

# **Digitization: A Solution to the Preservation of Records at the Mindanao State University Main-Campus**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to elicit information among selected faculty members and staff of the Mindanao State University Main Campus about their records management practices and their perspective on digitization as a solution to records preservation. In selecting the 363 participants, purposive sampling was utilized. The results showed that the participants were open to the idea of digitization of the records of the Main Campus and that the staff were willing to digitize records in order to improve records management, although they believe that seminars, workshops, and orientations are needed for them to be aware of digitization and thus improve their skills. They also believe that administrative support is badly needed by using sufficient budget in managing records in the campus.

**Keywords:** Mindanao State University, records management, digitization, records preservation

## INTRODUCTION

Information storage and retrieval have become a hot question in an information society. Nowadays, as stated by Yue (2011), people pay more and more attention to information storage and retrieval. There have been some technologies used, such as network storage, records management, retrieval, etc. which have resolved some problems with information storage and retrieval, but on account of the impending problem of storage and the mentality of retrieval, there are still some existing problems.

Some organizations have designated centralized offices to manage all their records while others leave their different offices to handle their respective records. How records are organized and preserved might be different from one office to another, but it cannot be denied that records kept, organized, and preserved in a central office are better-off than those scattered in different offices. Thus, a centralized Records Management Office is believed to be the best office to do the task of collecting, keeping, organizing, maintaining, disposing, and, most importantly, preserving records for future use.

The challenge today is not only to keep records and update collection but also to provide better and faster access to information through the use of new technology. This can be done using digitization. Digitization is today's response towards a faster delivery and storage of information to its users (Samson, 2017). Information technology nowadays is modifying and making people's works easier; thus, making the use of technology a core part of any organization around the world. Computer-based systems are now considered essential for the operation of any organization. Today is the perfect time for a brand-new start. There is a need to start thinking of ways to make these records readily available and easily retrievable.

Digital preservation or digitization refers to the various methods of keeping digital materials alive for the future; it centers on the choice of interim storage media, the life expectancy of a digital imaging system, and the expectation to migrate the digital files to future systems while maintaining both (Okoro, Awodele, Kuyoro and Adekunle, 2013). It is long-term, error-free storage of digital information, with some means for retrieval and interpretation, for the entire period that the information is required.

The Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, being a premier institution of higher learning in Mindanao, is no exception to this increasing number of records due to its great number of employees and students. It is

along this line of thinking that this researcher, being a faculty of this institution, particularly in the Department of Library and Information Science of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, was motivated to conduct this study to elicit information from the selected faculty and staff of MSU-Main Campus on their records management practices and their willingness to digitize the records in the campus in order to preserve them and to have an easy and speedy retrieval. This is deemed very timely, especially with so many unexpected and unavoidable circumstances - acts of God calamities like floods, storms, earthquakes, etc. and acts of man calamities like fire, bombings, etc. that may be experienced by the University. With records being digitized, there is less worry about the loss of records because they can still be retrieved through the program/database to be created.

### FRAMEWORK

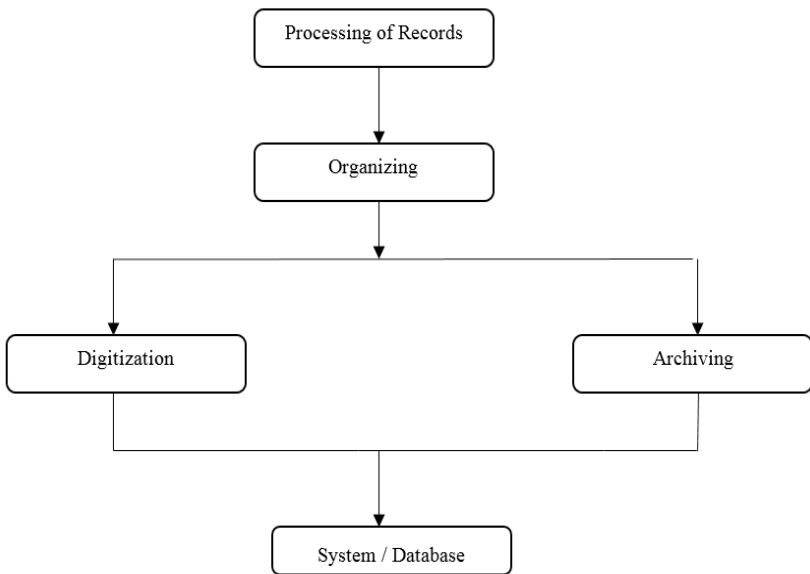


Figure 1. A Schematic Diagram of the Research Flow

The diagram shows the flow of the study. Records are to be processed and then organized through digitization and archiving. With the ever-increasing number of employees and the continuous addition of records, there is a need to organize and preserve records of the employees of the MSU-Main Campus for easier access and speedier retrieval. Thus, the need for the creation of a database or records management system for the MSU-Main Campus.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to elicit information among selected faculty members and staff of the Mindanao State University Main Campus. On their records management and their willingness to digitize the records in the campus.

### **METHODS**

The sampling utilized in this study is purposive. There were 363 selected faculty and staff of the Main Campus who were selected as participants of the study to get their ideas and perceptions about the records management practices of the staff assigned in handling records in different offices, as well as their reactions to the digitization of records. After all, they are deemed to benefit from the study once records are digitized.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following table shows the result of the records management practices of the MSU- Main Campus staff handling records, as observed by the participants.

Table 1

*Records Management Practices of the MSU-Main Campus Staff*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. The University uses offsite storage, duplication, microfilming and digitization for vital records protection.	3.30	1.036	Undecided	Records are Moderately Managed
2. The University stores inactive temporary and/or permanent records.	3.51	.905	Agree	Records are Managed
3. The University has a storage area for records.	3.74	.953	Agree	Records are Managed
4. The University develops and implements records classification scheme which covers all records irrespective of their nature or format.	3.57	.884	Agree	Records are Managed
5. The University’s records classification scheme is able to support accurate capturing and easy retrieval of records.	3.54	.961	Agree	Records are Managed
6. The University’s records classification scheme is able to provide robust security and access control of records.	3.47	.926	Undecided	Records are Moderately Managed
7. The University’s records classification scheme facilitates segregation of vital records for protection.	3.53	.914	Agree	Records are Managed
8. The University reviews its existing classification scheme regularly to cater to changing circumstances (e.g., obsolete subjects due to reorganization).	3.39	.975	Undecided	Records are Moderately Managed
9. Easy retrieval and well preservation of records, and space and time saving are the benefits that the staff can get from digitization.	3.74	.900	Agree	Records are Managed
10. Developing file plans, inventory of records, retiring inactive records and monitoring records are the duties of a records management personnel.	3.92	.856	Agree	Records are Managed
11. Top management support, clear business vision and plan, adequate and on-going training and support, good project management, excellent strategies of change management, motivated great implementation team, and staff’s record-keeping awareness and practices are important for the successful implementation of records digitization.	3.96	.856	Agree	Records are Managed

Table 1 Continued

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description	Interpretation
12. Users resistance, financial constraints, lack of top management support, absence of skilled personnel, no appropriate equipment, and familiarity and comfort with paper are the reasons why the office could not implement digitization.	3.80	.940	Agree	Records are Managed
13. Records management, appraisal of records, managing electronic records, and preservation of records are the skills needed in records management.	3.96	.853	Agree	Records are Managed
14. The staff are willing to digitize the records available.	3.90	.834	Agree	Records are Managed
15. Records digitization is the solution to record preservation.	4.06	.861	Agree	Records are Managed
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>.6227</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Records are Managed</b>

## Legend:

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.50 - 5.00	Strongly Agree	Records are Well-Managed
4	3.50 - 4.49	Agree	Records are Managed
3	2.50 - 3.49	Undecided	Records are Moderately Managed
2	1.50 - 2.49	Disagree	Records are Poorly Managed
1	1.00 - 1.49	Strongly Disagree	Records are Not Managed

The participants believed that “records are managed” in the Main Campus, although they lamented for the lack of seminars and training and orientations in records management, and of course, the need for sufficient budget to improve the records management system. Participants agreed to the needs and importance stated in Indicator 11, top management support, clear business vision and plan, adequate and on-going training and support, good project management, excellent strategies of change management, motivated great implementation team, and staff’s record-keeping awareness and practices are important for the successful implementation of records digitization ( $M=3.96$ ). If the administration could provide these support, then better records management can be achieved because the participants, especially the staff handling records, were very much eager to improve the records management.

The above finding is also true to the study conducted by Yue (2011) and Wang (2010), which emphasized the importance of information storage and retrieval, and identified technology as network storage. One information or document that has been important in any organization is its records\_ organization and its employees.

As shown in the table above, the indicator with the highest mean of 4.06 is Indicator 15, Records digitization is the solution to records preservation. It implies that participants were into the idea of digitizing the documents of the Main Campus, as also shown in Indicator 14, the staff are willing to digitize the records available (M=3.90). This finding was also supported by the following comments from the participants (which were copied as they were written by them):

1. “Sana mahigh-tech na tayo at may personnel na competitive na mag man sa records. Dapat may archive din.” (We hope that the Campus aspires for high-technology so that personnel can be competitive in manning the records. There should also be an Archive here).
2. “Uniform guidelines must be thought for the staff, and digitization is the right thing, great solution to preserve collections and records.”
3. “I.T. must be done in monitoring records because one of the big job responsibility in university is recording files, etc.”
4. “If all records can be digitized, then it would be easy to retrieve and preserve records, and we can save space and time, which we all can benefit from.”
5. “I agree the document management system for Mindanao State University, Main Campus must be in the database.”
6. “I strongly agree with the university digitization of records as to getting records takes too much time to process due to its complicated procedures.”
7. “HRDO Personnel and Registrar Personnel should be toward on digitization. They must the significance of digitization.”

One way of preserving information or records is digitization because this would benefit the organization, as shown by the findings of Yang’s (2009) study. It revealed that with the development of information technology and the further improvement of archives management requirements, the archival digitization in the theory and practice had become one of the hot spots in recent years.

Similarly, the study of Khan and Aftab (2015) found out that the main reasons to digitize were to enhance access and improve preservation. By digitizing their collection, institutions could make information accessible that were previously made available only to a select group of users. Digitization could also help preserve materials making high-quality digital images available electronically, and it might reduce wear and tear on brittle and fragile documents.

Moreover, the above-stated studies were also supported by the findings of Baloguns and Adjei's (2018) study, "Challenges of Digitization of the National Archives of Nigeria." Respondents of the study admitted that digitization would be highly beneficial to the institution, but they had enumerated issues such as lack of funding, lack of digitization policy, and lack of trained personnel as the major challenges facing the digitization project.

Two indicators also show high means, namely, Indicator 10, developing file plans, inventory of records, retiring inactive records and monitoring records are the duties of a records management personnel ( $M=3.92$ ) and Indicator 13, records management, appraisal of records, managing electronic records, and preservation of records are the skills needed in records management ( $M=3.96$ ). Participants agreed on the importance of the two indicators, as well. The mentioned duties and skills are required to improve the records management system in the Main Campus.

The administration has to give priorities on Indicators 1, 6, and 8 as these are the indicators which were answered by the participants as "moderately managed." Indicator 1, "the University uses offsite storage, duplication, microfilming, and digitization for vital records protection", with  $M=3.30$ . Participants were undecided on this matter as the Main Campus does not have off-site storage; this shows how firm participants were of the need to have off-site storage to save and provide space in their respective offices. This is true to the study conducted by Murphy (2018), which showed that the administrative documents were stored in both manual and electronic forms. This leads to quick decision making, saves office space, and promotes good corporate governance.

On indicator 6, "the University's records classification scheme can provide robust security and access control of records", with  $M=3.47$ , and Indicator 8, "the University reviews its existing classification scheme regularly to cater to changing circumstances (e.g., obsolete subjects due to reorganization)", with  $M=3.39$ , the participants were undecided because there is no uniform classification system practiced in the Campus since every office has its classification system and usually these are arranged in alphabetical order.



## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data gathered, it is concluded that the administration, as well as all employees of the MSU-Main Campus, needs much awareness about the importance of preserving records; the support of the administration by providing enough budget is very much needed in managing records. Training on handling records should be conducted through seminars and workshops in order for the staff to understand their roles and responsibilities as keepers of records and to improve their skills in doing their jobs. Finally, digitization is the one, if not the best, solution to records preservation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following measures are recommended:

1. The Administration should allocate sufficient and regular budget for records management. It is high time that a separate office or an Archive, be established to store all the important records or documents of the Main Campus, in particular, and the University, in general, for better preservation.

2. The Director of the Human Resource Development Office (HRDO) should evaluate the capacity of the employees handling records. Staff assigned to these tasks should be sent to seminars and training to broaden their knowledge of records management. Regular orientations should be conducted, especially if there are new employees assigned on the job. They should invite Resource Speakers on records management, and conduct seminars inside the campus for maximum participation.

3. The HRDO should come up with a program on the proper way of managing records. A manual should be distributed to all offices so that the staff may be aware of what records are to be collected and preserved, how to identify active from inactive records, and how to appraise what records are to be disposed of. Information dissemination is a must.

4. A uniform classification for all records filing system should be required. This would help in tracking records for easy and speedy retrieval.

5. Future researchers should conduct further studies considering the limitations of this present study.

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