

# Perceptions on the Utilisation of Archives in Enhancing Research in Higher Educational Institutions

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## Abstract

*When used effectively, archives can stimulate creative thinking and the production of new information. The archives at Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) are priceless knowledge repositories that preserve and make accessible scholarly materials, historical records, and cultural artefacts vital for study, instruction, and developing a vibrant academic community. This study's methodology is a systematic literature review completed by compiling pertinent works from other academics, from textbooks and journals. Although a substantial body of literature has been written about the value of archives in advancing HEI research, little is known about the factors that have influenced researchers' opinions on the use of archives in HEI research. Even though previous research highlights the advantages and difficulties of using archives, a thorough examination of how these factors impact researchers' perceptions regarding archives use is lacking. For this study, the social constructionist theory was used to understand better how archives are perceived as a means of advancing research in HEIs. The study also suggests recommendations for improved archiving.*

**Keywords:** Archives, Research, Higher Education, Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)

## Introduction

As stated by Järvelä et al. (2022), archives are a vital source of data for higher educational institutions (HEI) researchers. Scientific, historical, and cultural materials found in archives can guide and stimulate creative research (Sternfeld, 2011). However, some obstacles and variables affect how archives are viewed and how valuable they are for research, making using archives in research not always straightforward (Knake, 2023). It has long been acknowledged that archives are an essential data source for scholars working in higher education institutions (HEIs), offering distinct perspectives on past occurrences, cultural customs, and scientific breakthroughs (Chrysanthopoulos et al., 2023).

There are several interpretations of the word “archives,” one of which is connected to the idea of a collection. Within this context, archives pertain to methodically arranged and carefully selected sets of historical records, papers, or other items vital for scholarly research or historical documentation (Corrado and Sandy, 2017). In addition to providing researchers and scholars with invaluable insights into the historical narratives being written, and the progression of knowledge over time, archives, as collections, are essential for maintaining the cultural and institutional memory of societies, institutions, and communities. A few examples of the many areas in which archives are essential to society are health, human rights, and land claim proceedings. Mainly, HEIs oversee safeguarding and maintaining their institutional histories.

Archives are also repositories of historical documents that have been kept for their historical, cultural, or scientific significance. They can either be private or public, and they are frequently arranged

according to the organisation that made them or by its subject matter. According to a 2008 Council on Library and Information Resources report, archives offer researchers some advantages. Among these, are primary source materials that offer distinctive perspectives on historical events, cultural artefacts, and institutional histories. Primary sources are crucial because they give historical context and enable researchers to conclude. Moreover, contextual information from archival materials aids in researchers' comprehension of the historical and social settings in which objects and events took place. Details about the individuals involved, the period, and the prevailing cultural norms and beliefs can all be considered contextual information.

Regarding diversity, archival materials present a range of viewpoints not accessible through alternative research techniques. They offer a glimpse into the lives of individual s-such as women, people of colour, and marginalised groups - who might have been left out of the historical record. Researchers can now more easily access archival materials remotely, thanks to digitising archives (Piggott, 2012). Moreover, archives can act as a starting point for interdisciplinary research, bridging gaps in knowledge.

Additionally, oral history plays a crucial role in preserving the stories of marginalised or underrepresented communities, and the lack of such narratives can perpetuate historical inequalities in archival records (Barros, 2016). Overcoming this challenge requires intentionally collecting and incorporating oral histories into archival practices, ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive portrayal of the past (Ma, 2020). In addition, navigating archives can be complex and time-consuming, requiring technical knowledge and skills (Cook, 2013).

Ethical and legal considerations, such as privacy and copyright, can also pose challenges for researchers utilising archives in their work (Flinn, 2011). Considering these challenges, there is a need to enhance the perception of archives and their value in research among scholars in HEIs. By doing so, researchers can more effectively utilise archives in their work, unlocking the potential for interdisciplinary and innovative research (Carbajal and Caswell, 2021). This requires collaboration and dialogue between researchers and archivists and

developing strategies that promote access, navigation, and ethical and legal considerations (Ventresca et al., 2017).

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Although the potential advantages of utilising archives in HEI research are acknowledged, little is known about how these institutions' researchers viewed and used archives. Although some studies have looked at archives in particular fields, like literature or history, there isn't much thorough research on using archives in HEIs for various fields (Butterworth, 2017). Furthermore, inadequate information is available on the variables influencing how archives are viewed, their importance in research, and methods for improving their use. A research agenda for critical archival studies is presented by Carbajal and Caswell (2021) to question conventional wisdom and advance inclusive, socially conscious archival practices. According to the researcher, archives can act as hubs for social justice and resistance, and critical archival studies can help create societies that are more just and equitable (Carbajal and Caswell, 2021). The paper emphasises the need for more study on the relationship between archives and social justice concerns and the function of archives in creating power and knowledge.

### **Aim of the Study**

The present article aims to critically review the perception of the utilisation of archives in enhancing research in HEIs.

### **Research Question**

What are the perceptions of the utilisation of archives in enhancing research in HEIs?

### **Significance of the Study**

This in-depth investigation into how HEIs perceive the use of archives to support research has the potential to alter practices and policies related to the archival environment significantly. The study can uncover critical insights into the current issues, levels of awareness, and expectations regarding archival resources by exploring the viewpoints of researchers, academics, and other stakeholders (Eastwood, 2015). This vital data, forms the basis of evidence-based

policymaking, pointing out deficiencies and developing focused plans to improve accessibility, encourage cooperation, and remove technology obstacles (Pugh, 2017).

The study results inform the creation of policies that address the various requirements of researchers and guarantee that archival environments are vibrant, welcoming, and conducive to scholarly research initiatives (Millar, 2017). Furthermore, this study contributes to developing quality standards and ethical considerations by illuminating perceptions regarding training, support, and the representation of diverse perspectives in archival collections. In the end, perceptions catalyse positive change, promoting a more responsive, user-centric, and progressive archival environment in higher education.

### **Theoretical Approach for the Study**

This article adopts the theoretical framework of social constructionism to comprehend how perceptions of archive utilisation are constructed within the context of higher education institutions. According to the theoretical framework of social constructionism, our perception of reality is shaped by the social and cultural environments in which we live. This perspective holds that language, and social interactions are how knowledge and meaning are constructed rather than being fixed or objective. Cook (2013) contends that archives are essential to the social construction of research and that this process makes it what it is.

The researcher argues that various elements, such as researchers' disciplinary backgrounds, research questions, and personal experiences and biases, influence how they view archives. The significance of comprehending the social and cultural contexts in which archives are created and used is another point the researcher emphasises. Moreover, archives are critically analysed by Bawden and Robinson (2015) as social constructions, who contend that cultural norms and power dynamics shape archives. She argues that archives can become arenas of conflict and struggle when various groups try to rewrite history through archival materials. Additionally, the researcher highlights how crucial it is to comprehend the ethical and political aspects of archival work and the social interactions and

interactions with peers, mentors, and fellow researchers, all of which significantly impact participants' perceptions. Yale (2015) explained the social construction of knowledge through the lens of archives, arguing that archives are not neutral information repositories but are shaped by social and cultural factors.

The researcher suggests that researchers' perceptions of archives are influenced by their disciplinary backgrounds and the prevailing epistemological frameworks in their fields. Bawden and Robinson (2015) opined that social constructionism could provide insights into how researchers perceive the utilisation of archives in enhancing research in HEIs. According to this theoretical framework, perceptions of archives are not fixed or objective but constructed through social interactions and language. Here are some examples of how social constructionism can inform our understanding of perceptions of archives in higher education research. The value of archives is socially constructed:

According to social constructionism, the value of libraries is not inherent in the materials themselves but rather is constructed through social and cultural factors. The prevailing epistemological frameworks may shape researchers' perceptions of the value of archives in their fields and broader cultural attitudes towards history and knowledge production (Azim et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is germane to state that perceptions of archives are constructed through language, and social constructionism emphasises the role of language in shaping our understanding of reality. Researchers' perceptions of archives may be shaped by the language used to describe them and the narratives and discourses surrounding their use.

Applying social constructionism as a theoretical framework allowed the challenge of long-standing assumptions and preconceived notions regarding archive utilisation in HEIs. The researcher uncovered instances where researchers' perceptions were contingent upon specific social contexts, highlighting that these perceptions are not universally held truths. Social constructionism challenges the notion that perceptions of archive utilisation are static and universally shared. Instead, it recognises that these perceptions are dynamic and constructed within specific social and cultural contexts. For example,

somewhere, researchers held the assumption that archives were primarily repositories of historical documents with limited relevance to contemporary research HEIs (Sabharwal, 2015). However, findings revealed that this assumption was not universally accepted in specific social contexts characterised by interdisciplinary solid collaborations, where researchers recognised the potential of archives to contribute to innovative research, thus challenging the prevailing assumption.

Perceptions of archive utilisation are contingent upon specific social contexts (Welch et al., 2011; Dobрева, 2018). For instance, researchers working within collaborative research environments viewed archives as valuable resources facilitating knowledge creation and cross-disciplinary research (Knake, 2023). In contrast, individuals in more isolated academic settings often believed that archives were remote and less relevant to their immediate research needs. This contingency in perceptions highlighted the role of social interactions and academic environments in shaping how individuals viewed archive utilisation (Pearce-Moses and Baty, 2005).

Social constructionism prompts the acknowledgement that the 'reality' of archive utilisation is socially constructed. What one group perceives as an essential research tool may be viewed differently by another. In this sense, no universally 'correct' perception of archive utilisation exists. Instead, perceptions are situated within specific social, cultural, and academic contexts, evolving in response to changing norms and practices. Caswell (2021) stated that applying social constructionism as the theoretical framework challenges the assumption of a monolithic perception of archive utilisation within HEIs.

The findings highlight these perceptions' dynamic and context-dependent nature, emphasising the need for interventions and educational strategies that recognise and accommodate this diversity in perceptions among academic communities. The lens of social constructionism enabled the recognition and embrace of multiple and diverse realities concerning archive utilisation within the diverse landscape of HEIs (Dobрева, 2018). This framework highlighted those stakeholders within unique social contexts held varying perceptions of archive utilisation.

Social constructionism fundamentally acknowledges that reality is not a singular, objective

truth but a multi-faceted and socially constructed phenomenon (Pearce-Moses and Baty, 2005). This article exemplified revealing a spectrum of perceptions regarding archive utilisation within HEIs. Professors, researchers, librarians, and students, each positioned differently within the academic ecosystem, brought their perspectives to the fore. This diversity in perceptions illuminated multiple 'realities' about the role and value of archives in academic research (Sabharwal, 2015).

The review revealed that various HEI stakeholders had differing opinions about using archives due to their distinct social circumstances and positions. Professors tend to emphasise the pedagogical significance of archives because they are frequently involved in research and curriculum development. Conversely, scholars emphasised that archives can produce new research discoveries (Dobрева, 2018).

Students' perceptions were frequently in line with their immediate research and learning needs, but librarians and archivists, who served as guardians of archival collections, brought a preservation-focused perspective (Beetham, 2022). These differences demonstrated how people's roles and responsibilities within HEIs influenced how they perceived the use of archives.

Understanding different perspectives within particular social and contextual contexts is encouraged by social constructionism (Welch et al. Dobрева (2018); 2011). It acknowledged that people's conceptions of using archives were shaped by their roles and larger institutional, disciplinary, and societal contexts. Stakeholders have valid but differing perceptions due to these challenges and opportunities (Morris et al., 2014).

This framework acknowledged that every perspective adds to the larger conversation about the value and application of archives in higher education, allowing us to respect and consider the legitimacy of multiple and diverse realities. This understanding can guide more inclusive and situation-specific strategies.

## Literature Review

Archives are pivotal in facilitating research within HEIs, providing an invaluable source of primary materials for various academic disciplines.

Nevertheless, the perception of archives' usefulness and relevance in research is a complex matter influenced by many factors. This literature review delves into synthesising the perceptions of users on the use of archives in HEIs research in enhancing research in HEIs.

### **Archives**

Academics employ archives to obtain primary sources, which offer firsthand and authentic accounts of historical events and societies (Walsham, 2016). Primary sources for historical, social, and cultural studies can be found in archives, which are a vital source of data for researchers. Researchers can access these resources archivists gather, preserve, and make available. The public's access to and preservation of historical records depends heavily on archives. While digitisation efforts improve accessibility, archivists use a variety of strategies to ensure the long-term preservation of documents and artefacts (Punzalan and Caswell, 2016). Effective use of archival materials requires proper organisation and description.

To provide finding aids that assist researchers in locating pertinent materials, archivists employ standardised systems such as the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) (Caswell, 2021). To create narratives and interpretations of the past, historians analyse primary sources from archives, including letters, diaries, and official documents (Punzalan and Caswell, 2016). When researching one's family history, archives are a priceless tool. Archives frequently contain birth certificates, census information, and immigration records, that can be used to trace one's ancestry (Schmidt, 2011). While government officials may use archives for administrative reasons, lawyers and other legal professionals can use them to locate past legal precedents.

### **Archives in HEIs Research**

Because it can give scholarly investigations a rich historical context and an empirical foundation, archival research has attracted much attention, especially in the higher education sector. With the help of archives containing a vast range of materials like records, documents, datasets, and more, scholars can investigate, evaluate, and interpret historical and

modern educational phenomena. This methodological approach makes it easier to fully explore the nuances and complexity of educational theories, practices, and policies by offering a reliable source of empirical, qualitative, and quantitative data (Kezar, 2006).

The use of archives in research on higher education provides a means of closely examining and comprehending the historical development of educational practices, policies, and theories. By giving insights into the socio-political, economic, and cultural elements that have shaped and influenced educational practices and policies over time, it offers a lens through which the evolution of educational paradigms can be traced (Ma, 2020). Additionally, researchers can explore the historical background through archival research, which lays the groundwork for securing current studies. Archives facilitate a nuanced understanding of higher education research's historical, social, and cultural dimensions. They are not just repositories of historical data.

### **User Perceptions of Archives in HEIs**

Archives are virtual information repositories for scholars, researchers, and knowledge producers. They provide primary source materials for understanding historical events, cultural trends, and social movements. Archives are also crucial for producing new knowledge in various fields, including history, sociology, anthropology, and literature. However, the perception of archives and their utilisation in research is not a neutral process.

Archives are essential sources of historical, cultural, and social information that can enrich research in HEIs. However, the perception of the usefulness and relevance of archives in research can vary widely among researchers and scholars. Several factors can influence this perception, including technological advancements, political and social contexts, power relations, digital humanities approaches, archival representation, archivists' advocacy and outreach efforts, professional discourse, and contextualisation.

Advancements in technology have revolutionised the way researchers access and use archives. Manžuch (2017) provided a comprehensive overview of the changes and challenges facing archives and records management in the digital age. The researcher argues that the perception of the

usefulness of archives in research is influenced by technological advancements, which have made it easier to access and use archives remotely, eliminating the need to visit physical archives. This has increased awareness of archives' importance in research, particularly in the digital humanities. However, digital archives also raise concerns about the authenticity and reliability of digital records, with consequences for researchers' perception of their usefulness.

The political and social contexts in which archives are created and preserved can significantly influence researchers' perceptions. Harrison (2010) examines the political dimensions of heritage preservation and use. The book argues that power relations and social inequalities shape the perception of archives in research. Archives may be seen as valuable or irrelevant depending on their alignment with the interests of dominant social groups. Political and social contexts can also influence the perception of archives in research. Archives are often created and preserved to reinforce dominant national identity and historical narratives. Thus, archives aligning with these narratives are more likely to be perceived as valuable, while those challenging or contradicting them may be dismissed or ignored. Similarly, archives that document marginalised groups or histories may be undervalued or neglected, further perpetuating social inequalities and power relations.

Theimer (2012) emphasises the importance of contextualising archival materials in research. How researchers situate these materials within broader historical and cultural contexts influences their perception of archives. This contextualisation is vital for practical use, as archival materials must be understood within their historical and cultural milieu to yield accurate insights. As Yakel (2003) discussed, archival representation plays a role in shaping perceptions. The researcher argues that the perception of archives in research is influenced by how they are represented, affecting their visibility and accessibility to potential users. How archival materials are described, organised, and accessed can affect their visibility and accessibility to potential users. Effective archival representation can increase awareness of the value of archives in research, while poor representation can undermine the perceived usefulness of archives (Ghaddar and Caswell, 2019).

How archives and archivists are framed and presented in professional literature can influence how researchers perceive their relevance and usefulness (Theimer 2012). The researcher uses discourse analysis to examine how professional literature shapes the perception of archives and archivists. They argue that the perception of archives in research is influenced by how they are framed and presented in professional discourse, which may reflect broader cultural and social values and norms. This underscores the importance of analysing professional discourse to understand the broader cultural and social values that shape perceptions of archives in research, shaping the perception of archives and archivists.

The framing and presentation of archives and archivists in professional literature reflect broader cultural and social values and norms, influencing how researchers perceive their relevance and usefulness in research (Caswell and Cifor, 2016). Cultural norms surrounding history, knowledge production, and the role of archives shape perceptions. According to Downey (2015), cultural norms influence the perception of utilising archives in research. In some cultures, archives are revered as essential knowledge repositories; in others, they are considered irrelevant to contemporary concerns Evans et al., (2015).

These cultural attitudes influence researchers' assessments of archives' value. Broader cultural attitudes towards history, knowledge production, and the role of archives in society shape the perception of archives. In some cultures, the past is viewed as a source of wisdom and guidance, and archives are crucial knowledge repositories that must be preserved for future generations. In other cultures, the past is viewed as irrelevant to the present, and archives are considered irrelevant to contemporary concerns. Cultural attitudes towards archives can influence how researchers perceive their value and role in research. For example, in many Western countries, archives are viewed as essential sources of evidence for historical research. In contrast, some African countries view archives as colonial instruments of control and oppression.

Archivists' advocacy for increased resources can promote archives' integration into research; outreach efforts and collaboration are also crucial, with considerable influence on the perception of archives in research (Downey, 2015). Archivists play

an essential role in promoting the use and integration of archival materials in research by collaborating with researchers and disciplines, developing outreach programmes, and advocating for increased resources and support for archives (Ghaddar and Caswell, 2019). Furthermore, Tesar (2015) narrated that disciplinary backgrounds are among the most significant factors influencing the perception of archives' utilisation in research. Different academic disciplines have different methodologies, research questions, and epistemological frameworks shaping how researchers perceive archives. For example, historians are often concerned with constructing past narratives based on primary sources, such as archival materials. They view archives as essential sources of evidence to support their arguments and understand the historical context.

Researchers' experiences with archives can shape their perceptions of their value and role in research. For example, a researcher who has had a positive experience using archives may view them as valuable sources of information that can enrich their research. They may develop positive attitudes towards archives, and their perceptions may influence their research practices. In contrast, a researcher who has had a negative experience using archives may view them as unreliable or difficult to work with. They may develop negative attitudes towards archives, and their perceptions may influence their research practices. These factors shape the way researchers perceive archives and influence their research practices. Understanding the factors that influence the perception of the utilisation of archives in research is essential for developing effective strategies for enhancing their role in knowledge production. Researchers and archivists can work together to identify and address these factors to ensure that archives are valued and utilised in ways that are relevant and meaningful to researchers. It is also important to note that contextualisation is an essential factor influencing the perception of archives in research. Archival materials must be situated within broader historical and cultural contexts to be effectively used in research. Without proper contextualisation, archival materials may be misunderstood or misinterpreted, leading to incorrect conclusions and undermining the perceived usefulness of archives (Landau, 2018; Sternfeld, 2011).

## Literature Synthesis

Archives are a vital source of primary materials for many academic disciplines, making them essential to HEI research. However, opinions about their usefulness in research are complex and shaped by various factors. Because archives provide firsthand accounts of historical events and societies, they are invaluable for researchers in various fields, including history, sociology, and anthropology. Although access to archives has increased due to digitisation, problems like copyright violations and access limitations still exist. Political and social contexts, technological developments, and the portrayal of archives by professional literature also influence researchers' perceptions of archives. Personal experiences with archives and cultural norms further shape researchers' perspectives. The advocacy and outreach activities of archivists are vital in advancing archives. Researchers' perceptions are also influenced by their disciplinary backgrounds because different academic fields approach archives with different goals and methods. Contextualising archival materials correctly is essential because failure to do so increases the possibility of erroneous interpretations and conclusions.

## Methodology

The study adopted the systematic literature review (SLR), a rigorous and structured approach to identifying, analysing, and synthesising existing research on a particular topic. The study was carried out from June to October 2023. It critically appraises all relevant studies conducted on a specific subject, intending to provide a comprehensive summary of the available evidence (Dobrevva, 2018). There is a detailed breakdown of the methodology, including search terms, databases used, inclusion/exclusion criteria, strategies for addressing publication bias, and data extraction and synthesis methods used.

Relevant search terms were carefully chosen to capture all relevant literature. This article's search terms include Archive utilisation, Archives in higher education, perceptions of archives, research in HEIs, archives and academic research, and library and research collaboration. Synonyms and related terms were considered to ensure a comprehensive search. Boolean operators (AND, OR) assisted in combining

these terms logically. The methodology also involved combining academic databases relevant to the topic, such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar (for grey literature). The choice of databases used is based on their coverage of the above search terms and education and social sciences literature related to the article. The inclusion/exclusion criteria were also adopted as part of the methodology. These criteria ensured that the selected studies met specific quality and relevant standards, defined studies considered for inclusion, and determined which studies were excluded from this article (Piggott, 2012; Dobрева, 2018). The inclusion criteria comprise relevance to the research problem, the publication type, citation index and the outcome measures. The relevance criteria enable the selection of articles directly related to the research problem and topic of the article. It clearly defined the review's scope, specifying the research problem's critical aspects. The publication type is typically a systematic review, which includes only peer-reviewed publications. However, the publications used are based on the research problem and available evidence, grey literature, conference papers, and reports.

The exclusion criteria adopted as part of the methodological approach involved excluding databases based on content irrelevance, publication status, citation index and outcome measures. Studies that do not directly address the research question or topic were excluded from this category. This criterion ensures that the review remains focused on the intended subject. As per the publication status, exclusion criteria include studies that have not undergone peer review or have not been published by a reputable source.

Also, articles that do not involve the relevant intervention or exposure in terms of citation were deleted, and articles not reported on the specified outcome measures or endpoints were excluded because they were unrelated to archive utilisation in HEIs or lacked empirical research. This helps to minimise bias and ensures that the studies selected for inclusion are the most relevant and of sufficient quality to address the research question. Studies conducted in HEIs include research on the perceptions of archive utilisation, studies published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and conference

proceedings, and research conducted in various geographical regions to capture diverse perspectives. The researcher expunged grey literature sources to mitigate publication bias and disclosed any limitations associated with publication bias within the review. A systematic approach was employed for data extraction to collect pertinent information from each included study. This encompassed capturing study characteristics (e.g., author, publication year, methodology), key findings, and themes relevant to perceptions of archive utilisation within HEIs. In the data synthesis phase, a thematic analysis was conducted to discern recurring themes and patterns across the included studies (Ventresca et al., 2017).

The methodology for the analysis commenced with the Internet literature search of related topics to the pertinence of information and library science to sustainable development. In carrying out this task, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR and Google platforms were utilised in the literature search, and after that, a total of 97 articles were generated. The second step involved the search by theme, of which a balance of 86 articles was retrieved from the Internet search. Step 3 involved the search by publication, giving credit of 69, and consequently, 18 paper abstracts and duplicate articles were removed. This led the researcher to proceed to the second phase. Advanced literature selection was carried out in the second phase, including the general activities of the articles, methodological aspects of the articles, themes, and topics in the literature. Finally, 51 articles were used for this review article.

This systematic review methodology ensures a comprehensive and transparent approach to investigating perceptions of archive utilisation in HEIs. It allows for the systematic identification and synthesis of existing research, helping to advance our understanding of this critical topic, while minimising bias and ensuring the reliability of the findings.

## Key Findings

Figure 1 provides some of the highlights of the literature review on the use of archives in HEIs research, from which the critical findings concerning the broader issues of utilisation, challenges, potential, directions, and perceptions are excised.





**Figure 1: Literature highlights**

### Perceptions of Utilisation

For historical and qualitative research, archives are a rich primary data source that is priceless (Mills, 2019). Researchers frequently delve into archival materials to obtain context, confirm findings, and strengthen the validity of research findings (Allison-Bunnell et al. The opinions of educators, researchers, and students about the use of archives in research differ. According to some researchers, archives are invaluable because they offer a wealth of untapped data (Piggott, 2012). On the other hand, because of the materials' sheer volume, accessibility, and decipherability, some scholars find conducting archival research intimidating (Teichler, 2013). Additionally, Ramirez (2015) described the advantages of using archives in higher education institutions by highlighting the fact that archives give researchers unrivalled access to primary, historical, and cultural data, guaranteeing accurate and impartial insights into the past and preserving materials for future study (Ramirez, 2015). Nevertheless, Welch et al. (2011) described the obstacles to using archives, such as limited access to materials, an absence of digitisation, and challenges utilising archival systems. These problems may make it more

difficult to use archives effectively for academic and research purposes. It is also critical to remember that digitising archives offers a big chance to improve accessibility and research use (Butterworth, 2017; Azim et al., 2018).

### Discussion and Synthesis of Findings

This paper summarises the material provided, emphasising archives' crucial role in HEIs and the differing opinions and difficulties of using them for research. It emphasises the importance of viewing the world through a social constructionist lens to comprehend how these perceptions are formed, how flexible they are, and how cooperative actions can lead to positive change. In addition, the conversation looks at methods archivists can use to raise researchers' knowledge of and appreciation for archives, which will eventually help to promote their use and importance in research at HEIs. Numerous academics have pointed out that archives are essential for recording historical events and safeguarding knowledge for upcoming generations (Giannachi, 2023).

The study concluded that these priceless primary material sources make it easier for researchers to access original documents and artefacts. This allows them to investigate the historical context without being constrained by the potential bias present in secondary sources of information, giving them firsthand knowledge of historical events, cultural practices, and societal issues (Allison-Bunnell et al. As Ramirez (2015) suggested, the results also demonstrate archives' critical role in safeguarding historical and cultural materials for future study and providing insights into societal, cultural, and economic changes over time. Notably, access to archives is available.

## Conclusion

Archives are crucial because they give researchers at HEIs access to primary source materials frequently unavailable elsewhere. Nonetheless, researchers have different perspectives on and uses for archives in their work. While some researchers may not be aware of archives or have the requisite expertise to use them efficiently, others may consider archives unimportant or challenging. The present review has explored the complex domain of attitudes related to archives in higher education institutions. The research's findings have shed light on a fundamental fact: attitudes toward using archives are dynamically created within particular social and cultural contexts rather than remaining static.

This research supports the ideas of social constructionism and acknowledges that these attitudes are not set in stone. Nevertheless, they are flexible and amenable to change via dialogue, language, and cooperative efforts. We have learned more about the complex ways archives are used in higher education institutions using the social constructionist lens. It has highlighted the perspectives among stakeholders in the academic ecosystem while underscoring the influence of language, cultural norms, and social interactions in forming these perceptions. These revelations set the stage for more positive and inclusive methods of using archives in higher education institutions. To overcome these obstacles, archivists can employ several techniques to raise researchers' understanding of and appreciation for archives.

## Recommendations

Based on the challenges and strategies discussed in the previous sections, the following are recommendations for improving the perception and utilisation of archives in the enhancement of research in HEIs:

- **Promote Inclusive Language and Discourse:** HEIs should embark on initiatives that encourage inclusive language and positive discourse when discussing archives. This transformation should extend to pedagogical practices, with instructors using language that emphasises the dynamic nature of archives as resources for knowledge creation. We can gradually reshape perceptions by reshaping the way we talk about archives.
- **Foster Collaborative Efforts:** Recognising that collaborative interactions influence perceptions, HEIs should promote cross-disciplinary collaborations. These efforts should involve students, faculty, librarians, archivists, and other stakeholders. Interdisciplinary projects can serve as fertile ground for stakeholders to collectively explore the potential of archives in diverse research and learning contexts.
- **Raise Awareness and Carry out Education Campaigns:** Awareness and education campaigns should be launched within HEIs to provide stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of the value of archives. These campaigns should target students, researchers, faculty, administrators, and librarians. Workshops, seminars, and online resources can be instrumental in disseminating information about the richness of institutional archives.
- **Archival Advocacy:** HEIs should engage archivists and librarians as advocates and ambassadors for archive utilisation. These professionals can actively participate in academic communities, share their expertise, and collaborate on research projects. By doing so, they can demystify archives and demonstrate their potential to enrich research and learning experiences. Archivists should emphasise the importance of archives in research and their unique contribution to knowledge production.

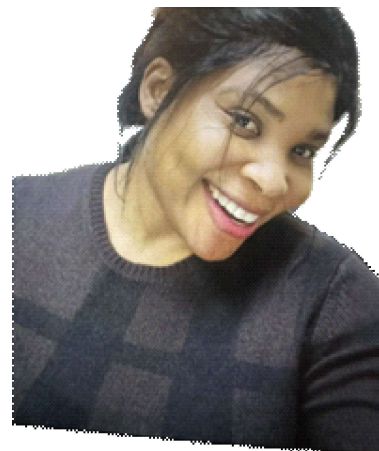
- **Curricular Integration:** HEIs should incorporate archive utilisation into curricula across disciplines. This integration should emphasise the practical relevance of archives in students' academic journeys. By weaving archives into coursework and research projects, HEIs empower students to explore archives as valuable resources, thus reinforcing more positive perceptions.
- **Oral History:** Archivists should also consider the importance of oral history as a valuable resource in complementing archival collections by providing insights and narratives that may otherwise be missing from traditional written records. It bridges gaps in historical documentation, offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of events, perspectives, and experiences.
- **Foster partnerships with other institutions:** Archivists should foster partnerships with other institutions, such as libraries and museums, to promote the use of archival materials and increase access to them. With the adaptation of these strategies, HEIs can actively work towards reshaping perceptions of archive utilisation within their academic communities through the lens of social constructionism. The researcher acknowledges that perceptions are not fixed but are open to transformation, and by leveraging language, discourse, and collaborative actions, they collectively create a more enriched and inclusive landscape for archive utilisation within HEIs. By implementing these recommendations, archivists can improve the perception and utilisation of archives to enhance research in HEIs. This will contribute to a deeper understanding of history, enrich research, and advance knowledge in various fields.

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