

Traditional Archives as New Archives' Backbone

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Traditional Archives - originating from the Greek institution *archeion* - are guardians of the rule of law and indispensable instruments to keep up the principle of (societal) responsibility which expresses basic values of our society. Audiovisual documents are a natural part of this type of archival holdings. As far as legal evidence emanates from audiovisual documents or their creation is the aim of public authority's actions they need to be archived in an archive in this strict sense of the term. Beyond these functional limitations of archival holdings there is - of course - further need to preserve, additional, audiovisual material - in archives, libraries, museums or other trustful institutions. However, the tradition building in the context of responsibility must remain the main responsibility of archival institutions. What seems at a first sight to be a defensive position of an archival claim is, in fact, a very offensive attitude: Making archiving of audiovisual documents an archival matter means that there is a definite obligation of the producers of such material to archive it - in a public or in a (their) private archive -, however, always combined with the citizens' formal (and enforceable) right to access these documents as they serve to assume societal responsibility (see e.g. the Swiss federal law on archiving). Archiving, therefore, means always a moment of truth. Who we are can be deduced from what we have done and this doing includes the way we perceive the world, economics, politics etc. As far as audiovisual media are concerned, archiving its documents underlines the importance of their constructional contribution to our understanding of the world we are living in. Nevertheless, by distinguishing sharply the institutional functions and consequently their respective responsibilities, there is an institutional convergence too, however, mainly on a technical level assuring e.g. the state-of-the-art preservation. Archiving processes too can be shared by different institutions if on the judicial level information protection, access and - as concerned - copyright or intellectual property rights are respected. Archives, therefore, old or new, have to claim a particular position within a field of converging technical issues, for the best of the long term preservation and access of audiovisual material.