

ON THE INTERSECTIONS OF ARCHIVISTS, ARCHAEOLOGISTS, AND HISTORIANS IN LIBRARY PRACTICE: AN EXPLORATORY APPROACH

By

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Abstract

Many advances and developments in Library and Information Science are attributable to the influence of other fields or sub-fields whose works have aided library theory and practice. However, some of the contributions made by these fields or disciplines to library practice need to be studied or investigated in more detail. It is in light that this paper seeks to examine the role of archivists, archaeologists, and historians in library practice. Using an exploratory approach, this work identified vital areas where archivists, archaeologists, and historians have enhanced library practice. The paper shows, among other things, that archaeological discoveries, archival preservations, and historical records and documents enrich repositories of libraries. The paper concludes that library practitioners will continue to rely on the useful contributions of archaeologists, archivists, and historians to strengthen their professional practice. The paper recommends areas of collaboration among the fields to strengthen library practice.

Keywords: Archaeologists, Archivists, Historians, Information Science, Library Practice, Record Management

Introduction

The field of Library and Information Science has evolved over the centuries. Yan (2011) notes that the evolution within information science has brought about interdisciplinary connections among emerging disciplines. These inter-disciplinary connections play a significant role in not just the evolution of the affiliate disciplines, but also in their organisation and operations. It has been demonstrated that technological disruptions and market needs have influenced educational institutions to mount pedagogical changes worldwide from time to time (Safir, n.d.). Accordingly, sub-fields, such as archiving, information science, and librarianship, have emerged as distinct disciplines with their own identities to meet market and academic needs. Such needs enrich the experience, work and collaboration between the disciplines.

The inter-connectedness of disciplines means therefore that no single discipline is independent. The interdependence of knowledge makes it almost difficult to find any discipline which relies exclusively on its disciplinary progress. Among other things, such inter-connectedness fosters collaboration, stimulates the exchange of information, creates partnerships, and promotes diversity. Chen (2024) observes that intersection and collaboration between disciplines broaden the scope and frontiers of a discipline and research. It shapes the related discipline and gives it a better focus. It charts new directions of the discipline and resolves emerging challenges. This is true of many fields, such as Library and Information Science and its related or affiliate disciplines, namely, archaeology, history, and archival management. It is because of this that this work examines the intersection between and among them.

Conceptual Review

Many concepts and terms are repeatedly used in this paper, namely, archiving, archaeology, history and library practice. Though different, they share some fundamental relationship with library and information science practice. Archaeology is defined as the gathering of artefacts. However, archaeology is much more than gathering artefacts (Nicholson, 2005) because archaeology interprets the meaning behind those artefacts in time and history. Archaeological findings help to interpret artefacts to provide humanity with a logical understanding of events, people, and time. Mekonnen, et al. (2022) note that archaeologists help preserve artefacts, which builds their credibility and validity—a goal librarians also try to uphold.

Archiving and documentation are significant to the work of library practitioners. Archiving is the practice of storing historical records or documents in a depository. The use of artefacts, such as wax, papyrus, leather, clay, parchment, paper and wood to keep records (Kargbo, 2016), though archival practice, enhances library practitioners' preservation and distribution of information. Archive is considered distinct from the library profession because it has its established theoretical background, history, and methodology (Morris, 2009). Archival management is a branch of library and information science. Archival science, a subset of library and information science, focuses on selecting, preserving, and managing records and documents with enduring value. Archivists organise and maintain archives, ensuring access to historical materials while

safeguarding their integrity. It involves appraisal, arrangement, description, and preservation principles to support research, accountability, and cultural heritage.

In *The History Teacher*, Julian Boyd states that “historians and librarians are the most indispensable pillars of civilisation” (cited in Emmick, 1989, p.375). This demonstrates that librarians and historians play reciprocal roles in the service of their disciplines. Historical records are among library repositories. The historical records are valuable documents which are consulted by clientele. Historians keep records of events. They help to reconstruct history and gain valuable insights into history. On the other hand, librarians help the public assess these important historical records that are kept as a part of the library’s repository.

Origin and Development of Archaeology as a Discipline

Archaeology is said to originate in the 19th century, with figures like Sir Flinders Petrie and Augustus Pitt-Rivers contributing to its development. It evolved as a systematic approach to uncovering and studying human history through mining and investigating artefacts, structures, and cultural remains.

The main goals of archaeology include the discovery and understanding of human history and prehistory through the systematic study of artefacts, structures, and other physical remains (Frieman, 2023). Archaeologists aim to reconstruct past societies, lifestyles, and cultural practices, shedding light on the development of civilisations and contributing to our knowledge of the human experience across time. Additionally, preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage are essential for archaeological goals.

Archaeologists have achieved significant milestones in uncovering the mysteries of the past. These achievements collectively contribute to a deeper comprehension of human history and cultural development. To begin, archaeology has brought about the discovery of ancient civilisation. Archaeologists have unearthed and studied major ancient civilisations, such as the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Greeks, Romans, Maya, and others, revealing insights into their cultures, technologies, and societal structures (Anifel, 2014). Archaeology has brought about advancements in dating techniques. The development of precise dating methods, such as

radiocarbon dating, has allowed archaeologists to establish accurate timelines for artefacts and sites crucial for constructing historical narratives (Okoronkwo, Emoh, & Ogbuefi, 2020).

Understanding human evolution is one of the primary achievements of archaeology. Archaeological findings and other scientific disciplines have contributed to our understanding of human evolution, tracing early hominins' development and migration patterns (Tryon et al., 2010). Apart from discovering human evolution, archaeology tries to preserve cultural heritage. Archaeologists play a vital role in preserving and protecting cultural heritage sites, artefacts, and monuments, ensuring they are passed down to future generations. Archaeological research has enriched the field of anthropology by providing insights into human behaviour, social structures, and adaptation over time (Rodning, 2024). Archaeologists have reconstructed past environments by analysing flora, fauna, and geological layers, contributing to our understanding of climate change and its impact on human societies (Adams, Ide, Barnett, & Detges, 2018). Integrating technology, such as 3D scanning and GIS (Geographic Information System), has revolutionised archaeological documentation and analysis, enhancing the accuracy and accessibility of findings (Psarros, Stamatopoulos, & Anagnostopoulos, 2022). Interdisciplinary collaborations between archaeologists and others often enrich experts from various fields, including geology, biology, chemistry, and physics, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of archaeological materials and sites.

Origin and Development of Library and Information Science as a Discipline

The origin and development of Library and Information is well-known in the literature. However, briefly stated, the history of Library and Information Science (LIS) dates to ancient civilisations where collections of clay tablets and scrolls were curated. In the Middle Ages, monastic libraries played a key role. The Renaissance saw the rise of private libraries, and the 19th century marked the development of public libraries. Prominent ancient libraries include the Library of Alexandria in Egypt, the Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh, and the Library of Pergamum in Anatolia. These libraries were crucial in shaping their societies' intellectual and cultural landscape.

Many scholars contributed to the origin and development of library and information science. For instance, Melvil Dewey's decimal classification system, introduced in the late 19th century, greatly influenced library organisation. The 20th century has brought about technological advancements, such as the rise of electronic databases. Today, LIS encompasses digital information management and evolving technologies in the information age. Uses of the library in ancient times

In ancient times and the present day, libraries have served several essential purposes. Libraries are repositories of manuscripts, scrolls, and tablets, preserving cultural, scientific, and religious knowledge. They played a crucial role in safeguarding information for future generations. Libraries were hubs for learning, attracting scholars and students. They provided access to literature, philosophy, mathematics, and various fields of knowledge, contributing to education and intellectual development (Bouaamri, Otiye, & Barat, 2022). Libraries facilitated the exchange of ideas and cultures. Scholars from different regions could access texts, fostering cross-cultural understanding and disseminating diverse perspectives. Ancient libraries supported research by collecting, organising, and making texts available. Scholars utilised these resources to study, research, and advance knowledge in various disciplines. Some libraries, especially in religious institutions, housed sacred texts and manuscripts. These collections were vital for religious study, worship, and the dissemination of religious teachings.

S. R. Ranganathan, a prominent scholar who contributed to the evolution of library and information science, was a pioneering figure in LIS. Ranganathan developed the "Five Laws of Library Science" and substantially contributed to library classification systems. Known for creating the Dewey Decimal Classification system, Melvil Dewey played a crucial role in standardising library organisation. Another scholar is Michael Gorman. An influential figure in modern LIS, Gorman has contributed to cataloguing standards and shaped the information profession.

While primarily a scientist and engineer, Vannevar Bush's essay "As We May Think" in 1945 laid the groundwork for hypertext and influenced the development of information retrieval systems. In the same way, Marcia Bates, renowned for her work in information-seeking

behaviour and user-centred design, contributed to understanding how people search for and use information. Barbara Tillett's work involved developing cataloguing standards, including her work with the Library of Congress. Also, Donald B. Cleveland contributed to information retrieval and online searching; Cleveland's work has impacted the field of information science.

Role of Archivists in Library Practice

Archivists play a crucial role in library practice by managing and preserving records of enduring value. They organise, describe, and maintain collections of historical documents, manuscripts, and other materials. Archivists ensure the long-term accessibility and usability of these records for researchers, scholars, and the general public.

In a library setting, archivists collaborate with librarians to integrate archival materials into the broader collection. They contribute to cataloguing, establish access policies, and assist users in locating relevant archival resources. Archivists also play a crucial role in digitisation efforts, helping to make historical documents available in digital formats for broader dissemination. Archivists in library practice focus on curating and preserving historical records, enriching the library's offerings with valuable resources for research and education.

Archivists assess materials to determine their value and relevance for long-term retention. They help select and acquire records, manuscripts, and other materials for the library's archives. They help arrange and describe manuscripts and records by organising materials systematically, creating finding aids, and making collections accessible to users. They help to implement strategies to protect and prolong the life of documents, including proper storage conditions and conservation efforts.

They help researchers access and use archival materials, guiding them in navigating collections. They employ technology to digitise and make archival materials available online, increasing accessibility. By playing these roles, archivists contribute to the overall mission of libraries to preserve cultural heritage, support research, and provide valuable resources for future generations.

Role of Archaeologists in Library Practice

Archaeologists typically focus on studying material remains from past cultures, while library practice involves organising and managing information resources. While these fields may seem distinct, there can be some overlap.

Archaeologists may utilise libraries for research, accessing historical documents and scholarly publications to enhance their understanding of a particular culture or period. In turn, librarians may collaborate with archaeologists to curate relevant collections and assist in preserving and disseminating archaeological findings through literature and documentation. The connection lies in the symbiotic relationship between research in archaeology and the preservation and accessibility of information in libraries.

Role of Historians in Library Practice

Historians also play a significant role in library practice, particularly in researching and interpreting historical sources found in libraries. Here are some key roles and responsibilities of historians in library practice:

Research: Historians rely heavily on library collections to conduct research for their studies and publications. They utilise a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including books, manuscripts, archives, newspapers, and electronic resources available in the library, to gather evidence and gain a deeper understanding of historical events, people, and societies.

Bibliographic assistance: Historians assist library users by guiding them in using relevant resources and research methodologies. They can help users navigate the library catalogue, databases, and archives and recommend specific sources or reference materials essential for research topics or periods.

Collection development: Historians may contribute to collection development by identifying gaps in the library's holdings and recommending acquiring new materials relevant to their research areas. They may collaborate with librarians to assess the value and significance of potential acquisitions, ensuring the library's collections remain comprehensive and up to date.

Reference services: Historians can assist library users, including students, scholars, and the public. They can help answer research inquiries, provide historical context, and assist in locating specific information within the library's collections. They may also guide research strategies and recommend additional resources for further exploration.

Education and outreach: Historians often engage in educational programs and outreach activities organized by libraries to promote historical knowledge and research. They may participate in lectures, workshops, and public events, sharing their expertise, presenting their research findings, and fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of history among library patrons.

Collaboration: Historians frequently collaborate with librarians and archivists to develop research tools, organise exhibits, and curate collections. They may collaborate to create digitisation projects, develop research guides, or establish partnerships with other institutions to enhance access to historical resources and promote interdisciplinary research.

Preservation advocacy: Historians can advocate for preserving and conserving historical materials in libraries. They may lend their expertise to developing preservation policies and practices, advocate for funding to support conservation efforts or contribute to initiatives that raise awareness about the importance of preserving our collective cultural heritage.

Historiographical analysis: Historians critically evaluate and analyse historical sources and scholarship to assess their credibility, accuracy, and interpretative frameworks. Historians contribute to advancing historical knowledge and developing new perspectives and narratives through their research and analysis. Historians play a crucial role in utilising library resources for their research, assisting library users with historical inquiries, contributing to collection development, promoting historical knowledge, collaborating with library professionals, and advocating for the preservation and interpretation of historical materials.

Relationship Between Archaeologists and Archivists in Library Practice

The relationship between archaeologists and archivists is symbiotic, as both professions contribute to preserving, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge about the past. Their collaboration enhances the integrity of historical research and ensures that valuable cultural heritage is safeguarded for future generations. Archaeologists and archivists share a collaborative relationship in preserving and interpreting cultural heritage:

Documentation and Preservation: Archaeologists often generate a wealth of documentation, including field notes, photographs, and maps. Archivists play a crucial role in organising, preserving, and providing access to these materials, ensuring they are available for future research and reference.

Archival Research: Archaeologists contextualise their findings using archival records, historical documents, and institutional archives. Archivists assist in locating and accessing relevant historical materials that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of archaeological sites.

Curation of Artefacts: Archaeologists work with archivists or museum professionals to curate and preserve artefacts after excavation. Archivists ensure that proper cataloguing and documentation accompany each artefact, facilitating its long-term preservation and accessibility.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Both archaeologists and archivists benefit from interdisciplinary collaboration. Archaeologists may consult with archivists to gain insights into historical contexts, while archivists may seek input from archaeologists to enhance the understanding of archival materials.

Public Outreach and Education: Archivists and archaeologists often collaborate on public outreach and education initiatives. They may jointly organise exhibitions, lectures, or workshops to share knowledge about the past and the methods used to study it.

Legal and Ethical Considerations: Archivists and archaeologists navigate legal and ethical considerations related to owning and accessing historical records and artefacts. Collaborative

efforts help establish guidelines for responsible research practices and cultural heritage management.

Collaboration Between Library Science and Archaeology

The collaboration between Library Science and Archaeology is multifaceted and contributes to the preservation, accessibility, and dissemination of archaeological knowledge. Here are some aspects of their collaboration:

Archaeological Collections Management: Libraries assist archaeologists in managing and cataloguing their collections. Archaeological collections management involves organising, preserving, and providing access to artefacts, documents, and research materials related to archaeological findings.

Digital Archiving: Libraries are essential in digitising archaeological records, manuscripts, and other materials. Through digital archiving, the library ensures the long-term preservation of valuable archaeological information and makes it more widely accessible to researchers, students, and the public.

Information Retrieval and Research: Librarians and information scientists support archaeological research by helping researchers navigate vast databases, library catalogues, and online resources. They assist in locating relevant literature, primary sources, and research materials.

Collaborative Research Projects: Libraries often collaborate with archaeologists on research projects. They may provide expertise in information organisation, data management, and digital preservation, contributing to the success of archaeological investigations.

Archaeological Publications: Libraries serve as repositories for archaeological publications, including journals, conference proceedings, and research papers. They ensure these resources are accessible to scholars and students interested in the field.

Educational Support: Libraries facilitate educational initiatives related to archaeology by curating resources for students, researchers, and the public. Educational support includes creating subject guides, organising workshops, and supporting academic programs in archaeology.

Interdisciplinary Studies: The intersection of Library Science and Archaeology encourages interdisciplinary studies. Collaborations may involve experts from both fields working together to address challenges related to information management, data curation, and knowledge dissemination in archaeology.

Relationship between Archaeology and Archival Practices

The relationship between archaeology and archival practices is interconnected through the preservation and study of historical materials, though they serve distinct purposes:

Preservation of Records: Both archaeology and archival practices involve the preservation of artefacts and records. Archaeologists excavate and preserve physical objects from the past, while archivists manage and preserve documents and records to ensure their longevity.

Historical Documentation: Archaeological findings and archival materials often complement each other in reconstructing historical narratives. Archival documents provide context to archaeological discoveries, and archaeological evidence contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of historical events.

Contextualisation: Archivists contextualise records within historical frameworks, aiding researchers in understanding the broader context. Similarly, archaeologists interpret artefacts within the context of their discovery sites, contributing to a holistic understanding of past cultures.

Interdisciplinary Research: Collaboration between archaeologists and archivists facilitates interdisciplinary research. Archival materials guide archaeological investigations, and archaeological findings prompt further archival research to deepen historical understanding.

Cultural Heritage: Both fields contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. Archivists safeguard written records, while archaeologists preserve and interpret physical remnants of past societies, collectively enriching our understanding of human history.

Collaboration Between History, Archeology and Archival Practice in Library Science

The collaboration between history, archaeology, and archival practice in library science is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the past. These fields intersect in various ways:

Research Integration: Archival materials provide valuable primary sources for historians and archaeologists, aiding in interpreting and reconstructing historical events and cultures.

Preservation: Archivists work to preserve and catalogue historical documents and artefacts, ensuring their longevity. This collaboration helps maintain the integrity of historical records and archaeological findings.

Interdisciplinary Studies: Joint projects encourage interdisciplinary studies, allowing researchers to combine historical narratives with archaeological evidence, creating a more holistic understanding of past societies.

Digitisation and Accessibility: Archival practices involve digitising materials for broader access. This digitisation benefits historians and archaeologists, offering remote access to crucial resources and facilitating collaborative research.

Museum Exhibitions: Collaboration in designing museum exhibits involves historians providing historical context, archaeologists contributing artefacts, and archivists offering relevant documents, creating immersive and informative displays.

Educational Outreach: The collaboration supports educational initiatives by providing materials for teaching history and archaeology. Archivists play a role in organising and disseminating these resources.

Record Management: Archivists' proper record-keeping and management practices assist historians and archaeologists in tracking provenance and understanding the context of historical documents and artefacts.

Legal and Ethical Considerations: Collaboration helps navigate legal and ethical considerations related to the ownership, preservation, and use of historical and archaeological materials.

Cultural Heritage Protection: Archivists, historians, and archaeologists collaborate to advocate for protecting cultural heritage sites and materials, working together to prevent looting and illicit trade.

Data Sharing: Archival practices can involve creating databases and repositories that house historical and archaeological data, facilitating collaboration and data sharing among researchers.

Conclusion

From the preceding discussion, archaeology, history, and archival practice are distinct disciplines which have developed with their own identities, concepts, methods, theories or cross-disciplinary theories, but they play interdependent and complementary roles in library practice. With technological advances and interdisciplinary collaboration among the fields, they have enriched library practice, stimulated new ideas, and deepened the engagements of both patrons and clientele in library practice. It recommended that these collaborations be sustained for the growth of knowledge. Library professionals must continue to innovate and adapt to changing landscape in their professional practice.

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