

PRESERVING THE POSTWAR ARCHIVES HERITAGE AND
COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF BULACAN: LOCAL GOVERNMENT
RECORDS AND PRACTICES

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Abstract

Presents the condition of the local government records and archives of the local governments of Malolos, Meycauayan and San Jose Del Monde in Bulacan. Discusses the approaches of these local governments in controlling local government records using the records continuum concept.

Alongside the evolution of physical carriers and media in which information is recorded, is the development of thought as regards the theory and practice of Archival Science. Archival Science is seen as a discipline that originated from and is closely related to the field of historical sciences, in which documents are treated as traces of the past and are supposedly preserved and appreciated as part of society's heritage (Cardin, 2000). Thus, it is clear that archives play a vital role in building collective memory and identity both in the micro and macro level of society; and this "memory" should be accessible and be transmitted to future generations.

Theories and principles central to archival practices, as well as the standards set for the preservation of archives heritage have been laid for the archivists worldwide to follow and guarantee that there are enough and properly preserved representative records. Numerous texts on archival practices have been published by different archives theorists and archives organizations, including the collaborative efforts of the International Council on Archives (ICA) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The UNESCO has launched the Memory of the World Programme that aims to preserve and disseminate the archives and library holdings worldwide. There is also the Information and Documentation Standard for Records Management, otherwise known as ISO 15489:2001 that outlines the best practices in recordkeeping, and a framework for an integrated and unified approach to records and archives administration, the records continuum.

In the Philippines, there are already legislative instruments that mandate the protection of our heritage. The responsibility of the State in the protection of the country's artistic and historic wealth that constitutes the cultural treasure of the nation is clearly stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Art. XIV, Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports, Sec. 16). This duty is further reiterated in the declaration of policy of Republic Act 9470, National Archives of the Philippines Act of 2007, which states that:

It is the policy of the State to conserve, promote and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage resources. The State shall pursue, conserve and promote the Filipino cultural heritage and resources including the documentary records of Filipino culture, history and governance. (Art. I, Sec. 2).

This provision is also parallel to what is instructed in the Local Government Code of 1991 or Republic Act 7160 about the establishment of archives system for each local government unit. Government archives have an additional responsibility for the management of records for public use to protect the civil rights of the people.

SEC. 374. Establishment of an Archival System. - Every local government unit shall provide for the establishment of an archival system to ensure the safety and protection of all government property, public documents or records such as records of births, marriages, property inventory, land assessments, land ownership, tax payments, tax accounts, and business permits, and such other records or documents of public interest in the various departments and offices of the provincial, city, or municipal government concerned.

The evidential, cultural and historical values of these public records are essential in governance and nation building as these records will not only substantiate the rights of the citizens and how they can exercise their civil rights, but will also make them familiar with their history, culture and duties to the local government and state. Thus, the public records, particularly the records of a local government, are significant assets to the officials,

government personnel, and to the entire populace.

This article focuses on the local government records and archives as well as the recordkeeping practices of the city offices of Malolos, Meycauayan and San Jose Del Monte. The cities of Malolos, Meycauayan and San Jose Del Monte were chosen as the main subjects because after more than 400 years of existence of the province, these places are the ones that officially became component cities among the initial 24 municipalities of Bulacan. It is also in the city of Malolos where the seat of provincial government is situated. Cities are centers of economic and political activities, and according to the Local Government Code of the Philippines, these consist of more urbanized and developed barangays with an annual income of at least PHP 20,000,000.00 for two consecutive years, and a population of not less than 150,000 (Sec. 448 and 450). This means that the three cities had complied with the criteria, which involve evident economic, political and social progress. With all the activities and developments that these cities have undergone for the past years, it is expected that the city offices have created and maintained innumerable records and evidences of their transactions and affairs. Local history studies will surely benefit from these resources, as these would reflect the fall, success and evolution of the cities that were once municipalities of the historic province of Bulacan.

The Province of Bulacan

The origin of the province's name Bulacan, is said to have originated from the word "bulak" or cotton, because the towns of Malolos, Baliuag and Bocaue were famous for their textile and silk weaving industry. Another theory said that the province's name came from the word "burak" or murky soil, because there is a place situated between Calumpit and Pampanga called "Burakan" or a source of murky soil, which would be used for pottery and planting. Bulacan is also an old province, yet its geographical boundaries had changed for many times. (Veneracion, 1986).

Bulacan is considered as the capital of the first Philippine republic, because of the remarkable event that took place in Malolos, Bulacan, the promulgation of Malolos Constitution. It is also one of the first provinces to revolt against Spain. It is also the birthplace of many national heroes, artists and well-known political figures, such as Marcelo H. Del Pilar, Gregorio Del Pilar, Francisco Balagtas, Nicanor Abelardo and Guillermo Tolentino (The Province of Bulacan, 2007).

Bulacan is located at the Central Luzon region, north of Manila. It currently has three cities, Malolos, San Jose del Monte and Meycauayan; and 21 municipalities, Angat, Balagtas, Bocaue, Bulacan, Bustos, Calumpit, Doña Remedios Trinidad, Guiginto, Hagonoy, Marilao, Norzagaray, Obando, Pandi, Paombong, Plaridel, Pulilan, San Ildefonso, San Miguel, San Rafael and Santa Maria.

Malolos City

The city's name, Malulos, is said to have originated from the word "paluslos" or the downward direction of water that flows from Kingwa and Calumpit to the sea that passes through Malolos (Bautista and Santos, 1936). The town was founded in 1673, when the Augustinian missionaries built the first church in a place in Barrio Kanalate, in the district of Kalumpang, Malolos. It is in Malolos where the Bulakenyo propagandists launched their campaigns against Spain. The revolutionary propagandist, Marcelo H. Del Pilar, founded the newspaper *Diariong Tagalog* in 1882. This publication and other revolutionary ventures also reached and took place in the town of Malolos. The Barasoain Church, where the first constitutional convention of 1898 was held, is also located in this city. The Malolos Constitution led the establishment of the first Philippine Republic, making the Philippines the first country in Asia to promulgate its own constitution (Karganilla, 1999).

In 1999, by virtue of Republic Act No. 8754, the municipality of Malolos was converted into a component city of Bulacan. At present, the provincial capitol compound where the seat of the provincial government of Bulacan is situated or "Kapitolyo," can be found in the city of Malolos.

San Jose Del Monte City

On March 2, 1752, the town of San Jose Del Monte was established under the Spanish colonial government. This town is said to be a result of reduccion, or the system used in order to spread Christianity especially in remote areas of Bulacan, from the populated area of Meycauayan. In 1901, during the American regime, San Jose Del Monte was placed under the political supervision of Sta. Maria, which is a nearby town. However, it became independent again in 1918, with Hon. Ciriaco Gallardo as the first town mayor. After several decades, in 1996, the idea of cityhood was first envisioned by former Congressman Angelito M. Sarmiento. In December 10, 1998, House Bill 5988 or "An act converting the municipality of San Jose Del Monte into a component city to be known as the City of San Jose Del Monte" was filed.

Two years after, former President Joseph Estrada signed Republic Act 8797 that formally converted this town to a city, and the plebiscite was set. Also on that year, September 10, 2000, the city of San Jose Del Monte became the first city of Bulacan, under the administration of Hon. Eduardo V. Roquero (City of San Jose Del Monte Bulacan, 2008).

Meycauayan City

This place got its name from “may kawayan,” which means “full of bamboos.” Meycauayan was founded in 1578 by the Franciscan Catholic missionaries who first arrived in the town. Meycauayan used to be one of the largest municipalities in Bulacan, because the early towns of San Jose Del Monte, Bocaue, Marilao, Valenzuela, Obando, Sta. Maria and Pandi were once part of its political jurisdiction. On March 5, 2001, the municipality of Meycauayan was declared as a component city of Bulacan but the conversion did not happen due to the rejection of the local voters of Meycauayan in a plebiscite. Few years after, on December 10, 2006, the voters finally approved the conversion of this municipality into a city in a plebiscite held under the authority of Republic Act 9356 (Meycauayan City, 2007).

The Local Government Records as Archives Heritage

The word heritage usually signifies things inherited from the past with cultural and historical value. Heritage is not only limited to built and natural heritage sites that have most of the time been the concern of different organizations worldwide. Archival materials such as those found in government offices and agencies are also part of our heritage. Local government records such as court records, police blotters, civil registry records, city planning records, and licenses among others have evidential, administrative, informational and historical value vital to the construction of memory of a community and its members. Without these archives heritage, the progress of historical and cultural scholarship is unconceivable. Mibolos (1998) suggested ways on how to start studying a specific locality or region. Archives and primary resources, family genealogies, published local history, personal histories, taped histories, cultural data, demographic characteristics, private diaries (with permission of the owners), letter accounts, financial and judicial archives, parish records, works of arts, keepsake/memorabilia, town or school records and case studies of families may be used for local historiography. Most of these materials can be found in the local or city and

municipal archives, church archives or registries, schools, public libraries and museums.

Archival records, particularly local government records, contain important information to support the government operations and lives of individual citizens. These records document and provide evidences of birth, adoption, payment of taxes, ownership of homes, businesses, outcomes of legal proceedings, and civil and criminal court cases. One of the main problems in the administration of these records is the absence of widely accepted standards for the care and management of local government archival records (CoSA, 2008). Records management and archives administration are not a priority of the local government, and the local government archives are underutilized by the government itself, local historians and legal researchers. Most of these materials are most of the time not known, not used, and not properly administered. People, especially officials of the local government should start to be more aware of the existence and significance of their archives heritage.

The Writing of Local History of Bulacan

Interest in research of and writing local history had risen only after World War II, due to the resurgence of nationalism among Filipinos (Foronda, 1972). Names such as Zaide and Agoncillo are prominent in the field of writing national history. In local history, historians such as Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr., Isagani R. Medina and Jaime B. Veneracion endeavored the writing of history of their respective provinces. Veneracion concentrated on Bulacan and other Filipinos who wrote about the history of Bulacan are Antonio Bautista and Jose P. Santos, *Ang Malulos sa mga Dahon ng Kasaysayan*, 1936; Rolando Villacorte, *Baliwag: Then and Now*, 1970; and Francisco Calalang, *History of Bulacan*, 1971.

In the interview conducted by the researcher with Mr. Rolando E. Villacorte, author of *Baliwag: Then and Now*, he said that it is more difficult to write local history compared to national history due to lack of resources particularly written records. Since there were no established archives and records centers in Baliuag and nearby towns, he used ephemeral sources, souvenir programs, church records and photographs. Some of these sources, especially photographs and souvenir programs had to be collected from different residents of his town. He also resorted to oral history, in which he interviewed the actual participants or those who had experienced and witnessed significant historical events that took place in Baliuag, Bulacan. This is what Dr. Jaime Veneracion said about the creation of records with the use of narrations and personal accounts of actual participants

or eye-witnesses when one cannot find records on a topic or period being investigated. Mr. Villacorte had to verify the information he gathered from the interviews and he had to ask his informants many times with the same set of questions to check the consistency of their responses. Moreover, what made it more difficult for him in conducting his research was the fact that some informants and materials were not confined in Baliuag. He also used some municipal records but according to him, most of the records were incomplete that he had to go to Malolos to look for some of the records that he needed.

In writing the history of Bulacan, Dr. Veneracion used Historical Data Papers at the National Library, various materials from the National Archives in Manila such as Ereccion de Pueblos, local municipal records such as resolutions, court cases, police blotters, church records relating to baptism, death and marriage, registry of deeds on land ownership, and private collections such as the Cirilo Honorio Collection in Marilao and the Antonio Valeriano Collection in Taal, Bulacan, Bulacan. Both of them claimed that they needed patience in conducting their historical research and in explaining to librarians, archivists or personnel the purpose of their research to let them have access to records as well as to avoid suspicion. They likewise faced difficulties in finding resources, which is usually a consequence of lack of systematic arrangement of records.

According to Dr. Veneracion, before he started writing the *Kasaysayan ng Bulakan*, there were already several books written about the history of Bulacan but they were made by non-professionals who did not have access to archives, or training to synthesize their materials. The researcher of this paper looked into the published books about the local history of Bulacan and found out that most of these books contain more information on the phase of the establishment of pueblo; the Spanish rule up to the American period. For example, facts about the history of Bulacan in the book *Bulacan: Lalawigan ng Bayani at Bulaklak* (2000) only include the events from Spanish era up to the American regime. It also provides historical timeline, which includes significant events and personalities only up to 1899. Books that were published earlier such as *Ang Malulos sa Mga Dahon Kasaysayan* (1936) and *Baliwag: Then and Now* (1970) have not been fully updated. The book *Malolos: The Legacy of its Past* (1982) contains discussion on the history of Malolos, gathered from different records (e.g. police blotters culled from the municipal records of the town). The discussion regarding what happened to Malolos from 1942-1945 and towards 1980's, is not as detailed

or comprehensive as the establishment of pueblo, British occupation, years of turmoil and revolution and the fight for having the first republic in 1898 to 1899. Dr. Veneracion mentioned during the telephone conversation with the researcher of this study that a number of postwar records are gone, especially after the 1986 EDSA Revolution because of the change of administration and then some mayors took the records with them.

Boncan (1998) presumed that “complete records of the past do not exist so as to provide a continuous history, history is for the most part only a reconstructed story of the past” (p.197). If history, therefore, is a reconstructed story or an interpretation of the past based on the only available records and other sources used for historical research, this means that how these material evidences are managed and preserved directly affects the creation of history, in this case, the local history of Bulacan specifically during the postwar years. If there is a systematic management of records, the reconstruction of Bulacan’s past or history would be better.

Now, the question is: where are these postwar records and how do and should the local government units of Bulacan manage these contemporary public records in their respective offices that could be good sources of history of their province?

Postwar Local Government Records of Bulacan

The Provincial Records Division is under the Provincial General Services and is located at the Provincial Capitol, Malolos City. It was established in June 2003 and is not considered an archives repository by the personnel in the Capitol, but rather a depository or storage area of inactive records of the Provincial General Services Division of the Provincial Capitol. The Records Division contains valuable records that have administrative, legislative, medical and historical value. Also included in the collection are journals and other periodical publications, correspondences, minutes of meetings, photographs and maps of different places in Bulacan. There are approximately 3,976 folders of permanent records and 40,884 folders of current records. Among the permanent records are the 201 files (personnel files) of the Provincial Capitol employees from 1998 to 2008, land titles of the provincial government of Bulacan, which are all kept in a safety vault and in/out patient records from different hospitals. The main provenance or creators of these records are the offices and departments of the Provincial Capitol, the Provincial Hospital (Malolos) and six district hospitals of Bulacan, namely, Baliuag District Hospital (Baliuag), Emilio G. Perez Hospital (Hagonoy), Maternity and Children Hospital (Calumpit), Rogaciano Mercado

Memorial Hospital (Sta. Maria), and San Miguel District Hospital (San Miguel). These are all required to transfer their in/ out patient records to the Provincial Records Division five years after their creation and active use.

Most of the postwar records in the city offices of Bulacan



Figure 1. Provincial Records Division, Malolos, Bulacan

are very recent and it is noticeable that only the offices of Sangguniang Panlungsod and City Civil Registrar keep most of older records, ranging from 1901 up to the present for the Civil Registrar and from 1952 up to the present for the Sangguniang Panlungsod. The postwar records of Sangguniang Panlungsod consist of minutes of meetings, ordinances and resolutions necessary for the efficient and effective governance of the city. The City Civil Registrar Office contains vital civil records of the city's inhabitants. It keeps and processes all registrable documents and judicial decrees concerning the civil status of the citizens. Records of the other offices, such as those relating to the city's development and infrastructures dating from 1987 to the present, can be found in the City Planning and Development Office. Tax



Figure 2. Bundles of Records of the Province.

declaration books dating as early as 1945 and other property assessment and taxation records from 1980 onwards can be found in the City Assessor's Office. Most of the records in other offices or departments, including the Office of the City Mayor, are relatively recent. The chronology of records starts from the term

of the incumbent mayor. This may be explained by the fact that the cities of Bulacan – San Jose Del Monte, Malolos and Meycauayan- were founded as component cities only in 2000, 2002 and 2006, respectively. Oftentimes, the inclusive dates of records kept in the offices range from the year of their cityhood up to the present, or a few years before these former municipalities became cities.

Integrated Control of Bulacan’s Local Government Records

‘Integrated control of records’ means that the processes of recordkeeping and archiving are actively involved in the management and monitoring of records; in this case, local government records of Bulacan. Deserno and Kynaston (2005) cited what the World Bank said about the importance and purpose of an integrated records management, which is “to preserve records and archives in an accessible, intelligible, and usable form as long as they have continuing utility or value and to make information from records and archives available in the right format to the right people, at the right time” (p. 61).

Local government records may have historical and cultural value, other than what these records are created for. This calls for records managers or officers to have close ties with archivists and other similar professions to clearly identify the primary use of records and which among them are worthy of permanent preservation as archives. The concept of records continuum highlights the collaboration between the archivist and records manager; unlike the time-bound records lifecycle that rigidly divides the purpose and responsibilities of recordkeeping and archives administration. This model was formulated in the 1990s by Australian archival theorist Frank Upward. This framework also provides stable and continuous recordkeeping strategies for recorded information of various formats (print, electronic, etc.) to link the past to the present and the present to the future (Xiaomi, 2003).

Kennedy and Schauder (1998) explained the four dimensions of the records continuum and these are document creation, adding information for evidential purposes, organizing memory and pluralizing memory. In the first dimension, records are produced as part of the organization's processes and activities. The records which have been created or received are then tagged with information or metadata in the second dimension. In this dimension, the record's links to other records are also determined through metadata. In the third dimension, records now become part of a storage and retrieval system that will comprise the collective or corporate memory of the organization. In the last dimension, particular records that are required to be preserved for purposes of societal memory and accountability will be part of an archival system together with other records coming from different institutions or organizations.

An effective records management program must have provisions for records retention and disposal. Different values of records must be appropriately determined and assigned to records through appraisal. Appraisal may take place not only on the last phase of the functional life of the records, but it may happen in the beginning or middle phase. To avoid premature disposal of archival records that are worthy of permanent preservation, appraisal must be done by the records managers/officers and archivists, with the help of the local government's administrators, institutions and departments that are tasked to preserve history and community information, and also local historians. Using the concept of records continuum, approaches to control local government records of the city offices of Bulacan from their creation to their preservation in archives are discussed in this segment.

First Dimension: Documentation of Transactions and Activities

This dimension encapsulates all the processes and controls in records creation. In records life cycle, records of different formats are created as by-products of activities to have evidence and meet certain legal requirements. In the records continuum concept, the creation stage of records is also the recommended period for appraisal to recognize which among the bulk of records to be created are archival. This gives the archivist a proactive role in the creation, retention, proper disposal of records and transfer of archival records to the archives. Records do not need to reach their inactive stage in the lifecycle for their secondary values to be determined, such as archival, historical, informational and symbolic.

Records creation controls, such as forms management, correspondence and mail management and utilization of machines and equipment to create records, should be given more attention as these identify the use of good quality paper and other media or carriers to create records that are initially appraised to have archival value. This would make the life of the archival records longer, especially if through the records creation phase, the methods of preservation and access have already been determined, such as microfilming, digitization, provision of access copies, and immediate or perpetual transfer of records to the archives.

The medium used to produce local government records is not always paper. Though the widely used format is still paper, the records management program should have measures on how to manage and capture the data contained in both paper and electronic format. The records lifecycle, being an equally important concept in archives and records management, may also be used as an approach for electronic records because it is not easy to differentiate electronic records of substantive value from fixed-term and transitory. To resolve this, records managers and archivists must know information about the creation process of records and the context in which they are created (Deserno & Kynaston, 2005).

Various activities of the departments in the city offices are reported and represented by the records created. Records are either legislative (those created and used by the Sangguniang Panlungsod) or administrative (those created and used by majority of the departments), which clearly have connection to and are used for the governance of the cities. Records that are created, for example, the proposed resolutions and ordinances in the Sangguniang Panlungsod, have significance to the next phases of reading and referral to concerned committees for consultations, research and interpellation before carrying out

any legislative measure or act. These records are therefore needed to be captured and appraised based on their function and value. Since most of the departments in the three city offices do not have documented and formal directive on the control of records creation, they should start establishing the appraisal guidelines for them to identify which records have more significance and must be retained for a period of time in the records office or permanently in the archives. The records schedule of the Provincial Records Division in the Capitol, the model general records schedule for local government and the model records retention and disposition schedule of the National Archives may serve as basis for the appraisal of local government records in the city offices of Bulacan. The workflow of transactions that produce records in the offices may likewise be observed.

Second Dimension: Information systems used for documentation and evidential purposes

Once the records are created, these must be captured in the records and information management systems for more efficient use, access and retrieval. This dimension shows that records of the same context must be linked to each other, regardless of their formats. Records must be linked to their creators, contents, functions, work processes and other related records. This could be done through description, which may be separate from the record (e.g. labels in the folders, boxes or shelves, indexes, catalogs and other finding aids) or metadata that may be embedded in the electronic record or resource itself. Description and metadata standards, such as the General International Standard Archival Description or ISAD(G) created by the International Council on Archives (ICA), and Dublin Core may be used for this purpose.

Information systems are important in capturing records in the course of their creation, use and maintenance. These help the staff of the city offices as well as the general public to coherently create, use, request for and process records. For example, the local government units of Bulacan are using the Real Property Tax Information System (RPTIS) for revenue generation and to facilitate easy assessment and appraisal of real properties of the cities. The modules of this system include assessment operation, billing system and collection of real property taxes. Based on the official website of the province of Bulacan, this information system has improved the processing of simple Real Property Unit (RPU) by 93%, production of tax bills and notices of delinquencies, as well as the reassessment and update of property information. Another commonly used system is the Civil

Registry Information System (CRIS) for the storage, retrieval and access to different civil registry documents. Aside from these systems, the departments in the city offices are using basic Microsoft Office applications, such as MS Word and MS Excel. Valtonen (2007) said that the staff's involvement in the design of recordkeeping information systems is one of the basic tasks in records management and one of the essential components of the records continuum-based recordkeeping. Based on the findings, the staff involved with recordkeeping lack participation in designing forms and information systems, as these were already provided by the provincial government and have been used by different local government offices all over the country. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the information systems used by the local government units in Bulacan have efficiently improved the services they provide, particularly in providing the information that the public needs.

Arrangement and description of records bring physical, intellectual and contextual order to records. The Provincial Records Division follows the prescribed hierarchical levels of arrangement of archives, from repository down to item level. Labels and codes are also provided for the records. The organization of records in the city offices, on the other hand, is not uniform and they do not have a filing manual and file plan that will identify the relationship of records to other series of records, arrangement and retention period. The most common filing methods used for active and semi-active local government records are alphabetical and chronological. To preserve the original order and provenance of records, these filing methods may also be used in the archives once the records of permanence from different units or departments are transferred to the archives.

Third Dimension: Organizing Corporate Memory

In this dimension, a model recordkeeping regime must be organized to ensure that appropriate recordkeeping strategies are done to create, capture and keep records that will support the businesses, functions and decision-making of the different departments of local government units. Records from different departments must be accessible by people who are authorized to have access on these. Documentation standards may be formed parallel to the information systems used by the offices. The workflow and processes must be clearly understood before designing and implementing strategies that will identify whether a record series will be maintained in the semi-active collection of a particular department or these will be deposited or transferred to the archives for the purpose of preserving the corporate memory of the

city office. Unfortunately, the city offices of Bulacan do not have a coherent recordkeeping regime across the departments nor do they have a centralized repository for their semi-active and inactive records of enduring value. This is reflected by the lack of standards on what records to keep and what to dispose of despite the existence of the model records disposition schedule for local government units. The decisions on where to put or what to do with the semi-active and inactive records lie on the hands of the head of the departments, without concrete basis, as opposed to the retention and disposition practices of the Provincial Records Division in the Provincial Capitol. Provisions for preventive conservation for local government records are almost absent due to lack of budget and awareness of what records to preserve first, which could be determined during the early stages of records creation and appraisal.

Standards and legislations must be taken into consideration. Based on the best practices set by the ISO 15489-2:2001, there are eight steps in the design and implementation of a records system. The first step is to conduct preliminary investigation and then analyze business activity that creates records, identify requirements for records, conduct systems analysis and determine the strategies to satisfy the records requirements such as policy, standards, design and methods of implementation before designing a records system. The last two steps involved the implementation of the records system and performing post-implementation review. These steps may be followed by the city offices in designing and implementing their recordkeeping regime and records system. As mentioned in the second dimension, the staff, particularly the records managers or officers and archivists, must take role in the design of any information and recordkeeping systems for their departments and city offices.

Fourth Dimension: Pluralize Collective Memory

The previous dimension involves the formation of a recordkeeping regime that will meet the documentary needs of the departments or individual city office. In this level, this scheme does not only keep and manage local government records to form corporate memory, but also collective and societal memory. This purpose, along with the intent to achieve government transparency and accountability, is clearly mandated by the law. Though there are no local legislations that direct the local government units of Bulacan on how they should manage their government records, the Local Government Code of the Philippines already stated that

local government units must have their own archival systems for their records.

The city offices of Bulacan lack standard controls and procedures on the creation of forms, exchange of correspondence, maintenance and security of records, and preservation of records deemed to have archival value. Disposal of records in the city offices is based on the decision of the personnel in charge of the records and heads of the departments, and not on a records schedule which the city offices still do not have. To ensure that records containing evidences that will build the collective memory of Bulacan are properly captured and preserved, recordkeeping and archival functions, such as proper handling, maintenance, repair and doing measures for preventive conservation of records, may be done concurrently. Local government records do not need to be inactive for these to be considered archives and be taken care of. Records deemed to have permanent value to the department, city office and province as a whole should be given attention as to how these should be used, processed and handled and where these should be filed, placed and transferred after a period of time. Conservation treatments must also be applied to damaged and deteriorated archival records. Promotion and outreach activities should also be done to inform the public about the existence of these documentary heritage materials. Aside from promoting good administration and governance, these local government records would be helpful in filling up the gaps of the local history of Bulacan.

In this part, the concept of records continuum was used to examine the local government units' recordkeeping and archives practices in general. This revealed their limitations in managing, appraising, disposing and preserving records. Provisions for the preservation of records of enduring value are almost absent, as well as appraisal criteria that should be used upon the creation of records. With this, archives and recordkeeping are clearly not yet integrated in the city offices of Bulacan.

Impact of Findings on the Writing of Local History of Bulacan

“‘No documents, no history’ is one dicta of historical research. Such a reminder often depresses, considering that one of the greatest problems confronting research on local history is accessibility of materials” (Medina, 1977, p.185). The absence of better access to materials to write local history has been a problem of many historians and researchers. However, this must not be a hindrance to historiography. These primary sources are to be found in different local government units and the informational and historical values of these materials are just waiting passively to be taken full advantage of. The management of archives and records has a direct effect on the availability of these materials for possible research. The findings of this study

show that the local government units of Bulacan have low recognition of the role of archives and records management in support of organizational efficiency, accountability and historical scholarship. Proper coordination in the usage of records of different formats, as well as standard policies and local legislations relating to appropriate management, transfer and centralization of local government records are also absent. Though the Provincial Records Division has an RMAO or National Archives of the Philippines (NAP)-approved records retention and disposal schedule, the city offices do not have records schedules that will guide them in the proper and timely retention and disposal of public records. There are also inadequate protection, security and confidentiality controls over public records. All these findings can be considered as drawbacks on the writing of local history of Bulacan. Since the local government records are not properly managed from their creation, use and up to their disposal, the records, which may be of historical and permanent value, are not appraised and have the possibility of being prematurely destroyed. The status of the local government records of Bulacan showed what Minchew (1995) accentuated in her manual, that despite the worth and substance of local government records, they are commonly the most neglected records in the nation. She also underscored the fact that historians and archivists have been plaintive for the lack of sufficient attention and care given to the huge quantities of local government records produced every day.

While not all local government records have archival value and societal significance, some of them do. The local history of Bulacan has the possibility of having unresolved gaps if this fraction of important records is taken for granted, lost or deliberately and untimely destroyed. There are standards and principles that may be followed to avoid this. They may also follow the concept of records continuum, in which secondary values that bring about community and societal significance, such as research and history, are already assigned to records from the time of their creation. There should be a strong and continuous support, both administrative and financial, from the national and local government for the formation and implementation of archives and records repositories as well as integrated programs and policies that will guide their archives and records management practices. Local ordinances must be passed and implemented for these officially provide the basis of operations of archives and records management programs. These would endorse the establishment of records

centers and archives in the different local government units. These may also require the collaboration of all government officials and employees concerned with recordkeeping to work as a team, follow the standards and best practices on archives and records management and regularly transfer identified and permanent records to the archives. The local government units must also know how to promote awareness about the availability of local government archives. This can be done together with schools, local associations, historical societies and other related organizations and institutions. The Province of Bulacan may form a Local Government Archives and Records Council that consists of representatives from different local government offices. The council will serve as the main coordinating body that will decide on and evaluate the elements of the programs and policies of local archives administration and records management. The members of this council will also be responsible for the monitoring of the status of records and practices of local government units.

The local government units must always remember that the records they are creating, using and keeping in their respective offices are not only public properties and assets that have to be systematically managed, but these are also part of the cultural and historical heritage of their community. With this, local government archives that may be of use for local history writing and serve as representations of Bulacan's collective memory will be appropriately preserved and used.

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