

# INFOCUS

A Newsletter of ARMAG | Edition 1



25TH FEBRUARY 2022

## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

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It is my sincerest joy to present to you to the first edition of the ARMAG Newsletter..

## RTI IMPLEMENTATION

Adopting the NARA M-19-21 Template

## GOOD PRACTICES

Lessons learned from the authority of archives and records community groups in New Zealand

## SPOTLIGHT ...

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Five archival institutions featured on the theme "Archives: Empowering the future through the past"



# Editor's Note



It is my pleasure to introduce ARMAG's maiden newsletter. It is the editorial committee's hope that the newsletter will be a vehicle for sharing, information and inspiration for colleagues so we urge everyone to make this newsletter their own by contributing to its various sections.

In this inaugural issue we have two articles that discuss the lessons we can learn from other records and archives contexts. While ARMAG vice-president Isaac Armstrong's article focuses on what Ghana can glean from the United States' National Records and Archives Agency's M-19-21 policy for its RTI implementation, former president of ARANZ, Eric Boamah discusses what we can learn from our colleagues and sister association in New Zealand. University of Winneba Archivist Baaba Bonuedie reflects on how her professional experiences have demonstrated the intersection of archives, records and information management.

In future, we plan for the Spotlight section to feature one archival repository's collections and activities. In our first Spotlight section, however, we introduce five archival institutions which were featured in our inaugural Archives Month celebration.

The Conferences, Symposia and Trainings sections reports on some of the recent activities in which members participated.

We hope you find the contents of this, the first ARMAG newsletter, both interesting and enlightening. Again, we strongly urge contributions for upcoming issues.

Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, PhD.  
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University of Ghana, Legon

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is my sincerest joy to present to you to the first edition of the ARMAG Newsletter. I am humbled, honored and privileged to assume the role of President of the Archivists and Records Managers Association of Ghana. I am deeply grateful to my predecessor, Dr. Musah Adams, for his leadership and outstanding contributions to the Association during his presidency. That said, I must also extend my profound gratitude to the past executives.



Nicholas Dei-Kumi  
(ARMAG President)

I am inspired by their commitment to ARMAG and all their achievements. Indeed, the growth of ARMAG has been propelled collectively by our members and the various institutions that have supported our activities over the years. I look forward to continuing this important work towards fulfilling the mission of ARMAG. In this endeavor, I am joined by my colleagues on the Executive Committee and our Council of Advisors to help grow this Association. With their continued support and that of our dedicated members, I am confident that we will be steadfast in addressing our pressing challenges, and hopefully in the next two years our accomplishments will be many.

During our two years tenure, we will work to promote continuous education, invest in research and advocacy, leverage the Internet of Things (IoT) to promote the Association, affiliate and collaborate with other professional associations, and lead the national agenda to promote effective records keeping for good governance.

This Newsletter is one of the ways we plan to promote the association and to share knowledge with our members. By increasing expertise, we increase capacity to meet the challenges we face in information management, and increased capacity leads to better services while also ensuring the future of the profession. Increasing expertise includes better training of existing practitioners and mentoring new people into the profession. There is a major knowledge gap about the practice of our profession that needs to be bridged, and knowledge sharing is the core to accomplishing this. Dear colleagues, let us reflect on our shared responsibilities to the association and the profession as we champion the cause of “Good records, good governance”. Enjoy reading!

# BECOME A MEMBER OF ARMAG

A hand holding a glowing lightbulb against a sunset background. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger holding the base of the bulb. The lightbulb is illuminated from within, casting a warm glow. The background is a gradient of colors, transitioning from a light blue at the top to a deep red at the bottom, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is one of inspiration and hope.

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# Developing An Electronic Records Management Strategy For The Effective Implementation Of Ghana's RTI Act 989: Adopting The Nara M-19-21 Template



*By Isaac Issah Armstrong [ARMAG Vice-President]*

**M**any governments are confronted with the urgent need to improve their economies, reform their constitutions, strengthen institutions, modernize public administration, fight corruption, and address civil unrest. From the grassroots to the top political administration, the availability of authentic records, the ease of access to such information, and the ability to make timely decisions in the exercise of their democratic entitlements, are the main keys to satisfying the tenets of democracy in all states. The proper management of information and citizens' ability to access such information will foster greater transparency and can help establish trust between government and its citizens. This is the foundation on which the Right to Information (RTI) law is built.

Ghana passed the RTI Act in September 2019 and activities towards full implementation commenced in January 2020. Unfortunately, not much has been said about improving the state of public records management in view of implementation efforts although studies have shown that the state of public records administration in Ghana is very deplorable. Since Ghana is not the first to pass such legislation, it is important to remind ourselves not to try to reinvent the wheel when there are viable strategies undertaken by other countries from which we can learn. This article therefore aims at looking into how the United States' National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) M-19-21 mandate can be applied to Ghana's RTI implementation efforts to ensure the objectives of the Act are achieved.

Considering the complexity with which modern governments operate, it has become necessary that the management of public records be managed with a more holistic approach than before. ISO 15489-1(2001) defines records as information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. This definition alludes to the fact that every activity by government needs to be captured appropriately, stored, and made accessible for accountability

Even more, ISO 15489-1 (2016) defines records management as the creation, capture and management of records regardless of structure or form, in all types of business and technological environments over time. By this definition, public records cannot only be handled as end products of government business but rather as a continuous management function at every facet and stage of government business.

Since 1996, Ghana's erstwhile National Archives (now Public Records and Archives Department (PRAAD)) has morphed from being a purely cultural institution restricted to the management of the inactive phase of the records life cycle to one with mandate to provide leadership in the management of all phases of the life cycle. With this additional records management remit, PRAAD now approximates the function and structure of the United States' National Archives and Records Agency (NARA).

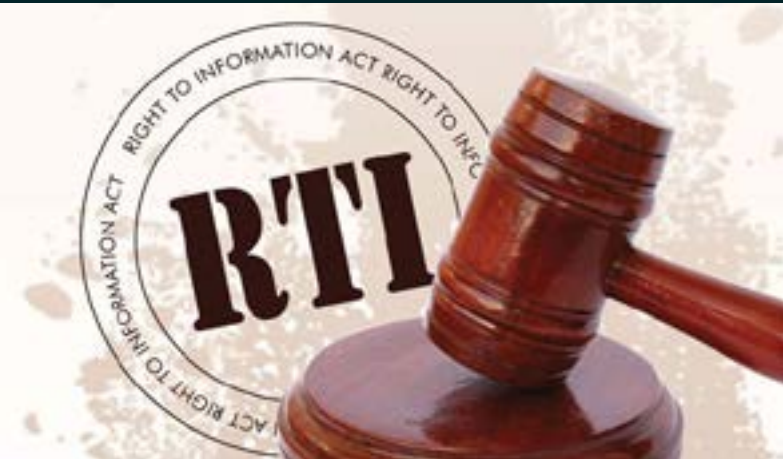
NARA has been in existence since 1934 and has been charged with the protection and oversight of the Federal Government's vast stores of historically significant records. Managing this massive repository of archives over the years has posed considerable challenges for the institution, and in response, NARA implemented the M-19-21 mandate on June 28, 2019 to help the federal government transition to electronic record keeping with the purpose of increasing efficiency, accuracy, and economical use of space. The M-19-21 consolidated and added more requirements to the hitherto M-12-18 directive. The M-19-21 provides a deadline for public institutions to migrate from paper to electronic records management. Ultimately, the initiative is designed to transition agencies into managing government records, whether temporary or permanent, entirely within an electronic environment by 2022. Though the core objective of the directive is to capture archival holdings of the US federal government in an electronic format, it also aims to help improve responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. All Federal institutions are required to comply by this directive or face fines or penalties. Below is a summary of 10 "must haves" to be NARA M-19-21 compliant as cited from NARA's 2019 Annual Report:

1. Regular records management program audits, evaluations and frequent updating and validation of vital records inventory.
2. Clear metrics and performance measures to validate records management effectiveness.
3. Quick response and clear accountability for FOIA requests.
4. Integrated internal controls to ensure the reliability, authenticity, integrity, usability and preservation of electronic records throughout its lifecycle.
5. A clearly identified digitization strategy to convert permanent records created in hard copy or other analog formats to digital format.
6. Integrated management of electronic records regardless of storage location (both on-prem and cloud).

7. Automated systems for capturing, assigning necessary metadata and classifying electronic information as it is created or enters the organization.
8. Incorporation of automated records management functionality into all electronic information systems.
9. Documented and approved procedures to enable the migration of records and associated metadata to new storage media or formats as technology changes.
10. Documented and approved policies and systems for eventual transfer of all electronic records to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

(NARA Federal Agency Records Management 2019 Annual Report)

According to NARA's "Criteria for Successfully Managing Permanent Electronic Records" there are four primary concerns when developing an effective Electronic Records Management (ERM) strategy to meet the M-19-21 requirements:



### Policies

- Relevant stakeholders should be identified and guided through the policy development process
- Training should be implemented to standardize document handling at all agencies
- Policies should be clear, enforceable, and aligned with long term records management goals

## Systems

- Implement systems that can create, capture, manage, preserve, and transfer in electronic formats
- Automation can be a powerful tool in ensuring records are transferred to NARA with all required metadata
- Systems should carefully consider the document life cycle for the agency – some records are ephemeral while others may need to be retained and referenced for decades

## Records Access

- Access to records improves an agency's ability to make quick decisions
- Records should be protected from unauthorized access, alteration, deletion, or loss
- Effective electronic records access can make documents searchable, saving time and effort

## Disposition

- By 2022, NARA will no longer accept transfers of permanent or temporary records in analog formats and will accept records only in electronic format and with appropriate metadata
- Beginning January 1, 2023, all other legal transfers of permanent records must be in electronic format, to the fullest extent possible, regardless of whether the records were originally created in electronic formats

(Source: DOMA Technologies)

Considering the number of physical records produced by the U.S government, it would be a daunting task for federal institutions to meet the requirement by 2022, but NARA is committed to working with these institutions to help meet the deadline. Though PRAAD manages more paper than electronic records, it is well-known that the ubiquity of technology has brought us to an era where a good number of public records are born digital and hence would need to be managed as such. Ghana's RTI means people from wide and near could require easy access to public records, and the most common way to do this would be via electronic formats and media. It would therefore be prudent for PRAAD to consider developing and implementing an Electronic Records Management (ERM) strategy à la NARA's M-19-21 requirement. The strategy should encompass strong policies that ensure that relevant stakeholders are identified and guided through a standardized document processing and handling regime; deploying centralized systems that can create, capture, manage, preserve, and transfer all records in electronic formats; and applying good records management principles to convert documents into acceptable formats and tag them correctly for effective disposition when their retention periods are due.





With an explicit strategy, PRAAD would be able to clearly identify digitization strategies to convert permanent records created in hard copy or other analog formats to digital formats, and curate digitally born records for ease of authorized access from all locations. This would lead to:

- Integrated management of electronic records regardless of storage location.
- Automated systems for capturing and assigning necessary metadata for classifying electronic information at the point they are created or enters the organization.
- Incorporation of automated records management functionality into all electronic information systems of public institutions.
- Documented and approved procedures to enable the migration of records and associated metadata to new storage media or formats as technology changes.
- Documented and approved audit process, electronic records standard, and systems assurance for eventual transfer of all electronic records to PRAAD's Centralized ERM system.

This strategy could be executed with close partnership between the RTI Commission and the National Information Technology Authority, with PRAAD having the overhead responsibility for effective implementation.

Ultimately, the success of Ghana's RTI law rests firmly on the ability of government institutions to create, capture, maintain, secure, and distribute reliable, trustworthy, and accurate government records. This would translate to the citizen's ability to easily request and obtain public records. The RTI law can only thrive when citizens and the stakeholders of government have easy access to reliable records. Implementing this law has a colossal impact on record keeping in government and on government's budget. It is therefore important for the government of Ghana to realize the need to invest generously in building adequate infrastructure for record keeping and providing the necessary support in ensuring the system works. When record-keeping systems are weak or unsupported, the government cannot meet the requirements for the RTI ACT 989 2019. Adopting a strategic mandate like NARA M-19-21, would serve as the first step towards greasing the wheels of the RTI law for a successful run.



# Lessons Learned From The Authority Of Archives And Records Community Groups In New Zealand



*By Dr. Eric Boamah (Former president, Archives and Records Association of New Zealand)*

## Introduction

I have learned a few lessons from my involvement with the Archives and Records Association in New Zealand and I would like to share some of these with my colleagues in ARMAG with the aim of encouraging members and hopefully motivating everyone to keep committing to our association. We may be part of a movement that has the authority and power to change the course of Ghana for the better.

The issues archival institutions face are almost the same everywhere in the world. What makes some countries achieve progress is the building of strong communities. When professionals come together, the authority of the group provides a stronger voice for the profession, and the power in that voice forces government and decision-makers to listen and become accountable, leading to good governance. I observe this type of power play out very well in New Zealand's archival communities, and I am confident that it can work in Ghana as well because of the emergence of groups like ARMAG and what it has started doing.



ARANZ Council, 2021

From what I gather on ARMAG's discussion platforms, I am hopeful that it won't be long for the voice of archives and records management professionals to fully show its authority and power in Ghana.

## The power of archives

The power of archives can be seen in their ability to preserve the past, direct the present, and build the future memory of a nation. But it takes an authoritative voice of an archives and records community to make the power of archives known. For instance, in the recent past, Ivory Coast claimed that the Ghana oil fields were in its territory and they pushed the case to the international court in the Hague. Ivory Coast was almost winning the case until someone in Ghana remembered that at PRAAD there was an old map showing the original demarcation of Ghana's maritime boundaries between the two countries.

After some frantic searches, the map was retrieved, and it was used as reliable evidence to help Ghana win the case. What followed were numerous news articles with a parade of lawyers being praised for saving Ghana. Nobody mentioned that a piece of document in the stacks of archival records on the floor of a room at PRAAD made all the difference. The point here is that if ARMAG had a strong authoritative voice, then the archival community in Ghana could have pressed the government to acknowledge that the actual power behind Ghana's victory in the court case came from the country's archives.

**In countries that have achieved progress in addressing issues affecting archives and records management, like New Zealand, it is such submissions that give power to the archival communities. Such power compels the governments to listen. The lack of such an authoritative voice in Ghana's archives and records community raises questions such as:**

- *How can ARMAG provide an authoritative voice for the archives and records community in Ghana?*
- *What strategies can ARMAG implement to ensure an effective understanding of archives and the importance of records in Ghanaian decision-makers?*

The constitution of ARMAG provides the framework for some of the answers to these questions. But ARMAG can still learn from some of the examples of similar associations in other contexts that have achieved progress. Maybe some of their approaches will provide a starting point for discussions or even reinforce what ARMAG is already doing.

In New Zealand, there are several records and information management associations and groups that engage professionals in all aspects of the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums, and Records (GLAMR) sector in New Zealand, including Digital Preservation Practical Implementer Guild Group (DP-PIGG), the Digital Inclusion Group, Association of Local Government Information Managers (ALGIM), Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ), just to mention a few. For many of these groups, Archives New Zealand is the regulatory institution. My discussion here will focus on ARANZ which is most similar to ARMAG.

The Archives and Records Association of New Zealand

ARANZ was established in 1975 to promote understanding of the importance of records in New Zealand. The association is for the archives and records community but members include librarians, teachers, researchers, historians, and all interested people. The Governor-General of New Zealand is the patron. It has a national council of about 12 members, including the President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Advocacy Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Editor of the ARANZ Journal (ARCHIFACTS), Editor of the ARANZ Newsletter (ALERT), and Council Members. ARANZ has 6 branches across New Zealand. Each branch has its own branch council. The overarching aim of ARANZ is to provide an authoritative voice on matters of concern to archives and records in New Zealand. Its specific objectives are many and varied.

### **Objectives of ARANZ**

- To provide an authoritative voice on matters of concern relating to archives and records.
  - To foster the care, preservation, and use of archives and records, both to public and private, and their effective administration.
  - To cooperate or affiliate with any other bodies in New Zealand or elsewhere with like objectives.
- from August 2018 to 24 September 2021 and this position helped me to learn a bit more about how ARANZ operates to achieve its objectives.

- To promote professional competence in the administration and preservation of archives and records; by providing advice to the appropriate authorities on levels and standards of professional education and training, and by promoting the training of archivists, records keepers, curators, librarians, and others by the dissemination of specialized knowledge.
- To encourage research on the care, preservation, and use of archives and records and to promote the publication of the results of this research.
- To promote the standing of archives institutions and those working with archives and records.
- To advise and support the establishment of archives services throughout New Zealand.
- To publish a journal and other publications in furtherance of these objectives.

More information about how ARANZ conducts events and activities to help achieve these objectives can be found on its websites<sup>1</sup>. I served as the President of ARANZ for three consecutive years

### How ARANZ achieves its objectives

#### Authority in voice

To ensure authority in the voice it represents, ARANZ works closely with key bodies like the Archives Council of New Zealand, Archives New Zealand<sup>2</sup>, and the Chief Archivist's office. ARANZ President meets regularly with each of these higher offices to update them on the activities of the association, and also presents the concerns of the community. The Archives Council discusses those issues with the Minister of Internal Affairs. The authority of the Archives Council is established in the Public Records Act 2005. It reports directly to the Minister of Internal Affairs. The Archives Council is not a public office. It is also not subject to the Public Finance Act 1989, the Ombudsmen Act 1975, and the Official Information Act 1982<sup>3</sup>. The President of ARANZ meets the Council twice a year to update them on the state of the archive's community of New Zealand, and presents all concerns, from members. The Archives Council provides suggestions and comments which President reports back to ARANZ Council and members.

ARANZ President also meets monthly with the Chief Archivist of New Zealand to discuss issues and concerns affecting the archival community and report back to the community. As the director of affairs at Archives New Zealand, which is the regulatory institution of all activities in New Zealand including those of ARANZ. The Chief Archivist explains the strategies and policies they plan to implement and how those policies will work for the community.



ARANZ Council, 2018



A collaborative meeting with leaders of Information associations

The Department of Internal Affairs is responsible for the recruitment of the Chief Archivist's position. To ensure the authority of voice, the archival community insist that the ARANZ President has to sit on the panel that interviews the prospective Chief Archivist. This way, when the Chief Archivist takes office, he sees the authority in the voice of the President of the community and takes the voice the ARANZ President represents very seriously during the discussion of issues concerning the community. The Department of Internal Affairs is responsible for the recruitment of the Chief Archivist's position. To ensure the authority of voice, the archival community insist that the ARANZ President has to sit on the panel that interviews the prospective Chief Archivist. This way, when the Chief Archivist takes office, he sees the authority in the voice of the President of the community and takes the voice the ARANZ President represents very seriously during the discussion of issues concerning the community.

### **Fostering of care**

To achieve effective fostering of care, preservation, and use of archives and records, both to public and private, and their effective administration, ARANZ provides guidance, training, and support to all public institutions on their recordkeeping activities and disposal schedules.

For instance, all institutions, both public and private, have a specific period within which they need to dispose of their inactive records. These records are usually taken to Archive New Zealand. The institutions there seek guidance from ARANZ for the records they need to destroy. So, they will submit a full report to ARANZ President on the records they want to dispose of and why. The President will work with the Advocacy Secretary to review the report and submit feedback to the institution. Based on ARANZ's suggestions and comments, the institutions will revise their report before they submit the records to Archives New Zealand.

### **Teaming-up**

ARANZ collaborates with other associations in New Zealand or Australia that have similar objectives. For instance, ARANZ has an MoU with the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA). So, members of ARANZ can enjoy all the benefits ASA provides for its members and vice versa. Within New Zealand, ARANZ team-up with the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA), the Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA), Museum Aotearoa, and other similar associations to have joint events to support our members and address concerns. The whole GLAMAR sector is planning a big conference together because most associations couldn't have their usual conferences because of the effect of COVID-19. A collaborative event like this will ensure that all members of the sector receive the most benefit from the programme.

### **Research**

To encourage research, ARANZ has a Journal called ARCHIFACTS. Members are encouraged to submit reflections, success cases of their practice, and research work to the journal for publication. To make it easy for everyone to submit something, ARANZ has made peer-review processes optional. So, only those who want their papers to be peer-reviewed go through the process. ARANZ also has a biennial conference where members present, share and discuss their work, projects, and research with the community.

### **Awards**

Also, ARANZ has established award systems to motivate members. The Prizes are named after key members who have made outstanding contributions to the Association and the archival community. For instance, the Michael Standish Prize is awarded to the best journal article published in ARCHIFACTS. The Ian Wards Prizes is given to the best published book on an archival subject.



ARANZ Council, 2019



A workshop with archival educators in New Zealand and Australia



A meeting between the Chief Archivist, Richard Foy, the President of RIMPA-NZ and the President of ARANZ

There is also an Honorary Life Membership Award, which is given to persons who have contributed outstanding service to the Association or other outstanding service commensurate with the objects of the Association.

These are just a few of the activities and procedures ARANZ follows to achieve the objectives that space will allow.

### **Lessons learned**

The lessons I am learning from getting involved in the various archival community groups are many and varied. Those that can be applied in ARMAG include:

### **Collaboration**

Collaborations within the archival communities and between other information management associations enable good relationships and teamwork among professionals and the associations. Collaborations help members to fully understand what is working or not working in their areas of practice and how it relates to other contexts, what they need to change and what they need to improve. Such collaborations breed confidence in professionals and enable them to give out their best. Collaboration makes the collective voice stronger and more authoritative, compelling authorities and decision-makers to listen to the concerns of members. I see this type of collaboration working within ARMAG and I hope it is working well between ARMAG and its stakeholders as well.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

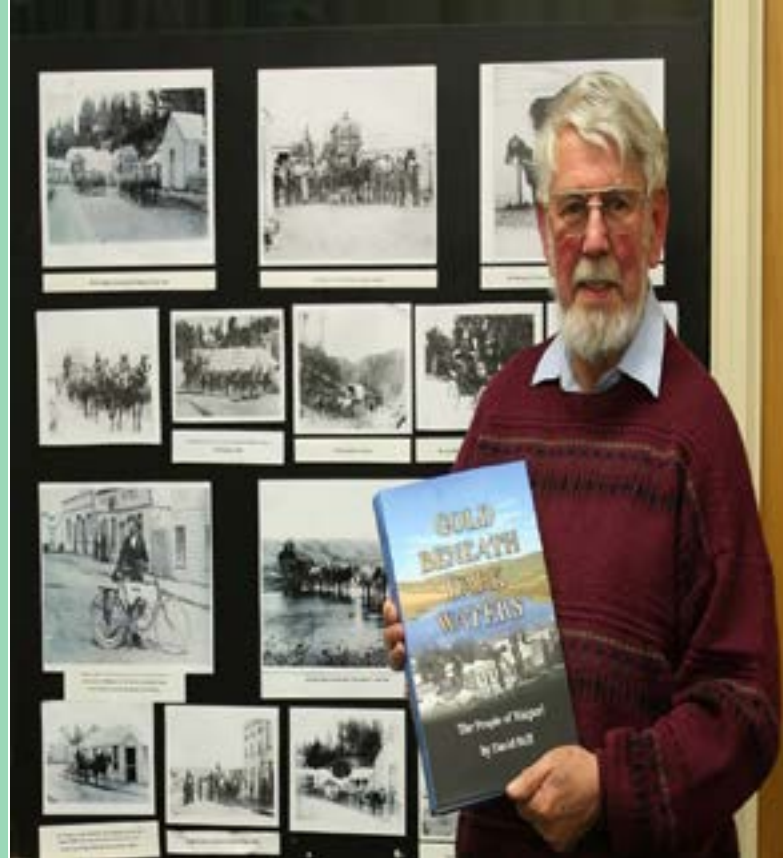
Stakeholder engagement is very powerful to enable the achievement of an association's goals. It is important for ARMAG to clearly identify all its stakeholder groups and list them, including the relevant Ministry, other associations that share similar objectives with ARMAG, and institutions offering archival education and training. This way, clear strategies can be designed on how best to engage with each stakeholder and what suitable communication approach can be used to communicate the aims and purpose of ARMAG to ensure effective interconnections and achievement of the objectives.

In New Zealand, there are only two educational institutions offering archives and records management programmes (i.e., Victoria University of Wellington and the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand).

Every year, the President of ARANZ visits these institutions to talk to the students and staff about the aims and objectives of the association and what benefits students can get as members. While this is a membership drive strategy, it also creates awareness of the association's objectives in students. These students are emerging professionals. So, when they come to the field of practice, they already know what they can offer to the association and how best they can contribute their service to the community.

### **Effective communication**

The ability of the association to communicate its aims and aspirations to stakeholders is key to the effective achievement of its objectives. This works well when there is a clear structure in the membership, with specific responsibilities for each role. Communication is effective when there is a clear message. ARMAG can communicate its message clearly when its members know who to say what to at what point in time, which specific stakeholder to engage, and how to connect with them. This system eliminates ambiguities in the message being communicated and removes confusion among the stakeholder receiving the message from the association. Some stakeholders, especially governments and decision-makers enjoy it when an association does not communicate its message well. This gives them an excuse for not being able to provide the support the association needs from them. But when the message is clear and effectively communicated to the right stakeholder at the right time, the authority behind the voice puts pressure on the government to offer the needed support.



A winner of the Ian Wards Prize for best book

### **Community empowerment**

When the association collaborates well with similar community groups, engages well with key stakeholders, and communicates its message clearly for relevant bodies to understand, it empowers the community. Community empowerment is achieved when members of the community are enabled to give their best and take control of their professional lives.

This way, members of the association not just get involved and participate in all community activities, they also engage well with the community and its stakeholders. When members are empowered, they will go beyond just getting involved and take ownership and responsibility of action that explicitly aims at social and political change.

### Conclusion

The establishment of ARMAG is a big step for Ghana's archives and records management community toward progress, and hope for the country's future. The aims and objectives set by ARMAG are consistent with the aims and objectives of similar associations in countries that have achieved progress in archives and records management, good governance, and national development.



A sample Honorary Life Membership Certificate

ARMAG is already doing things that made similar associations in other contexts achieve progress. For instance, ARMAG members are engaging in great discussions on very relevant topics and taking part in useful workshops and seminars. These are good actions toward progress. This article has discussed some of the activities and processes ARANZ follows in New Zealand. Some lessons can be learned on how to go about collaboration, stakeholder engagement, effective communication, and community empowerment. This can help members to take ownership and act to achieve progress in ARMAG's goals as well as social and political change for Ghana.

### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.aranz.org.nz/about-us/about-aranz/>
- <sup>2</sup> [https://assets.ctfassets.net/etfoy87fj9he/3Lu9zyGIbiB4wu8euWITIU/8b-84568c240a12acf772274b0b81ef9f/Archives\\_Council\\_Charter.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/etfoy87fj9he/3Lu9zyGIbiB4wu8euWITIU/8b-84568c240a12acf772274b0b81ef9f/Archives_Council_Charter.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> <https://archives.govt.nz/about-us>



## A Mirror Of The Development Of The Archives, Records & Information Management Profession

By Baaba Bonuedie (Head, Records Management at University of Education, Winneba)



In my career in the information management professions, I have worked as a Records Manager, Information Manager and now the University Archivist of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). For many people, even those within the field, my trajectory has been confusing, with many wondering exactly what my roles have been and whether I'm rising or falling. But as I reflect on my experiences and changing roles, I see something of what the future holds for professionals in archives, records, and information management as a whole.

So, what defines one as an archivist, a records manager, or an information management professional? From my professional perspective, although this question is an important one, it seems to have been ignored for a long time – both organisations and individual professionals choose the titles as they so wish even if the role to be performed doesn't relate. The truth is, as archivists, records managers or information management professionals, we all traditionally manage records at different stages of the records lifecycle. This is a popular concept known to the profession. Based on the lifecycle concept, the records and information manager is supposed to be managing the records in their more active or semi-active stages and the archivist is required to select from the general body of records those relevant for long-term or permanent preservation and manage other special collections. Moreover, records' critical needs -- maintenance, management and provision of access -- remain dominant across all three, while records managers, information managers, and archivists ensure the integrity, authenticity, reliability and usability of records in their custody.

Reflecting on my journey, I actually discern very little difference in the duties performed in the different roles. As a records and information manager of a group of companies, I facilitated the development of filing systems and maintained these to meet administrative, legal and financial requirements, and initiated the setup of a spacious, safe and secure records center for the storage of company records. I also developed strategies for the easy retrieval of requested documents and archives, trained company and departmental heads on best practices, designed and ensured the implementation of records retention and disposal schedules, and assisted with the implementation of an electronic records management system (EDRMS). Many in the over 30 different companies referred to me as their records manager while others as archivist. However, it is important to add that the department I managed, the Document Management Unit, was responsible for sorting, classification, boxing, archiving, digitisation, and other records processing activities. In effect, I was managing records in the active, semi-active and inactive cycles.



In my second role as records and information management specialist with a professional archives management company, my employers and I struggled a bit with the appropriate title to cover the kind of responsibilities I was hired to perform. Nevertheless, it was an interesting role exposing me to various aspects of the records management (RM) profession. I was required to use my expertise to lead a team of developers to develop data mapping tools and an online records management system (ORMS).

Even more, I was to assist with records management proposals, train clients on RM best practices and archival principles, and ensure information management efficiency. So here again, I was combining all three aspects of the profession. I couldn't be called an archivist, records manager or information manager because, in essence, I was performing all three roles indirectly.

My current role as University Archivist is quite defined. As an Archivist, I am also responsible for heading the Records Management Unit. I'm therefore not just ensuring that inactive records or the archives of the University are well maintained but also responsible for initiating RM projects, acquiring special collections, training various faculties, departments, and units on records management and archival best practices. Again, buried within my responsibilities is the need to develop strategy for the digitization of the University's records for easy access and use.

From a review of these three roles, it is not clear whether I am by profession an archivist, records manager or an information manager. It seems to me that my journey is a reflection of the future of the archives and records management professions, where if we want to excel, we cannot restrict our skills to purely being an archives professional, a records professional, or an information management professional. Our roles are changing as we evolve into the knowledge economy and now extend from just maintaining the integrity of records over time for legal, administrative, fiscal, societal and corporate purposes to performing these same function for all manner of electronic archives, records, information and knowledge management systems (Cox 2005). Furthermore, archivists and records managers now help their organisations discover external regulations and apply them to their own organizations rather than merely seeking to save old records for often difficult-to-define historical purposes and values.

So this is what looking back on my experience with a critical, professional-tinged observation teaches us. The question researchers, academicians, and professionals in the field need to ask is: what should students preparing for an archives position know and what other attributes should they acquire? According to AAJ Ismail, one way to find answers for these questions is to examine current job descriptions and position postings. I make a general call to archivists, records managers and other information professionals to rediscover and promote our changing roles. Archivists and records managers need to associate with policy makers, business analysts, information technology specialists and software engineers, and rise up to influence policy, re-define our roles and echo our new role to the world.

#### References

- Cox, RJ. 2005. *Archives and Archivists in the Information Age*. Neal-Schuman, New York.
- Ismail, AAJ. 2011. Records professionals: an invisible profession in Malaysia, *Records Management Journal*, 21(1), 69-75.

## SPOTLIGHT

This year, as part of its participation in the International Council of Archives's Archives Day festivities, ARMAG launched its inaugural Archives Month. Under the theme "Archives: Empowering the future through the past", it featured five archival institutions – the University of Ghana's University Archives, JH Kwabena Nketia Archives and the Adu Boahen Memorial Library and Archives; the Information Services Department's Photo Library; and the Public Records and Archives Administration Department. Covid-19 precautions led ARMAG to hold virtual tours of these repositories that were shared on social media. Colleagues in the institutions, each representing a different type of archives, shared tidbits about their institution's holdings and also spoke about why they enjoyed their work. Especially gratifying in this vein was the participation of the next generation of archivists – information studies students and archival interns – who shared their views about what they love about the profession and the institutions at which they work. The videos can be accessed via ARMAG's Facebook and YouTube pages (links below). Enjoy!

Public Records and Archives Administration Department  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmiYINqsmxE&t=4s>

University of Ghana Archives  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcviWgo7sKA>

Adu Boahen Memorial Library and Archives, History Department, University of Ghana  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDoQ6JE\\_bqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDoQ6JE_bqQ)

Information Services Department Photo Library  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JyXWSBrLGw>

JH Kwabena Nketia Archives, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jN4I4bPCcqs>

## Conferences, Symposia, Trainings

**E**dwina Ashie-Nikoi (Lecturer, Department of Information Studies, University of Ghana) and Killian Onai (Chief administrative assistant, University of Ghana Archives), along with two archivist colleagues in the United States, Miranda Mims and Steven Fullwood, co-founders of the Nomadic Archivist Project, presented “Documenting Us: Pan-African Strategies for Unearthing our Historical Narratives” at the PANAFEST International Colloquium held July 26 – July 28 at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, and in virtual space. The theme of the conference was Securing the African Family: Our Soul, Our Health, Our Wealth.

Edwina Ashie-Nikoi and Judith Opoku-Boateng (Archivist at the Nketia Archives, Institute of African Studies), presented at the IASA Annual Conference held virtually from 27-30 September 2021. The theme for the conference was Closing the Gap for a New Generation of Sound and Audiovisual Archives and their presentation centered on “Strategies to Counter Archival Silences in African Audiovisual Archives”.

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**A**s part of ARMAG’s goals to promote continuous professional development and skills among members, the association organized a one-day training on current trends in electronic records management and digital archiving on September 29, 2021 at the University of Ghana’s Balme Library Seminar Room. The training was facilitated by Dr. Edwin Ayenor (senior lecturer, University of Professional Studies, UPSA) and was well-attended. Topics included electronic records management systems (ERMS) and their implementation, policies and guidelines for e-records and digital archives and preservation of digital materials.

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY 17TH MARCH, 2022**

**Launch Of ARMAG  
website on**

**MARCH, 2022**

