine how can archival material be presented in a way that it makes sense to and meets the needs of the visitor to allow for new perspectives in interpreting the artifact? The main target is to encourage museums to preserve their historically valuable records. The archivist should consider going out into the community to meet with local groups to talk about the history of the museum. The principal aim of archives is not only to acquire, professionally process and make available archival documents for public or private purposes, but also to carry out preservation and conservation in order to keep valuable information and heritage for an indefinite period.

Keywords:

Museum Exhibition, Archival Material, Digital Archive, Displaying Archive, Archival Materials Interpretation.

Introduction:

Archival exhibitions are very rarely discussed in Egyptian museums. The power of an institutional archive lies in its dual role. The museum archives is both a resource for the administration and for researchers: it is necessary for the day-to-day operation of the museum and it serves researchers of all kinds. The first part of the research addresses the management of museum archives; its importance lies in being a valuable sources of information for research to nations and regions, communities, organizations, and individual people, also the archive provide evidence of the museum activities which occurred in the past, it's our recorded memory, for an important part of our community and cultural history.

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The paper addresses the major components of the activity of preparing a museum archive management. Make an exhibition for archive and its objects as a kind of attraction and marketing for the museum; since exhibitions are major productions, several museum departments are likely to participate, creating their own exhibition files putting into consideration that the income of the exhibition must be for only the archive section for its development.

The interpretation of displaying archival material using interpretation equipment such as labels, panels, graphic photos, videos, exhibit catalogue, and copies or replicas of original object. Good interpretation should enrich the visitor's experience by making it more meaningful and enjoyable; also assist the visitor to develop a keener awareness, appreciation and understanding of the heritage being experienced.

The exhibiting of heritage, artefacts, manuscripts, documents, the unique, the rare, and the wonderful, is a crucial part of the educational mission of many cultural museums. It is also an effective way of attracting attention and support from the public.

As historians, curators and archivists, we have an obligation to educate a broad spectrum of community. One important way of fulfilling this obligation is to help them to better understand their cultural heritage through exhibitions, which can provide a visual counterpart to textbooks, scholarly publications, and other writings.

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Archives and Museums:

Share the goal of preserving items of historical significance, but museums tend to have a greater emphasis on exhibiting those items, and maintaining diverse collections of artifacts or artwork rather than books and papers.

Archives can be incredibly rich and enlightening part of the museum collection. They can tell a whole range of stories and help bring the whole museum and the rest of collections to life. All museum collections contain ‘works on paper’. These might be single drawings, photographs, files or a series of correspondence or ledgers, but when do these become classed as archives?

In museums, archives are generally found either as part of object collections or managed as stand-alone collections. Museums often describe parts of their collections as ‘archives’ and use this to cover items on paper, photographs, maps or, increasingly, digital files, even if they are not a structured archive.

The Museum and archive professions developed separately from each other and it has been noted that even as recently as 1986, Archivists and museum employees were isolated from each other in the course of their work¹. Some archives in museums can be treated as part of the museum collection but there are times when it is best to consider them separately as a ‘structured archive’. The decision about which route to take is up to each individual museum and should be based on what works best within the existing capacity, resources and approach of the museum. Structured archives are permanently preserved as the record of the activities of the individual, family or organization.

¹ Deborah Wythe, *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004), 3.

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They are selected and preserved because they provide evidence of how these activities were carried out and because they will be useful for future research. Since the late seventeenth century, museums have been opened to the public and have taken on the responsibility of collecting, preserving and curating the world's objects for the purposes of research and education².

Using the museum history is helpful for the museum to maintain an up to date account of its historical development and useful as background for funding application, induction (orientation) programs, manual for staff, volunteers and members of the governing body, and for briefing purposes for external bodies.

Museums and archive services collect archives and other collections according to well-defined collecting or collection development policies. Museums who intend to collect structured archives should ensure that they are referenced in their own Collections Development Policy³.

The value of museum archives is apparent. The museum may plan its archives to be a major research center for historians of science, technology, or art; or may simply to provide adequate care for its historical records. Therefore, the kind of archives program established should serve the needs of museum staff but should not strain the resources of the museum.

² Edward P. Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, (Nashville: American Association For State And Local History, 1979), 8.

³ Successfully Managing Archive in Museum, The National Archive, Emma Chaplin and Janice Tullock

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A well- funded, well-staffed archival program with sufficient space, supplies, and equipment is obviously preferable. Since this thesis is about museum archive, it is necessary to begin with an understanding of what a museum archive is: in the course of daily life, individuals and organizations create and keep information about their personal and business activities. All state governments as well as many local governments, universities, business, libraries, historical societies and museums, maintain archives. Archives provide firsthand information about the past. They are valuable to researchers, scholars, students, journalists, lawyers, and others who want to know about people, places, and events in the past.

Archives have value to nations and regions, organizations, communities and individual people. They provide evidence of activities which occurred in the past. They tell stories, document people and identity, and are valuable sources of information for research. Deborah Wythe characterizes the museum’s archive in *Museum Archive: An Introduction* (2004) as the museum’s “institutional memory”⁴. They are our recorded memory and form an important part of our community, culture, and history.

Since materials in archival collections are unique, the people (archivists) in charge of caring for those materials strive to preserve them for use today, and for future generations of researches. Archives have specific guidelines for how people may use collections to protect the materials from physical damage and theft, keeping them and their content accessible for generation.

⁴ *Museum Archive: an Introduction*. Deborah Wythe (2004)

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The potential of organizing and developing an archive can be scaring. If the process is divided into simple tasks, the process becomes much easier to manage. “It is easier to recognize that action is needed than to know where to start”⁵.

Any archive has three basic needs: space, staff, and financial support. Any archivist thinking of establishing an archives program must be aware of those needs and determine the goals for establishing an archival program.

Establishing digital archive manual and online

Digitization is the creation of digital copies of records that originated in traditional physical formats such as paper, parchment, photographs, film, sound and video. Many archives are beginning to digitize their collections to protect originals from regular handling, to provide wider access to collections, or in response to technical change⁶. Across the world, non-profit cultural heritage organizations that encompass museums, archives and national libraries, would generally already have accumulated a rich amount of content in the form of artefacts and documents in different forms, medium and formats that have been acquired, preserved and conserved for a long time.

⁵ Managing the Preservation of Library and Archive Collections in Historic Buildings, National Preservation Office (2002).

⁶ Archive Principles and Practice: an Introduction to Archives for non-archivists, the national archives.

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Many of these would now be increasingly digitized, described and stored in digital archives. They are subsequently made available directly to the public through the use of digital library technologies, either as stand-alone documents that can be searched and retrieved, or packaged or curated through other means such as virtual online exhibitions⁷.

Increasingly museums and private collectors record information about their collections using computerized databases. Computer databases take up less space than paper-based recording systems, allowing backup copies to be made (digital preservation). They also make it easy for information to be stored in an ordered and structured manner and allow for fast searching and retrieval of records⁸. Digital information is easy to share, allowing photographs and descriptions of items to be sent to researchers. Information held in databases can be reused in many different ways, including creating catalogues, exhibition texts or on-line exhibitions.

In Egypt, Ministry of Antiquities can work for an agreement with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in order to provide a software program for digitizing archival material. Internationally, several software proved good quality in digitizing archival materials. For example, Past Perfect Museum⁹ software is used by over 9500 museums. It is considered affordable, comprehensive, and easy-to-use.

⁷ Foo, Leng, Hoe-Lian, and Cheong, 2009, p.5.

⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

⁹ <http://www.museumsoftware.com/index.html>

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Past Perfect Museum is distributed by AltaMyra press¹⁰ and authorized by the American Association for state and local history (AASLH)¹¹, and built on Microsoft's Visual FoxPro platform, which allows it to work across MS Office Suite and with hypertext links¹².

One of the most critical barriers to digitizing museum archives in Egypt is the financial barriers. To provide all the equipment, supplies and needed space, it is necessary to get adequate budget for accomplishing the required work. Egyptian museums' archives have many problems regarding accessibility; that they have no accessibility and it is so difficult for anyone to use it. In order to solve such problem, museums should find alternative sources of fund. Many archives rely on fundraising activities for part of their income. Open houses, fairs, tours, and community events; all can increase local awareness of activities and may generate some financial and other assistance. Sales of books, postcards made from popular photographs or other types of sales, small revenue by charging for photocopying, photo-reproduction, or other work. Museums also can participate in joint projects with other international institutions to improve their archives.

Requirements of good digitization will also include a clear policy for developing and maintaining the museum's archives. The policy will need to be reviewed on a regular basis, but it should aim to provide for reliability and continuity of approach in selecting and retaining material for the museum's archives. Policies and standards are produced to support the long-term sustainability of archives, wherever they are kept.

¹⁰<http://www.altamyra.com>

¹¹<http://www.aaslh.org>

¹² Stielow, 2003, p.114.

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Together, they provide the principles and practice to shape how work is done to best effect, making the best use of the available resources. Policies can be internal or external. Internal policies are intended to support the museum's mission or its collecting remit. External policies are intended to support the wider archive sector. Standards for archives are usually external and cover all aspects of managing archives; they are a means to measure best practice and to deliver policy aims¹³.

In the web era, digitization will pervade repositories activities. The process and potential of this emerging technology is reorienting notions of service, content, and access, and demands studied legal, ethical, and financial consideration. The resulting policies will apply equally to data born digitally and to digital archives as a whole. They will have to resolve copyright questions arising from photocopier reproduction, address freedom of access and privacy issues, as well as clarify criteria for appraisal and selection¹⁴.

Digitizing the archival materials will require a good team of archivists as well. Faculties of Art in Egypt include high studies for archives, which as a perfect opportunity to employ those well-learned students in developing museums archives. But the fact that most of the museums in Egypt are governed by Egyptian Government is leading to very strict regulations concerning employment and workforce. However, museums archives need special considerations and sufficient training for the team who will work with it.

¹³The National Archives, 2011, p. 17.

¹⁴ Stielow, 2003, p. 119.

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A step following the digitization process is the online publishing. Accessing the archive online is considered as a part of digitized accessibility. It is a method for widen the community engagement and participation, as well as raising the potential for holding online exhibits, which are the most formal elements of digital archives.

The Mudira project of (university of Munich)¹⁵ is one of the good examples of online digital archives. It was launched in early 2012 as joint project of the Institute of Egyptology of the University of Munich and the State Museum of Egyptian Art Munich (SMÄK), in which the extensive image collections of both institutions digitized to ancient Egypt and made accessible. In the first (in 2 to 3 years applied) project phase about 30,000 present as small format slides original recordings from Egypt and of stocks Egyptian museums and collections are professionally scanned and prepared by the IT group Humanities (ITG) LMU database online presents. Project objectives are to facilitate access to the images, the scientific preparation of the related information, and ultimately the preservation of science often historically significant figures on a modern storage media. The UNI DIA publishing house has also proven its nearly 6,000 pictures to ancient Egypt in digital form. These pictures are already completely processed and retrieved. In a second step, the glass plates to be digitalized and enhanced collection of the Munich Institute of Egyptology.

¹⁵For further information <http://mudira.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/>

Applying technology in displaying the archival collections

It's one of the best opportunities we have had in decades to really reach and engage the public and visitors with their different age. Digital technology will generate added values to the cultural institutions; makes things possible that wouldn't have been possible in the past, or at least very difficult. It is considered as an interactive mean with the public, a presentation, interpretation, research and statistics tool in the same time.

Digital technology is an essential tool in the toolkit of every modern organization, and especially museums. It touches every aspect of the organization, so that it needs to be at the heart of every organization.

The need to install technology that supports conservation and new media, as well as the space that is the art work and that may envelop the viewer, and the need to provide designated vistas or views into and through the work, have exploded the traditional notion of the single, all-purpose art gallery. Even the traditional archival display modes featuring table cases for display of fragile documents, scrolls, manuscript books, and art books no longer tell the full story of archival display. Multimedia walls incorporating interactive touch screen technology, touch tables, interactive multipage book formats, and more are emerging as engaging ways to allow the visitor to experience the treasures of archival collections¹⁶.

¹⁶ Lord and Piacente, 2014, p. 102.

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The writer believes that virtual exhibitions can, and are expected to, survive and grow as they stand to yield a rich set of both tangible and intangible for institutions that fully embrace the idea of both the physical and virtual operating environment in this Internet age. Development of new interpretative spaces by major institutions, with specialized high-tech solutions for conservation display, has encouraged interest in bringing archival treasures into the public display domain.

Traditional ways of displaying archival works and manuscripts in table cases no longer give the full story of the archival works. New demands are raising on installing technology within the galleries Multimedia walls incorporating interactive touch screen technology, touch tables, interactive multipage book formats, and more emerging as engaging ways to allow the visitor to experience the treasures of archival collections¹⁷. Fortunately, digitization has given all archives a method of introducing the public to the visual and intellectual riches of their pages without affecting the documents themselves.

Using copies of archival materials as interpretation materials

Allyn, Aubtiz, and Stern Facsimiles might be employed for purely visual considerations. Enlargements of photographs and manuscripts, for example, can change the scale of an exhibit and provide maximum impact. An enlargement also can be effectively juxtaposed with the original item so visitors have the benefit of viewing both so that they can view the real thing as well as the enlargement which offers clarity and detail.

¹⁷ Dr. Mohamed Gamal RASHED, mohamedgamal_1@yahoo.com Types of exhibiting archival materials and manuscripts in museum exhibitions, session.

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Another successful technique for exhibiting photographs is to juxtapose black and white with color photos of the same or similar objects. Older black and white photos of buildings or neighborhoods, for example, can be exhibited alongside newer, color photos of the same buildings or streets. The older photos serve as documents of the past and the newer ones anchor the viewer to the familiar present. Sepia-toned photographs (either originals or copies) can also provide a visual change from black and white photos. Inclusion of original hand-tinted black and white prints can also vary the visual format¹⁸.

For instance, in documenting ethnic communities in Philadelphia and the region, the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies frequently incorporates photographic collages of community residents. Visitors come to the exhibit to see themselves, their families and friends; their direct involvement makes the entire documentary exhibit more intimate and personal. In "Italian-American Traditions: Family and Community,"¹⁹ original family photographs were exhibited in conjunction with passports, immigration papers, inspection cards, steerage tickets, passenger lists, and other documents which represented the experiences of Italian immigrants to the Delaware Valley.

The most accurate example of using copies of archival materials is the exhibition of "Tutankhamun: his tomb and his treasures" it takes place firstly in Zurich in 2008²⁰, they use modern replicas on show rather than genuine artefacts, the idea was to create an exhibition that communicated information in an interesting and informative way.

¹⁸ Allyn, et al., 402.

¹⁹ <http://www2.hsp.org/exhibits/Balch%20exhibits/italian/italian2.html>

²⁰ Tutankhamun: his tomb and his treasures catalogue,

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Visitors should experience Pharaoh's treasures through Howard Carter's eyes, understand their significance and appreciate the achievements of the ancient Egyptians. They reconstructed more than 1000 of the most important objects from the treasures using modern as well as traditional techniques (for example, gilding with real gold leaf) to create replicas that laypersons would find impossible to distinguish from the originals exhibited behind bulletproof glass in Cairo. Replicas can be presented in ways unthinkable with originals, and through the use of copies the barrier between the visitor and the object can be overcome. Only replicas provide the opportunity not just to showcase individual pieces, but to bring the complex historical context to a wide audience. The objects in this exhibition are not roped off or protected by an alarm system; they communicate their message to visitors, unaffected by reflections in the glass of display cases. An original work of art, be it a painting, sculpture or relief, cannot be replaced by anything else when it comes to gaining an impression of the individual mastery bequeathed by the creator. The replicas, the copies of each individual object, allow visitors to become familiar with the cultural, historical religious context in a documentary, scientific, and understandable way.

Conclusion:

Archives can be an incredibly rich and enlightening part of our Egyptian museum collection. They can tell a whole range of stories and help bring our whole museums and the rest of the collections to life. Through a museum archive management the researcher is aiming to guarantee the ease of access for some of the archival material to the public, also enhance the display in the museum using its archival collection and to preserve and revive olden times and sustain its presence through the ages.

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The purpose is to organize, preserve, and make accessible records not in current use and to collect documentation relevant to the work of the museum, including: records relevant to the Museum's history (minutes, committee reports, departmental papers, photographs, sound recordings, and videotapes); personal papers of curators and directors when relevant to Museum interests or history; papers of individuals related to Museum interests, such as Trustees and former staff; oral histories; twentieth-century primary resource material, including papers, manuscripts, and photographs; a photographic archive comprised of tens of thousands of images. The Museum Archives provides necessary research support in order to enrich and enhance the Museum's curatorial and educational missions.

The archival material should be considered an integral part of the exhibition. It is not just to accompany the artifacts as decoration, but to add another level to the narrative of the exhibition. And it is this narrative that is crucial in the context of archival exhibitions, which makes the exhibition a powerful tool. It should be noted that with the biography of the person or museum brought into the exhibition especially through the aid of archival material, the curator can create a function and write a narrative in order to meet the needs of the visitor to gain additional insight into the history of a museum. The visitor in return can read the story and is free to make his own interpretation. In this context it remains crucial to point out that every interpretation can only be based on the material that the curator selects and puts on display. So, the curator has a crucial role in telling the visitor the story of someone or somewhere else's history.

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The role of the museum exhibition is to make potential users aware of the sources available in archives. It seems essential in the context of the post museum to introduce archival material into exhibitions and thus to the visitor. The intangible heritage contained in records should be made accessible in order to question previous museum practices and the way art historians negotiated the past.

Finally, by considering the museum archive as equal to the artifacts, museologists could indeed take a step towards a self-determined exhibition.

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