

**“A qualitative analysis of the Irish archival institutions, their
functions, challenges and anticipated changes.”**

Chris Taylor

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Supervisor: Clare Thornley

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Declaration

'I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc in Information and Library Management is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.'

Signed: Chris Taylor

Student Number: 10522328

Date: 26/08/2020

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to address the gap of Irish context in archival theory, gain insight into the functions of Irish archival institutions and discover their prospects for the future. This dissertation was qualitative in its research design and followed an interpretivist philosophy.

The research population for this project consisted of professional archivists who work or have worked in Irish archival institutions. Exploratory sampling was used, and the research followed an inductive approach. A grounded theory research strategy was implemented for this research and semi-structured research interviews were employed for data collection. Data was then analysed using coding and thematic analysis.

The results concurred with some of the existing literature written from an international perspective but also shed light on issues and points that were not present in the literature. Some of these may be unique to Irish archival institutions and warrant further investigation.

Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgement	3
Abstract	4
Chapter One: Introduction - 8	
1.1 Background	8
1.2 Research Goals	12
1.3 Literature Review	13
1.3.1 Preservation of Records	14
1.3.1.2 Digitisation of Physical Records	15
1.3.1.3 Record Storage	17
1.3.2 The Acquisition of Archives	18
1.3.2.1 Providing Transparency and Accountability	19
1.3.3 Record Appraisal	20
1.3.3.1 Record Provenance and Macro Appraisal	22
1.3.3.2 Context of a Record	23
1.3.4 Literature Conclusion	24
Chapter Two: Research Methodology - 26	
2.1 Research Methodology Introduction	26
2.2 Research Aim	26
2.3 Research Objectives	26
2.4 Participant Sampling	27
2.5 Research Design	29
2.5.1 Research Approach	29
2.5.2 Research Strategy	31
2.6 Materials	32
2.7 Data Collection	33
2.8 Data Analysis	36
2.9 Ethical Considerations	38
2.10 Limitations of Methodology	39
Chapter Three: Results - 41	
3.1 Introduction	41
3.2 How the Data Was Coded	41
3.3 Digital Records and Preservation	44

3.3.1 Difficulty Adapting to Digital Records	45
3.3.2 Expectation for Records to be Available Online	46
3.3.3 Deciding What to Digitise	47
3.4 Archives are Under-resourced	48
3.5 Importance of Context and Authenticity	49
3.6 Need for Standardised Recordkeeping Policies	50
3.7 Issues with Storage	51
3.7.1 Need for More Local Repositories	52
3.8 Record Appraisal	53
3.9 Public Perception of Archives	54

Chapter Four: Discussion - 56

4.1 Introduction	56
4.2 Research Aim and Findings	56
4.3 Functions of Irish Archival Institutions	57
4.4 How Irish Archival Institutions Carry Out Their Functions	58
4.5 Issues Irish Archival Institutions are Currently Facing	59
4.6 Impact of Technological Advances on Irish Archival Institutions	60
4.7 Potential Changes to the Functions of Irish Archival Institutions	61
4.8 Comparison to Previous Literature	62
4.9 Digital Records and Preservation	62
4.10 Archives are Under-resourced	64
4.11 Importance of Context and	65
4.12 Need for Standardised Recordkeeping Policies	66
4.13 Issues with Storage	66
4.14 Record Appraisal	68
4.15 Providing Transparency and Accountability -	70
4.16 Public Perception of Archives	72
4.17 Limitations of the Research	73
4.18 Future Research	73
4.19 Research Applications	74
4.20 Conclusions	75
References	76
Appendix A	84
Appendix B	87
Appendix C	90
Appendix D	95
Appendix E	100
Appendix F	104
Table 1	42

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

This dissertation will examine the current landscape of archival institutions in the Republic of Ireland and anticipate any changes which may occur. For the purposes of this dissertation the definition of archives set out by the International Council on Archives shall be used:

“Archives are the documentary by-product of human activity retained for their long-term value.

They are contemporary records created by individuals and organisations as they go about their business and therefore provide a direct window on past events. They can come in a wide range of formats including written, photographic, moving image, sound, digital and analogue. Archives are held by public and private institutions and individuals around the world.”

(International Council on Archives [ICA], 2016)

Any changes in how archivists and archival institutions conduct their functions are generally informed by archival theory. Archival theory “aims to generalize about the nature of archives in order to set the intellectual framework for method and practice” (Eastwood, 1994, p129), and has existed for as long as archives themselves, which Yale postulates may even be as old as human agriculture, where records were created “as a way of keeping account of the land and its produce” (Yale, 2015, p332). Though the starting point for archival theory as we know it today is usually credited with the creation of the *Manual for the Arrangement and Description*

of Archives, also known as the 'Dutch Manual', which was originally written in 1898 by Muller, Feith, and Fruin and this is still referenced by archival theorists today (Horsman et al., 2003, p249).

Since the 'Dutch Manual', there have many contributors to the field of archival theory from all across the globe. Countries such as England (Jenkinson, 1937), The United States (Schellenberg, 1956) and Canada (Cook, 1997). Something which is noticeable to an Irish person when sifting through these seminal works as well as the plethora of journal articles on the topic which these works have spawned, is the distinct lack of an Irish perspective to archival theory. It is unclear as to why this is the case however, this is a gap in archival theory that this dissertation will seek to address.

One of the earliest archival institutions in Ireland was the Public Record Office which "was established in 1867 under the Public Records (Ireland) Act 1867, to bring together into a single modern repository the records of English government in Ireland" (Crooks & Wallace, 2018, p1). This institution was housed in the Four Courts in Dublin and was unfortunately destroyed by a fire during the civil war on June 30th, 1922 and many records were lost as a result (Crooks & Wallace, 2018, p5). The institution took six years to rebuild, reopening in 1928 (Crowe, 2012). This destruction was closely followed by the Public Records Act (Northern Ireland) 1923, which established the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. This Act contained a wide definition of 'public records' that allowed them to acquire different kinds of private records as well as records of state in an attempt to "plug something of the gap in evidence created by the Four Courts' fire" (Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, 2008, p2).

Further attempts are currently underway to plug the gap in Ireland's records created by the destruction of the Public Records Office in the form of Beyond 2022. This is a project spearheaded by Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with the National Archives of Ireland and the UK as well as the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Irish Manuscripts Commission. The project seeks to virtually recreate the Public Records Office based on architectural plans and photographic evidence and any surviving records which exist in archives around the world (National Archives of Ireland, n.d.b).

There are many institutions which house archives in Ireland today, but very few whose sole purpose is the acquisition and preservation of archival material. The National Archives can be considered the major archival institution in the country, as departments and bodies of the state are legally obligated to regularly provide them with all records they create for the purpose of archiving and understanding the political, economic and social forces which have shaped the nation (National Archives of Ireland, 2018a, p3). This institution was first established in 1988 as an amalgamation of the State Paper Office and the Public Record Office of Ireland, the National Archives houses records from government departments and their agencies after they turn thirty years old as well as many of the country's historical records (National Archives of Ireland, n.d.a). According to their mission statement: "the National Archives collects, manages, and preserves the public record of Ireland and ensures its availability both as a resource and to safeguard citizens' rights" (National Archives of Ireland, 2018a, p3).

The National Archive's further functions include acquiring other archives from private individuals and organisations, facilitating access to archives for members of the public and the development of programmes to educate the public on the nature and use of archives (National

Archives, 2018b, p3). While the policies of the National Archives are freely available for viewing on their website divided in the *Acquisitions Policy 2018-2022*, *Digital Imaging Policy* and *Loans Policy*, these do not provide insight to the reader into how their functions are changing or any issues they are currently facing.

Other Irish institutions which house archives include the National Library of Ireland, the Cork City and County Archives, the Waterford County Archives and Trinity College Dublin. The functions of these archives are even less visible to the public than those of the National Archives, with their websites only giving a broad outline of their collections and functions. Trinity College Dublin, for example state that they contain records created by the college itself as well as “20,000 collections of manuscripts and archives, dating from the 13th century BC to the present day”, (Trinity College Dublin [TCD], 2018) with no mention of how these are selected for preservation or why other than for the purpose of “building on existing strengths and advancing into new areas of scholarship” (TCD, 2018).

Digital records are a topic discussed frequently by current archival theorists and are currently changing the very nature of archives and the functions of archival institutions, with some theorists claiming that these institutions are struggling to adapt to the new medium (Lemieux, 2018, p41). According to the National Archives of the UK, a digital record refers to “records that you can view on a computer screen, whether a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile phone screen,” (National Archives UK, n.d.). This can refer to a digital copy of a physical record or a ‘born-digital’ record, meaning that the original record was created digitally. An exploration into how Irish archival institutions are handling this transition does not appear to have been

carried out in the past but should prove vital for highlighting any issues they may be having or how this new medium may be changing their existing roles and functions.

1.2 Research Goals

The goal of this research is to determine the functions of Irish archival institutions, examine the possibilities for future developments of these functions as well as Irish archival theory and discover any issues these institutions are currently encountering. The purpose in doing so is to attempt to address the gap of Irish context in archival theory, gain insight into the functions of Irish archival institutions and discover their prospects for the future. In order to achieve this goal, the research for this dissertation will be carried out with the following aims in mind:

1. To determine aspects of archival theory which have influenced the functions of Irish archival institutions.
2. To ascertain if current trends in archival theory and technology are impacting or will impact the functions of Irish institutions.
3. To determine any issues which Irish archival institutions may be currently facing.

Research question:

- A qualitative analysis of the Irish archival institutions, their functions, challenges and anticipated changes.

The subsequent objectives of this dissertation are:

- To establish the functions of Irish archival institutions.
- To determine how they carry out these functions.
- To identify any issues Irish archival institutions are currently facing.
- To determine the impact of technological advances on Irish archival institutions.
- To determine any potential changes which may occur to the functions of Irish archival institutions.

In answering these questions perhaps any current or potential archivists in Ireland can gain a greater understanding of the present state of the archival landscape in the country and therefore better prepare for their professional future. The public may also become more informed as to the functions of their archival institutions and the role they play in their society.

1.3 Literature Review

The purpose of this section was to conduct a critical review of the literature and other resources relating to the topic in order to discover what is known and unknown about the nature and possible future of archives by archival theorists, how this relates to Ireland's archival institutions and whether an exploration of archival theory in an Irish context has been carried out in the past (Saunders et al., 2019, p75). An in-depth analysis of the findings was then carried out and linked to the research aims and objectives of the dissertation. A number of key themes and sub-themes were identified in the literature, and this review has been divided accordingly, using these as headings.

1.3.1 Preservation of Records

The preservation of archives and the records contained therein is one of the primary tasks of archival institutions. Preservation in the context of archives and records management refers to the act of protecting archives and minimising the risk of losing records for future generations, using variety of different measures (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 2006, p2).

According to Owens there exists three different types of records and each require different means of preservation. These types are artifactual, informational and folkloric records. Artifactual records are usually tangible, physical objects which the object itself is the record and needs to be preserved from physical degradation. For informational records, the physical medium is not important but the information it contains is what is most in need of preservation. Folkloric records are more abstract and imprecise in nature. As long as all of the key elements of a story are still present then the folkloric record is considered to be preserved (Owens, 2018, p15).

Owens also talks about how modern archival practice is still very much focused on physical preservation of records with one of the more successful methods of this being the act of encoding records onto microfilm. A medium which, if stored correctly has the potential to remain intact for a thousand years (Owens, 2018, p29). Of course, this method is only effective

for preserving informational records, so artifactual records still need to rely on protection from physical degradation.

1.3.1.1 Preservation of Digital Records

One medium which archival institutions are still struggling to adapt their preservation policies and techniques to is digital records. Lemieux argues that archivists are still using methods and theories designed for paper records and are having limited success (Lemieux, 2018, p41). However, it is becoming increasingly important to the general population that archival records be made accessible to them online. According to Gauld, as our citizens become more reliant on the internet for their information, they are more likely to believe that anything not available online is irrelevant and, as a result of this archives and archivists may also lose their relevance to society if this issue is not addressed (Gauld, 2018, p145).

Despite what some may think, all digital information is in material form and is held on some sort of physical object (Owens, 2018, p38), such as a server or hard drive. Some of the primary issues identified for the preservation of digital records is technological obsolescence and the physical decay of the medium on which they are stored (Nui, 2012, p124). Thurston agrees with these issues and even refers to digital records as 'fragile', stating that, if they are not professionally managed, "their value as evidence and their historical significance can be compromised or they can be lost completely" (Thurston, 2019, p211). Tschan also describes digital records in this manner and draws attention to the time sensitivity which surrounds the medium (Tschan, 2002, p192). To combat this issue digital records must consistently be

migrated forward onto new mediums before decay of the record occurs (Cook, 1997, p45). Yeo mentions that some digital preservation experts predict a time when digital records will handle their own preservation with little human input required (Yeo, 2018, p52) which would make this task far more feasible for archivists, requiring less time and resources to carry out.

Another issue with digital records, which Ranade highlights, comes as a result of the sheer volume of them that are being created. As a result, “It has become unsustainable for archivists and records creators alike to create an authoritative, high-quality description for each object” (Ranade, 2018, p81). Ranade further concludes that a certain amount of messiness and uncertainty surrounding digital records must be accepted as unavoidable by archival institutions (Ranade, 2018, p93). McDonough, in his 2017 report as the Director of the National Archives of Ireland also drew attention to these issues stating that, “The proliferation of electronic records and records created in electronic business systems is regarded as a digital time bomb unless procedures and policies are developed for the management of this material” (McDonough, 2017, p23).

A benefit attributed to digital records is how simple it is to create copies of them. Owens believes this makes them the greatest medium for the preservation of informational records (Owens, 2018, p55). He also agrees with Cook in that digital records should not be preserved by maintaining their storage mediums but rather by copying the record and adding it to a new medium (Owens, 2018, p58). Owens also considers the issue of technological obsolescence, particularly in relation to file formats as there is a possibility that future software may not be able to render current file formats such as pdfs, meaning that a part of digital preservation is attempting to predict future technology and prepare accordingly (Owens, 2018, p120).

Software is upgraded regularly and usually supports the previous file type but usually drop support for older file types, which will not be readable by current software unless they are migrated to newer file types (Digital Preservation Management, n.d.).

1.3.1.2 Digitisation of Physical Records

Physical records can be defined as; “records in paper or other analog formats, such as audio tape or video tape” (University of Virginia, 2020). The digitisation of physical records is usually accomplished by means of scanning and creating a digital image of the record which can then be preserved electronically. The National Archives states that this process is “the primary means of assisting preservation whilst simultaneously enabling wider access to collections of national significance” (National Archives of Ireland, 2016, p2). Their policy also states that their criteria for prioritising which physical records are to be digitised are records which are in frequent use, have ‘national significance’ and are in good enough physical condition for the procedure (National Archives of Ireland, 2016, pp2-3). Gauld agrees with the concept that records which are most worthy of digitisation are those which are most in use by the public (Gauld, 2018, p146).

1.3.1.3 Record Storage

Concern was expressed in 2017 by McDonough that inadequate storage space for the National Archives may result in their inability to acquire further records, therefore impairing the

functionality of the institution and jeopardizing the preservation of these unacquired records (McDonough, 2017, p8). In fact, the National Archives were forced to decline the annual transfer of records from the Companies Registration Office in 2017 due to a lack of adequate physical storage space (McDonough, 2017, p19).

One of the benefits of digital records, which Yeo highlights, is the potential for infinite storage space (Yeo, 2018, pp49-50) however, Owens believes that this will result in the majority of the budget for archival institutions having to be spent on digital storage space due to the increasing volume of these records (Owens, 2018, p190). Yeo does not believe this will be the case and that the costs of large-scale storage of digital records will become negligible in the future (Yeo, 2018, pp47-48).

1.3.2 The Acquisition of Archives

Acquisition of archives refers to the process of an archival institution taking in archival material for the purposes of preservation. The National Archives Act 1986 outlines which records are to be acquired by the National Archives and nullifies the previous archival acts of the Public Records Act 1867 and the Parochial Records Act 1876. These acquisitions include any records created by a department of the state which are over thirty years old as well as any archives which are donated by private individuals or those which are deemed to be of 'national significance' (National Archives Act 1986). What constitutes a record being of 'national significance' is not defined in the act or the policies of the National Archives.

Other archival institutions in the country do not have stringent legislation to determine the archives they acquire, such as Trinity College Dublin, who do not have set criteria other than the archives “reflect the intellectual, spiritual, economic and everyday lives of scholars, patriots, rebels, church men and women, politicians, explorers, landowners, servants and students” (TCD, 2018). Another example is the Cork City and County Archives, who simply state that they collect “local authority records, and records and archives donated or deposited by local organisations and individuals” (Cork City and County Archives, n.d.).

1.3.2.1 Providing Transparency and Accountability

Armstrong defines transparency as the, “unfettered access by the public to timely and reliable information on decisions and performance in the public sector” and accountability as, “the obligation on the part of public officials to report on the usage of public resources and answerability for failing to meet stated performance objectives” (Armstrong, 2005, p1). The National Archives state that the primary reason for their acquisition of archives is to safeguard the rights of citizens and “provide essential primary source material for people seeking to understand the political, economic and social forces which have shaped our nation” (National Archives of Ireland, 2018a, p3). According to Duranti, this function has never been more important than today, as the prevalence of connectivity that has become a part of the digital age has allowed misinformation to spread at an unprecedented level (Duranti, 2018, p20). Duranti also worries that some politicians and administrators try to avoid preserving certain documents so as not to be held accountable for their actions (Duranti, 2018, p21). Indeed, the

National Archives Act does provide loopholes which state departments could potentially exploit, such as an officer being able to make a case that the record due for acquisition would impede the function of the department should it be transferred for preservation (National Archives Act 1986). Armstrong states that a lack of government transparency and accountability can lead to corruption and misconduct if left unchecked (Armstrong, 2005, p9).

Duranti writes that it is vital to provide access to government records to the public in order to combat misinformation and provide proper context for citizens in a democratic society (Duranti, 2018, p27). McDonough seems to agree with this sentiment writing, “The annual transfer is an example of demonstrable accountability and transparency. The act of making archives publicly available reinforces democracy and the link of the citizen to the State” (McDonough, 2017, p4). The National Archives Amendment Act was brought into effect in 2018 and reduces the waiting period for the transfer of departmental records to twenty years (National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018), allowing for sooner access to government records to the public and therefore shall possibly serve to improve the transparency and accountability of the government departments and bodies of Ireland.

1.3.3 Record Appraisal

Crockett defines record appraisal as the “assessment of records to determine their value as primary source material providing evidence of the history of the organization, family or individual” (Crockett, 2016, p141). There have been a number of seminal works in the field of archival theory relating to the subject of records appraisal, as well as many differing opinions on

the matter. One of the earliest being *A Manual of Archive Administration* written by prominent twentieth century British archivist, Hilary Jenkinson. Originally published in 1922, the work advocated that archivists should, above all things, be impartial and that their work should be akin to that of a passive custodian of records, having no direct input when it comes to record appraisal and instead keeping and preserving all records that are created. While with this approach, physical storage space would eventually become an issue, Jenkinson believed that the onus for reducing record build-up was on the records creators themselves rather than archivist, and the creators should be encouraged not to create unnecessary records in the first place (Jenkinson, 1937).

There has been debate among theorists more recently about what constitutes the 'creation' of a record, with Douglas arguing that simply arranging records or using them for the purposes of research is an act of record creation in itself (Douglas, 2018). The view of the archivist needing to be completely objective in their work so as to retain the purity of the records in their keeping has, since Jenkinson's time been disregarded by many theorists as impossible, that archivists will "inevitably will inject their own values" (Cook, 1997, p45) into their recordkeeping process.

Another, some might say more realistic, view postulated nearly two decades after Jenkinson's work is that records should be appraised by archivists based on their perceived 'primary' and 'secondary' values, these being the evidential value they have to their creators and their informational value to other potential researchers respectively (Schellenberg, 1956). A resolution to the debate around records appraisal may yet be at hand though, which would no doubt satisfy Jenkinson if he could witness it. Some theorists now believe that with the

prevalence of digital records and the potential for infinite storage that eventually no records need ever be destroyed, that we will in fact be able to keep all records that are created (Yeo, 2018). This could potentially end the act of record appraisal entirely if it becomes the standard.

1.3.3.1 Record Provenance and Macro Appraisal

Provenance in archival theory refers to the intent and context behind the creation of a record. It harkens back to Jenkinson's view of the creator having control over if and how records are archived (Jenkinson, 1937). This concept that Terry Cook also terms 'macro appraisal', originated among archival theorists in Canada in the 1980s and was implemented into the policy of their National Archives in 1991 (Cook, 1997, p31).

This concept shifts the focus away from the content of the record being the main criteria for which it is appraised and instead chooses to examine the context of a record as revealed through the creators' functions, programmes, activities, and transactions (Cook, 1997, p31). Douglas further expanded on this, again writing from a Canadian perspective, in their discussion of what constitutes an act of creation and advocates for a re-examination of the archival principle of provenance and how this principle does not fully consider the act of creation and the different possibilities of who a record creator may be (Douglas, 2018).

Micro-appraisal on the other hand, refers to the original method of appraisal where the record itself is the sole criteria for appraisal rather than the circumstances surrounding it. According to Nui, these criteria can include their content, format and media (Nui, 2012, p122).

1.3.4.2 Context of a Record

The International Council on Archives state that the context of a record allows us to “understand how, why and who created it, its content and its format” (The International Council on Archives, 2016). The issue of a record’s context is a prominent topic in archival theory and ties into the other themes of Record Appraisal and Provenance. Part of the reasoning behind archivists remaining objective in the selection and retention of records was to attempt to preserve the record’s original context (Jenkinson, 1937). A number of methods for understanding and preserving a record’s context have been since been posited, such as analysing the creator’s process and intention behind the record (macro appraisal), or analysing the content of the record itself (micro appraisal) and attempting to determine its context that way (Cook, 1997).

Determining and preserving the context of a record is becoming a larger issue in contemporary archives with the emerging prevalence of digital records. Records become “detached from their administrative, provenancial, procedural and documentary context, while their digital integrity can be proven, their contextual identity and meaning cannot, thus they are unable to be trustworthy sources of facts and acts” (Duranti, 2018, p23). A concern expressed by Duranti is that this lack of context in digital records can be taken advantage of in an internet environment and that people can more easily use these records separated from their original context in order to spread misinformation. If they are to prevent this, Duranti

believes that archivists need to re-examine and re-define their traditional roles (Duranti, 2018, p24).

1.3.4 Literature Conclusion

While I have only begun to touch on nearly a century of archival theory, it is clear that multiple paradigm shifts have occurred within this field and are still occurring today. One thing that became apparent from reading through this literature was that a much of it was developed from a British, American or Canadian context, with many of the newer works seeming to originate from Canada especially. Outside of the National Archive of Ireland's policies and reports, not a single academic text or paper on archival theory which mentioned Ireland, or its archival institutions was found when researching the literature for this dissertation. There does not appear to be any publicly accessible way of knowing where the functions of these institutions originated from.

What is obvious from the literature is that new technologies and the popularity of the internet is forcing archivists to reconsider their profession and the functions that their institutions serve. That ignoring new developments in technology and, in turn society, is impossible and that their roles and functions must adapt or risk losing their relevance. This is something that has not escaped the National Archives as they state in their *Archives Framework* that they are planning to develop upon their capability of managing digital records (National Archives of Ireland, 2018c, p3). It would be interesting to hear the opinions of archivists working in Irish archival institutions on the issues surrounding digital records and if they have

any plans as to how they can address them and also see if there are any issues unique to Irish archival institutions which are not covered in international literature.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

2.1 Research Methodology Introduction

This chapter shall outline the methodology that was used to conduct the research for this dissertation, which consisted of both primary and secondary research carried out in the form of interviews and a literature review respectively. For the purposes of this dissertation research is defined as “A process that is undertaken in a systematic way with a clear purpose, to find things out” (Saunders et al., 2019, p5). Included in this chapter will be the aims and objectives of the research, the choice of participant sampling, the design, approach and strategy to the research, a description of how the data was collected and how it was analysed. Following this shall be an explanation of any ethical issues which were relevant to the research as well the limitations of the chosen methodology.

2.2 Research Aim

The purpose of this research is to determine the functions of Irish archival institutions, how these functions may change and any challenges that they are currently facing.

2.3 Research Objectives

1. To determine aspects of archival theory which have influenced the functions of Irish archival institutions.

2. To ascertain if current trends in archival practice and technology are impacting or will impact the functions of Irish institutions.
3. To determine any issues which Irish archival institutions may be currently facing.

These shall be carried out by gathering the views of professional archivists who have worked in Irish institutions on these topics.

2.4 Participant Sampling

The research population for this project consisted of professional archivists who work or have worked in Irish archival institutions, as they may be able to provide key insight into the functions of these institutions as well as any issues they have encountered or may encounter in the future. Due to time constraints and practicality it was not realistic to expect to interview every member of the research population (Saunders et al., 2019, p294), therefore the implementation of participant sampling was deemed to be necessary. The basic principle of participant sampling is that data does not need to be collected from the entire research population in order to produce valuable findings (Denscombe, 2014, p51), instead a relevant sample is chosen from said population to participate in the research project.

This dissertation made use of exploratory sampling, which was appropriate for the small-scale and qualitative nature of the research and is generally employed when researching topics which are relatively unexplored (Denscombe, 2014, pp51-52). This sampling method favours an approach with less breadth but much depth, which is ideal for a qualitative research project involving such a small research population.

Since there was not a large population to take the sample from, non-probability sampling was used where key individuals of the sample population were chosen based on their perceived potential value to the research project. The sample needed to be homogeneous as the objective of the research was to gain insight into the archival institutions of Ireland, therefore only people who were perceived to have intimate knowledge in this field were chosen to take part.

People who met these criteria were difficult to locate and contact as the websites of many of these institutions only have one contact email address and phone number. Unfortunately, due to the COVID19 pandemic many of these institutions were also closed, with no responses being given to emails or phone calls, which drastically limited the potential participant pool for this research. Since contacting participants directly was impossible, snowball sampling was used to obtain participants where the initial point of contact, this being the institution itself, would contact other potential participants who they believed would volunteer, with these participants in turn contacting others (Saunders et al., 2019, p323) and if those contacted were perceived by the researcher to have relevant insight into the topic, they would partake in the data collection process.

The reason for the use of non-probability sampling is linked to the methods of data collection, which made it unfeasible to include a large sample base in the study and, as the purpose of the study is exploratory in nature, this lends itself to the selection of participants due to their levels of expertise and experience within the chosen topic. This ties into the purposive sampling techniques that were used in the research, where the sample base was picked based on relevance to the topic and their perceived level of privileged knowledge and

experience of the topic. Using these criteria increased the researcher's chances of gaining quality information and valuable insights into the topic (Denscombe, 2014, p61).

2.5 Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that was used to integrate the different components of the research being undertaken in a coherent and logical manner, with the aim of addressing the research problem (Sacred Heart University Library, 2019). This dissertation was qualitative in its research design and followed an interpretivist philosophy where the goal was to develop an understanding of the fundamental meanings behind the topic and to gather multiple subjective views in order to identify common patterns and themes (Saunders et al., 2019, p141).

2.5.1 Research Approach

In conducting this research different approaches were considered. A deductive approach depends upon testing an existing theory against the data collected by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2019, p153). As the research topic for this project did not contain an existing theory to be tested, the research for this dissertation followed an inductive approach, where the topic was explored in detail prior to the collection of primary data through the reading of the literature and identifying common themes to develop specific areas of interest from which to formulate the research questions. Theoretical explanations were then developed for these

research questions as the data was collected and analysed (Saunders et al., 2019, p51). The intention behind using this approach was to allow meanings to emerge from the data set during the collection process and analysis in order to identify patterns, themes and relationships between data items so that theories could be generated (Saunders et al., 2019, p62). The inductive approach is typically more concerned with the context surrounding a research topic and seeks new theoretical insight from the research that does not already exist in the literature (Saunders et al., 2019, p179), which relates to the goal of the research question. In this way existing theories are observed in the beginning and developed upon further towards the end of the project.

The inductive approach is more concerned with subjective interpretations of a topic and thus lends itself to the interpretivist philosophy underpinning the research methods for this project (Saunders et al., 2019, p155). Interpretivism is the study of meanings ascribed by human beings to phenomena rather than the physical phenomena themselves and acknowledges that a different approach is required for this end (Saunders et al., 2019, pp148-149). While an inductive approach is not as reliant on the researcher's familiarity with the existing theory surrounding the topic, this does not mean disregarding theory entirely. Theoretical works still needed to be consulted and examined in formulating the research questions and objectives and in order to identify any concepts that needed to be explored in the research process (Saunders et al., 2019, p62). Therefore, familiarity with existing theory was still a necessity in undertaking this research approach.

An inductive research approach lends itself to qualitative research methods where researchers are required to interpret the subjective meanings surrounding the given topic.

Qualitative research seeks to study the meaning behind the contributions of its participants and attempts to establish relationships between these meanings in order to create a theoretical contribution to the research topic. Data collected via qualitative methods is non-standardised and requires being grouped into themes and categories in order to be analysed effectively (Saunders et al., 2019, p179). This approach is most suited to this research topic due to the lack of literature surrounding archival practice and institutions in Ireland. This requires subjective interpretations to be gathered from those with knowledge of the topic that is not widely available, with the goal of generating new insight.

2.5.2 Research Strategy

The research strategy refers to the researcher's plan of how to go about answering their research questions (Saunders et al., 2019, p189). This needs to be consistent with the overall design as well as the approach being taken to the research. The proposal for this dissertation had originally sought to conduct a case study of a particular Irish archival institution however, this proved not to be feasible due to a lack of available participants. Instead a grounded theory research strategy was adopted which was more feasible and still in keeping with the overall goal of this dissertation.

Grounded theory allows the researcher to inductively generate a new theory from the data set they collect (Saunders et al., 2019, p205), which is in line with the inductive approach that was taken to the research. This strategy involves analysing the data shortly after it has been collected and sorting important data items into codes, which are then refined as more

data is collected (Saunders et al., 2019, p205). Using this strategy, more participants are usually selected after each interview takes place in order to follow a line of enquiry based on certain interesting data items collected from the previous participant (Saunders et al., 2019, p207), however this was not possible for this research project due to the lack of available participants and the need to make use of snowball sampling mentioned previously.

The purpose behind this research project was exploratory in nature, making use of open questions in the hope of gaining understanding and insight into the topic (Saunders et al., 2019, p186). Exploratory studies are used to discover insights into the research topic and clarify understanding of an issue (Saunders et al., 2019, p186) while emphasizing development of the current theory through the collection of new data (Stebbins, 2001, p4). Methods used in exploratory studies are usually qualitative in design such as interviews (usually unstructured or semi-structured) and observation. One key reason an exploratory approach to the research was ideal for this research project was that it is flexible and can commence with a broad focus but narrow as the research into the topic progresses (Saunders et al., 2019, p187), which proved to be the case with the research for this dissertation.

2.6 Materials

Materials for this dissertation consisted of lists of interview questions and participant information sheets/consent forms. Interview questions were based on the research objectives of the dissertation and were modified depending on the background of the participant. Care was taken to ensure that each of the core topics was discussed with each participant. Please

see appendix for copies of interview questions (Appendix C-F) and the participant information sheet/consent form (Appendix A/B). Note that the title of this dissertation has changed since these were sent to participants.

2.7 Data Collection

Since qualitative data needed to be collected for this dissertation, two options were available for data collection methods: observation and interviews. Observation requires the watching of participants in their natural setting in order to identify lifestyles, cultures and beliefs, making this method more suited for ethnographic research (Denscombe, 2014, p235) and unsuitable for collecting qualitative data on specific topics. Research interviews were decided upon for the method of data collection. These are defined as, “a method of data collection that uses people's answers to researcher's questions as their source of data” (Denscombe, 2014, p213).

Interviews allow for exploration of opinions, feelings, complex issues and even privileged information, if key participants make themselves available to the interviewer (Denscombe, 2014, p215). These interviews were semi-structured in nature, where there was a clear list of issues to be addressed but the flow of the interview was flexible, with interchangeable supplementary questions used as appropriate to the background of the participant as well as allowing the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on the responses given to questions (Kallio et al., 2016, p6).

The participants were also allowed time to speak freely on the given topics in the hope that they would further elaborate on any points of interest, which accommodates the exploratory purpose of the research. Questions were grouped according to topics, where an attempt was made to allow a natural flow from one topic to the next while allowing room to switch back and forth at the participant's choosing. Each participant was asked about the main themes of the project which, "covered the main content of the research subject and within them participants were encouraged to speak freely about their perceptions and experiences. Every participant would usually be questioned on the main themes" (Kallio et al., 2016, p14). This allowed for some uniformity to the subjects of the data collected but also allowed for exact questions to be changed depending on the participant.

Interviews were conducted one-to-one as this was ideal for exploratory research where the interviews needed to be in-depth. This type of interview allowed the interviewer to use probing questions, which are a more direct type of question used to follow up on what the participant has said in order to gain a greater level of detail (The Open University, 2019). This level of depth can prove more difficult in group interviews where multiple participants would be speaking, and it may be more difficult to keep track of who has made which point and thus seek to explore the point further (Saunders et al., 2019, p444).

Four interviews were conducted, which allowed themes to be found across a number of different sources rather than having to rely on the statements of a single participant (Denscombe, 2014, p230). Participants were contacted in advance of the interview and a time and date was chosen based on their availability. Due to restrictions in place as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, conducting these interviews face-to-face was not a possibility. Interviews

were instead done online in real time using Zoom video calls, where a webcam was used to attempt to mitigate the impact of a lack of face-to-face contact (Denscombe, 2014, p227). This was not possible for one participant however, as their webcam was not functioning, so they were not visible to the interviewer during the interview, though the interviewer was visible to them.

Care was taken to ensure that the participant was not made to feel uncomfortable during the course of these interviews. A more passive, neutral stance was adopted on the part of the interviewer while trying to remain conversational, so as put the participant at ease and encourage elaboration on any topics of interest and not provoke any hostility or defensive attitudes from them (Denscombe, 2014, p220). Other methods that were employed with the aim of getting the most out of the interview were ensuring that the room that the interviewer was making the video call from was quiet and ensuring to begin the interview with some easy questions that the participant was likely to be familiar with and have no issues answering (Denscombe, 2014, p223).

The skills that were required from the researcher for this method of data collection were; attentiveness, sensitivity to the feelings of the participant, the ability to tolerate long silences, the ability to use prompts, the ability to use probes, the ability to use checks (checking that the interviewer has understood the participant fully) and avoiding coming across as judgmental of the participant (Denscombe, 2014, pp221-222). After each interview there was a period of reflection on what went well with the experience and what did not, as well as determining whether certain questions should be removed from the interview question sheet or new ones added (The Open University, 2019). After the second interview it became apparent

that the participant was unprepared for some of the questions and that this may have resulted in some of the shorter answers that they gave. It was decided that for the next two interviews the interview question sheet would be sent to the participants in advance in order for them to prepare more in-depth answers.

2.8 Data Analysis

As the data set was qualitative in nature, coding and thematic analysis were employed in the analysis of the data. This took place once the interviews had been transcribed by the researcher. According to Walliman, "Codes are labels or tags used to allocate units of meaning to the collected data" (Walliman, 2006, p133). Coding is a method used to label pieces of data which the researcher observes to have the same or similar meanings. The code assigned to them serves to symbolise or summarise these pieces of data. This allows the researcher to more easily link pieces of data from different interviews and establish relationships between them.

One of the benefits of coding is that it allows for constant comparison between different items of data collected, which served to facilitate the inductive approach that was taken to the research. After these codes were developed, further analysis of them was conducted in the form of memos where notes were written about the codes that are being used, how these codes had changed throughout the research process, how these codes might be related, which can lead to the identification of theoretical relationships and the emergence of higher-level

codes and categories and any other ideas that occurred to the researcher that helped them to develop the research process and analyse the data (Saunders et al., 2019, p206).

Coding and summarising key points allowed themes that were present in the data to be more easily identified for further exploration and theme analysis. For the purposes of thematic analysis, “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p82). An inductive approach was taken to the theme analysis where the researcher allowed the themes to present themselves from the data collected without using an existing coding framework. The whole data set was examined repeatedly, and recurring themes and patterns were allowed to emerge naturally (Saunders et al., 2019, p652), while attempting not to impose the previous themes identified in the literature.

Thematic analysis is ideal for both similarities and differences between data gathered from different participants as well as generating unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p97). How important a theme is to be considered is not something that has a quantifiable measure, but rather depends on how it relates to the research question. Deciding what counts as a theme is ultimately left to the judgement of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p82). The thematic analysis for this research project made use of the coding method and consisted of six phases. These were becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp87-93).

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns which needed to be taken in account during the course of the research stemmed from the principle that “the ends do not justify the means in the pursuit of knowledge” (Denscombe, 2014, p343). The Economic and Social Research Council identified six possible aspects to research that present a high risk to participants in an ethical sense, these being research involving vulnerable groups (e.g. children, people with a learning disability), research involving sensitive topics (e.g. sex, religion or illegal behaviour), research making use of deception or carried out without the informed consent of participants, research that uses confidential information about identifiable individuals, research processes that might cause psychological stress, anxiety, humiliation or cause more than minimal pain and research carried out using intrusive interventions (e.g. administration of drugs or vigorous physical exercise that would not be part of participants’ normal lives) (Denscombe, 2014, p341).

Out of these six aspects only three of them were a concern for this dissertation and its data collection. There would always be a possibility that participants may consider the topics discussed to be of a sensitive nature, even if the researcher does not, as what an individual finds to be sensitive is entirely subjective. While not the intention of the research project, there was a chance that participants could disclose confidential information, or information that they themselves consider to be confidential, during the course of the interview. Finally, the interview process could have caused the participants to experience feelings of stress, anxiety or humiliation, though this was again not the intention of the interview, people can react in different ways to different stresses and situations.

A method which was used to try and mitigate these ethical concerns, which itself should be part of any research involving participants, was the practice of informed consent. In order for consent to qualify as 'informed' there were a number of criteria which needed to be met. Participants needed to be made clear that their participation in the research is entirely voluntary and they needed to be fully informed as to the nature of the research project and know what kind of commitment is required of them (Denscombe, 2014, p346). Informed consent for this research project was obtained from the participants through means of a consent form. This is also used to provide documented evidence of the participant's willingness to take part in the research project.

Care was made to ensure that ethical standards were met in the handling of the data that was collected. No deception was used on the part of the researcher in its collection, the data was only used for the purposes specified in the consent form, only data relevant to the project was collected and all data was stored securely (Denscombe, 2014, pp353-354). Some other ways of reducing ethical concerns that were implemented are anonymising the data collected from participants and ensuring they were aware that they have the right to withdraw their contribution, in part or whole, at any time.

2.10 Limitations of Methodology

There are some drawbacks which need to be considered with regard to the use of interviews as a data collection method. For example, the concept of the 'interviewer affect', where the participants may alter their statements depending on the identity of the interviewer.

There may not be a way to remove this effect entirely, however it can be lessened by taking care to make the participant feel at ease using methods outlined in data collection section of this chapter. Interviews were all conducted online via video calls, which it is believed can reduce stress or anxiety in interviewees in some cases as they do not have a recording device being placed in front of them by the interviewer (Denscombe, 2014, p232).

Another issue with interviews is that they can be a time-consuming method of data collection. Especially with interviews that are not structured in design, where more time will need to be spent on coding and sorting the data (Denscombe, 2014, p232). The only solution for this was to try and conduct the interviews as early in the research as possible to allow extra time to be spent of the data analysis.

When using the inductive approach to research there are some disadvantages it provides to the researcher. One example being the fact that theory development only occurs once data has been collected, which creates a narrower timeframe for formulating these theories than with a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019, p78), putting more pressure on the researcher. Another disadvantage is the possibility that data collected does not prove to be of theoretical value, with no useful patterns emerging from the data. This could prove to be the downfall of the research project and is a risk that must be taken when using an inductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019, p157).

Chapter Three: Results

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to examine the views of professional archivists working in Ireland on the current landscape of archives in Ireland, the functions of the archival institutions they have worked in and how these may change as well as any issues these institutions are currently encountering. This chapter analyses data collected from participants via semi-structured interviews, where topics identified in the literature review were discussed in-depth. Four interviews were conducted with professional archivists. All four participants work or have worked for an Irish archival institution. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom video calls and recorded. Transcription of the interviews was done using Otter.ai transcription software with corrections made manually and data anonymised by the researcher. Transcriptions were then sent to participants who were then given the option to change or remove any sections that they wished. First the process of how this data was coded and how these codes became themes shall be discussed. Following this, data collected from the interviews shall be presented which best addresses the research questions and objectives of this dissertation.

3.2 How the Data was Coded

The coding process first involved reading through and becoming familiar with the data set while highlighting extracts that were considered to be key information by the researcher. These extracts were then gathered and given codes which attempted to summarize the

information conveyed in the data item. Once this was done these codes were then refined into overarching themes by combining certain codes, using some codes as sub-themes and removing others entirely (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p90). These themes were then further reviewed with some being discarded due to insufficient data items in support of them and some being combined further.

Once this was completed names were decided for each theme depending on the 'essence' of what each theme was about, while also being concise and able to convey to the reader the subject of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p92). Some of these were also split into further sub-themes when necessary. Table 1 can be seen below and shows how the data was initially coded and how these codes became themes can be seen below. In the left column is listed the themes and in the right column are the initial codes that formed these themes.

Table 1 – *Themes and Codes*

Themes	Codes
Digital records and preservation	Difficulty adapting to digital records Digitising records with visual impact Expectation for records to be made available online Digitisation is resource and time intensive Deciding what to digitise
Archives are under-resourced	Archives are under-resourced Digitisation is resource and time intensive

Importance of context and authenticity	Importance of physical records Importance of context and authenticity
Need for standardised recordkeeping policies	Need to get involved early in record's lifecycle Records should be available sooner Need for recordkeeping policies Importance of transparency and accountability
Issues with storage	Issue of storage space Issues with infinite storage Need for more local repositories
Record appraisal	Need for record appraisal Macro and micro appraisal Archival value Hesitation to dispose of records
Public perception of archives	Public perception of archives Increasing awareness of archives

From the four interviews that were carried out, there were seven themes which emerged from the data set, some of which containing sub-themes. These can be seen below

- Digital records and preservation
 - Difficulty adapting to digital records

- Expectation for records to be available online
- Deciding what to digitise
- Archives are under-resourced
- Importance of authenticity and context
- Need for standardised recordkeeping policies
- Issues with storage
 - Need for more local repositories
- Record appraisal
- Public perception of archives.

Examples of data items relating to each theme shall be given in order to justify them and explain their emergence from the data set. For the purpose of anonymising the participants, they shall each be given a code name. A1 will stand for Archivist 1, meaning the first participant that was interviewed, A2 will stand for Archivist 2, and so on. The themes shall now be presented under their own respective headings.

3.3 Digital Records and Preservation

Digital records were a prominent feature of discussion for every interview conducted. Each participant had differing views as to how the increasing prevalence of digital records are altering the Irish archival landscape and outlined both the positives and negatives of this

medium. With regards to the National Archives, it was made clear that since they acquire government records which are thirty years old, records have not yet been coming into them in digital form since government departments and bodies were not creating digital records at that time, though this will change in the near future and they must be prepared.

Participants expressed a preference to the preservation of artifactual records over informational records, though they would ideally preserve both, with A3 mentioning that, “The informational value is valuable to the person looking for information. The artifactual value is valuable to the person looking at the very same thing, but for different reasons. You can't extricate them”.

3.3.1 Difficulty Adapting to Digital Records

Concern was expressed about the difficulties archival institutions have encountered when attempting to adapt to the handling of digital records. One institution does not yet have digital repository and so has no way of properly storing digital records on site. A4 believed that the lack of these facilities may result in loss of data and brought attention to the urgency of the matter:

“we should be accepting digital records at this stage because there’s major loss of information going to take place if it doesn’t happen. It’s already happened and it’s just going to get worse if it doesn’t happen relatively soon.”

A2 also mentioned their institution's consciousness with regards to digital records and that they would like to focus more on these types of records. Concern was expressed by A1 that "the technical knowledge amongst archivists maybe has not been there in the past to seriously tackle the digital records", which they partly attribute to a lack of resources given to archival institutions.

3.3.2 Expectation for Records to be Available Online

Each participant was asked about whether they felt that there was an expectation from the general public for records to be made available online. All four participants expressed a belief that this was indeed the case, with A3 stating "I know there is, absolutely", and A2 elaborating on this point, that it seemed to be particularly true among younger people who grew up with the internet, "because younger people are so digital savvy, and they want everything online". A1 expressed that this expectation was brought about by recent technological changes has happened so quickly that the archival profession has been struggling to adapt.

Even researchers who visit these archival institutions have been expressing this expectation, as A4 talked about their experience working with researchers who initially thought that all the records of their institution were available online; "I've dealt with this dealing with researchers, that they think everything is available online, where in fact only a fraction of the records are available online". A2 felt that this would not dishearten researchers however, as "if researchers really want to know something, they're prepared to go and see them".

3.3.3 Deciding What to Digitise

The records that are selected for digitisation are a result of many different factors. Every participant made it clear that archivists are unable to digitise every record in their institution's collection due to how resource and time intensive the process is. One of these factors, which was highlighted by participants A1 and A4, was whether the record is considered to have wide appeal for the public, which can draw more attention to the archival institution and its collections, with A1 divulging:

“It's partly driven by economic interests because genealogical tourism is a big factor in this country, so there's a huge demand for census records, that's why so much has been invested in putting it online and that's perfectly legitimate and perfectly acceptable.”

A1 further elaborated on this factor, mentioning that records with more visual appeal are considered a better choice for digitisation, such as maps and pictures. This ties into a factor mentioned by A2 and A4, referred to as ‘targeted digitisation’ where certain individual records would be selected for digitisation with the goal of appealing to certain researchers.

Other factors mentioned by A1 included, “What records are in most demand? What records are most at risk? Therefore, digitising them provides kind of a security element if you like. There are so many different elements that go into that, but I think one of the driving ones definitely is level of demand and expectation of access”. This factor of which records are most at risk was also mentioned by A2, with the idea being that archivists would take records that

they were “reluctant to let researchers look at them because of their condition” and digitise them so that researchers can view them without risk of further damage to the record.

3.4 Archives are Under-resourced

Lack of resources for archival institutions was a concern that was raised by all four of the participants, particularly the resources required for them to move in a direction where they can handle the storage of digital records on a large scale. A3 highlighted how particularly difficult this is, as archivists are expected to carry out their previous functions while taking on this new role with no extra resources:

“I think it is a matter of resources. It's not just the resources required to change what you do, which of course are enormous, but you are required to change what you do while still maintaining the service that you have already, always provided.”

A4 discussed the National Archives Amendment Act, which was implemented in 2018 and reduces the waiting period for the transfer of government departmental records from thirty years to twenty. This rule has yet to take effect and concern was expressed that the National Archives is expected to carry out this extra work with no extra resources given to them and that they are expected “to actually take in nine years' worth of transfers in one go, so that we can basically be at the same stage as UK because the big push at the moment is the Good Friday Agreement will be released in the UK next year”. They also mentioned that the COVID19 pandemic seems to have tempered this expectation, but that the extra pressure being put on

them to keep up with the UK's release of records was unreasonable without being given further resources.

As previously mentioned, the issue of Irish archival institutions having a lack of resources also affects what records are selected for digitisation, with A4 stating that "because our resources are so limited, we have to target our collections when making these decisions". All four participants made it clear that they would like to digitise as many records as possible but A2 points out that "it is an expensive process and takes a lot of time", and therefore at the moment targeted digitisation projects are all that are feasible with the current amount of resources at their disposal.

3.5 Importance of Context and Authenticity

Participants were asked whether they thought that digitising records could possibly remove them from their original context. While none of them considered this to be a major issue or something which archives should be concerned with, they did concede that it can become an issue in certain instances.

One of these instances, which was mentioned by all participants, was that sometimes certain parts of a record are missed during the digitisation process, such as blank pages, and some researchers are unhappy with these omissions, believing that it can remove some context from the record. Another example of this issue, which A3 recalled was the digitisation of a manuscript where the left page contained illustrations that pointed to certain text on the right

page and this was not visible when viewing the pages one at a time on the digital record. A3 also made the point that context has varying degrees of importance when it comes to records:

“Sometimes you know who made it and that's important. Sometimes you know who made it and that's not important. Sometimes you don't know made it and that ruins the whole thing. Sometimes we don't know who made it, and that doesn't matter at all.”

However, all participants expressed confidence that serious researchers would visit the archival institution to inspect the original document if they had any doubts about its context or authenticity. Another interesting point which three of the participants raised was that the issue of original context also works in reverse, where if you print a born digital record some of its context can also be lost.

Three of the participants mentioned that their institutions do take measures to provide context and assurance of authenticity to the researcher when digitising records to make available online. Some measures mentioned by A4 include, “a contextual introduction to the collection and to inform researchers that there may be associated administration records”, and A2 mentioned coversheets, watermarks and copyright information.

3.6 Need for Standardised Recordkeeping Policies

One issue which A1, A3 and A4 raised with regards to archival institutions inheriting records from non-archival institutions and bodies, was the lack of standardised recordkeeping policies in place among these institutions. This is partially due to these groups not employing

professional archivists or recordkeepers, though A4 believes this is starting to change since their institution has become actively involved in assisting these institutions in classifying their records. This has allowed for them to raise awareness of the necessity of recordkeeping policies and has resulted in the hiring of professional archivists in these non-archival institutions. A4 also stated that implementing records management infrastructure across the civil service would allow for more transparency and accountability by allowing us to see what people are creating and why. A3 too expressed the need for recordkeeping policies so that records of value can be decided, “so that anything that's created should be worth creating and storing for a length of time has been decided at the point of creation.”

3.7 Issues with Storage

All participants revealed that they had experienced issues with storage throughout their archival careers. A2 and A4 mentioned their institutions have needed to rent commercial storage space, which they both saw as a detriment with A4 expressing that, “the more control you have over your storage, whether it be digital or physical, the less likely you are to have any issues”.

Participants did not necessarily see storing records digitally as a solution to this issue, as the physical record would still need to be preserved. A4 also pointed out that digital storage can be very expensive, especially over a long period of time due to having to perform file migrations, where existing digital record files would need to be converted to new file types as they become obsolete.

All participants believed that in the future, infinite storage of digital records may indeed be possible, but all were against the idea of every record that is created being automatically stored in this manner. A1 and A4 expressed concerns that this system would result in General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) breaches and decried that storing massive amounts of unstructured data would not be any use to anyone. The primary solution posited by participants came down to resources yet again, where archival institutions require expansions to their physical storage space to be able to keep taking in and preserving new records.

3.7.1 Need for More Local Repositories

A3 drew attention to the issue that, “in Ireland we don't have a well-established local records network.” This was corroborated by participants A1 and A4 who mentioned taking in material into their institutions which they felt should have belonged in a specialised local repository as it did not fit the criteria for the archives that their institutions are meant to be acquiring. However, A3 and A4 have taken in these archives in the past for the purposes of preservation rather than let them deteriorate in private storage, thus putting extra strain on their own, already lacking, storage facilities, with A3 stating that their institution would take in:

“items that would go to a local records office, they have very often nowhere to go in this country and I think our institution has a role to play in preserving materials that might be considered marginal, that might be considered to have less obvious historical value when compared with some of the top line, internationally known collections that we have.”

3.8 Record Appraisal

All four participants believed that appraisal on the part of the archivist will always be necessary, with A1 stating, “I think there has to be some appraisal. I think appraisal is a necessary element of what we do”. A4 mentioned using a blend of macro and micro appraisal techniques, using macro appraisal for the most part, as it is more suited to the large volume of records that they receive where micro appraisal just would not be possible, though they did say that they make use of micro appraisal on occasion when necessary. Their main concern was the function for which the record was created:

“so the business functions, the statutory function that they're supporting, how they're being used so, the methodology, the process involved, are they policy records? If they are what are the processes and the methodology behind the development of that policy? Are they routine records of processing activities?”

A2 only mentioned using macro appraisal, with the most important criteria being similar to that of A4, “It's function, what was it for, why was it created?”, though appraisal is not a large part of their role in their institution. A3 revealed that they only use micro appraisal, as they are primarily concerned with the content of the records that are taken into their institution. A4 divulged that disposal of a record needed to be authorised in writing by the Director of their institution and therefore is a very cumbersome procedure and rarely carried out.

3.9 Public Perception of Archives

Something common across all of the participants was that they believed the public perception of archives and archivists to be inaccurate. A4 stated that they thought the profession has not been good at promoting themselves or engaging with the general public in the past, which helped to contribute to this issue. Though they also mentioned that they think this has begun to change in recent years.

A2 and A4 believed that their institution's use of social media is helping to engage with people and increase awareness of the roles and functions of their Institutions and their importance. All four participants cited digitisation of physical records for display in online collections as an important method for engaging with the public and attracting new users, with A2 expressing, "I think it builds up awareness. It's like an advertisement even for things that people that are looking at it might not come and use" and A1 concurring, "I would say if that's helping to increase appreciation and increase awareness of what archives do".

A4 mentioned that traffic to a particular collection that their institution had digitised and made available online is receiving over two million visits a year and has had nearly thirty million visits in total at this point. They said that targeting these digitisation projects so that they have wider appeal has allowed them to expand their user base and now, "60% of our researchers now are not from traditional archive user backgrounds". They also attribute this to removing a feeling of intimidation that members of the public may have felt about visiting archival institutions in the past, as "archives have been perceived as academic institutions,

which is not the case at all”, which has resulted in more engagement from the public with their institution.

Chapter Four: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the results section shall be discussed in relation to the research question and objectives of this dissertation. These findings will also then be discussed in relation to the previous research and theory mentioned in the literature review.

Consideration will be made as to the contributions of this research to the area of archival studies. Limitations to this research will be mentioned and examined as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Ideas for future research in the topic highlighted by this research will also be considered as well as the potential applications of this research.

4.2 Research Aim and Findings

The aim of this research was:

- To establish the functions of Irish archival institutions.
- To determine how they carry out these functions.
- To identify any issues Irish archival institutions are currently facing.
- To determine the impact of technological advances on Irish archival institutions.
- To determine any potential changes which may occur to the functions of Irish archival institutions.

The findings of this research will now be discussed in relation to each of these research aims individually.

4.3 Functions of Irish Archival Institutions

The preservation of records was established as being one of the primary functions of Irish archival institutions. All participants interviewed attributed greater value and priority to the preservation of artifactual records than informational records, though they also expressed that both were of importance, with A3 stating:

“The informational value is valuable to the person looking for information. The artifactual value is valuable to the person looking at the very same thing, but for different reasons. You can't extricate them”.

Another function of these institutions was determined to be for them to provide context and assurance of authenticity to researchers for the records in their care. Researchers are given context with regards to the background of each record and informed if there are other records relating to each individual record, A4 elaborated:

“with collections we've digitised, we will try to give a contextual introduction to the collection and to inform researchers that there may be associated administration records”.

Watermarks and coversheets are also provided by institutions for digitised records to assure the reader of its authenticity. Appraisal of records was identified through this research as another key function of these institutions, though participants expressed that they would

always be reluctant to decline taking in records which are offered to them. Any appraisal that is carried out is based on the function of the records and whether it complements the institution's existing holds, though this definition is broad and leaves a lot of room for interpretation on the part of the archivist. A3 made clear however that if a record is not in line with what their institution normally takes in but has no other archival institution in which to be placed then their institution would usually take it rather than risk it degrading from inadequate preservation.

4.4 How Irish Archival Institutions Carry out Their Functions

In order for Irish archival institutions to preserve records they must first acquire them. There are several methods as to how they do this, such as governing legislation like the National Archives Act 1986 which requires certain government institutions and bodies to transfer the records they create to the National Archives once they turn thirty years old, or donations from private institutions and individuals, or the institution purchasing archives from private institutions or individuals.

Once these records are acquired, they are then preserved in physical storage space within the institution itself, though sometimes storage space needs to be commercially rented due to inadequate room in the institution. Depending on a number of factors, certain records are selected for digital preservation which results in the creation of a digital record that can then be made available for viewing on the institution's website.

Context and authenticity are given to records by the institutions in several ways. Coversheets are provided to digital records giving an overview of the background of the record, archivists themselves inform researchers who come into the institution as to the background of the record and watermarks are put on the digitised records to ensure the reader of its authenticity, with A2 explaining:

“we put a cover sheet on it, and we watermark it and we've also in the past put the copyright on it. And it's to try and to make sure that people know that that image came from us, that they're using our image”.

Appraisal of records is carried out by institutions in different ways. Macro appraisal can be used to appraise a record based on its function and the context of its creation. Micro appraisal is also used based on the content of a record and whether it complements the existing holds of the institution. Institutions who receive a large volume of records regularly favour macro appraisal and those who do not favour micro appraisal.

4.5 Issues Irish Archival Institutions are Currently Facing

Irish archival institutions are currently facing several issues, however, most of these seem to stem from one overarching issue; a lack of resources being invested in them. Institutions are under-funded and under-staffed, and their workload is only increasing. Participants A1, A3 and A4 mentioned this issue and attributed it to their institution's difficulty adapting to digital records, digitising physical records, acquiring and preserving archives and storing archives.

The changing nature of records has proved more challenging for these institutions because of this lack of resources, with A3 explaining this issue well, highlighting that archivists are expected to continuously increase their workload, adopting more functions while still carrying out their existing ones with no extra resources being given to them:

“It's not just the resources required to change what you do, which of course are enormous, but you are required to change what you do while still maintaining the service that you have already, always provided”.

This is clearly unsustainable and must be addressed if Irish archival institutions are to continue to carry out their functions which, like archival institutions in different parts of the world, are continuously changing.

4.6 Impact of Technological Advances on Irish Archival Institutions

Technological advances have brought about the ability to create records digitally, whether this be born digital records or physical records which are then digitised for the purpose of preservation or access, and the ability to store these records in such a manner where the previous concerns of physical degradation are no longer the issue they once were.

It was determined from this research that Irish archival institutions are struggling to adapt to this new medium and its uses due to inadequate resources. All participants stated that the policies of these institutions are still focused on the preservation of physical records, though they also thought that this was justified, as physical records warrant preservation more

that digital ones at the moment. Born digital records are not generally acquired by these institutions due to a lack of facilities for storing them. These institutions do digitise physical records, though this is done on a case by case basis as it is incredibly resource intensive. A4 mentioned that in their institution the original copy is known as the “master record” and this is the most important for preservation. Since these usually come into them in physical format, their institution still prioritises the preservation of physical records.

4.7 Potential Changes to the Functions of Irish Archival Institutions

Changes to the functions of Irish archival institutions have been happening very gradually. This slow pace appears to mostly be due to a lack of resources to implement change at a faster rate and on a larger scale, but even with the resources they have it is impossible to avoid these changes. Digital records are becoming more prevalent and Irish archival institutions are going to need to adjust their methods of appraisal and preservation in order to fully embrace this medium, which they are attempting to do as best they can, with A2 stating; “we are very conscious of the electronic, digital aspect, the born digital aspect and we would like to focus a lot more attention on that”.

Digital versions of physical records are already being used by institutions as both a convenient means of access to the public and an advertisement for themselves to attract more users and draw attention to their functions and their importance, with A4 disclosing; “I would say if that's helping to increase appreciation and increase awareness of what archives do, that's

a good reason to do it". Perhaps this may be crucial for securing further resource investment in order to face the inevitable changes occurring.

4.8 Comparison to Previous Literature

A lack of an Irish perspective when it comes to archival theory or publicly available information about the functions of Irish archival institutions and the challenges that they are facing were a prominent finding of the research carried out for this dissertation. All literature that was used outside of policy documents or brief overviews from websites was written from an international perspective and as such, has limited applications to Ireland and its archival landscape, though some was applicable, as shall be discussed in this section.

Something of note was that most of the current literature in relation to this topic seems to emanate from Canada, the United States and the UK while also three of the most influential works of archival theory from the twentieth century originate from these countries, these being the works of Cook, Schellenberg and Jenkinson respectively. Findings from the data collected shall now be discussed in relation to the previous literature on the topic. For the purposes of structure and flow this will be grouped into the theme headings from the results section.

4.9 Digital Records and Preservation

Owens discussed his belief that records have three forms: artifactual, informational and folkloric. Participants were asked whether the informational or artifactual record should be the

focus of preservation. While all four considered both artifactual and informational records to be of importance, A2 and A4 expressed a belief that the preservation of the artifactual record was more important and A1 and A3 that neither was more important than the other, with A3 elaborating; “the format is not, mostly, what should be concerning us, the archivist has to be concerned with the archives, regardless of the format it is presented to them in”.

With regards to modern archival practice in Irish archival institutions being focused primarily on physical records, this was unanimously agreed upon by participants, which gives validation to Lemieux’s (2018) argument. However, all participants expressed a desire for this to change with A1 and A3 citing a lack of resources as the reason for not being able to expand the function of archives further towards preserving and managing digital records. Lack of resources will be discussed further but it is interesting to note that all participants were in favour of archives focusing more on digital records if they are given the opportunity.

Gauld’s (2018) argument that the public may regard records that are not available online as irrelevant was mostly met with disagreement from participants, apart from A1 who thought there was truth to this argument. A3 argued that records retain their relevance even if they are not viewed by the public while A2 and A4 expressed that dedicated researchers will always exist, and non-digitised records will still be relevant to them. There may be some bias here, as no one wants to see part of their work become irrelevant, but their point that records will remain relevant to serious researchers, no matter the format may be true.

Technological obsolescence of storage mediums was not considered a prominent issue by participants. A2 mentioned that their institution will migrate files to new types as they

become obsolete while A3 said their institution is aware of this issue but has not tried any large-scale file migrations yet. While participants may not be concerned about this issue, file migrations require a lot of time and resources, so they do have the potential to become a larger issue down the line if the lack of resources is not addressed.

The general unpreparedness of Irish archival institutions to preserve the massive volume of digital records being created was agreed upon by all participants. Again, this was considered an issue of resources and all were aware that it will become a problem soon unless they are given more resources to prepare.

4.10 Archives are Under-resourced

One prominent issue that was continuously highlighted over the course of the data collection was how under-resourced Irish archival institutions are, both in terms of staff and budget. This was an issue that was not generally conveyed in the literature though, as mentioned previously, none of the literature, apart from the reports from the Director of the National Archives, was written from the perspective of archivists working in Ireland so this may be a problem that is particularly prominent in Ireland.

This lack of resources was considered by all participants to be the biggest obstacle for Irish archival institutions when it comes to adapting their functions to manage and preserve digital records. A4 conveyed the urgency of this matter with regards to potential loss of information:

“we should be accepting digital records at this stage because there’s major loss of information going to take place if it doesn’t happen. It’s already happened and it’s just going to get worse if it doesn’t happen relatively soon.”

The problem of Irish archival institutions being under-resourced was not something that presented itself much through the literature prior to the data collection and may not be something that much of the public are aware of. This is concerning as it is impeding Ireland’s archival institution’s ability to adapt to handling digital records, digitise physical records to make available online and even store more physical records.

4.11 Importance of Context and Authenticity

Establishing or keeping a record’s context is a concern for many archivists and recordkeepers. While establishing the context of a physical record can be a matter of determining its provenance, who created it? When did they create it? For what purpose did they create it? A3 felt that sometimes this context was important and sometimes it was not and that this importance was dependent on the content of the record:

“Sometimes you know who made it and that's important. Sometimes you know who made it and that's not important. Sometimes you don't know made it and that ruins the whole thing. Sometimes we don't know who made it, and that doesn't matter at all.”

However, with digital records becoming more prevalent new problems establishing and retaining the context of a record have presented themselves. Participants were asked about the

issue that Duranti (2018) posited of digitised physical records becoming detached from their original context and had varying opinions on the matter. While they conceded this as a possibility it was not a major concern, as they believed that the full context of a record was not a major concern to the general public and that dedicated researchers will still visit the institution to view the original record if they are interested in the full context of that record. A2 even mentioned such researchers visiting their institution and comparing the digitised record to the original, physical record and complaining about certain blank pages being missing from the former.

Something that was not encountered in prior research was a point made by A4 that, “if you're printing born digital records, printing the file, you're losing some context there as well.” This would make sense, as the issue with physical records possibly becoming detached from their original context as they are moved to a medium entirely different to that on which they were created, the same is true of digital records. One unforeseen implication of this may be an issue with file migrations as, if a digital record is created on a file type which becomes obsolete and must be moved to a newer file type for purposes of preservation and access some context may be lost in this process. This was not an issue that was encountered in the literature but may be a concern for future archivists.

4.12 Need for Standardised Recordkeeping Policies

While the need for standardised recordkeeping policies among non-archival institutions was not something that was encountered in the literature, it was a concern that was raised by

A1, A3 and A4. It is unknown whether this issue is unique to Irish institutions but A4 stated that they believe this issue is changing and some institutions are hiring professional archivists and recordkeepers to implement these policies. This is partially due to archivists from A4's institution working with these non-archival institutions and making them aware of the importance of recordkeeping policies.

4.13 Issues with Storage

Storage space is an inevitable concern for any archival institution since records are created indefinitely, so new storage space must also be sought indefinitely. A3 mentioned that their institution was indeed running out of physical storage space, but this did not deter them from acquiring new archives as they still felt a duty to acquire records worthy of preservation, "we have a storage problem and no, that doesn't stop us adding to our collections because it can't, it mustn't". Much of this material, they believed should have gone to a local records office which would house more specialised material relating to their local area, but unfortunately Ireland does not have many of these and, in their absence their institution was one of the only options for saving these records. This lack of local archival institutions was also mentioned by A4 and is perhaps an area in which archives are under-resourced in Ireland.

The idea of moving to digital storage of records to save on physical storage space was not a favourable one among participants who all felt that the physical record should always be preserved. Despite Yeo's theory that the potential for infinite digital storage may be a possibility in the future (Yeo, 2018, pp49-50), which all participants were in agreement with,

they disagreed that the cost would be negligible (Yeo, 2018, pp47-48) as right now the cost of digital storage for archival institutions is one of their greatest expenses. The costs include the process of digitisation itself, renting server space from external providers and maintaining the institution's websites where some of these digital records are made available to the public. This corroborates Owen's (2018) theory that more and more of the budget for archival institutions will be forced to be spent on digital storage as it becomes more prevalent (Owens, 2018, p190) and unless the issue of the lack of resources is addressed soon this can potentially create great problems for Ireland's archival institutions down the line and may result in the loss of important records.

4.14 Record Appraisal

Differing opinions on record appraisal permeate the field of archival theory and the opinions of the participants were no exception. All of them seemed to reject the notion originally put forward by Jenkinson that archivists should take no part in the appraisal of records (Jenkinson, 1937) and felt appraisal on the part of the archivist was necessary and must continue, even if there is the potential for every recorded created to be stored (Yeo, 2018, pp49-50), with A1 stating, "I think there has to be some appraisal. I think appraisal is a necessary element of what we do,".

In terms of actual appraisal techniques, there was a mix between the different participants. When taking in a large volume of records in a short space of time a macro appraisal approach, which was outlined by Cook (1997) and implemented first in the National

Archives of Canada in 1991 (Cook, 1997, p31), was considered to be more desirable where the creation and intended function of a record were the most important factors in its appraisal, with A4 divulging that, in their institution:

“you basically go and see what records are being created, so the business functions, the statutory function that they're supporting, how they're being used so, the methodology, the process involved, are they policy records? If they are what are the processes and the methodology behind the development of that policy? Are they routine records of processing activities?”

However, A4 also noted that sometimes archivists in their institution must make use of micro appraisal due to acquired records being improperly classified as a result of non-archival institutions having no standardised recordkeeping policy in place. A3 stated that their institution utilises micro appraisal as it is more suited to the type of records they collect, which are also smaller in volume and judged by their content rather than how and why they were created.

The criteria for how a record is considered to be worthy of preservation proved to be similar for the different participants with a common reason being whether it complements the existing collections of the institution. A3 pointed out that this is especially true if acquiring these records is going to cost the institution money, the archivist must attempt to justify the acquisition of the record. This again shows the influence the resources at their disposal has on these institution's capacity to carry out their functions.

4.15 Providing Transparency and Accountability

The National Archives houses the records created by the Irish state and its governing departments and bodies. One of the primary reasons for this is to help the public to, “understand the political, economic and social forces which have shaped our nation” (National Archives of Ireland, 2018a, p3), which should provide transparency to the public as to how their government operates and allow them to be held accountable for their actions.

Duranti states how important this archival function is to a democratic society (Duranti, 2018, p27) and John McDonough, the Director of the National Archives in 2017 gave similar reasons as to the importance of this function (McDonough, 2017). However, some participants mentioned some issues the institution has had in carrying out this function but also outlined possible solutions to these issues.

Transfer of state records to the National Archives only occurs once they are thirty years old and A1 believes that the immediacy of these records is gone by the time the institution acquires them. A4 concurs with this assessment, stating that they believed:

“the reason the thirty year rule existed was because it basically, it was the next generation that were researching the records so you had this bit of time in-between the creation of the records, and the release of the records which allowed for other events to take place or for people to move on.”

The National Archives Amendment Act was brought into effect in 2018 which will reduce the waiting period for the transfer of departmental records to twenty years (National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018), however A4 outlined that this change has not yet come into

effect and when it does it “will only apply initially to Anglo-Irish records, so it's only going to affect four departments” and so will not do much to increase government transparency and accountability. The reason given by A4 for it only initially applying to Anglo-Irish records is that the UK has a twenty-year waiting period for the release of government records so now records relating to the Good Friday Agreement are being released to the public. Therefore, since only one side of the event is being released to the public the National Archives are looking to acquire the records from the Irish government relating to the event in order for the Irish side of the story to be told. A1 also corroborated this reasoning; “I mean the focus is very much on the whole Anglo-Irish relations thing and you know, because the UK records have been released after twenty years, there was that perception that there would effectively be a ten year gap in the Irish version of events around Anglo-Irish agreement and the peace process and so on.”

A4 stated that the Freedom of Information Act, which was introduced in 1997, provides a greater level of government transparency and accountability as citizens do not need to wait thirty years to access records and it also covers more bodies, such as the HSE, than The National Archives Act 1986. They also declared that:

“If you want a proper level of transparency and accountability, you do things like you implement proper records management infrastructure across the civil service so you can see what people are creating and why they're holding it. There is a lack of information management across the civil service and that's where the transparency issues, accountability issues arise.”

This relates to the previous theme of a lack of standardised recordkeeping policies within non-archival institutions though this may not be an issue for archives but for the government departments and bodies themselves.

4.16 Public Perception of Archives

The roles and functions that archives and archivists in Ireland may not be clear to the majority of the public. This was certainly the sentiment among the participants as all of them mentioned some unawareness from the public as to their functions and importance. A2 for example, stated, "I think not many people know what archivists do". This was not an issue that was encountered in the literature but was something which every participant talked about. The importance of reducing this unawareness on the part of the public was conveyed by the participants, with A4 mentioning in regard to the records that their institution takes in:

"these are records that were created, basically funded by taxpayers at some level and you have to engage with people to demonstrate the significance of the records and why we actually do what we do, so that's really important as well."

This raises the point that many archival institutions in Ireland are also funded by the taxpayer, so they should be aware of exactly where their money is going and why. A4 put some of the blame for this issue with the archivists themselves, that they "haven't been great as a profession about promoting ourselves and what we do", but they also mentioned that they think this is changing with their institution's use of social media and that:

“we've tried to do things like upgrade our websites so there's more engagement with researchers and things like that as well and it's easier to look for information and to find information and that has worked as well”.

So, one of the keys to increasing awareness among the public, in the view of the participants, is expanding upon the institution's online presence. This again, takes a certain amount of time and resources.

4.17 Limitations of the Research

Some limitations of this research have stemmed from the unexplored nature of the archival landscape in Ireland. Questions posed for the research were based on the limited amount of information available about Irish archival institutions and literature written from an international perspective, with the hope of applying it to the Irish archival landscape. As a result, some questions asked in the data collection remained unexplored that did not carry relevancy to the participant's experience and knowledge, while new questions were also raised which were not anticipated. This demonstrates the value of this research in that new areas for exploration have emerged as a result of it.

4.18 Future Research

This research highlighted the lack of literature available concerning Irish archival institutions and has discovered several issues affecting these institutions not visible in the

literature which warrant further investigation. These issues include these institutions being under-resourced, struggles to carry out new functions expected of them while continuing their old ones, the lack of standardised recordkeeping policies in non-archival institutions in Ireland, the need for more local archival institutions, having difficulty adapting to the use of digital records and how the public perceives these institutions incorrectly.

Further research can be conducted into why Irish archival institutions are under-resourced, if this has to do with the perception the public has of them and potential actions that these institutions can take to remedy this. Research can also be conducted into why non-archival institutions in Ireland, for the most part, do not adopt recordkeeping policies, how digitising physical records and making them available online can increase public awareness for archival institutions and their functions, whether born digital records risk losing their original context when a file migration is performed and why there is a lack of local archival institutions in Ireland. Participants from more Irish archival institutions can be sought as the participant pool was limited during the course of this research as many institutions were closed due to the COVID19 pandemic.

4.19 Research Applications

This dissertation has highlighted the functions of Irish archival institutions, how these are changing and the issues these institutions are facing. Potential archivists seeking to work in Irish archival institutions can better prepare themselves and make more informed decisions about their careers by being aware of the topics discussed in this dissertation and perhaps seek

to address any of the issues that were presented themselves. The Irish public, whose perception of archival institutions can be inaccurate, can be better informed as to their functions and the value they have in their society.

4.20 Conclusions

Particular areas of interest which emerged from the research carried out for this dissertation are the lack of resources given to Irish archival institutions, the absence of standardised recordkeeping policies throughout government departments and bodies, digital records as a means of advertising for archival institutions, how born digital records can risk losing their context from file migrations, the scarcity of local archival institutions in Ireland and the inaccurate perception of archival institutions in the eyes the Irish public. These are areas which were previously unexplored in the literature and this dissertation has managed to bring them to light.

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Appendix A – Participant Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

The Future of Irish Archival Policy

You are being asked to take part in a research study on the development and possible future of the archival policies of Ireland. This study will examine archival theory in an Irish context and attempt to understand where the policies of Irish archival institutions have come from, what has influenced them and how they may change in the future.

I am a student in Dublin Business School and currently undertaking an MSc in Library and Information Management. The study you are being asked to participate in is my dissertation for the course, which is being supervised by Clare Thornley.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to answer questions in the form of a one-to-one, face-to-face interview with myself at your convenience, in a location of your choosing or online. Questions and topics in this interview will relate to archives and the archival profession, with a focus on an Irish context.

TIME COMMITMENT

The study typically takes one interview session which can last from 45 minutes to an hour, though can exceptions to this timeframe can be made.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn / destroyed.

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect does not contain any personal information about you and you will remain anonymous. This can be done through the use of a pseudonym or code that you are free to choose yourself. Data gathered from the interview shall only be used for the purpose of writing my dissertation. It shall be stored on two, password-protected USB drives. All data collected will

be destroyed upon the completion of the project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I or / and Clare Thornley will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at clare.thornley@dbs.ie.

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:

The Future Policy of Irish Archival Institutions

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This dissertation will examine the archival policies and of Irish archival institutions as well as any possible future changes to these policies.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Participant's signature Participant's Name (Printed)

Student Name (Printed) Student Name signature

Date

Appendix C – Interview Topics and Questions A1

Interview Topics and Questions A1

Introduction

What is your experience in working with archives?

Do you plan on pursuing a career in archives?

What is your knowledge of the National Archives?

Record Preservation

Do you believe that the archival practices and policies of the National Archives are still very much focused on the preservation of physical records?

Now that more and more records are ‘born digital’, do you believe that this focus needs to change?

Do you believe that it is just as important or more important to preserve the ‘artifactual’ record as the ‘informational’ record?

Electronic Records

With regards to digital records, do you know what precautions the National Archives takes in order to combat technological obsolescence and decay of their storage medium?

Do you think there is a high demand for physical records to be made digitally available online?

Craig Gauld believes that the much of the population considers information that is not available online as irrelevant and that if archives are not made digitally available, they risk losing their relevance. Do you agree with this sentiment?

Luciana Duranti writes that digitised records become detached from their original context making them less trustworthy sources of information than physical records. Do you agree?

The strategic plan of the National Archives makes mention to developing the Institution's capability to manage electronic records. Do you know how the National Archives plans to execute this?

Can you explain what is the Archival Repository Project?

Record Storage

It states in the Archive Framework that the National Archives has over 50 million documents.

Do you think that storage space is a concern for the institution?

Do you think that the Amendment Act reducing the waiting period for annual transfer to 20 years will result in further issues regarding storage space?

In the Director of the National Archives' 2017 report he drew attention to the lack of physical storage space which prevented some of the annual transfers. Do you know if this is still an issue?

Geoffrey Yeo writes that there is a possibility that digital storage may become so prevalent and trivial that storing every record that is created will be a possibility. Do you agree? (Appraisal)

Record Appraisal and Disposal

Do you think that the potential for infinite storage of records electronically could remove the need for record appraisal on the part of the archivist entirely? (Yeo)

Hilary Jenkinson believed that archivists should be impartial custodians of records having no input regarding appraisal and instead keeping all records that are created. Do you agree with this sentiment? Do you believe it is possible?

Do you know how the National Archives appraises the records they receive, if at all?

Does the National Archives make use of Macro appraisal? Is this considered the most appropriate appraisal method for archival institutions?

It mentions in the Archive Framework that one of the primary responsibilities of the National Archive is to acquire "records of archival value from government departments, offices of State, the courts and scheduled bodies". Do you know how a record is determined to have "archival value?"

Archive Acquisition

It states in the functions of the National Archives that they acquire records of national significance. Do you know the criteria for determining if a record is 'nationally significant'?

Do you know the process of how The National Archives acquires archives from private individuals, institutions and organisations? Do they request them? Are they donated voluntarily? Do they keep everything donated to them?

Transparency and Accountability

Do you believe that more public engagement with the National Archives can help combat the spread of disinformation by allowing them to view records in their original context?

Do you think that making records available online is important for encouraging public engagement with archives?

Do you know how it is determined which records to make accessible online?

Do you think the Amendment Act will help to improve government transparency and accountability by reducing the waiting period for record transfers?

Do you think that the loopholes given in the Act for departments to delay the transfer of certain records leaves room for misuse?

Conclusion

Is there anything that has not been covered that you would like to talk about?

Appendix D – Interview Topics and Questions A2

Interview Topics and Questions A2

Introduction

What is your experience in working with archives?

What is your area of knowledge of the National Archives?

Record Preservation

Do you believe that the archival practices and policies of the National Archives are still very much focused on the preservation of physical records?

Now that more and more records are ‘born digital’, do you believe that this focus needs to change?

Do you believe that it is just as important or more important to preserve the ‘artifactual’ record as the ‘informational’ record?

Electronic Records

With regards to digital records, what precautions does the National Archives take in order to combat technological obsolescence and decay of their storage medium?

Do you think there is a high demand for physical records to be made digitally available online?

Writer Craig Gauld believes that the much of the population considers information that is not available online as irrelevant and that if archives are not made digitally available, they risk losing their relevance. Do you agree with this sentiment?

Another writer Luciana Duranti writes that digitised records risk becoming detached from their original context, which can make them less trustworthy sources of information than physical records. Do you agree?

The strategic plan of the National Archives makes mention to developing the Institution's capability to manage electronic records. Do you know how the National Archives plans to execute this?

Record Storage

It states in the Archive Framework that the National Archives has over 50 million documents.

Do you think that storage space is a concern for the institution?

Do you think that the Amendment Act reducing the waiting period for annual transfer to 20 years will result in further issues regarding storage space?

In the Director of the National Archives' 2017 report he drew attention to the lack of physical storage space which prevented some of the annual transfers. Do you know if this is still an issue?

Geoffrey Yeo writes that there is a possibility that digital storage may become so prevalent and trivial that storing every record that is created will be a possibility. Do you agree? (Appraisal)

Record Appraisal and Disposal

Do you think that the potential for infinite storage of records electronically could remove the need for record appraisal on the part of the archivist entirely? (Yeo)

Hilary Jenkinson believed that archivists should be impartial custodians of records having no input regarding appraisal and instead keeping all records that are created. Do you agree with this sentiment? Do you believe it is possible?

Does the National Archives make use of macro appraisal or micro appraisal?

It mentions in the Archive Framework that one of the primary responsibilities of the National Archive is to acquire "records of archival value from government departments, offices of State, the courts and scheduled bodies". Do you know how a record is determined to have "archival value"?

Archive Acquisition

It states in the functions of the National Archives that they acquire records of national significance. Do you know the criteria for determining if a record is 'nationally significant'?

Do you know the process of how The National Archives acquires archives from private individuals, institutions and organisations? Do they request them? Are they donated voluntarily? Do they keep everything donated to them?

Transparency and Accountability

Do you believe that more public engagement with the National Archives can help combat the spread of disinformation by allowing them to view records in their original context?

Do you think that making records available online is important for encouraging public engagement with archives?

Do you know how it is determined which records are made accessible online?

Do you think the Amendment Act will help to improve government transparency and accountability by reducing the waiting period for record transfers?

Conclusion

Is there anything that has not been covered that you would like to talk about?

Appendix E – Interview Topics and Questions A3

Interview Topics and Questions A3

Introduction

What is your experience in working with archives?

What is your area of knowledge with regards to archives?

Record Preservation

Do you believe that the archival practices and policies of Irish institutions are still very much focused on the preservation of physical records?

(If yes) Now that more and more records are 'born digital', do you believe that this focus needs to change?

Do you believe that it is just as important or more important to preserve the 'artifactual' (physical) record as the 'informational' record?

Electronic Records

With regards to digital records, what precautions does your institution take in order to combat technological obsolescence and decay of their storage medium?

Do you think there is a high demand for physical records to be made digitally available online?

Writer Craig Gauld believes that the much of the population considers information that is not available online as irrelevant and that if archives are not made digitally available, they risk losing their relevance. Do you agree with this sentiment?

Another writer Luciana Duranti writes that digitised records risk becoming detached from their original context, which can make them less trustworthy sources of information than physical records. Do you agree?

Record Storage

With the ever-increasing abundance of physical records being created, is storage space a concern for your institution?

Geoffrey Yeo writes that there is a possibility that digital storage may become so prevalent and trivial that storing every record that is created will be a possibility. Do you agree? (Appraisal)

Record Appraisal and Disposal

Do you think that the potential for infinite storage of records electronically could remove the need for record appraisal on the part of the archivist entirely? (Yeo)

Hilary Jenkinson believed that archivists should be impartial custodians of records having no input regarding appraisal and instead keeping all records that are created. Do you agree with this sentiment? Do you believe it is possible?

Does your institution make use of macroappraisal or microappraisal techniques?

Do you know how a record is determined to have “archival value” for your institution?

Archive Acquisition

Do you know the process of how your institution acquires archives of external documents? Are they acquired from private individuals, institutions and organisations?

Transparency and Accountability

Do you believe that more public engagement with archives can help combat the spread of disinformation by allowing them to view records in their original context?

Do you think that making records available online is important for encouraging public engagement with archives?

Do you know how it is determined which records are made accessible online?

Conclusion

Is there anything that has not been covered that you would like to talk about?

Appendix F – Interview Topics and Questions A4

Interview Topics and Questions A4

Introduction

What is your experience in working with archives?

What is your area of knowledge of the National Archives?

Record Preservation

Do you believe that the archival practices and policies of the National Archives are still very much focused on the preservation of physical records?

Now that more and more records are ‘born digital’, do you believe that this focus needs to change?

Do you believe that it is just as important or more important to preserve the ‘artifactual’ record as the ‘informational’ record?

Electronic Records

With regards to digital records, what precautions does the National Archives take in order to combat technological obsolescence and decay of their storage medium?

Do you think there is a high demand for physical records to be made digitally available online?

Writer Craig Gauld believes that the much of the population considers information that is not available online as irrelevant and that if archives are not made digitally available, they risk losing their relevance. Do you agree with this sentiment?

Another writer Luciana Duranti writes that digitised records risk becoming detached from their original context, which can make them less trustworthy sources of information than physical records. Do you agree?

The strategic plan of the National Archives makes mention to developing the Institution's capability to manage electronic records. Do you know how the National Archives plans to execute this?

Record Storage

It states in the Archive Framework that the National Archives has over 50 million documents.

Do you think that storage space is a concern for the institution?

Do you think that the Amendment Act reducing the waiting period for annual transfer to 20 years will result in further issues regarding storage space?

Geoffrey Yeo writes that there is a possibility that digital storage may become so prevalent and trivial that storing every record that is created will be a possibility. Do you agree? (Appraisal)

Record Appraisal and Disposal

Do you think that the potential for infinite storage of records electronically could remove the need for record appraisal on the part of the archivist entirely? (Yeo)

Does the National Archives make use of macro appraisal or micro appraisal?

It mentions in the Archive Framework that one of the primary responsibilities of the National Archive is to acquire “records of archival value from government departments, offices of State, the courts and scheduled bodies”. Do you know how a record is determined to have “archival value”?

Archive Acquisition

It states in the functions of the National Archives that they acquire records of national significance. Do you know the criteria for determining if a record is ‘nationally significant’?

Do you know the process of how The National Archives acquires archives from private individuals, institutions and organisations? Do they request them? Are they donated voluntarily? Do they keep everything donated to them?

Transparency and Accountability

Do you believe that more public engagement with the National Archives can help combat the spread of disinformation by allowing them to view records in their original context?

Do you think that making records available online is important for encouraging public engagement with archives?

Do you know how it is determined which records are made accessible online?

Do you think the Amendment Act will help to improve government transparency and accountability by reducing the waiting period for record transfers?

Conclusion

Is there anything that has not been covered that you would like to talk about?