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THEVELI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023

ABSTRACTS

RESEARCH FOR INFORMED POLICY DECISIONS

Theveli

The Maldives National University
21st and 22nd August 2023

Guardians of History: A Case Study on the Operational, Legal, and Organizational Infrastructures of the National Archives of Maldives

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Abstract

Established under the Archival Act 16/2011, the National Archives of Maldives (NAM) is responsible for preserving national official records and formulating archiving policies. The objectives were to understand the operational protocols, legal and policy foundations, and the organizational chart in influencing the performance and reliability of the institution. The study comprised a study tour of the National Archives record room and discussions with the key officials of the Records Management Section, including the Director. Through detailed examination, we have elucidated the strengths and weaknesses of the current archival system, identified potential areas for improvement, and illuminated such institutions' role in preserving and disseminating a nation's cultural and historical heritage. The Act details NAM's responsibilities for acquiring, appraising, and preserving historically significant records, managing records transfers, and facilitating public access. It requires official documents to be retained for 25 years within institutions before being transferred to NAM, with records predating 1980 preserved permanently. A policy of disposal is also in place for inactive records. The Act establishes the NAM's organizational structure, overseen by a Director General and an advisory board. Despite the NAM's mandate, it currently faces challenges such as space limitations, lack of standard transfer procedures, and lack of professional archivists, which prevent it from acquiring new records. Recommendations include establishing operational procedures for records acquisition, obtaining a larger archival building in or outside Male', professional archivist training, and better utilizing the existing preservation chamber.

Keywords: *National Archive of Maldives; Archives Act; cultural heritage; archival policy; digitization*