VIEWPOINT

**EDUCATING FILIPINO ARCHIVISTS
AMIDST THE CHALLENGES OF THE
21ST CENTURY ARCHIVAL PROFESSION**

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Introduction

Taylor (1972) aptly describes the role of archivists today, forty two years ago, as a critical player, a manager of information both of the past and present. This is reflected in the following quotation.

> *"[The archivist's] resources will span the present and the past, and he will hold the key to decision-making and research alike. His bank of interest will be far wider than that of the records manager, but he must learn the language of the computer like his native tongue if he is not to be relegated to the fringe of administration from which he came.* (Taylor, 1972, p.33)

Moreover, having a vision of how electronic technology would affect archiving, he fairly acknowledged the need for archivist to have the knowledge on how computers are used in archiving (Taylor, 1972).

In the website of the International Council on Archives (http://www.ica.org), there is a page dedicated to the definition of "the records, archives and the profession". The said page briefly discusses what archives are, and their characteristics, as well as how important these are to an individual or a nation. Although there is a brief description of the role of an archivist and records keeper, there is no mention of the qualifications that are required of an archivist or a records keeper in order to qualify as such. So what qualifications should a 21st century archivists possess?

The new emerging archival environment that archivists have to respond to requires specific skills which would adopt and evolve with the new information ecology. This evolving information ecology has a great impact on archival education. Both the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) and Society of American Archivists (SAA) came out with guidelines on the establishment of archival programs in their respective countries. The International Council on Archives (ICA) Section for Archival Education and Training conducts conferences to serve as venue for discourses about the changing archival environment and the need to integrate the changes in the archival education (http://www.ica.org) In the recent Asia

and Pacific Conference on Archival Education (APCAE) the need for innovation and improvement of archival education to deliver required knowledge and skills to respond to these challenges has been emphasized (APCAE, 2013). More specific skills were further discussed and suggested in different fora and gatherings of archivists in different parts of the world. In a paper presented by Yaco (2007) during the annual conference of the ICA Section on University and Research Institutions Archives, she discusses the technical skills that an archivist should acquire in order to maximize the use of new technologies to better improve access to archives collection, both physically and electronically. Among these are knowledge on Web page design, voice recognition software, understanding of Encoded Archives Description (EAD), POD casts, setting up of style sheets, and other technical concepts to make archives collection available online (Yaco, 2007). A call for the expansion of digital preservation to digital curation has also been emphasized to complement the "move toward postcustodial and continuum approaches within the archival profession (Lee, C. & Tibbo, H., 2011, p. 124)" Consideration of these technical skills may suggest an expansion of the archival education curriculum and/or through the design of specialized training programs intended to cover these required skills and provide the necessary preparations to the new archival environment.

Education and Training as Measure of Readiness

Taking off from the foregoing discussion on education and training, being the most effective strategies to prepare archivists to the future of archives, this may likewise be taken as a measure to test the readiness of the archivists. (Although there are other factors that would determine readiness, such as experience, attitude, management skills, and resources, among others, this paper, however, focuses on the training and education aspect as measure of preparedness with the assumption that preparation for the mentioned challenges are dealt with, in the proposal for a curriculum and/or training designs for archivists.) In this regard, taking a closer look on the status of archival education in Asia, particularly, in the Philippines, would somehow suggest the readiness or the preparation that they (archivists) adopt to be able to face these challenges in the archival profession.

Based on an online Directory of Library and Information Schools in Asia prepared by Consortium of iSchools in Asia Pacific (CISAP), out of the nineteen countries in South Asia, East Asia and South East Asia, thirty four (34) institutions are offering a specific degree on archival studies and one (1) in Records Management (http://www.cisap.asia/schools/). Since most of the archival programs being offered in Asia are often subsumed in the Library and Information Studies Department, data were based from this directory being the most updated in the Region. However, a more updated data may be available if direct inquiries will be made with the concerned institutions. A program on conservation, which is a necessary component of archival science, is offered in Malaysia . Out of the 34 institutions, thirty one (31) of which are located in China, one (1) in Japan, one (1) in Taiwan and another one (1) in India. The Philippines, which is the focus of this study, does not offer a formal program on archival studies. However, courses on archival studies are being offered as elective courses or special track under the Library and Information Science Program (http://www.cisap.asia/schools/). Only a tally of academic institutions which specifically offer archival studies, as indicated in the directory by CISAP, were included. The count does not include other programs which may also offer archival science courses as part of the curricula. It is therefore suggested, that a more

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in-depth study of the curricula of these institutions offering archival studies program be made to be able to come up with a more accurate assessment of archival education in Asia.

Challenges of the Current Global and Local Archival Landscape

Information technologies, re-conceptualization of archives and the exponential growth of archives in different formats including the born-digital have shaped the current and evolving archival landscape in tremendous ways (Nesmith, 2007). It is impossible to learn the archival science with all the concepts and theories that go with it, without having to situate it within the current digital realm. Moreover, it will require a comprehensive analysis of the different archival practices-appraisal, acquisition, arrangement and description, preservation, access and reference service, outreach and public programming, in order to understand the unique requirements of the archival education in the country. A broad perspective of these challenges that archivists have to face in understanding the nature of digital, as well as, analog records, and in managing the archival institutions that maintain these records, is very critical to ensure the efficient performance of their tasks.

The Philippines cannot be exempted from the challenges posed by the evolving global archival landscape. However there are factors which are unique to the Philippine archival profession that further increase these challenges.

The Philippines is a young developing country with a very old history that has resulted in a rich Filipino heritage. As a result of more than four decades of colonization, the Philippines developed a multicultural heritage that made Filipino culture unique and interesting for historians, anthropologists, social scientists and other types of researchers and scholars. This characteristic has become a challenge in discovering the true authentic Filipino culture and history. The challenge becomes more difficult because of the inadequate access to evidences, particularly of primary records that document the *raison d'etre* of such rich cultural and historical heritage. This is the first biggest challenge that the Philippine archival profession has to contend with. Records which are scattered in different parts of the country and different parts of the world have still to be accounted for such as those in Spain and other part of the Europe, in the US and other parts of the world.

Moreover, the relative youth of the Philippine archival profession is another factor which adds to these challenges. The very first decree that required the organization, duplication and storage of records was made more than a century after the very first Spanish records were created in the country. Similarly, the first Bureau of Archives was established in 1901, more than three centuries after the Spanish colonization (Punzalan, 2006). Highlighting this, is the passing into law of the National Archives of the Philippines Act also known as Republic Act which occurred only in 2007. In all those years that no prescribed recordkeeping system was implemented, archives of both the government and private individuals and institutions were handled loosely. This also includes those unwritten accounts which have remained in the minds of first hand witnesses who preferred not to put the history in writing.

Another unique factor that contributes to the complexity of the challenges is the very natural landscape and environment of the Philippines. Situated along the Pacific Rim of Fire,

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the Philippines contains 37 volcanoes (http://kidlat.pagasa.dost.gov.ph). Its northern and eastern regions lie within the typhoon belt, thus, it is also constantly mauled by typhoons averaging twenty times annually. This environmental condition places the country in constant risk of natural disasters; thus, such condition requires special care and management of the archives.

Lastly, another major factor is the limited number of properly trained professionals to handle the archives and the archives functions. The majority of the records during the Spanish, American and Japanese colonization and the records produced and transferred to the National Archives by the different government institutions are still requiring proper organization, identification, and preservation. These records do not include the pre-colonial cultural tradition that remained recorded in the minds and the hearts of indigenous Filipinos. Further as the country strives to develop its economy, more records are generated which require proper handling and organization of trained personnel in the field.

At present, there is no standard archival practices for all types of archives in the Philippines. The National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), by virtue of R.A. 9470, is entrusted to regulate all public records. However, it has vague, if not limited, authority over private archives, which more often have in their custody rare collections of records which have significant historical and cultural values. Although Article II Section 9 of RA 9470 gives authority to the Director of NAP to acquire private archives which has enduring historical value, there is no provision in the Law nor its Implementing Rules and Regulations that would detail the appraisal of value of archives and how the acquisition of private archives would be implemented.

Evolution and Development of Archival Education in the Philippines

Archival education in the Philippines, has from its first introduction, been a part of the development of the library and information science education in the country. Several factors may be attributed to this connection. First, archives is viewed as part of the library, either as special collection section or a separate archives section. This is true particularly, in most academic institutions, where most of the established archives can be found. Secondly, this association to the library led to the need for librarians to be trained in archival science. Thus, most of the pioneers in the archives profession who underwent training in archival science were librarians.

Notwithstanding other informal training on records organization given prior to 1954, the first formal course in archives was offered in 1954, when the first archives elective subjects were included in the undergraduate program of the Department of Library Science at the University of the Philippines (UP). A more detailed historical account of the archival education is presented in the paper of Yolanda C. Granda, Ricardo Punzalan and Teresita Montesa in the Journal of Philippine Librarianship in 2001 entitled "Insight and Foresight: Developing the Master of Archival Studies at the Institute of Library and Information Science, University of the Philippines". Continuing courses of the preliminary archives subjects, were also offered and which were converted into graduate level courses with the introduction of other continuation courses. However, due to lack of enrollees, the courses were abolished in 1960. Failure of this initial effort on archival education were attributed to two factors, the absence of a distinct mas-

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ter's program and the absence of a local faculty to teach the courses. However, despite the abolition of the elective courses, a course in archives conservation continued to be offered until the approval of a Records and Archives Track in the Master of Library and Information Science Program and eventually as a track in Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS). At present, the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) at the University of the Philippines Diliman is the only academic institution offering a number of courses in archival studies, both in the undergraduate and graduate programs.

This association with the field of library science became particularly advantageous, when the library profession became regulated by virtue of the Philippine Librarianship Act of 1990 (Republic Act 6966). Librarianship gained the acknowledgment and the respect accorded to other regulated professions. This relationship was further strengthened when the said Act was updated and repealed in 2004 by virtue of Republic Act 9246. This law officially delegates archival education within the realm of librarianship when it specifically included in the scope of the practice of librarianship the teaching of archives subjects, along with other library science courses, as stipulated in Item 5 of Section 5 of the Law which specifically states that "Librarianship shall deal with the performance of the librarian's functions, which shall include, but not be limited to the following…(5)Teaching, lecturing and reviewing of library, archives and information science subjects, including subjects given in the licensure examination; .." The inclusion of archives subjects in the library science programs somehow promoted the archival education as more and more library schools started to offer and include archival courses in their curricula.

Moreover, numerous non-formal training programs are also being offered by the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), formerly known as Records Management and Archives Office (RMAO), National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and other professional organizations such as the Society of Filipino Archivists (SFA), Philippine Records Management Association (PRMA), the Society of Film Archivists (SOFIA), Society of Ecclesiastical Archivists of the Philippines (SEAP), Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI), UP Library and Information Science Alumni Association and other organizations (Granda, et.al, 2001). These programs were often geared towards introductory or basic courses and continuing or supplementary education on archives administration (p. 12).

A proposed curriculum for Master of Archives and Records Management (MARM) was jointly developed in early 2000 by the SLIS faculty and the officers of the Society of Filipino Archivists (SFA). However, the absence of a faculty member with a degree in archival studies prevented the program from being implemented.

Required Competencies for 21st Century Filipino Archivists

In order to face these challenges, Filipino archivists and would be archivists and all personnel in charge with the archives should be properly trained and equipped with the necessary skills to handle and manage archives in different formats.

It is in this purview that besides conducting short courses and trainings/seminars, a formal degree in archival studies is seen as an effective long term solution to the challenges faced by the archival profession in the Philippines. A proposed graduate program which would

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respond to the specific requirements of the profession in the country while at the same time addressing the challenges of global archival landscape is deemed necessary. Given this requirement, I have identified some of the basic competencies that should be developed among would be archivists in the Philippines.

Appraisal Strategies

If Filipino archivists would address the issue of acquiring or accounting all the historical records which are maintained in different repositories inside and outside of the Philippines, specific appraisal strategies should be developed to guide archivists in the appraisal of these archives. The understanding of the different issues about appraisal procedures brought forward by experts like Cook, Samuels and Duranti require a critical analysis of how and what the best appraisal practices are. Beyond knowing the classic Jenkinsonian and Schellenbergian principles of appraisal and preservation of the authenticity and organic whole, there is a need to understand the concepts of function-based appraisal, total archives, participatory appraisal and macroappraisal and checking its applicability to the current appraisal practices in the Philippines. As Cook suggested, it is necessary that prospective archivists understand not just their role as manager of the archives (records and repository), but also their relationship and responsibility to the parent institution, the community, and the society as a whole (Cook, 2011). Transcending the role of archivists as keeper of records to protector of societal and cultural memory requires a catalytic role as an advocate of truth. Reiterating what Cook said, the need to be "extraordinary sensitive to the different political, social, philosophical and ethical nature of appraisal"(p. 173) is a must in order to discover the deeper meaning and value of records, the contextuality of the records, the societal provenance, as educator Tom Nesmith espouses; thus, it is also tantamount to the need to understand the whole of society.

It would be a challenge to introduce the concepts of societal provenance, participatory appraisal and the total archives, which also leads to the inclusion of non-institutional and personal archives in the Philippines. However, as important as learning the appraisal practices, it is critical to understand the true meaning and importance of archives in the Philippine context.

Preservation and Disaster Management Skills

Aside from the knowledge of appraisal procedures and responsibilities, there are other pragmatic concerns to be considered, such as the issue of preservation and long term access.

Whatever is appraised as record with enduring value requires proper care and preservation to ensure its continuous or prolonged usefulness, whether it is in analogue or digital format. But the extent of preservation intervention that an archivist has to apply to the archives, often time, is influenced by existing resources. This is particularly true both for digital and analog records, where issues of limited manpower with the necessary expertise, limited preservation tools and also time, are of great influence on the decision making process pertaining to preservation. This is where the understanding of the materiality of the archives comes in very helpful in prioritizing the preservation and understanding preventive options that archivists are required to take. Training courses which focus on teaching would be archivists the basic restorative procedures are undoubtedly very helpful to ensure that records of enduring

value are preserved. It is, however, also necessary to understand that such interventions can only be done if required resources are available, which realistically, is not always the case. Minimizing the environmental risks and being prepared for possible disaster are preventive measures, which cost less but could do more benefits both to the holdings and the archival institutions. In a tropical country, prone to all kinds of natural disasters, like the Philippines, focus on disaster preparedness and management courses are very critical.

Technical Skills in Digital Archiving

Current archival challenges revolve around the management, preservation and making available archives in different formats particularly the digitized and born digital archives. The development of new technologies that facilitate the exponential growth of digital records has presented issues on the preservation and access of these types of archives. With the deluge of records that the digital technology has made possible to conveniently produce, how do archivists appraise the value of these thousands of records? So how does one determine the contextual value of born digital archives? Undeniably, the archival profession is now faced with a bigger challenge of not only determining the contextual value of archives, but also the preservation of the information, capturing the context of creation of archives but more so, how to preserve a new format-digital materials- which is now the current trend and will going to be in the next so many years, and ensure its accessibility for as long as possible. All the issues and concepts related to appraisal are now carried over to the issues of preservation and access. This huge challenge presented by IT requires not just knowing the procedures but being able to understand the technical underpinnings of IT adoption. As the whole concept and application of IT becomes more and more complicated there is a need for archivists to not wait and depend on IT experts to do the job for them. As Evans et. al. (2009) have written, in order to meet the challenges and maximize the benefits of digital and networking technologies, archivists need a paradigm shift, a recognition and acceptance that there is really a need to shift from systems and tools dominated by the paper paradigm towards the born digital records.

Conclusion

There is no better way to describe the changes that archives and archival profession have gone through, than the statement made by educator Tom Nesmith (2007) with his account that "the reconceptualisation [of archives], the increasing diversity of uses of archives, the greater accessibility of archives [brought about by new technologies], and the exponential increase in the volume of institutional and private records in all media are the most noteworthy features of the new archival environment that has taken shape in the last 30 years"(p. 2) This statement encompasses the various stages of transformation that archives and the profession concerned with it have undergone. The same is also true in the Philippines. As the archival profession takes off to further assert its importance in the society, it is necessary that would be archivists be equipped with the necessary understanding of the evolving archival landscape, and all other issues that go with it. The role of a more holistic archival education becomes more critical and deeper understanding of digital technology more compelling. However, as Upward, et.al.(2011) suggests, archivists "need new forms of consciousness, new ways of viewing our functions and new tactics, structures, and strategies" to meet the challenges of evolving information ecologies". Archivists should maintain the analytical skills necessary in the contextualization of the archives to accurately extract the value of the archives not only to the

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researchers but also to the community that the archives represent, while at the same time, should be flexible and adaptable to the changing archival landscape. Furthering this characteristic of adoptability, Yakel (2000) enumerates several roles that archivists may take in a digital environment, as knowledge broker, translator, boundary spanner or as gardener. In assuming any of these roles, archivists have to be familiar with the issues concerning appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description and preservation of records which are unique to Philippine archival profession within the context of digital realm. Archival education should be aimed at ensuring that would be archivists have a clear grasp, not only of the issues but also of the different roles that they are expected to perform and to be able to be responsive to the challenges of the archival profession.

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