


**ARCHIVES COMMUNICATION: MUTATIONS OF A FUNCTION**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b>  <b>Received:</b> Jul, 12<sup>th</sup> 2024  <b>Accepted:</b> Sep, 13<sup>th</sup> 2024</p>	<p><b>Objective:</b> The objective of this article is to examine the evolving communication function of archives in the context of new information and communication technologies. It aims to identify the impact of digitalization on archival practices, focusing on how these changes enhance the accessibility and usability of archival materials for the public and researchers. By exploring the emerging practices of archivists and their role in facilitating effective communication, this article seeks to highlight the significance of communication in the archival profession and to provide insights into the best practices for ensuring a positive user experience in the consultation of archival documents.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b>            Archives;            Archivist;            Communication;            Communicability;            Standards of Description;            Consultation of the Archives.</p>	<p><b>Theoretical Framework:</b> This article explores the communication of archives in the digital age, focusing on communication theory, digital archive science, user-centered design, social constructivism, and information behavior. It emphasizes the importance of understanding historical and cultural contexts, user needs, and information behavior to design effective communication strategies.</p>
	<p><b>Method:</b> This article uses a qualitative research approach to examine the evolving communication function of archives in the context of digital technologies. It uses literature review, case studies, interviews with archivists, user surveys, and content analysis to understand the impact of digitalization on archives and identify best practices for archivists.</p>
	<p><b>Results and Discussion:</b> The literature review, case studies, interviews, user surveys, and content analysis reveal a significant shift in archival practices towards digital communication. Key themes include accessibility, user engagement, and the role of digital technologies in transforming traditional functions. Successful examples include digitization of collections, innovative outreach strategies, and collaborations between archivists and technology experts. Key themes include a user-centered approach, balancing digital and traditional practices, ongoing training, and collaboration between archivists, technology professionals, and user communities.</p>
	<p><b>Research Implications:</b> This study highlights the need for further research in archival science and communication to explore digital practices, user experience, collaboration models, social media's impact, training for archivists, ethical considerations, and long-term impact on research outcomes. It emphasizes the need for in-depth studies on user experience, collaboration models, social media's role, and the impact of training on professional development and broader societal impact.</p>
	<p><b>Originality/Value:</b> This article explores the evolving communication function of archives in response to digital advancements. It integrates theoretical frameworks with practical insights from case studies, interviews, and user surveys. The research emphasizes user-centered approaches, empirical evidence, and best practices for archivists. It contributes to ongoing discourse on the future of archives and raises ethical considerations, addressing challenges faced by archivists.</p>
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## COMUNICAÇÃO DE ARQUIVOS: MUTAÇÕES DE UMA FUNÇÃO

### RESUMO:

**Objetivo:** O objetivo deste artigo é examinar a evolução da função de comunicação dos arquivos no contexto das novas tecnologias de informação e comunicação. Ele visa identificar o impacto da digitalização nas práticas arquivísticas, concentrando-se em como essas mudanças melhoram a acessibilidade e a usabilidade dos materiais de arquivo para o público e os pesquisadores. Ao explorar as práticas emergentes dos arquivistas e seu papel na facilitação de uma comunicação eficaz, este artigo procura destacar a importância da comunicação na profissão de arquivista e fornecer insights sobre as melhores práticas para garantir uma experiência positiva ao usuário na consulta de documentos de arquivo.

**Estrutura Teórica:** Este artigo explora a comunicação dos arquivos na era digital, com foco na teoria da comunicação, na ciência dos arquivos digitais, no design centrado no usuário, no construtivismo social e no comportamento da informação. Ele enfatiza a importância de compreender os contextos históricos e culturais, as necessidades do usuário e o comportamento informacional para projetar estratégias de comunicação eficazes.

**Método:** Este artigo utiliza uma abordagem de pesquisa qualitativa para examinar a evolução da função de comunicação dos arquivos no contexto das tecnologias digitais. Ele usa revisão da literatura, estudos de caso, entrevistas com arquivistas, pesquisas com usuários e análise de conteúdo para entender o impacto da digitalização nos arquivos e identificar as melhores práticas para os arquivistas.

**Resultados e Discussão:** A revisão da literatura, os estudos de caso, as entrevistas, as pesquisas com usuários e a análise de conteúdo revelam uma mudança significativa nas práticas arquivísticas em direção à comunicação digital. Os temas principais incluem acessibilidade, envolvimento do usuário e o papel das tecnologias digitais na transformação das funções tradicionais. Exemplos bem-sucedidos incluem a digitalização de acervos, estratégias inovadoras de divulgação e colaborações entre arquivistas e especialistas em tecnologia. Os principais temas incluem uma abordagem centrada no usuário, equilíbrio entre práticas digitais e tradicionais, treinamento contínuo e colaboração entre arquivistas, profissionais de tecnologia e comunidades de usuários.

**Implicações para a Pesquisa:** Este estudo destaca a necessidade de mais pesquisas em ciência arquivística e comunicação para explorar práticas digitais, experiência do usuário, modelos de colaboração, impacto da mídia social, treinamento para arquivistas, considerações éticas e impacto de longo prazo nos resultados da pesquisa. Ele enfatiza a necessidade de estudos aprofundados sobre a experiência do usuário, os modelos de colaboração, o papel da mídia social e o impacto do treinamento no desenvolvimento profissional e no impacto social mais amplo.

**Originalidade/Valor:** Este artigo explora a evolução da função de comunicação dos arquivos em resposta aos avanços digitais. Ele integra estruturas teóricas com percepções práticas de estudos de caso, entrevistas e pesquisas com usuários. A pesquisa enfatiza abordagens centradas no usuário, evidências empíricas e melhores práticas para arquivistas. Ela contribui para o discurso em andamento sobre o futuro dos arquivos e levanta considerações éticas, abordando os desafios enfrentados pelos arquivistas.

**Palavras-chave:** Arquivos, Arquivista, Comunicação, Comunicabilidade, Normas de Descrição, Consulta aos Arquivos.

## COMUNICACIÓN DE ARCHIVOS: MUTACIONES DE UNA FUNCIÓN

### RESUMEN:

**Objetivo:** El objetivo de este artículo es examinar la evolución de la función de comunicación de los archivos en el contexto de las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. Pretende identificar el impacto de la digitalización en las prácticas archivísticas, centrándose en cómo estos cambios mejoran la accesibilidad y usabilidad de los materiales de archivo para el público y los investigadores. Al explorar las prácticas emergentes de los archiveros y su papel a la hora de facilitar una comunicación eficaz, este artículo pretende destacar la importancia de la comunicación en la profesión archivística y aportar ideas sobre las mejores prácticas para garantizar una experiencia de usuario positiva en la consulta de documentos de archivo.

**Marco Teórico:** Este artículo explora la comunicación de los archivos en la era digital, centrándose en la teoría de la comunicación, la archivística digital, el diseño centrado en el usuario, el constructivismo social y el comportamiento informativo. Destaca la importancia de comprender los contextos históricos y culturales, las necesidades de los usuarios y el comportamiento informativo para diseñar estrategias de comunicación eficaces.

**Método:** Este artículo utiliza un enfoque de investigación cualitativa para examinar la evolución de la función de comunicación de los archivos en el contexto de las tecnologías digitales. Utiliza la revisión bibliográfica, estudios de casos, entrevistas con archiveros, encuestas a usuarios y análisis de contenido para comprender el impacto de la digitalización en los archivos e identificar las mejores prácticas para los archiveros.

**Resultados y Debate:** La revisión bibliográfica, los estudios de casos, las entrevistas, las encuestas a usuarios y el análisis de contenidos revelan un cambio significativo en las prácticas archivísticas hacia la comunicación

digital. Los temas clave son la accesibilidad, la participación de los usuarios y el papel de las tecnologías digitales en la transformación de las funciones tradicionales. Algunos ejemplos de éxito son la digitalización de fondos, las estrategias innovadoras de divulgación y la colaboración entre archiveros y expertos en tecnología. Los temas clave incluyen un enfoque centrado en el usuario, el equilibrio entre las prácticas digitales y tradicionales, la formación continua y la colaboración entre archiveros, profesionales de la tecnología y comunidades de usuarios.

**Implicaciones para la Investigación:** Este estudio pone de manifiesto la necesidad de seguir investigando en archivística y comunicación para explorar las prácticas digitales, la experiencia del usuario, los modelos de colaboración, el impacto de los medios sociales, la formación de los archiveros, las consideraciones éticas y el impacto a largo plazo en los resultados de la investigación. Destaca la necesidad de realizar estudios en profundidad sobre la experiencia del usuario, los modelos de colaboración, el papel de los medios sociales y el impacto de la formación en el desarrollo profesional y el impacto social más amplio.

**Originalidad/Valor:** Este artículo explora la evolución de la función de comunicación de los archivos en respuesta a los avances digitales. Integra marcos teóricos con conocimientos prácticos procedentes de estudios de casos, entrevistas y encuestas a usuarios. La investigación hace hincapié en los enfoques centrados en el usuario, las pruebas empíricas y las mejores prácticas para los archiveros. Contribuye al discurso actual sobre el futuro de los archivos y plantea consideraciones éticas, abordando los retos a los que se enfrentan los archiveros.

**Palabras clave:** Archivos, Archivero, Comunicación, Comunicabilidad, Normas de Descripción, Consulta de los Archivos.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Archives are no longer what they used to be, they are undergoing changes or rather mutations both in epistemology and theory and in archival practices. The perception of archival science by archivists themselves and in the first-place changes; for them the archivist: “is not - or more only- an auxiliary science of the History and a technique of conservation of the written heritage, it tends to become also a branch of the sciences of management or management.” (Hottin, 2013). This requires a new positioning of the archivist;

- the archivist “manager”;
- manager;
- expert in his profession.  
He seeks to be respected, to gain respect.
- is it not necessary to change the characteristics of yesterday that made the specificity of the profession of archivist?
- is it not an administrative, scientific and cultural actor?
- isn't he a cultural mediator?

Actor and Mediator; the archivist is indispensable in this field, he collects the archives, classifies the archives, he preserves the archives, finally, communicates the archives, these are the great missions of the archivist: Collection, Classification, Conservation and Communication.

This article attempts to expose the new forms of communication of archives due to information and communication technologies and its implications on the performance of this extremely important function in archival practice.

## 2 QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY

The archives are also experiencing changes or rather mutations due to several factors, including ICT (new information and communication technologies). Like all archival functions; the communication of archives is changing.

To communicate the archives, they must be made accessible: (legal problems related to the communicability of documents, public reception infrastructures, increasingly easy and available research instruments, the use of new information and communication technologies, etc.).

The last phase of the archival chain implies several significant terms that are linked and complement each other, as follows:

- communication of the archives;
- consultation of the archives;
- communicability of the archives;
- access to the archives;
- dissemination of the archives.

Most often, the term communication is used to mean consultation or vice versa, while Canadians use the term dissemination. The word “communication” has a primary meaning that is used by the world of archives: to communicate is indeed “to pass something from one entity to another, to transmit”. What better image to find than that of transmission to evoke the passage of the document from the hands of the one who keeps to those of the one who consults? The analysis of the gesture becomes complete when we add the second meaning of the word: “give knowledge, share”. This transmission has a purpose and a meaning; it concerns the content, contained in the document communicated, which will now be able to be known to the person who consults and possibly shared with others.

What is the point of taking the trouble to collect, describe, and organize the archives if not to transmit them and make them known?

What is the point of building archives if not to communicate and make accessible in the best conditions the documents that we jealously guard?

The Consultation is: The «action of reading a document” (Directorate of Archives of France, 2002, p. 14).

The Communicability: “Quality of a document or archive that its legal regime makes accessible to the public” (Directorate of Archives of France, 2002, p. 14).

Accessibility: “Neologism used to account for the ability to consult archival documents following the legislation and regulations in force, and according to their material state of conservation, their classification status and the existence of appropriate research instruments” (Directorate of Archives of France, 2002, p. 08).

Dissemination: “is the action of making known, highlighting, transmitting or making accessible one or more information contained in archival documents to known or potential users (persons or organizations) to meet their specific needs” (Charbonneau, 1999, p. 374).

The notion of dissemination includes several facets such as communication (access to documents), valorisation (educational and cultural activities), exploitation (use of archival documents for various purposes), reference (assistance to researchers) (*Cf.* Yvon, 1012, p. 18).

Communication or Dissemination of Archives is considered one of the “most important purposes of archival work” (Couture, 1999, p. 22) “It is not an end in itself to acquire, process and preserve archives. The ultimate goal of the archivist is to make available and prepare for dissemination the information it contains” (Couture et al., 1982, p. 257).

This means that archival material should be made available to current and future users that contains information that reflects the activities and achievements of those who created it. Make archival documents available to users; it is first of all a collection of useful and important documents, it is the classification, ordering and storage of documents, the conservation of documents in better conditions. It is also the development of instruments to identify these documents, otherwise, how can we identify these documents and make them visible to applicants?

To complete all these functions, the specialists have issued working rules, and valid standards for each function of the archivist.

### **3 ARCHIVIST AND STANDARDS: DESCRIPTION STANDARDS**

Archivists were slow to agree to conform to the homogenization of their practices, it was not until the early 1990s that archivists' concern for research instruments, for example, quickly became apparent in the profession. Standardization is the only technical way of easy

and reliable exchange and sharing of information. A standard result from a consensus of the most expert persons in a given field. (Cf. Dhérent & Catherine, 2000, p. 22). “A standard is a set of rules approved by official standards bodies, Technological developments have led to numerous standards developed to satisfy the need for interoperability, in particular to make explicit for machines what may remain implicit for humans” (Jacobson & Michel, 2013, p. 41).

The areas covered by standardization for archives are very numerous: archival buildings, preventive conservation, description, digitization, electronic archiving, outsourced management of archives, etc. Other associated standards complement the list of standards used in archives such as safety standards, quality standards, equipment standards, and building materials. Also, the computerization of services is a factor very consumer of standards (for storage media, hardware, software, formats of representations, network equipment, etc.).

Since 1994, the International Council of Archives (ICA) has published four standards for archival description:

- General and International Archival Description Standard ISAD(G) 1994, 2000;
- International Standard on Authority Records Used for the Community, Individual or Family Archives, ISAAR(CPF) 1996, 2004;
- International Standard for Job Description, ISDF 2008;
- International Standard for the Description of Archival Institutions, ISDIAH 2008.

These standards apply to research instruments, one of the two essential elements allowing access to archives; they have transformed the description practices. The other thing about access is the legal authority to access the archives.

Two complementary CIA documents highlight the importance of access as a component of archival practice:

- The 1996 Code of Ethics and the 2010 Universal Declaration of Archives.
- Principles 6 and 7 of the Code of Ethics state:
- Principle 6: Archivists facilitate access to archives by as many users as possible and offer their services impartially to all users.
- Principle 7: Archivists aim to strike the right balance between the right to know and the right to privacy in the context of current legislation.

The Universal Declaration of Archives states:

«The essential nature of archives for the effective, accountable and transparent conduct of business, protection of citizens' rights, the constitution of the individual and collective

memory, understanding of the past, the documentation of the present and the preparing for the future.”

Identifies as one of the essential roles of archivists: the provision of archives for their use, and indicates that archivists are committed to working together to ensure:

That the archives be made accessible to all, following the laws in force and the rights of individuals, creators, owners and users.

A standard to develop a model for dealing with existing research instruments in their diversity of form and structure:

The EAD (Encoded Archival Description) was developed as a DTD (Document Type Definition) to encode search instruments that describe archival holdings. It is therefore first and foremost a structuring of the archival description that uses the possibilities offered by XML to allow the computer exploitation of research instruments: indexing, publication on the web, etc.

The EAD cannot be used alone: proper use of the EAD requires knowledge and application of the content description standards to which it refers, in particular the General and International Standard for Archival Description, SADI(G). This format allows, beyond the general description of a fund or a collection, to **build a hierarchical description precisely restoring the nesting of components and subcomponents.**

#### 4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS: NEW FORMS

Generic term for any description or reference tool developed or received by an archival service in the exercise of its administrative or intellectual control over archival records. (Retrieved from <http://www.piaf-archives.org/espace-formation/mod/resource/view.php?id=22>)

The research instruments were first produced and disseminated traditionally on paper, then in electronic forms which resembled in every respect the instruments on paper; In this respect, word processing software was mainly used. Computing is now increasingly used for the processing of archives and, more particularly, for all the stages of their description and the preparation of research instruments.

A growing number of archive centres around the world are using different software which presupposes different ways of organizing information using database management instead.

At the same time, archivists, who are increasingly using the Internet to disseminate their research instruments, are discovering more dynamic and effective ways of presenting information from computer research instruments, these modes of research instrument design not only add more advanced research capabilities to the benefit of researchers, but also significantly expand their reach.

All archives that have adopted computer systems for the dissemination of their research instruments must of course consider the problem of the retrospective conversion of all research instruments produced before the advent of computing. Therefore, one has to ask whether the design principles of research instruments should be the same in paper and electronic mode.

Electronic search tools put online, allow their remote interrogation, The example of IREL is edifying in this case; Among other things, it concerns the archives transferred from Algeria and kept in the centre of the overseas archives in the city of Aix-en-Provence. The IREL (Online Research Instruments) application allows the reader to access various functionalities:

#### 4.1 GENERAL STATEMENT OF FUNDS

Brief description of the collections: archives from the ministries in charge of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries of the French colonial empire and local administrations of the former colonies and Algeria. It also describes complementary resources (private archives, photographs, maps and plans, library, microfilmed archives).

#### 4.2 DETAILED INVENTORIES

Online inventory list: the online inventory list is accessible by several types of entries (origin, chronological period, territory).

#### 4.3 NOMINAL BASIS PERSONS AND FAMILIES

It lists the names of individuals and families mentioned in the National Overseas Archives (ANOM) archives inventories

#### 4.4 LIBRARY

Online catalogue of the ANOM library, which is particularly rich and entirely devoted to colonial literature in its most diverse aspects (120.000 works).

#### 4.5 DETAILED INVENTORIES

- Ulysses Image Base: provides access to several thousand digitized images of documents belonging to the ANOM iconotheque and cartotheque. Regularly enriched as digitization campaigns;
- Digitized civil status: territories that were at one time or another part of the French colonial empires, since the seventeenth century. Since 2005, several thousand registers have been digitized. As digitization operations are completed, the images have been and continue to be uploaded.

Even better, virtual inventory rooms appear, as is the case with the French archives. The virtual room allows you to create a personalized space from which it is possible to take the necessary steps to prepare a consultation in the reading room. You can:

- verify the existence of a rating;
- compile personal lists of coats;
- send requests for research or reproduction,
- request a waiver or authorization or other lifting of restrictions.

View the history of your requests, follow those that are in progress and reserve an article for consultation on a given date.

In Canada, the BANQ has taken the same initiative and has put online research instruments and searchable databases to enable the various users of the archives to conduct remote searches.

- the Computerized Archive Processing and Documentary Retrieval Program known as “PISTARD” is Canada’s online research instrument application;
- In the United States the site of the National Archives (NARA) offers not only the tools of search of documents but also the documents digitized and put online;
- The National Archives of Australia offers such a powerful document search engine.

## 5 ARCHIVES ON THE INTERNET: NEW USES

Resources for historical research were made available on the Internet in the early 2000s, divided into two categories:

- on the one hand, information on content (research instruments or inventories;
- on the other hand, the contents themselves (documents that can be consulted in the form of digital images), It was above all an answer to practical questions: help researchers prepare for their visit to the reading room by identifying in the inventories the useful ratings, facilitate the consultation of the most requested documents at home on an extended time slot.

The analysis of the contents shows that the "online archives" have essentially been given a prominent place at the expense of electronic inventories in the first place to satisfy genealogical requirements: We can also find other archival sources available on the web; military numbers, notarial sources, registers of town halls, cartographic and cadastral documents, posters, postcards, photographs, old presses, etc. Day by day archivists seek to establish a special relationship with their users via websites and especially social networks to win a varied audience of users of the archives and thus create communities around the archives and their practices. To this end, social networks can be used to organize real virtual events on the model of what has been experienced in museums (*Cf. Moirez & Pauline, 2012*). The genealogist community constitutes a particular audience of archives services to which the success of participatory archive projects is largely due, 71% of the online archive pages come from parish and civil registry offices" (*Moufflet & Jean-François, 2013, p. 65*).

Genealogists are a target to which archivists are particularly attentive because they represent an important part of the public, both in the reading room and on the web, but also because they collaborate through their knowledge and work to improve access to archival documents. (*Cf. Moirez & Pauline, 2012*). To meet the needs of users when developing an archive website, several levels of information must be taken into account: The 1st level: the most basic level contains the general presentation information of the archives's services, it is composed of basic practical information such as contact details, opening hours, a brief description of the funds (type and volume) and possibly the researcher's guide.

The 2nd level offers the search function in the archives by making available the inventories of the collections, either by digitizing the inventories and offering them in image or text format on the site.

Another method is the conversion of inventories into HTML format, most archives provide dynamic search tools, and it is a search engine directly linked to the databases of services. Depending on the system used for the description, it is possible to offer an online search interface.” (Rosenbucsh, 2001, p. 46).

The 3rd level offers the user the possibility to consult directly the documents of the digitized background on the screen, The archive documents are accessible in image format or even in text thanks to the software of optical character recognition, we speak then of “virtual archives” and “virtual reading rooms”.

To complete these 3 levels of information of an archive site, several ancillary elements are useful on an archive website; for example, indicate to the researcher the use he will be able to make of the archives even before giving him access to the sources, additional sources are used to direct the researcher to other sites or sources of useful information: library, archives, thematic portal, associations, FAQ, etc.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The world of archives is changing, moving towards new practices, towards a new archival system based on new information and communication technologies. The implications are clear, especially in terms of archival searches and public use of the internet and access to documents and information. New information and communication technologies are undergoing very important changes such as the use of artificial intelligence in archives; a still virgin ground that remains unexplored, as well as other forms of this evolution.

We will try to keep up with these changes, we are trying to stay awake so that we can adapt to the technological changes and developments in the field;

- What about these changes and transformations in the world of archives in our country?

The field of application, investigation and research remains in our humble opinion that academic studies can contribute to this area.

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