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CONCEPTUALISING ARCHIVAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN JORDAN: POLICY, DIGITISATION, AND PUBLIC ACCESS

This study examines the transformation of archival governance from a traditional protection-oriented paradigm to an integrated management framework, with a specific focus on the Jordanian context. While archival institutions have historically prioritised the safeguarding and preservation of documentary materials, contemporary developments in digital technology, governance models, and public expectations necessitate a broader and more strategic approach. A hypothesis is proposed that leads to an integrated model for managing the efficiency, accessibility, and public value of archival institutions. Adopting a qualitative analytical methodology, the research draws on international legal frameworks, heritage management guidelines, and archival theory to assess the conceptual and structural evolution of documentary heritage governance. A comparative analytical framework is employed to identify the key differences between protection-based and management-oriented models, particularly in relation to policy coherence, digitisation strategies, and public accessibility. The findings reveal that archival governance in Jordan remains largely influenced by custodial practices, with emerging yet fragmented digitisation initiatives and limited structured public engagement mechanisms. The study highlights the absence of comprehensive management plans and coordinated national digitisation policies as critical gaps. The paper argues that effective archival heritage management in Jordan requires the integration of three interdependent pillars:

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КОНЦЕПТУАЛІЗАЦІЯ УПРАВЛІННЯ АРХІВНОЮ СПАДЩИНОЮ В ЙОРДАНІЇ: ПОЛІТИКА, ОЦИФРУВАННЯ ТА ПУБЛІЧНИЙ ДОСТУП

Розглянуто трансформацію управління архівною справою від традиційної парадигми, орієнтованої на охорону, до інтегрованої моделі управління, з акцентом на Йорданії. Якщо історично для архівних установ у пріоритеті були захист і збереження документальних матеріалів, то сучасні тенденції у сфері цифрових технологій, моделей управління та суспільних очікувань зумовлюють необхідність ширшого та більш стратегічного підходу. Висунуто гіпотезу, яка передбачає створення інтегрованої моделі управління ефективністю, доступністю та суспільною цінністю архівних установ. Застосовуючи якісну аналітичну методологію, дослідження спирається на міжнародно-правові рамки, рекомендації у сфері управління культурною спадщиною та архівну теорію для оцінювання концептуальної й структурної еволюції управління документальною спадщиною. Для визначення ключових відмінностей між моделями, заснованими на охороні, та моделями, орієнтованими на управління, використано порівняльно-аналітичний підхід зокрема щодо узгодженості політики, стратегій цифровізації та доступності архівних матеріалів для громадськості. Результати дослідження свідчать, що управління архівною справою в Йорданії значною мірою залишається під впливом традиційних практик зберігання документів. Водночас спостерігаються нові, проте фрагментарні ініціативи з цифровізації та обмежені механізми системної взаємодії з громадськістю. Наголошено на відсутності комплексних планів управління та скоординованої національної



strategic policy development, structured digitisation frameworks, and inclusive access mechanisms. By aligning national practices with international standards—particularly UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme—Jordan can reposition its archives as dynamic cultural assets that contribute to transparency, knowledge production, and national identity formation in the digital age (UNESCO, 2015).

Keywords: heritage management, World Programme, digital technology, governance models, Archival, Conceptualising.

політики цифровізації, що є критичними прогалинами у цій сфері. Обґрунтовано, що ефективне управління архівною спадщиною в Йорданії потребує інтеграції трьох взаємозалежних складових: стратегічного формування політики, структурованих механізмів цифровізації та інклюзивних механізмів доступу. Узгоджуючи національні практики з міжнародними стандартами, зокрема з програмою ЮНЕСКО "Пам'ять світу" (Memory of the World Programme), Йорданія може перетворити свої архіви на динамічні культурні ресурси, що сприятимуть прозорості, продукуванню знань та формуванню національної ідентичності в цифрову епоху (UNESCO, 2015).

Ключові слова: управління культурною спадщиною, програма "Пам'ять світу", цифрові технології, моделі управління, архівна справа, концептуалізація.

JEL Classification: Z11, Z18, O38, D83, L86.

Introduction

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical perspective to reconceptualise archival heritage management in Jordan within the broader framework of policy development, digitisation strategies, and public access mechanisms. Given the conceptual and governance-oriented nature of the research problem, the study relies on doctrinal analysis, comparative review, and policy evaluation rather than quantitative measurement.

The research is grounded in a theoretical–analytical approach that examines the transition from a protection-oriented paradigm to an integrated management model in archival governance. This shift reflects global developments in archival science, where preservation is increasingly linked to accessibility, digital transformation, and public engagement. The analytical framework presented in Table is used as a conceptual tool to assess the dimensions of this transformation.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, the study draws on multiple categories of sources, including international legal and policy frameworks (such as UNESCO conventions and Memory of the World Programme guidelines), national legislative and institutional regulations in Jordan, relevant scholarly literature on archival theory and digital transformation, and selected comparative international experiences that illustrate best practices in archival management.

The analysis is structured around key dimensions of archival governance, including philosophical foundations, policy orientation, institutional roles, digitisation strategies, access mechanisms, public engagement, and governance evaluation. These dimensions are examined through a comparative lens, contrasting the traditional protection-based model with the proposed integrated management model in the Jordanian context (Conway, 2010).

The study proceeds through three main stages: conceptual analysis, policy assessment, and synthesis for model development. Rather than

producing statistical generalisations, the research aims to provide a normative and strategic contribution to archival heritage governance. It is limited to publicly available documents and does not include empirical data collection. Ethical standards are fully maintained, as no personal or confidential data are used (Department of Antiquities of Jordan, n. d.).

Objective

- To examine the transformation of archival governance from a traditional protection-oriented model to an integrated management framework.
- To analyse the current state of archival governance in the Jordanian context.
- To evaluate policy coherence, digitisation strategies, and public access mechanisms within archival institutions.
- To identify structural and conceptual gaps in national archival management practices.
- To propose an integrated framework based on policy development, digitisation, and inclusive access.

A hypothesis is proposed that leads to an integrated model for managing the efficiency, accessibility, and public value of archival institutions.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative analytical approach. It relies on documentary analysis of international legal frameworks, heritage management guidelines, and archival theories.

A comparative analytical framework is used to distinguish between protection-based archival models and management-oriented archival governance models.

The analysis focuses on three dimensions: Policy structure, Digitisation strategies; Public accessibility mechanisms

Results

Archival governance in Jordan remains predominantly custodial and protection-focused.

- Digitisation initiatives exist but are fragmented and lack national coordination.
- There is an absence of comprehensive strategic management plans for archival heritage.
- Public engagement and structured access mechanisms are limited.
- Current practices do not fully align with integrated international archival governance standards.

Scientific contribution

- The study introduces a conceptual shift from traditional archival preservation to integrated archival heritage management within the Jordanian context.
- It proposes a three-pillar model consisting of:
 - Strategic policy development.
 - Structured digitisation frameworks.

- Inclusive public access mechanisms.
- The research bridges a gap between archival theory, heritage management, and digital governance.
- It provides a policy-oriented framework that aligns national archival practices with international standards, particularly UNESCO-related initiatives.
- The study contributes to repositioning archives as dynamic cultural and knowledge assets rather than static repositories.

The changing role of archives in society

The transformation of the archive's role in society has long been a subject of scholarly reflection. Early historiographical analyses – most notably those presented by the French archivist Robert-Henri Bautier – outlined the historical evolution of archives across several stages, from palace repositories in antiquity to "arsenals of power" in the early modern period, and later to "laboratories of history" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While this classification effectively captures the pre-digital phases of archival development, it does not fully account for the profound transformations brought about by digital technologies and new models of governance.

In the twenty-first century, archives have entered a new era characterised by digitisation, networked information systems, and expanding public engagement. No longer confined to administrative or purely scholarly functions, archives increasingly serve educational, communicative, and cultural roles. International academic debates have emphasised that archival science is undergoing a paradigm shift—moving beyond custodial preservation toward participatory, policy-driven, and access-oriented frameworks.

This reconceptualisation is particularly relevant to Jordan. As digital transformation reshapes public institutions, archives are no longer perceived merely as repositories of legal or historical records. Instead, they function as dynamic institutions that contribute to transparency, research innovation, civic education, and the strengthening of national identity. The emergence of digitisation initiatives, electronic records management systems, and open-access platforms has expanded the archive's communicative capacity, connecting past and present while facilitating broader societal interaction with documentary heritage.

Contemporary archival discourse highlights several core functions of modern archives: administrative accountability, scientific research support, public education, and cultural communication. In Jordan, these functions increasingly intersect within a policy environment that recognises archives as strategic cultural assets. The educational function enhances historical awareness and civic engagement; the communicative function fosters intergenerational dialogue; and the cultural function positions archives as pillars of collective memory within national development strategies.

Furthermore, modern philosophical and cultural theories have reinforced the understanding of archives as cultural phenomena rather than merely technical repositories. The "archival turn" in the humanities has

underscored the archive's influence on identity formation, memory politics, and historical reconstruction. Within this framework, archival documents are not only evidentiary instruments but also cultural artefacts whose value often extends beyond individual records to entire fonds and collections.

In light of these transformations, archival heritage management in Jordan requires a comprehensive policy framework that integrates preservation, digitisation, and public accessibility. The shift from protection to management reflects a broader recognition that sustainable heritage governance must balance safeguarding documentary integrity with ensuring inclusive access and societal relevance.

The structure of this article is organised as follows. The next section examines the theoretical foundations of archival governance and the transition from protection to management models. This is followed by an analysis of the current state of archival practices in Jordan, including institutional frameworks and digitisation initiatives. The subsequent section presents a comparative evaluation of traditional and integrated archival management approaches. Finally, the article concludes with a proposed conceptual model and policy recommendations for enhancing archival heritage management in Jordan.

1. Theoretical framework: the transformation of the archive and the emergence of a new management paradigm

The role of archives has undergone profound transformation throughout history, reflecting broader political, social, and epistemological shifts. Traditionally, archives were closely associated with authority and governance. In ancient and medieval contexts, archival repositories primarily functioned as instruments of political control and legal authentication. During the early modern period, archives increasingly became administrative tools – often described as "arsenals of power – serving state institutions and reinforcing centralised authority. By the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archives evolved into what scholars termed "laboratories of history," supporting academic research and historical reconstruction.

This historical trajectory, however, largely reflects the pre-digital era. The emergence of digital technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has fundamentally altered both the structure and the societal function of archives. Digitisation, electronic records management, big data environments, and online platforms have transformed archives from relatively closed custodial institutions into open, interactive, and networked knowledge systems. Consequently, archival science is no longer confined to preservation techniques; it increasingly engages with governance models, digital policy, information ethics, and public communication strategies.

This transformation has generated what many scholars describe as a paradigmatic shift – from a protection-oriented model to a management-oriented model of archival heritage. The traditional paradigm emphasised safeguarding physical documents, maintaining provenance, and ensuring legal authenticity. While these principles remain foundational, contemporary

archival governance demands broader responsibilities: strategic planning, digital infrastructure development, user-centred services, and institutional transparency. Archives are now expected not only to preserve memory but also to facilitate access, foster civic engagement, and contribute to knowledge economies (Harrison, 2013).

The theoretical "archival turn" in the humanities further reinforces this shift. Philosophical and cultural studies have reconceptualised archives as sites of power, identity construction, and collective memory formation. Within this framework, archival documents are not merely neutral historical traces; they are cultural artefacts embedded in political, social, and interpretative contexts. The archive thus emerges as a dynamic cultural institution whose influence extends beyond historiography into education, public discourse, and nation-building processes.

In the Jordanian context, this theoretical evolution is particularly significant. Jordan's documentary heritage reflects diverse historical layers – administrative, political, cultural, and social – that collectively shape national identity. As digital transformation accelerates across public institutions, archival governance must respond with comprehensive management strategies that integrate preservation, digitisation, and public accessibility. The growing demand for open information, academic research support, and digital services underscores the necessity of aligning archival practice with contemporary governance standards.

Moreover, international frameworks – such as UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme – highlight the importance of documentary heritage as a global cultural asset. These frameworks encourage member states to adopt structured management plans, digitisation policies, and public engagement initiatives. For Jordan, aligning national archival strategies with such international standards strengthens institutional credibility and enhances the visibility of its documentary heritage on the global stage (Jordan National Library, n. d.).

The reconceptualisation of archival heritage management in Jordan, therefore, requires a multidimensional approach. First, it demands policy innovation that clearly defines the archive's cultural, educational, and administrative functions. Second, it necessitates investment in digital infrastructure capable of ensuring long-term preservation and secure public access. Third, it calls for participatory strategies that position archives as communicative institutions serving scholars, policymakers, students, and the broader public.

In this light, archives in Jordan should no longer be perceived solely as custodians of historical records. Rather, they must be understood as strategic cultural institutions operating at the intersection of governance, technology, and society. By adopting an integrated management paradigm, Jordan can transform its archival system into a sustainable, accessible, and policy-driven framework that balances preservation with innovation.

This theoretical foundation supports the central argument of this study: that effective archival heritage governance in Jordan depends on

redefining archives as dynamic cultural assets managed through coherent policies, advanced digitisation strategies, and inclusive public access mechanisms (Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, 2012).

2. From cultural heritage protection to heritage management: conceptual and policy foundations

The concept of cultural heritage protection emerged formally in the early twentieth century and was consolidated through a series of international conventions adopted after the Second World War. Initially, the primary concern of the international community was safeguarding cultural property from destruction, particularly during armed conflicts. Legal instruments such as the 1907 Hague Conventions laid early foundations for the protection of cultural assets, while the devastating losses of libraries, archives, and monuments during the world wars highlighted the urgent need for stronger international frameworks.

A decisive turning point occurred in 1954 with the adoption of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict under the auspices of UNESCO. For the first time, the term "cultural property" was formally codified in international law, establishing principles of protection and restitution. Subsequent developments, particularly the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, broadened the scope of heritage governance by defining categories of cultural value and introducing the World Heritage List as a global recognition mechanism (Gilliland, 2016).

While these instruments primarily emphasised preservation and safeguarding, the late twentieth century witnessed a conceptual expansion from protection toward management. This shift was driven by several factors: the growing complexity of heritage assets, increased public expectations for access, and the rapid development of digital technologies. UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, established in 1992, marked a critical step in recognising documentary heritage as a distinct and globally significant category. By promoting registers of documentary heritage and encouraging digitisation initiatives, the programme underscored not only preservation but also accessibility and public awareness.

The transition from protection to management was further institutionalised through methodological guidelines that introduced the concept of the "management plan" for cultural heritage assets. These guidelines emphasised strategic planning, stakeholder coordination, budgeting, documentation, monitoring, and periodic evaluation. Heritage governance was thus reframed as a continuous, policy-driven process rather than a purely reactive conservation effort.

In the contemporary era, international policy frameworks increasingly integrate digitization and open access as central pillars of heritage

management. Initiatives such as UNESCO's Information for All Programme (IFAP) and European digitisation strategies have promoted long-term digital preservation, online accessibility, and inclusive cultural participation. The principle of "culture accessible to all" reflects a broader democratic vision of heritage governance in the digital age.

Within the Jordanian context, this global evolution has significant implications. Jordan possesses a rich documentary and archival heritage reflecting administrative, political, and cultural developments across different historical periods. While traditional protection mechanisms remain essential, they are no longer sufficient to address the challenges of digital transformation and expanding public demand for transparency and research access.

Reconceptualising archival heritage management in Jordan, therefore, requires moving beyond a preservation-centred model toward an integrated framework grounded in policy coherence, digitisation strategies, and inclusive access mechanisms. This entails the development of structured national management plans for documentary heritage, investment in digital infrastructure, and alignment with international standards such as the Memory of the World Programme.

Ultimately, the distinction between "protection" and "management" is not merely terminological. Protection represents a necessary but limited defensive approach, whereas management reflects a proactive, strategic, and sustainable model of governance. For Jordan, adopting this reconceptualised approach offers an opportunity to strengthen archival institutions as dynamic cultural assets that contribute to national identity, knowledge production, institutional transparency, and long-term cultural sustainability (Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, 2012).

3. A project-based approach to documentary heritage management in Jordan

The responsibility of the state toward cultural and documentary heritage extends beyond mere protection and physical preservation. It also includes the creation of institutional, legal, and technological conditions that ensure effective use, public engagement, and sustainable dissemination. In the contemporary governance framework, equal access to national heritage implies that different categories of citizens will engage with archives in diverse ways, often beyond the traditional reading room environment.

Historically, archival users were generally divided into two primary categories: scholars conducting academic research and citizens seeking administrative or legal documentation. However, the expansion of the concept of cultural values and the growing recognition of archives as institutions of collective memory have significantly broadened the profile of archival users. Today, archives increasingly serve educators, students, civil society actors, media professionals, and members of the general public whose interaction with

archival documents is motivated by educational, cultural, or identity-related interests rather than strictly scientific research (Rick et al., 2013).

This transformation necessitates a shift in service delivery models. Within a modern heritage management paradigm, archives are expected to adopt a project-based approach that promotes documentary heritage in accessible and innovative ways. Such projects go beyond traditional document provision; they present archival materials as cultural artefacts embedded within historical narratives. This approach integrates contextual interpretation, biographical information, visual representation, and digital storytelling, thereby enhancing public understanding and engagement (Rothenberg, 1999).

In the Jordanian context, a project-based management strategy could include a range of initiatives:

- physical and digital exhibitions of archival documents;
- online documentary publications and thematic digital collections;
- educational workshops and training programs on archival literacy;
- public lectures, roundtables, and community outreach events;
- development of searchable digital databases;
- virtual tours and interactive digital platforms;
- collaborative digitisation and transcription initiatives involving universities and civil society organisations.

International experiences demonstrate the effectiveness of such approaches. Large-scale digital heritage platforms have successfully integrated millions of cultural records while enabling public participation through transcription, annotation, and geotagging tools. These models highlight the importance of partnerships between state institutions, academic bodies, and the private sector in expanding access and technological capacity.

For Jordan, adopting a structured project-based framework requires coherent policy planning and sustainable funding mechanisms. While digitisation efforts have begun in several institutions, the level of digital infrastructure and open-access systems remains uneven. A comprehensive management model should therefore include:

- a national digitisation strategy for archival materials;
- clear standards for metadata, digital preservation, and cybersecurity;
- mechanisms for public-private partnerships;
- evaluation tools to assess user engagement and societal impact;
- continuous revision of project plans based on feedback and performance indicators.

Importantly, the effectiveness of project-based archival management depends not only on the creation of digital content but also on systematic monitoring and policy adaptation. Without structured assessment mechanisms, projects risk remaining isolated initiatives rather than components of a sustainable heritage governance strategy (Throsby, 2012).

Thus, reconceptualising archival heritage management in Jordan requires embedding project development within a broader policy-driven framework that balances preservation, digitisation, and inclusive public access. By institutionalizing this approach, Jordan can strengthen the role of its archives as dynamic cultural institutions that support education, transparency, national identity, and knowledge production in the digital age (*Table*).

Table

From protection-oriented archives
to integrated archival heritage management in Jordan

Dimension	Traditional protection model	Integrated management model (reconceptualised approach for Jordan)
Philosophical foundation	Preservation of physical documents as state property	Recognition of archives as dynamic cultural assets and instruments of collective memory
Primary objective	Safeguarding and preventing loss or damage	Strategic governance integrating preservation, digitisation, accessibility, and societal engagement
Institutional role	Custodial repository	Cultural, educational, communicative, and governance-oriented institution
Policy orientation	Reactive and conservation-focused	Proactive, policy-driven, and aligned with national development strategies
User categories	Researchers and individuals seeking legal documentation	Scholars, students, educators, civil society, media, policymakers, and the general public
Access mechanisms	Physical reading rooms, restricted consultation	Hybrid access: digital platforms, online databases, virtual exhibitions, open-access tools
Digitization strategy	Limited or ad hoc digitisation	National digitisation strategy with metadata standards, digital preservation protocols, and cybersecurity safeguards
Public engagement	Minimal outreach activities	Project-based initiatives: exhibitions, educational programs, workshops, digital storytelling
Governance framework	Administrative regulations focused on document custody	Comprehensive management plans with monitoring, evaluation, and stakeholder coordination
International alignment	Compliance with basic protection conventions	Alignment with UNESCO Memory of the World Programme and global digital heritage standards
Impact measurement	No systematic performance assessment	Impact evaluation based on accessibility indicators, user engagement metrics, and societal contribution

Source: developed by the author.

As illustrated in *Table*, the transition from a protection-oriented paradigm to an integrated management framework represents not merely an administrative reform, but a conceptual transformation in the governance of documentary heritage in Jordan. This reconceptualisation positions archives at the intersection of policy, technology, and public access, thereby enhancing their relevance within contemporary cultural and knowledge systems.

4. Results

The findings of this study reveal a clear conceptual and structural gap between the traditional protection-oriented model of archival governance and the requirements of an integrated management paradigm suited to the digital era. The analysis demonstrates that while foundational preservation principles remain essential, they are insufficient to address contemporary challenges related to digitisation, accessibility, and public engagement.

4.1. Persistence of the protection-oriented paradigm

The review of institutional and policy frameworks indicates that archival governance in Jordan remains predominantly influenced by a custodial logic. Emphasis is placed on safeguarding physical records, maintaining provenance, and ensuring legal authenticity. While these functions form the backbone of archival integrity, they reflect a defensive and preservation-centred philosophy rather than a proactive management strategy.

4.2. Emerging but fragmented digitisation efforts

The study identifies ongoing digitisation initiatives; however, these efforts appear fragmented and institution-specific rather than embedded within a unified national strategy. The absence of standardised metadata frameworks, long-term digital preservation policies, and integrated public access platforms limits the transformative potential of digitisation. As a result, digital access remains partial and uneven.

4.3. Limited public engagement mechanisms

The analysis confirms that archival services are still primarily oriented toward researchers and administrative users. Although awareness of broader educational and cultural functions is increasing, structured outreach programs, interactive digital platforms, and participatory initiatives remain underdeveloped. This limits the archive's capacity to function as a dynamic institution of collective memory.

4.4. Absence of comprehensive management plans

One of the most significant findings is the lack of comprehensive, policy-driven management plans tailored specifically to documentary heritage governance. International best practices emphasise strategic planning, stakeholder coordination, performance indicators, and continuous evaluation. The absence of such structured planning mechanisms constrains institutional adaptability and long-term sustainability.

4.5. Need for an integrated governance framework

The comparative analytical framework developed in this study highlights the necessity of transitioning toward an integrated management model characterised by:

- strategic national digitisation policies;
- hybrid access systems combining physical and digital services;
- project-based public engagement initiatives;
- institutional performance monitoring and evaluation;
- alignment with international standards such as UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme.

This reconceptualised approach positions archives not merely as custodians of documents but as active cultural and governance institutions contributing to transparency, education, and national identity formation.

4.6. Strategic implications for Jordan

The results suggest that adopting a comprehensive archival heritage management model would significantly enhance the societal relevance and international visibility of Jordan's documentary heritage. By integrating policy coherence, digital infrastructure, and inclusive access mechanisms, archives can evolve into strategic assets within the broader framework of cultural governance and knowledge-based development.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that archival governance in Jordan stands at a transitional stage between a traditional custodial paradigm and an emerging, yet not fully institutionalised, management-oriented framework. This transition mirrors broader global developments in archival science, where the emphasis has shifted from physical preservation toward strategic governance integrating digitisation, policy alignment, and inclusive access.

From a theoretical perspective, the persistence of a protection-centred approach reflects the historical foundations of archival institutions as instruments of legal authority and state administration. However, contemporary archival discourse—particularly within the context of the "archival turn" in the humanities—redefines archives as active cultural agents shaping collective memory, identity formation, and public knowledge. The results of this study demonstrate that while the philosophical recognition of this transformation is gradually emerging, its practical institutionalisation within Jordan remains incomplete.

The fragmentation of digitisation initiatives identified in the Results section highlights a structural challenge. Digitisation, when implemented without a unified national strategy, risks becoming a technical exercise rather than a transformative governance tool. International experiences demonstrate that successful archival digitisation requires standardised metadata systems, interoperable platforms, cybersecurity safeguards, and sustainable funding

models. Without these components, digital efforts may increase visibility but fail to ensure long-term preservation or equitable access.

Moreover, the limited scope of public engagement suggests that archives have not yet fully embraced their educational and communicative functions. In modern heritage governance, public outreach is not an auxiliary activity but a core institutional responsibility. Project-based initiatives—such as digital exhibitions, collaborative transcription platforms, and educational partnerships—enable archives to interact dynamically with diverse user communities. The absence of systematic evaluation mechanisms further limits the ability to measure societal impact and adjust policies accordingly.

The discussion also underscores the importance of policy coherence. A comprehensive management plan for documentary heritage should articulate long-term objectives, define institutional responsibilities, allocate resources strategically, and establish measurable performance indicators. Such planning mechanisms transform archival governance from reactive administration into proactive cultural management. In the Jordanian context, integrating archival policy within broader national digital transformation strategies would significantly enhance institutional efficiency and international alignment (World Bank, n. d.).

Importantly, the distinction between protection and management is not merely operational but conceptual. Protection emphasises safeguarding against loss; management emphasises maximising value. In the digital age, the cultural, educational, and governance value of archives depends not only on their preservation but also on their accessibility and usability. By reconceptualising archives as strategic cultural assets rather than passive repositories, Jordan can strengthen transparency, support academic research, and reinforce national identity.

Thus, the discussion reinforces the central argument of this study: that effective archival heritage governance in Jordan requires an integrated model grounded in policy innovation, structured digitisation strategies, and inclusive public access mechanisms. The transition toward this model is both a necessity and an opportunity—one that aligns archival institutions with contemporary expectations of openness, participation, and knowledge-based development (Yakel, 2007).

6. Policy recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed to support the transition from a protection-oriented archival framework to an integrated management model in Jordan.

6.1. *Develop a national archival heritage management strategy*

A comprehensive national strategy should be formulated to define long-term objectives for documentary heritage governance. This strategy must integrate preservation, digitisation, access, and public engagement

within a unified policy framework. Clear institutional mandates, timelines, performance indicators, and evaluation mechanisms should be established to ensure accountability and sustainability.

6.2. Establish a structured national digitisation plan

Digitisation efforts should move beyond isolated institutional initiatives toward a coordinated national program. This plan should include:

- standardised metadata and cataloguing systems;
- long-term digital preservation protocols;
- cybersecurity and data protection measures;
- interoperable digital platforms linking archival institutions;
- sustainable funding mechanisms.

A centralised digital portal for Jordanian documentary heritage could significantly enhance accessibility and international visibility.

6.3. Strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks

Existing archival legislation should be reviewed and updated to reflect contemporary digital realities. Legal reforms should address electronic records management, digital authenticity standards, public access policies, and data governance principles. Clear guidelines regarding open access and privacy protection are essential for balancing transparency with legal safeguards.

6.4. Institutionalise project-based public engagement

Archives should systematically adopt project-based initiatives to expand their educational and cultural functions. Recommended initiatives include:

- digital and physical thematic exhibitions;
- educational partnerships with schools and universities;
- public lectures and community outreach programs;
- collaborative digitisation and transcription projects;
- virtual tours and interactive online platforms.

these initiatives should be integrated into annual institutional planning cycles and evaluated through measurable engagement indicators.

6.5. Promote capacity building and professional development

Archival staff training must expand beyond traditional preservation skills to include digital competencies, data management, public communication, and project management. Partnerships with universities and international heritage organisations can facilitate knowledge transfer and professional development.

6.6. Encourage public-private and academic partnerships

Strategic collaboration with universities, research centres, civil society organisations, and the private sector can enhance technological capacity and financial sustainability. Such partnerships may support digitisation projects, digital platform development, and community-based heritage initiatives.

6.7. Implement monitoring and impact evaluation mechanisms

Effective heritage management requires systematic performance assessment. Institutions should develop measurable indicators related to:

- digital access rates;
- user diversity;
- educational outreach impact;
- research utilisation;
- international cooperation outcomes.

Continuous evaluation will enable evidence-based policy adjustments and long-term strategic improvement.

Strategic outlook

By adopting these recommendations, Jordan can transform its archival institutions into dynamic, policy-driven cultural assets aligned with international standards. The shift toward integrated archival heritage management will not only strengthen preservation efforts but also enhance transparency, knowledge production, and national identity formation in the digital age.

Conclusions

This study set out to reconceptualize archival heritage management in Jordan by examining the transition from a traditional protection-oriented paradigm to an integrated management framework. The findings directly address this objective by demonstrating that preservation alone is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the digital era. Instead, effective archival governance requires the integration of policy development, digitization strategies, and public access mechanisms within a unified system.

The study confirms the proposed hypothesis that a shift toward an integrated management model enhances the efficiency, accessibility, and societal value of archival institutions. The analysis shows that archives must move beyond custodial roles to function as dynamic entities contributing to knowledge dissemination, transparency, and cultural identity. At the same time, the findings highlight that the absence of coordinated national strategies in Jordan—particularly in digitisation and public engagement—remains a key limitation that must be addressed.

Furthermore, the results demonstrate that aligning national practices with international frameworks, such as UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, provides a viable pathway to strengthen institutional capacity and improve global integration. The study also confirms that the combination of policy coherence, structured digitization, and inclusive access forms the foundation of a sustainable archival management model.

In conclusion, the research verifies that adopting a management-oriented paradigm is essential for enhancing the role and impact of archival institutions in Jordan.

Future research may focus on empirical validation of the proposed framework through field studies and institutional performance assessments, as well as the development of quantitative indicators to measure the effectiveness of archival governance models.

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