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Archives Evaluating in Algeria: Whose Responsibility Is It?

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Abstract

Evaluation is the core of archival procedures. Its crucial importance is to achieve archival objectives and meet the needs of archive users. It is a critical stage in archiving, preserving memory, and preventing its loss. All countries have developed frameworks and tools for archivists to follow to succeed in this process. Algeria, through its National Archives Center, has not been exempt from these efforts. This paper studies and analyzes the procedure to clarify the responsibility of the archive evaluation process in Algerian institutions. This is achieved by the discussion of the legal frameworks and adopted professional policies, while also the assessment of the level of implementation of this process and related archival operations such as sorting, destruction, and archival transfer within institutions. This was accomplished by a questionnaire administered to a random sample of 48 archivists selected through the official page of the National Union of Archivists in Algeria.

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1. *Introduction*

In general, it is hard to reach complete and scientifically processed archival records except after the availability of many requirements for archival practice. The start is with the preservation premises and what they require in terms of equipment and tools, passing through the availability of specialists trained to perform and develop these operations. The guides for monitoring and controling archival practice should also not be forgotten, such as instructions, legislation, specifications and international standards.

If one desires the precision to reach ideal archival stocks, this can only be achieved through the mastery of the archival evaluation process. This process aims to select valuable archival documents for long-term preservation and remove others due to the lack of evidential or historical benefit. This is done to rationalize the expenses and costs of processing and storage, and to facilitate retrieval and use. This is what Couture (2011) emphasized regarding the essential role of the evaluation process compared to other archival processes the creation, acquisition, classification, description, circular, and preservation of archives all depend on the decisions made during their evaluation.

In Algeria, it has been found that most archive stores within Algerian institutions suffer from a large accumulation of archival documents. This problem grows daily because of both the increased administrative activity and the failure to carry out an evaluation of the archive and the associated archival operations in a way that ensures control over the permanent preservation of archival documents of scientific or historical value and discards those that have lost their administrative value in order to save on the space for their storage and the burdens of their preservation and maintenance.

Failure in such archival processes, particularly archive evaluation, is linked to numerous difficulties, most notably its connection to legislative texts and regulatory controls that impose a sense of obligation and accountability. It makes it a sensitive process from which all those involved in the determination of its final outcome try to evade responsibility. This is compounded by a lack of resources, including material, human, and organizational capabilities.

From this perspective, this study aims to identify the reality and responsibility of implementing the archive evaluation process in Algerian institutions. It does so by posing the following questions:

- Who is responsible for the process of evaluating archival documents within Algerian institutions?

- Are there organizational guidelines, such as an archives management schedule, that

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direct and regulate the evaluation of archival documents in Algeria?

- Are Algerian laws sufficient and clear enough to ensure the success of the archives evaluation process and related archival operations like preservation and destruction?

- What is the level of cooperation and coordination between document producers and archivists regarding the temporary preservation of archival documents to determine their final fate?

2. *Significance of the Study*

This study derives its significance from the importance of evaluating the archive and its role in the success or failure of the archiving process, due to its close connection with all archival processes. No one can receive more archives unless there are storage spaces provided by the evaluation process through sorting and removing documents that have lost their administrative value and have not proven scientifically or historically. It is also impossible to scientifically process archival documents by classifying, describing, and completing search and retrieval methods in an accumulated and mixed state. If any institution fails in the evaluation process, it will inevitably fail in its contribution to building an institutional and national memory for the state to which it belongs.

3. *The Study Objectives*

This study strives to achieve the following objectives:

- Understanding the current state of archive evaluation and its progress in some Algerian institutions.

- Archivists' efforts and concerns regarding the management and evaluation of archival materials within temporary archives in Algeria.

- Areas of cooperation, convergence, and conflict between archivists and administrators concerning the evaluation process in Algeria.

- A comprehensive list of all Algerian legislation that regulates and governs the archive evaluation process and its effectiveness in ensuring the success of archival document evaluation.

- Assessing the level of awareness among Algerian archivists regarding national legislation and international best practices in archive evaluation.

4. *Methodology*

To achieve the desired results of this study, the documentary method is implemented to identify and discuss the most important legislative texts related to the process of evaluating archives and related processes such as preservation and destruction. The descriptive method is also used to obtain quantitative data that measure the level of the implementation of this process within Algerian institutions.

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4.1 *The study sample*

A random sample of 44 archivists working at Algerian institutions was selected.

4.2 *Data collection tools*

To obtain quantitative data to measure the level of archival evaluation at the Algerian institutions, a questionnaire consisting of 12 questions has been distributed. It began with demographic data to control the variables specific to the study like specialization and experience. Then, it sought to determine the degree of overlap in tasks between the producer of archival documents and the archivist, and the areas of coordination between them, so that the final fate of archival documents can be determined—whether preservation or destruction.

In addition, some questions are included to reveal the reality of the accumulation of archival documents in temporary storage facilities and the extent to which sorting and destruction processes are implemented, along with their essential tools, such as management schedules, to measure the level of archive evaluation. The questionnaire is concluded with questions about the archivists' awareness of the legislative texts and scientific standards that govern and regulate the archival evaluation process and related archival operations.

5. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

In this section, some study-related concepts are defined and discussed.

5.1 *Archive management*

Archive management consists of all related processes that begin with receiving the archive from the producing offices, arranging and coding it, so that it can be sorted and evaluated in order to sort and identify the archival documents that have lost administrative value and are intended for destruction, and to preserve and maintain those that have proven their historical or scientific value in order to describe them and produce search tools for them to retrieve them and facilitate their use by beneficiaries.

5.2 *Archival evaluation*

It is a basic archival function that aims to determine the administrative and historical usefulness when processing documents in their final form, meaning the task of identifying documents to be preserved, in a neutral manner that is not biased towards any type of user - and objective - not influenced by personal vision and personal interests - and professionally - the final responsibility must be on the archivists and the evaluation must be based on knowledge derived from analysis (Duranti, 1994).

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5.3 *Evaluation according to Hilary Jenkinson and Theodore Schellenberg: "administrative or historical teleology?"*

Hilary Jenkinson (1892-1961), working at the Public Archives in the United Kingdom in 1922, was among the first to consider the issue of document evaluation. In his book, "*A Handbook on Archive Management, Including Problems of War Archives*," he stated that any document created and used in the context of an administrative or executive transaction, and not disposed of by its creator, constitutes an archive, and the archivist must assume the function of preservation. Determining the value of an archive ultimately rests with its creator, and no one is a better judge of a document than its creator.

Theodore Schellenberg, author of "*Modern Archives*: *Principles and Techniques"* in 1956, agrees with Jenkinson that the value of archives as evidence stems from their accumulation without external intervention, and that the best way to preserve them is by order of origin, he has a different opinion on the concept of archives, which he defines as the collection of documents belonging to any public or private institution that are considered worthy of permanent preservation for the purposes of reference, use and research, and which have been deposited or chosen to be deposited in an archival institution (Tschan, 2002)

In other words, Jenkinson considered all documents worthy of preservation, and it is the creator's responsibility of evaluating the archive. Schellenberg, however, held a different view, arguing that only archival documents worthy of preservation were those whose original purpose was different from their creation. He assigned the task of selecting these types of documents to the archivist. To reconcile this selection, he distinguished between two values: the primary administrative value as proof for their creators, and the secondary value related to their historical and cultural function for future users. Schellenberg thus redefined the role of the archive from legal evidence to historical and cultural resources.

Cook (1997) stated that archivists writing before the 20th century believed that all documents created and received by an administration were archives that must be preserved. However, after the middle of the 20th century and particularly after World War II, which saw a significant increase in the production of archival documents due to the growing number of institutions and the expansion of their activities. It became difficult to comprehend and control these documents without evaluation and selection. This was confirmed by Schellenberg, but this trend created a kind of controversy among archivists worldwide, as evaluation and selection conflict with the archive as an integrated and indivisible organic unit (Duranti, 1994).

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5.4 The *archivist's profession and evaluation responsibility*

Earlier, archivists worked at the institution that established the archive. They preserve everything entrusted to those archives to use them as evidence. Now, archivists serve not only the creators of the documents but also other groups.

This transformation, however, placed the archivist's profession in great ambiguity regarding who would undertake the task of managing and running these archives. Until the Dutch archivists assumed a solution to this problem that the archivist should play a dual role. They work on the administrative importance aspect of administrative archives, and on the other hand, they work on the historical importance of the old archives. This can be achieved through involving historians in the process of the archive evaluation. Ham (1993) emphasized that the archivist should give historians a dual role, as users and advisors at the same time, but without going into too much detail to avoid excessive influence on the evaluation process and the inflation of documents.

This is what Dutch archivists, most notably Graswicz in 1991, assumed. When archivists undertake the evaluation process, they should adhere to two important theories. The first archival theory, which dates back to the 11th century AD in Roman times. This theory focuses on permanent memory and public trust to prove the occurrence and validity of transactions and activities. It freezes them in the present before they fade into the past. Therefore, archivists ought to permanently preserve archival documents in reliable repositories (Koetsveld, 2009).

The second is the archival methodology. It is comprised of a set of principles with the aim of ensuring the logical coherence of archives during their transfer from the department of production to storage facilities. Archivists have to distinguish between individual documents, records, series, and complete archives during evaluation. Not all documents are considered final products of administrative processes; they may be preliminary copies, revised and amended versions, or internal documents not intended for transmission. It is essential to understand all these types and the activities of documenting. The established practice in archival work is that a document is not meaningful in isolation but rather as an integral part of a larger collection of documents that collectively record administrative activity. Thomassen (2001) states that for administrators to understand and for archivists to subsequently act upon and evaluate these documents, they had better arrange them in a logical order to create information resulting from coherent work activities, structured and recorded in a way that allows its retrieval from the context in which it was created.

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5.5 *Is the process of evaluating archives in Algeria constant or inconstant?*

The process of archival evaluation requires consistency and standardization of tools and procedures within a set of pre-agreed regulations and specifications. This is essential to achieving the desired objectives of selecting documents of scientific and historical value necessary for building institutional and national memory, while excluding those documents that might compromise the integrity of this memory or hinder its processing and use by beneficiaries. However, sometimes this archival process must be reconsidered and adapted according to exceptional circumstances. This is what the American archivist Rapport (1981) termed as "archival re-evaluation", he emphasizes that decisions made regarding archival evaluation should not be considered final. Archival collections that do not attract researchers' attention after a certain period can be discarded. Some of the most important factors that may affect archive evaluation procedures are the following:

5.5.1 *Closure of archival collections*

The cessation of institutions or changes in their activities results in changes to the archival documents produced by their various departments. In this case, previous archival documents become unique due to the absence of the activity and organizational context in which they were produced. This is called scarcity, and it may be informational scarcity, as expressed by Menne-Haritz (1994) who explains that the low probability of finding the information in other documents, or contextual scarcity.

Boles and Young (1991) summarize that contextual scarcity lies in the inability to access the date of their creation or the occasion for their creation, or in the uniqueness of the tasks and objectives of the document producer. The rule in evaluating archives is that the context of archival documents takes precedence over their content. This was confirmed by Cook (1992) through his holistic evaluation strategy. He states that before delving into the value of documents, it is necessary to know something about the institutions that created them and their associated events. That is, to understand the reason for their creation, not their content.

5.5.2 *Political, economic, and health fluctuations of countries*

The view of institutions regarding some documents and archival holdings may change from one situation to another. It is as required by the circumstances of these situations. Documents that were of no importance in casual times will be necessary in a political, economic, or health crisis. There are many examples in this field. For instance, during the Coronavirus period, many medical archival documents had no value except for the purpose of their production to prove health activity. However, with the spread of the epidemic, they acquired scientific and historical value from their inception. Doctors use them

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after the end of their current lifespan in scientific research to diagnose this epidemic and follow up on its symptoms and medical vaccinations in a previous period of time.

5.5.3 *Administrative investigations and judicial follow-ups*

Sometimes institutions record some violations and professional errors. This in turn affect the course of their work and infringe upon their rights and the personal or moral rights of their members. It puts the administration and decision-makers in a state of dispute and disagreement that requires administrative investigations and sometimes judicial follow-ups that require referring to archival documents, provided that they are stored and their unity is not compromised, to be used as evidence in the dismissal of such investigations and judicial follow-ups.

5.5.4 *Digital transformation of institutions*

One of the most important reasons for integrating modern technologies into institutions is the advantages they provide, whether at the functional level for performing work quickly and with high quality, or those related to the documentary aspect like moving from the paper archival document to the digital document, which does not require large storage spaces or lengthy processing procedures. It can be found that the necessity of keeping the process of the archive evaluation in a digital environment that has eliminated the problems of traditional archiving, as in inflation and the difficulty of management and processing.

5.6 *Archive Management Schedules: Comprehensive lists*

An archive management schedule, also known as a retention schedule, preservation schedule, management schedule, sorting schedule, or archiving schedule, is a standardized document prepared by the central archives administration. It describes the types of documents produced by an administration, department, or institution within the scope of its activities. It specifies the retention periods and durations at the office and temporary storage levels, as well as the final disposition of the documents (Coutaz, 2011).

In most cases, it consists of two main parts: the introduction, which contains a brief explanation of how the schedule works, the procedures for its use, and the rules for determining the primary and secondary archival document values according to their respective lifespans. The second part is a table that enumerates the documents and the required retention period at each stage—current, intermediate, and the final disposal decision, determining whether the document should be destroyed or permanently preserved.

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5.7 *Discussion of legislation related to the evaluation process in Algeria*

Algeria is among the countries that manage and regulate their archives through legal legislation, due to its connection to administration, sovereignty, and personal data. Therefore, Algeria has enacted numerous laws in this regard. Some of these laws are directly related to evaluation, while others pertain to related processes like destruction and preservation. Both are considered indicators of its nature. When people speak of evaluation, they necessarily mention destruction or preservation. Couture (2005) clarifies that archival evaluation is applied in Britain for the purpose of destruction, while in Germany, evaluation is carried out for the purpose of preservation, not destruction.

5.7.1 *Legislative texts directly related to evaluation*

The following are some legislative texts to be stated.

5.7.1.1 *Circular No. 01 concerning the organization of the management of shared documents produced by central administrations, dated September 14, 1990.*

This circular concerns the methods of organization and management that shared archival documents produced by central administrations. Its aim is the standardization, processing, and management procedures while defining responsibilities to ensure preservation and retrieval. This is achieved through several stages, the first of which is assessment of the current state of archival practices and their compliance with regulations and legislation. The second stage involves the implementation of the necessary procedures to standardize the management of these documents and prevent their loss. This includes the appointment of a committee composed of representatives from ministries and officials from the General Directorate of National Archives to establish a comprehensive national inventory of documents produced by institutions.

5.7.1.2 *Circular No. 22 dated July 16, 2001, relating to the comprehensive lists of archival documents*

This circular came from the General Directorate of National Archives to revive the process of adjusting and preparing the comprehensive lists of archival documents in a way that allows all central departments to be provided, in the first stage, and all document producers, in the second stage, with all the conditions and mechanisms for preserving and deleting archival documents.

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5.7.1.3 ***Circular No. 25, dated June 6, 2007, addressed to all ministries, provinces, and central administrations, was issued as an awareness campaign regarding the importance of preserving archives, which are suffering from serious practices that lead to their damage and destruction***

The circular emphasized the need for stricter penalties for those found negligent, as demonstrated by the inspection campaigns conducted by the National Archives Center. Furthermore, the legislature acknowledged the significant accumulation of archives in administrative offices and storage facilities. The National Archives Center, in cooperation with all public administrations, is committed to establishing general management guidelines by developing document management schedules for both shared and sector-specific documents.

5.7.1.4 ***Circular No. 37 dated October 17, 2010, concerning the standardization of procedures for preparing archival document management schedules***

It stipulates the necessity of applying standardized and unified procedures in the management of administrative documents in order to safeguard the documents that will constitute the collective memory. Among the most important of these procedures is the standardization and regulation of the document's lifecycle until it acquires final preservation value so that it becomes a source for research and proof of rights. It also emphasizes the mandatory preparation of an archival document management schedule at all levels of Algerian administrations and institutions in order to preserve the documentary and institutional heritage by managing it at both the technical and organizational levels.

5.7.1.5 ***Circular No. 438 concerning comprehensive archival document regulations***

This circular stems from serious shortcomings in the management of archives, revealed through inspection campaigns conducted by the National Archives Directorate. This situation arose from a misunderstanding of the archives' role, leading to their neglect by many officials and poor practices. This resulted in a significant accumulation of documents, sometimes necessitating haphazard management and even their destruction without any oversight or control. Therefore, the Archives Directorate intends to revive the comprehensive inventory process initiated by some institutions, such as banks and hospitals, which unfortunately has not been followed by any support.

It is recommended that after the comprehensive inventory is completed by a senior official in each institution, it will be submitted to the National Archives Directorate for approval. This circular concludes by stating that the Archives Directorate is at the disposal and ready to support any sector or institution requiring assistance in this area.

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5.7.1.6 ***Circular No. 2 concerning the payment of unused documents in administrative departments***

This pertains to the obligation of strategic institutions like the Ministry of Defense and the Presidency of the Republic to expedite the payment of these documents. Given the availability of preservation and security conditions in archive centers, their payment must be expedited. This includes closed records such as those related to suspended activities, single-topic activities, or those whose subject matter has been exhausted.

5.7.2 ***Legislative texts related to preservation and destruction***

The following legislative texts pertain to both preservation and destruction.

5.7.2.1 ***Circular No. 03 dated February 02, 1991 concerning the management of archival documents***

This urged the necessity for officials to participate in the maintenance process. All officials at any level must personally ensure that periodic monitoring is conducted to safeguard the preservation of files in their respective departments and to necessarily transfer them from unsuitable locations where they are exposed to the dangers of fire, water leakage, sand infestation, and rodents to locations with appropriate preservation and maintenance conditions.

5.7.2.2 ***Circular No. 06-94 dated September 26, 1994 concerning the destruction of certain types of archives***

The circular outlines the procedures and controls for the destruction and disposal of archival documents that are no longer valuable in the states. Ostensibly, this legislation does not directly address the evaluation process but rather tackles its most important element: destruction, with the aim of streamlining and controlling archive management.

5.7.2.3 ***Circular No. 7-94 dated October 2, 1994 concerning the rescue of archives produced before 1962***

This work falls within the framework of the comprehensive purification program for the archives sector in Algeria to rescue what French colonialism left of archival assets that were affected by deliberate and other forms of destruction to hinder the functioning of administrations and affect historical memory. Thus, this circular obliges all ministries and institutions to inventory all archives dating back to the colonial period and place them in packages or boxes described in order to deliver them to the National Archives Center in accordance with the program established for receiving archives.

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5.7.2.4 *Circular No. 08-95 dated January 24, 1995 concerning the management of administrative archives*

It came as a reminder of the general rules that must be observed in the management of archives for all institutions stipulated in law 88/09 dated January 26, 1988 like the theory of value of archives, the preparation of storage facilities, and the appointment of a person responsible for following up on the procedures for receiving archives, with a focus on the payment process and everything related to it in terms of preparation, arrangement, coding, and preparation of the schedule. In addition, this circular gave the producing institution the right to access its archives in order to rationalize management and administration.

5.7.2.5 *Circular No. 20 dated April 1, 2001, concerning the deletion of certain types of archives*

It reinforces Circular No. 06-94 dated September 26, 1994, concerning the deletion of certain types of provincial archives by the extension of the deadlines for the destruction of files of an organizational nature, such as national identity cards, up to 1988 at the latest, ordinary passports up to 1990 at the latest, car registration cards up to 1979 at the latest... and other documents mentioned in this circular - see Circular No. 20 dated April 1, 2001.

5.7.2.6 *Circular No. 31 dated October 22, 2009, concerning procedures for the disposal of archival documents*

The application of administrative document management schedules for central administrations and public institutions will result in the disposal of a large number of documents deemed worthless. Administrations are instructed to conduct a thorough assessment of the documents slated for disposal and to ensure they do not contain any value warranting permanent preservation.

Furthermore, it was warned that halting the disposal process will lead to an accumulation of worthless documents, negatively impacting storage space, and hindering the efficient management of archives.

It emphasizes the need to take the necessary steps to prepare lists of files slated for disposal and to develop the disposal schedule template, as detailed in this circular.

5.7.2.7 *Circular No. 32 dated October 22, 2009, concerning the transfer of archives*

The circular confirmed that the transfer of archives is from offices to temporary storage facilities, and from these facilities to permanent storage institutions. In this regard, the legislator obligated the producing or receiving departments (i.e., archivists) to prepare valuable documents, discard duplicates and worthless copies,

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prepare inventory reports, and refrain from accepting archival stocks not accompanied by a payment schedule. This circular also included two forms for the transfer of archival documents: the first for transferring archives from offices to temporary storage, and the second for transferring them from temporary storage to permanent storage.

5.7.2.8 *Instruction No. 33 of 2009 concerning the disposal of archival documents*

This instruction was issued in anticipation of the potential consequences of implementing the archive management schedule, which might lead to the destruction of large quantities of worthless archival documents. Therefore, all departments were required to organize this process to avoid errors and to follow Circular No. 6 of September 26, 1994, and Instruction No. 28 of October 28, 2008, concerning the deletion of certain types of provincial archives and the procedures for their destruction.

The instruction also reiterated the sensitivity and necessity of the destruction process and the requirement to analyze and evaluate all types of documents. This is to prevent the accumulation of documents, which hinders the resulting administration and weakens the development of the national memory.

5.7.2.9 *Circular No. 301-2000 dated August 20, 2000 concerning archive management*

It was issued in response to the destruction of archives without adherence to the rules established by the National Archives Directorate. It commended the achievements of some institutions in organizing archives, while pointing out those that failed to comply with the organizational and management principles stipulated in previous legislation. This reflects a negative view of archives and a lack of understanding of their status as a symbol of national sovereignty. This situation has placed the state of archives in Algeria in a worrying position, necessitating urgent measures that cannot be delayed.

5.7.2.10 *Guidance Note No. 2 on Adopting the Principle of Respecting Archival Collections in Processing Archives*

This note focuses on respecting the natural grouping of archival documents that were formed within the producing administrative departments, avoiding their mixing with other archival documents that do not share the same function, and preserving the existing relationships between them to maintain their functional and historical context.

The multiplicity of legislative texts issued by the Directorate of National Archives, which attempt to regulate the process of evaluating archives and related operations

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such as preservation and destruction, reflects the national will develop archive policy in Algeria. However, a closer look at their contents and objectives reveals that they came in the form of administrative guidelines lacking practical and executive character, as evidenced by the phrases and formulas used in these texts.

In Circular No. 01, the legislator referred to the establishment of a committee composed of representatives of ministries and executives of the Directorate General of National Archives with the aim of creating the comprehensive national list of documents produced by institutions. However, it did not provide details that would allow for monitoring and updating these lists according to what is required by developments in some producing departments like adding new documents or changing their names and functional contexts. This was confirmed by Instruction No. 28, dated 2018.

In addition to the content of Circular No. 25 dated June 6, 2007, which began with the statement of intent to establish general management rules by preparing document management schedules, whether shared or specific to each sector, in cooperation with all public administrations, without providing details on the tools and procedures for preparing these archive management schedules.

The terms "re-establishment," "recall," "mandatory," and "regulation" related to preparing comprehensive lists of archival documents also appeared in Circular No. 438 and Circular No. 37 dated October 17, 2010, and others, in the form of warnings lacking the tools and responsibilities for evaluating archives. This is with the exception of the hints contained in Circular No. 22 dated July 16, 2001, which assigned the responsibility for preparing management schedules to officials in institutions pending their review and approval by the staff of the General Directorate of the Algerian National Archives.

6. *The Questionnaire Analysis Regarding Archivists' Opinions on the Evaluation of Archives*

After the presentation and discussion of the theoretical concepts and legislation related to the process of archives evaluation at the Algerian institutions, we will try, through this practical aspect, to measure the level of implementation of this process and the archival operations associated with it, such as destruction and preservation, based on the data we collected through the questionnaire distributed to the sample of this study.

6.1. *The scientific specialty of archivists*

In recent years, the Algerian state has witnessed a qualitative leap in the documentary aspect at its public institutions and permanent archives, through the recruitment of archivists to achieve good management on the one hand, and to ensure the preservation of its

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institutional memory on the other. However, despite these efforts, the recruitment of archivists has not reached the satisfactory level and coverage necessary to guarantee and achieve the establishment of a strong national archival system. Many institutions in Algeria lack archivists or have been replaced by employees with no connection to the field of archiving. Within the framework of this study and based on the distributed questionnaires, it has been found that 44 out of 48 employees in the field of archives are specialized archivists, representing 91.7%. This percentage is considered satisfactory given the responses to the questions related to archival evaluation and other specialized questions.

6.2. *The archivists working experience*

Years of professional practice play a vital role in acquiring skills and benefiting from training that enhances professional development and keeps abreast of all developments related to archives. Speaking of the archivists working experience in the study, it has been revealed that 32 archivists, representing 66.7%, had more than five years of experience. This is very useful in understanding the level of expertise required to conduct evaluations within archive repositories. Furthermore, extensive experience in archival work reveals the specific responsibilities involved in this process.

6.3. *The tasks assigned to archivists at the workplace*

Many institutions in Algeria assign archivists other administrative tasks, either because these institutions themselves lack interest in archives, or because they assign archivists other administrative duties that hinder them from performing their duties to the fullest extent, especially those of a sensitive nature, such as archival evaluation. This evaluation is the dividing line between the permanent preservation of archives and their destruction, which, if lost, would erase national rights and memory. In this regard, the institution responsible for archives in Algeria issued legislation prohibiting the assignment of archivists to other tasks and emphasizing the necessity of remaining within the professional framework for which they were hired. Data collected from the questionnaires demonstrated that many institutions assign archivists, either wholly or partially, administrative tasks in addition to their archival duties. This figure reached 45.8%, with 8.3% of archivists being entirely assigned administrative tasks. This negatively impacts the performance of archival work, particularly the evaluation of archives, which is the subject of this study.

6.4. *The accumulation of archival holdings in storage facilities*

The majority of respondents (83.4%) agreed that archival documents have accumulated in storage facilities. This percentage indicates a lack of archival evaluation in these institutions and the

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indiscriminate storage of all archival documents. Those who denied the existence of excessive archival holdings in their institutions (16.6%) attributed this to the presence of approved archival evaluation schedules and shared document schedules, approved by senior management. Municipalities and universities are among the most prominent institutions exhibiting this issue. The excessive archival holdings identified by the study sample are a serious indicator of the loss of valuable documents due to their mixing with worthless ones, negatively impacting institutional and national memory.

6.5. *Integration and organization of archives in institutions*

Archival theory rests on two fundamental conditions for the transfer and handling of archives: original order and source. Archivists should respect these when transferring archives, as removing documents from their original order disrupts the relationships between them. The source stipulates the necessity of preserving records of different origins separately and in their original context. Together, these two principles constitute the principle of the archive respect.

The principle of original arrangement pertains to the internal situation while the principle of source concerns the external situation of the collection. Through these two principles, the archivist maintains the organic nature of the archive as evidence of activities and transactions.

The organization and integration of archival documents is a clear indicator of success in carrying out all archival work, from receiving the archive to its final preservation. In this study, responses regarding the level of organization and integration of archives at the institutions studied in Algeria varied. 33.3% of respondents indicated that it was good, and this is the same group that previously indicated in *Question 4* that they had conducted an evaluation of the archive. Those who stated that the organization and integration of archives was weak in their institutions constituted 3%, and these belonged to institutions that did not pay attention to archives. Perhaps the most significant evidence of this is the assignment of non-specialists in archival work to perform archival tasks, as observed in the responses to *Question 1*. These are the same individuals who were assigned administrative tasks, excluding archival work, as explained in the responses to *Question 3*.

6.6. *Administrator intervention in archivist work*

This question aimed to determine the limits and levels of document producer intervention in archivist work, seeking to identify indicators of responsibility for archival evaluation at the Algerian institutions. Is this responsibility held by the archivist, the document producer, or a

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third party? The responses from the sample revealed that, in most cases, document producers do not intervene, despite possessing the necessary archival qualifications and certifications, as seen in the answers to *Questions 1* and *3*. This demonstrates the lack of intervention by document producers in archivist work with 75% reporting no intervention whatsoever and 16.7% indicating intervention only in certain cases and at certain times. Those who confirmed administrative intervention in archivist work comprised 8.3%, and these were, of course, employees not involved in document evaluation at the Algerian institutions under investigation.

6.7. *Methods of transferring archives from producers' offices to storage warehouses*

Perhaps the most prominent indicator of the success or failure of the archive management process in an institution is the smooth transfer and circulation of documents between offices and temporary storage departments in an easy and controlled manner that ensures their safety and validity. This is only achieved through following the tools and guidelines provided by legislation like the obligation to use the archive payment schedule and the procedures for archival arrangement and coding. In this question, more than half of the archivists in the study, at a rate of 58.3%, indicated that the archive is transferred and circulated in a legal manner through the preparation of the payment schedule and the authentication of its three copies. This led to the integration of the archival balances that they expressed in *Question 5*.

6.8. *Responsibility of archives sorting and evaluation within temporary storage facilities*

Given the importance of the sorting and evaluation process and the potential consequences of losing documents of scientific and historical value, all parties are hesitant to undertake this process, especially in the absence of legislation and tools such as archive management schedules. In Algeria, despite the existence of some legislation, the responsibility for evaluation remains unclear among the parties involved in the management and administration of archival documents, such as the document producer, the archivist working in temporary archives, and the archivist working in permanent storage facilities.

This study aimed to identify those responsible for archival evaluation and the tools used. We posed a question to our sample, revealing that 79.2% of archivists conduct the evaluation independently, without the involvement of the document producer or any other external party. These archivists were divided into two groups: 33.3% used the archive management schedule for shared departmental documents, also known as the comprehensive list, while 29.2% did so without any tools or guidelines. This latter

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group relied on their own judgment, particularly regarding certain archival documents that experienced archivists (66.7%) had previously refrained from using.

As for the archivists who cooperate with the document producer in the evaluation process by guiding and clarifying which documents are valuable and which are not, their percentage was 16.7%. This is consistent with the archivist's overlap with other administrative work in question number 6, which reached 37.5% of those who were assigned administrative tasks along with archival tasks, with the denial of the document producer's monopoly over the archivist's evaluation process by consensus.

We also do not forget the percentage of those who admitted not carrying out the evaluation process at all, which reached 20.8%. This is the direct reason for the accumulation of archives recorded in the institutions' warehouses that reached 83.4%.

6.9. *The archivist's participation in senior management meetings to discuss the final fate of archival documents*

It is unreasonable to find some institutions marginalizing archivists from meetings where the development of their activities and future are discussed. The archivist's role, as Thomassen (2001) described it, is both a guide and a tool to support operational management and a source of knowledge or historical memory. These two functions are referred to as the primary and secondary functions.

The archivists in this study indicated that 80.9% of them did not discuss the fate of documents or determine their various values in management meetings. This is due, of course, to the lack of interest from officials within the institution and the absence of a clear national policy regulating their management and care through clear legislation and rigorous inspection visits.

6.10. *Difficulties hindering the archive evaluation process*

All the archivists interviewed in the study summarized the question regarding the difficulties of evaluating the archive as being due to the large accumulation and the difficulty of dealing with it, in addition to the lack of interest by the producers and their reluctance to transfer it to temporary preservation services; That affected its membership and integrity, not to mention those arbitrary behaviors practiced by the producers. For example, the random payment of the archive and the disruption of the archive evaluation process by not striving to create tools for its application, perhaps the most important of which is proposing management schedules for the archival documents belonging to their sector.

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6.11. *Awareness of Algerian archivists of the texts and legislation related to the evaluation of archival documents*

The archivists who were affected by this study mentioned a group of legislation, most of which are not related to the subject of this study, but rather talk about the management of archives in general without detail like the Algerian Archives Law 88/09 dated January 26, 1988, and some texts related to one of the processes pertains to evaluation, such as Circular No. 03 dated February 2, 1991, concerning the management of archival documents, and Circular No. 32 dated October 22, 2009, concerning the payment of documents that have become unused in administrative departments.

In addition to mentioning legislation that is not related to archives at all, such as Law No. 18-07 aimed at protecting natural persons in the field of processing personal data, and Law No. 15-04 dated February 1, 2015, which sets the general rules for electronic signatures and certifications to ensure the safety and reliability of transactions over the Internet, anyone who examines the answers received will find a kind of illiteracy among archivists regarding the legislative aspect, which is the basis of their professional practices. Its ignorance is one of the main reasons for not carrying out archival operations to the fullest extent and for evaluating the archive in particular.

7. *The Study Results*

- Most archives at the Algerian institutions are overflowing with accumulated and mixed archives due to a lack of evaluation and sorting. This is a consequence of the absence of specialized archive management systems for each sector, with the exception of municipalities and the justice sector. Furthermore, the existing shared document management system is inadequate because it has not been updated since 1990 to reflect the new, amended, or canceled documents created by Algerian institutions.

- The majority of the Algerian legislation that deals with the evaluation of archives consists of guidance circulars that direct archivists to the broad outlines of the process of evaluating archives and the processes related to it in theory without detailing them in practice.

- Archivists and producers of archival documents are reluctant to evaluate and sort the archive because it is linked to a sensitive process, namely the final destruction of evidence and documents of historical value. This may result in strict administrative penalties and legal proceedings.

- The Algerian National Archives Center assumes responsibility for evaluating archives in some cases, and this is clearly demonstrated by the legislation it has issued to destroy and delete some types of archival documents and to mandate the final preservation of others.

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8. *Conclusion*

It is impossible for Algerian institutions to reach a controlled archival environment that contributes to supporting their administrative activities, corrects their strategic decisions, preserves their institutional and national memory, and allows them to move to technological environments easily and safely without paying attention to the archivist and archival processes, especially evaluation. This is due to its importance in sorting archival documents of administrative and historical value from those of no value, which weaken the archiving process by disrupting the retrieval of important documents, and the financial costs required for their preservation or digitization in addition to the storage spaces they occupy and hinder their management.

To regulate the process of evaluating archives in Algeria, three essential parts should cooperate. The first is the producer of documents, who is responsible for the process, by listing all documents, coding them, determining their administrative value at the level of offices and temporary storage facilities, and proposing their final fate, whether destruction or permanent preservation. The second part is the archivists, who are responsible for the implementation of the evaluation process after discussing it with the third part, which is the National Archives Center, as an expert in the success of this process, approving it, or modifying it according to the consultations it receives from historians and specialists in various scientific fields of the administrative sectors, in order to finally give it a mandatory and legal character by formulating it in a legislative text directed to institutions for the purpose of using it and adhering to its contents.

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