Collection development strategies for audiovisual archives: Malaysia Government Agencies perspectives

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Abstract

Background of the study: The necessity for effective audiovisual (AV) record management nowadays is gaining precedence in most agencies, especially the government sector. Besides that, AV records are also being demanded to be retrieved and analyzed by researchers who come to the National Archives of Malaysia (NAM). Even though, NAM has found that most government agencies which act as depositor to these records are not actively depositing their valuable government AV records.

Purpose: This study aims to identify the issues in depositing AV records to the archives repository and to suggest a significant collection management strategy for encouraging government agencies to deposit their valuable government AV records to NAM for future generation references.

Method: The qualitative research method has used by contrivance case study approach. five (5) selected government agencies through the interview of five (5) officers who deal with AV records.

Findings: The findings of the study have proposed six (6) strategies to be applied by government agencies to overcome the issues.

Conclusion: This study is significant to government agencies, for Records Manager and NAM in increasing and enriching valuable AV archives collection as national heritage.

Keywords: audiovisual records, collection management, archival institution

Introduction

Regularly audiovisual materials can be used as reference materials in education research, the production of video documentaries, and radio programs, or training materials. Audio-visual information holds a unique dimension that the written word cannot replace (Davidson and Reid, 2022; Rachmat, Sumartono, & Jemat, 2018). Written words cannot show gestures, personality traits or tone of voice. To support this statement, Yap & Barsaga (2018) have mentioned that video documentation contains revealing speeches, techniques, or interviews which are valuable to a researcher. They noted that information rapidly transmitted through visuals is much more meaningful than printed words. In interpreting selected images, the researcher needs to discover new primary data, both written and visual, especially in underpinning their study as mentioned (Witkowski & Terrence, 2018). To support this statement, Lund (2020) stated that in the information and digital era, we can easily find audio-visual records or materials through social media such as Facebook.

Moreover, the usage of audiovisual records and archives in government agencies has also been emphasized because of the ease of this technological advancement that makes it easier for agencies to record all daily transactions and activities from conventional into audiovisual collection mediums. Every public office or government agency that produces audio-visual records is responsible for managing these records throughout their life cycle from their creation, use, and maintenance until disposition (Ngoasheng, Ngoepe, and Marutha, 2022). For this purpose, the National Archives of Malaysia (NAM) has the authority to govern the rule in records and archives management in the public office and act as the custodian of the public records (NAM Act, 2003). Following this matter, AV records also need to be deposited to NAM to be managed in NAM. According to Khan et.al, (2014) although NAM provides an audio-visual source of national heritage value, however many government agencies did not transfer their valuable audio-visual records to NAM. In addition, Rakemane & Mosweu (2020) also found that this situation might happened because of a lack of awareness in depositing AV records and also a lack of specified procedures, guidelines and implementation policies.

This practice will lead to failure in filling in the gap in the acquisition of audio-visual records that have many demands from researchers. This is to ensure audio-visual records are ready and accessible as a reference for researchers. Komba, Nawe and Manda, (2017) claimed that to ensure archival knowledge and heritage can be transferred from generation to generation, preservation needs to be done adequately. Once again, the preservation of AV records is another valid reason why AV records need to be deposited to NAM. The International Association of Sound and Audio-visual Archives (IASA) states that there are three principal activities in managing audio-visual materials namely developing and managing collection, preservation, and dissemination. Valuable AV records from government agencies are in high demand by researchers, unfortunately, gaps in collection occur (Ngoasheng, Ngoepe, and Marutha, 2022). Therefore, to safeguard valuable AV government records, government agencies and archival institutions need to collaborate in managing the collection development of AV records, their expertise and records preservation. Thus, the study on the collection development in NAM should be conducted to identify issues faced by government agencies and to propose strategies to overcome the issues.

Literature Review

According to Ghalib & Rubina (2021), Collection Management is an umbrella term which involves a wide range of interrelated activities, including Collection Development, Stock Management, Marketing Management, Fiscal Management, Risk Management, Access Management, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Management. All these elements have their characteristics which are very well explained. Therefore, an AV archive which is well-

known as an organization or department of an organization has a statutory or other mandate for providing access to a collection of AV documents and the AV heritage by collecting, managing, preserving, and promoting (Ray, 2013).

Collection development is considered an essential element of the information life cycle. It is the most significant process in the effective performance of any unit of information (Vignau & Meneses, 2005). Collection development includes all activities involved in assessing the users' needs, evaluating the present collection, determining the selection policy, coordinating the selection of items, re-evaluating and storing parts of the collection and planning for resource sharing, as written by Okogwu & Ekere (2018). Collection Development can be defined as the systematic intellectual activity of deciding what items will be acquired by trusted institutions of information regarding a well-defined mission or strategic programs.

The process includes the selection and deselection of current and retrospective materials, the planning of strategies for continuing acquisition, and the evaluation of collections to determine how well they serve user needs. Therefore, the Collection Development Procedure should be developed to ensure the collection management will be well organized. Four (4) important elements to be implemented in the Collection Development Procedure have been gathered from Ray (2016) Acquisition, Selection, Deselection and Disposal.

To strengthen the procedure's importance, the issue of rapid developments in ICT caused Malliari et al. (2022) to discuss the collection development with the aid of the Open Audio-Visual Archives (OAVA) project. AV providers including libraries, archives, museums, colleges, mass media companies, and government and non-government organisations can manage their AV collections online and compile their reference of materials.

In addition to the enormous changes caused by ICT, Kumar (2017), mentioned that there are challenges to be faced in managing digital collection development. For example, oral history as one of the types of AV records, is also found being created in government agencies in Malaysia involving top official officers such as the Secretary General of the ministry. Referring to Kamaruddin (2022), oral history was prioritized for collection because of its importance as evidence, which is a crucial factor in determining the worth of records. However, there is still a larger issue about the validity of oral history, its interpretation, and the requirement to record supporting evidence. In the context of oral history, input from witnesses to events is crucial in giving evidence and context.

Therefore, to have a good collection of AV materials, especially from government agencies, implementing stages or processes of digital collection development which starts from the collection of information with the vision of the information professionals, helps in identifying a good collection of AV materials to be preserved. Referring to Hussaini (2020) stated that several scholars in information science have been exploring the concepts and policy of collection development because of the importance of ensuring adequate and balanced national heritage resources.

Method
Research Type
This study used the qualitative research approach which was found to be relevant to this study. It has been chosen because it enables the researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the participants and informants. A case study methodology was considered the most appropriate approach to employ because it provides a systematic way to collect data, analyze information, and report the results, thus understanding a particular problem or situation in great depth.

Population and Sample

The population of informants have been selected from five (5) government agencies that provide services to the nation. All informants should at least have five (5) years of experience in managing AV records.

Data Collection

The instrument of interview protocol and observations used in this study consists of open-ended questions as the instrument of inquiry by asking questions for specific information related to the objectives of a study (Patton, 2015). Most of the questions will be adopted from those related to previous studies. For this study, the interview protocol questions will be provided to selected government officers who deal with or manage AV records. Questions have been divided into three (3) sections: Section A-Demographic, Section B- Management of AV records consisting of AV recordkeeping procedure and collection development; and Section Awareness of the importance of AV records.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done by using thematic analysis through the interview transcripts and observation notes were coded. Codes created using the proposed conceptual frameworks which have been identified through the adopted model in the literature review and been revised through the data from the interview session with the respondent. This coding helps the researcher to identify important data in each descriptive category of the study, even able to facilitate the work of analysing the data that is related to the study. Finally, the validation of the data has been done through professional checking from experts such as senior archivists from the National Archives of Malaysia and Records Managers in a few government agencies for trustworthiness purposes.

Result and Discussion

Issues in depositing valuable av government records to archival repository

Many issues have been identified through the literature, respondent feedback and observation. From the data analysis, researchers have found issues faced by government agencies in depositing valuable AV government records to NAM. Those issues can be divided into two main issues namely Governance in AV Records followed by its sub issues that is Inadequate of AV recordkeeping Procedure and Devoid of AV Collection Development Procedure. The second main issue is about the Information Professional which is followed by its sub-issues namely awareness and understaffing, as shown in the figure below:

AV Records Governance

Inadequate AV Recordkeeping Procedure

Devoid of AV Collection Development Procedure

Information Professional

Awareness

Understaffing

Figure 1: Issues in AV Government Records Depositing to Archives Repository

AV Records Governance was found the most impactful issue that contributes to the AV records depositing issues. Governance refers to the practice of governing a group of procedures to make sure people or organizations can take an action or decision effectively and efficiently.

This issue ultimately consists of two main lack of procedure with known inadequate AV recordkeeping procedure and devoid of AV collection development procedure. This issue has been agreed upon by all five informants and is the main issue that needs to be acted upon accordingly. Without strong procedures, the awareness and placement of officers will not help the smoothness and success of governance of AV records in government agencies.

Besides that, Information Professionals also specify as a main issue in depositing AV records to the archival repository. In the records and archives profession, information professionals are responsible for managing and controlling information effectively to meet legal, regulatory and business requirements. Many elements contribute to the lack of staff awareness on the depositing AV records to the archival repository such as lack of education, limited resources, inexperience in the AV records procedure and others. The lack of staff to manage AV records that cover recordkeeping and collection development makes it very difficult to deliver services to related matters. When valuable AV records are required, and there is a lack of staff to provide them, AV records cannot be accessed and retrieved at the right place and at the right time.

Hence, the allocation and placement of staff with exact numbers that balanced to the needs of the task, are strongly encouraged to ensure the management of AV materials can be done effectively. In addition, sufficient staff with deep focus and interest in AV record management, are bonuses that will help to overcome the problem of not depositing valuable AV records to archival repository.

Collection development strategies in depositing av records to archival repository

The finding of the study discovered that many strategies can be designed to improve the collection development strategies in depositing AV records to archival repositories. Respondents give a variety of suggestions and recommendations for government agency practices improvement and for the national archive's enforcement. Among the suggested strategies expressed by respondents and analyzed in detail by researchers are as stated (1) Enforcement of AV recordkeeping procedure, (2) Development of AV collection development procedure, (3) Specific unit in managing AV records, (4) Specific staff with specialization task, (5) Training and (6) Outreach program as shown in the figure below.
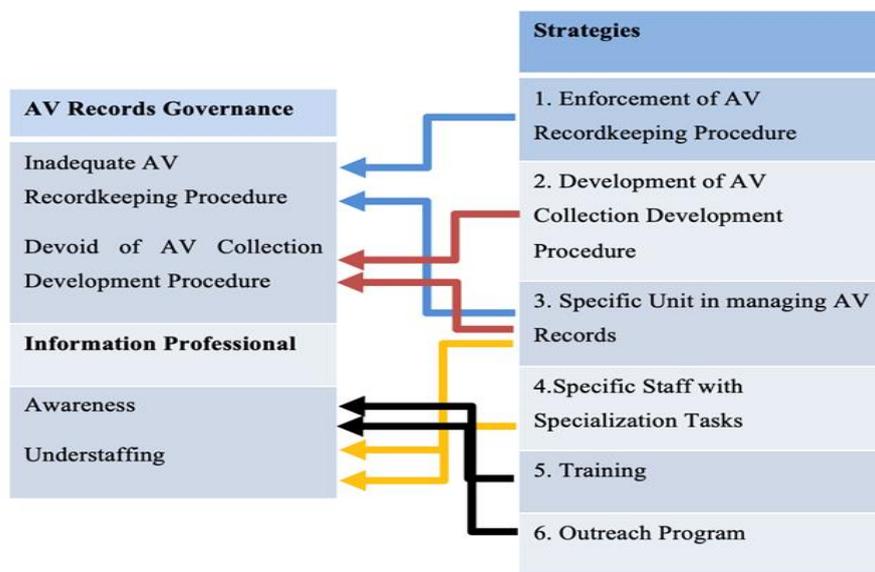

Figure 2: Strategies in Collection Development in Depositing AV Records to Archival Repository

Enforcement of AV recordkeeping

Data gathered from interviews, normally mentioned that when people begin to engage in large and complex reciprocal interactions, formal recordkeeping evolves to augment the imperfect human memory, which cannot precisely monitor the past behaviour of many partners at once. Recordkeeping allows data regarding transactions to be easily kept and recovered, providing a roadmap for future reciprocal behaviours. This situation might have affected decision-making, and it happened because of a lack of specified recordkeeping procedures, guidelines, and implementation policies (Rakemane & Mosweu, 2020).

> *"But, record keeping is useful if we want to make a decision later".*
> *[M2, PK02)]*
>
> *"so that when you want to make it as a reference in the future and use it to make decision". [M1, PK01]*

Therefore, the importance of having AV recordkeeping is crucial to ensure valuable Government AV records will be kept safely for future reference. A standard of procedure for all government agencies is needed to be enforced to ensure agencies make good decision making and the successfulness of AV recordkeeping management.

Development of collection development of av records procedure

Responses from informants, it is high time to develop the Collection Development AV Records Procedure as one of the important strategies in safeguarding Government AV Records. Therefore, A collection development policy is an extremely useful instrument for collection development planning. A policy that provides clear but basic rules for material selection would undoubtedly be beneficial for agencies to implement. Referring to (Rakemane & Mosweu, 2020) The word "collection development" refers to the process of deliberately establishing library or archive collections to meet the needs of library users for study, teaching, research, pleasure, and other purposes. The process comprises the selection and deselection of current and retroactive resources, the planning of acquisition strategies for the future, and the evaluation of collections to determine how well they meet user needs. The collection development policy outlines how the library or archives picks and manages its collection of information resources. The collection development of AV records procedure needs to be developed to ensure government agencies are aware and as a tool to enforce the collection development of AV records to ensure there are no more excuses from government agencies to deposit their AV records to NAM for future generations.

> *In a year or two, we have to develop a procedure. I also have to double-check. Maybe have…maybe no… because collection development is not given priority, so it is not active". [M4. PK04]*
>
> *"There is indeed a need to strengthen the development of this AV material collection. Because as I mentioned earlier, this AV material should not be taken for granted, it should not be taken lightly, because there are materials that have a high historical value, there are materials that have a high reference value". [M5. PK05]*

This action seconded by Khan et al (2013), mentioned that in maintaining AV records, this implementation needs efficient collection development, a well-trained group of experts,

financial allocation, and environmental conditions together with equipment and technology. Shilpa & Kalikadevi (2018) also mentioned that collection development is a never-ending process, a well-thought-out long-term policy which is required to complete the task of collection development systematically. Moreover, as Rakemane & Mosweu (2020) stressed in their article collection development is an advocacy tool that ensures that collections have a coherent and well-defined focus. It is therefore not doubtful that a collection development policy is an important aspect for the preservation of archives.

Specific Unit for managing AV Records

A specific unit to manage AV Records is important in government agencies to control from procedure to enforcement. There is indeed a need to strengthen the development of AV material collection as it should not be taken for granted, it should not be taken lightly, because they are materials that have a high historical value and have a high reference value. Generic reference skills are important to help library personnel, where their competency and experience with the tools are an integral part of their reference work. Klareld (2021) mentioned that cross-organizational information-sharing extends to complexity, as documentation from external actors must also be managed amongst departments within the agency with different purposes and responsibilities.

> *"CPR is the coordinator. And also middlemen. If possible, we want to be centralized". [M4, PK04]*

> *"..the need to develop it, should be specific to a special unit. To focus on one special unit is what is limiting the collection". [M5, PK5]*

Each public office bears the responsibility of maintaining its audiovisual (AV) materials, as they represent the collective institutional memory. This becomes particularly significant during special occasions or when referencing historical events captured within these materials. Being entrusted with the care of AV materials is a substantial responsibility that falls upon the public office, necessitating effective management and control.

Specific staff with specialisation Tasks

The need for specific staff with specialisation tasks in managing AV records is crucial from the interviews with all the informants. Rakemane & Mosweu, (2020) in their article, concluded that one needs to possess the necessary abilities to manage archives and preserve AV content. The management by ill-equipped staff members who are not well versed in contributing to the management and preservation of AV as well as a lack of technological know-how could be the result of incorrect and mistaken advice. According to Katuu (2022), the management of records created and preserved by institutions in the public and private sectors is the responsibility of the Archives and Records Management profession.

> *"As a record officer working in the ministry, there will be a lot of work. All tasks will be carried...the important thing is to know, the importance of this AV record, do not avoid from. SKU or my JD". [M2, PK02]*

> *"Short and medium term solutions. In the short term, I decided to take MyStep. To give focus to the acquisition of AV records. For now, these first years. More than picture acquisition". [M4, PK04]*

> *"With these new technologies, we really need someone who is an expert in this field. Because, in terms of storage, disposal, in terms of when we want to make policy or make SOP regarding the preservation of AV materials, we also need an expert". [M05, PK05].*

Training

It is believed that training enhances the knowledge of both archivists or records managers and government servants in managing AV records. The professionals who nominal in understanding electronic records and automated techniques were advised for training to fill in the knowledge gap (Ashley, 2022). In this section, training has been chosen as a tool to increase knowledge and raise awareness of the importance of AV records. As referring to Rakemane & Mosweu, (2020) education and training are essential for acquiring lifelong skills and competence. These allow employees to learn new skills, increase knowledge, and improve confidence in their workplace.

> *"As we go for a briefing, or a course... we do emphasize that AV records is a part of public records... this AV material is part of records".*
> *[M2, PK02]*

> *"Archive has done the awareness through their activities, their outreach programs, training". [M4, PK04].*

Training plays a pivotal role in the professional landscape, particularly given the rapid evolution of technology and the emergence of novel approaches and techniques in our increasingly competitive global environment. Staff members must remain abreast of these dynamic changes to effectively navigate the evolving landscape. Furthermore, ongoing research in various fields continuously contributes valuable insights and knowledge, further highlighting the importance of continuous learning and development.

Outreach programs

The outreach program should involve the Records Manager in agencies who play a middleman between ANM & agencies. Outreach programs such as Developing outreach program community partnerships are important to help archivists better conduct metadata (Ashley, 2022). Apart from holding training and briefings, outreach programs such as the involvement of government agencies in the celebration of National Day and Malaysia Day (HKHM) which are celebrated every year can foster confidence in the importance of AV records by using the agency's AV records that match the theme.

> *"So, we are this record unit as an intermediary between the National Archives, we must always be in touch, we must always add value".*
> *[M3, PK03]*

> *"Appropriate programs to raise awareness, then we will also prepare SOP. Then we will make a program that we call engagement".*
> *[M5, PK05]*

The implementation of outreach programs holds significant importance, particularly in educating students within schools about the importance of preserving audiovisual (AV) materials for the cultural heritage of the nation. Introducing these concepts to students at an

early age fosters awareness regarding the relevance of AV materials in understanding the historical narratives of their country and related topics. Such initiatives not only instil a sense of appreciation for cultural preservation but also contribute to fostering a generation that values the heritage and history of their nation.

Conclusion

Challenges in records management in Malaysia have been debated for a long time, finally, it has been successfully resolved with the development of Public Records Management procedures, General and Functional Affairs Records Disposal Schedule and also Service Circular No. 5/2007 which is subject to the NAM Act, 2003. However, issues in the management of AV records in Malaysia are still in the awareness phase. In this study, one of the central goals was to indicate how the Governance of AV Records in government agencies plays a big role in managing AV records. According to Uwandu, & Okere, (2022), the significance of written collection development policy is that it relieves pressure from powerful members of society. It also gives information that aids in the proper budgetary allocation of the agency's financial resources. Rakemane & Mosweu, (2020), implies that as a function inside an archive, it develops policies and methods for selecting resources for acquisition by the repository, often determining the scope of the acquisition. creators, subjects, forms, and other distinguishing features. Influence the selection procedure. Initially, the phrase collection was used. At the end of the research, this study proposes a model of effective collection management strategies to overcome issues in depositing AV records in the national archives repository. Those strategies can be applied to ensure the practice of depositing AV records to the National Archives of Malaysia can be implemented effectively to safeguard the valuable government AV records for our national corporate memory. In this paper, only the current application of strategies is presented and discussed. The limitation of the study is only reflected in AV collection from government institutions, meanwhile, there are so many valuable AV collections that have been identified in private agencies and NGOs.

Therefore, for future research, through this study, other researchers can explore the extent to which strategies and insights can be synthesized to become a part of the array of conceptual methods and tools supporting the governance of AV records and their information professionals. This will require an intellectual commitment beyond the scope of this paper however, it can be beneficial to the profession. This case study also implies that there is a need for similar research at other public agencies to increase understanding of how the responsibilities of documentation of procedures and information professionals in managing AV records in Malaysia as a whole.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed to the final manuscript. The contribution of all authors: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing original draft preparation, writing review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

All authors have no conflict of interest related to this study.

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