

V1.2

National Policy on Archives and Records Management

13.06.2023

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The National Policy on Archives and Records Management deals with both crisis and lacunae requiring urgent responses by way of policy direction, domain expertise and action.

1.2 A significant crisis is the mismanagement of records, which has exacerbated inefficiencies in public service, weakened accountability and transparency, and led to the loss of information and evidence. In addition, the significant absences and/or gaps in education and training, resource allocation and legislation have prevented the development of an archives and records management sector in the country.

1.3 The above are challenges requiring the participation and commitment of stakeholders across all levels in different sectors. Whilst the Policy primarily addresses public authorities and officials, it also encourages private institutions, faith-based institutions, and individuals to engage with the guidance, policies and standards put forward by the National Archives.

1.4 The Policy outlines the requirements and responsibilities in several areas that require immediate attention if archives and records management is to be advanced and its full potential realised across public authorities and private organisations by an independent and professionally managed National Archives. The importance of systematic records management; capacity-building in digital recordkeeping; the retention of records in public authorities; the prioritisation of resources for preservation; the recognition of rights of access to archives and records; the adoption of international standards; and the commitment to resource allocation, are all included in an overall policy framework intended to guide future decisions.

1.5 Section 12 of the Policy identifies the key priority issues and points of action that all stakeholders should commit to addressing in the short term. The points of action include the urgent requirement of new legislation and the introduction of measures to strengthen systematic, accountable, and professional archives and records management practices.

1.6 If a course is to be set for this area of management, which has a significant impact on every unit of administration, the rights of peoples and the collective memory of our nation, then it must be done now.

2. Rationale

2.1 The National Policy on Archives and Records Management is intended to guide and shape the management of archives and records across the country, ultimately benefiting the nation and its citizens.

2.2 Seizing the current moment to establish a national policy on archives and records management is imperative for the Sri Lankan government. Several critical factors highlight the importance of this endeavour.

2.2.1 **Firstly**, in a rapidly changing and unstable economic and political environment, organisations often experience frequent restructuring or dissolution.

2.2.2 **Secondly**, there is an evident crisis in records management within public authorities. Inefficient record-keeping practices, lack of standardised procedures, and inadequate resources contribute to this crisis. The consequences of this mismanagement are far-reaching, leading to delays in public service delivery, compromised accountability, increased opportunities for fraud and corruption, and the loss of information and evidence.

2.2.3 **Thirdly**, the exponential growth in the volume of digital records generated necessitates immediate action. Organisations and individuals produce an unprecedented amount of digital records. However, this abundance of records comes with its own set of challenges. The malleable nature of digital records makes them vulnerable to degradation, loss, or obsolescence if not managed properly. Moreover, the risk of accidental or deliberate destruction of digital records poses a significant threat to the preservation of valuable information.

2.3 Embracing new technologies, fostering collaboration among relevant entities, and recognising the significance of archives and records will lead to enhanced public access, increased transparency, and the ability to meet global information management standards.

2.4 Value of Archives and Records

2.4.1 The policy recognises the value of archives and records in preserving our collective memory, ensuring transparency and accountability, supporting effective decision-making and promoting research and knowledge exchange. Archives and records serve as vital sources of information and evidence, documenting the actions, policies, and decisions of governments, organisations, and individuals. The management of archives and records in order to provide authentic and reliable evidence is important for the following reasons:

2.4.1.1 **Preservation of collective memory:** Archives and records are vital assets of our cultural heritage and collective memory. They provide insights into our history, culture, and societal development. By preserving records and archives, we

safeguard our past for future generations, enabling them to understand and learn from our experiences, achievements, and challenges.

2.4.1.2 **Transparency and accountability:** Archives and records play a fundamental role in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance, for which there is a growing demand. They provide a documented record of actions, decisions, and policies, allowing for scrutiny and evaluation. Access to records and archives enables citizens to hold governments and public officials accountable for their actions, fosters trust, and helps combat corruption.

2.4.1.3 **Support for legal and administrative requirements:** Archives and records are essential for meeting legal and administrative obligations in both the short term and the long term. They provide evidence of transactions, contracts, and agreements, ensuring legal rights and obligations are upheld. Furthermore, they support administrative processes in the present, enabling efficient decision-making, planning, and resource allocation.

2.4.1.4 **Research and knowledge exchange:** Records and archives as documentary heritage serve as valuable resources for research and knowledge exchange. They provide a rich and diverse pool of information, allowing for in-depth analysis, academic research, and evidence-based policymaking. By harnessing the wealth of knowledge contained within records and archives, we can drive innovation, informed decision-making, and the advancement of society. Records and archives, if properly managed, make vital contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations by fostering the creation of an information-based society.

2.5 How Archives and Records Can Help Governance

2.5.1 **Transparency, accountability and good governance.** The National Policy recognises the pivotal role that records and archives play in enhancing governance at all levels, be it national, provincial, or local. Records and archives contribute to improved governance by providing accurate and reliable information, facilitating effective decision-making, promoting transparency, and enabling public participation. While respecting personal data protection legislation, under freedom of information legislation, the public has a right to obtain evidence of the transactions of a public authority. This right to information is closely tied to transparency, accountability and good governance. However, for the right to information to be protected, records need to be created, effectively managed, and preserved.

2.5.2 **Economic development.** Archives and records hold significant value for the economy by facilitating efficient and effective economic activities. Archives and records contain information that is potentially of great value to business, thereby supporting the efforts of the government to enhance economic growth. Well-maintained records and archives ensure the integrity of contracts, legal agreements, and financial statements, instilling trust and confidence among stakeholders. They provide evidence of ownership, intellectual property rights, and market transactions, enabling businesses to protect their interests and enforce legal claims. Additionally,

archives and records contribute to economic research, policy development, and market analysis, providing insights into economic trends, consumer behaviour, and industry performance. The archives and records of economic activities serve as reservoirs of collective knowledge, fostering innovation and economic growth.

2.5.3 Business continuity. It is important to highlight the role of records in supporting business continuity, particularly in emergency situations and disaster recovery. Records serve as vital resources for the continuity of business functions and play a crucial role in preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Implementing strong records management practices enables organisations to access essential information during crises, facilitating effective decision-making and the restoration of critical services. By maintaining a robust records management framework, organisations can ensure the accessibility of key records, thereby supporting business continuity and enhancing resilience in times of adversity.

3. Objectives

3.1 The National Policy on Archives and Records Management is guided by the following objectives:

3.1.1 Fostering an integrated framework. Fostering an integrated framework for managing, preserving, and accessing records and archives, defining roles and standards for stakeholders. Encourage collaboration among stakeholders to share best practices, resources, and expertise in the management of records and archives.

3.1.2 Supporting legal and regulatory compliance. Support compliance with relevant laws and regulations governing archives and records management, safeguarding privacy, confidentiality, and appropriate access.

3.1.3 Promoting long-term preservation. Promote long-term preservation and accessibility of archives and records through appropriate deposit, preservation, conservation and restoration.

3.1.4 Ensuring diversity of archives. The government is committed to promoting proactive archiving of everyday peoples and to cover marginal voices. The production of archives from the bottom-up and supporting community archiving will foster wider representation in archiving practices.

3.1.5 Modernising records management practices. Improve records management practices in the public sector by promoting standardised processes and technologies for capturing, maintaining, and retrieving both paper and digital records. It is vital that digital records management is embraced to better serve citizens, foster transparency and drive socio-economic progress in this digital age.

3.1.6 **Ensuring access, use and reuse.** Access, use, and reuse are vital principles in the field of archives and records management that promote knowledge dissemination, innovation, and societal progress.

3.1.7 **Supporting the archives and records management profession.** Support capacity building and training initiatives to enhance skills and expertise in records management, archival practices, and digital preservation.

3.1.8 **Promoting awareness and public engagement.** Raise public awareness about the value of archives and records, and promoting public engagement in archival initiatives.

3.1.9 **Fostering international cooperation.** Access to archival collections about Sri Lanka, but which are held in foreign archives, allows for a broader and more comprehensive understanding of our country's historical events, peoples, cultures, and perspectives, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and enriching scholarly research. It is therefore necessary to encourage collaboration with international organisations and other nations to exchange experiences, adopt best practices, and promote global standards in archives and records management.

3.2 The above objectives form the foundation for a robust and sustainable archives and records management that upholds principles of transparency, accountability, and good governance, benefiting present and future generations.

4. Scope

4.1 The National Policy applies to all public authorities, including national, provincial, and local authorities. It emphasises the importance of archives and records management in promoting transparency, accountability, and efficient governance within public administration.

4.2 The government also encourages the following entities to be guided by the archives and records management standards of the National Archives:

4.2.1 **Private institutions:** Private institutions, such as commercial businesses and non-profit organisations require accurate business records, complying with legal obligations, and supporting effective decision-making.

4.2.2 **Faith-based institutions:** The National Policy acknowledges the significant archives held by faith-based institutions, including religious organisations, places of worship, and associated entities. It emphasises the importance of preserving historical and cultural records held by such entities.

4.2.3 **Individuals:** The policy recognises the role of individuals as creators and users of records. It encourages individuals to understand the value of archives and records, promoting responsible record-keeping practices in their personal and professional lives.

4.3 By engaging public authorities, private institutions, faith-based institutions and individuals, the policy aims to establish a comprehensive and inclusive approach to archives and records management, promoting good governance, transparency, and the preservation of our shared heritage.

5. Records Management

5.1 **Systematic records management.** The government emphasises the importance of managing records, including digital, from the point of creation. It recognises key stages, including records creation, classification, storage, retrieval, preservation, and disposal. The Policy encourages the adoption of standardised practices to ensure the efficient and systematic management of records, across all sectors.

5.2 **Training and capacity building:** The government recognises the need for training and capacity building initiatives to enhance records management competencies among stakeholders. The National Archives should develop training programmes, workshops, and certifications to equip records professionals, administrators, and users with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage records effectively.

5.3 **Monitoring and compliance:** The Policy highlights the importance of monitoring and compliance mechanisms to ensure adherence to records management standards. The National Archives should establish monitoring frameworks, regular audits, and assessments to evaluate compliance with records management guidelines and identify areas for improvement.

5.4 By addressing these key aspects of records management, the National Policy aims to establish a robust and systematic approach to managing records, ensuring their integrity, accessibility, and preservation. This Policy supports the independence of the National Archives within state structures in order to guarantee that its function of ensuring authorised records management in public authorities can be carried out impartially and without interference.

6. Digital Records

6.1 By addressing the unique challenges and opportunities associated with digital records, the government will strive to ensure that digital records are managed, preserved, and utilised in a manner that upholds their integrity, accessibility, and long-term value.

6.2 **Digital recordkeeping:** The Policy recognises the need for institutional frameworks for the effective management of digital records. It emphasises the importance of capturing, organising, preserving and sharing digital records in a manner that ensures their authenticity, reliability, and long-term accessibility. The Policy recognises the value of Electronic Document and Records Management Systems (EDRMS) in facilitating the management of digital records.

6.3 **Digital preservation:** The Policy highlights the need for robust digital preservation practices to safeguard the integrity and usability of digital records over time. It encourages the adoption of strategies for format migration, metadata management, and regular data backups to mitigate the risks of technological obsolescence and data loss.

6.4 **Data security:** The Policy underscores the significance of data security and privacy in managing digital records. It promotes the establishment of robust cybersecurity measures, data encryption, access controls, and privacy policies to protect digital records from unauthorised access, breaches, and data alteration.

6.5 **Metadata and contextual information:** The policy emphasises the importance of metadata and contextual information in managing digital records. It encourages the creation and maintenance of accurate and comprehensive metadata, ensuring the contextual understanding, provenance, and authenticity of digital records for as long as they are retained.

6.6 **Digital access and open data:** The policy promotes the accessibility of digital records to facilitate transparency, public access, and open data initiatives. It encourages the development of user-friendly interfaces, online portals, and search mechanisms integrating new technology to enable citizens, researchers, and policymakers to access and utilise digital records effectively.

6.7 **Digital records training and skills:** Recognising the specialised skills required for managing digital records, the policy emphasises the need for training and capacity building in digital records management. It encourages the development of training programmes that equip records management professionals and users with the necessary competencies to effectively manage and utilise digital records.

7. Appraisal, retention and disposition

7.1 The Policy affirms that all public authorities are required to ensure records created and received in the conduct of business are captured in records management systems. It is, however, impossible to keep all records, particularly considering the constraints that arise due to space and cost. Instead, clear and accountable decision-making is required to select which records should be maintained, for what period and when they will be transferred to the Sri Lanka National Archives for permanent preservation.

7.1.1 **Appraisal criteria:** The Policy underscores that comprehensive appraisal criteria must be developed to inform decision-making about the maintenance of records in public authorities. The Sri Lanka National Archives shall take the lead in developing and updating appraisal criteria.

7.1.2 **Retention schedules:** The development of retention schedules helps manage records during their period of utility within an organisation by providing clear guidance on records series, retention periods, disposal actions and authorisations. The Policy recognises the vital role of the Sri Lanka National Archives in collaborating with public authorities to develop and update required retention schedules.

7.1.3 **Non-conflicting retention periods:** The Policy stresses the importance of ensuring that retention periods are non-conflicting across legislation, thereby eliminating the risk of arbitrary or unauthorised action on records. Notwithstanding other relevant laws, retention periods under existing and future national archives legislation as well as regulations shall be adhered to by public authorities.

7.1.4 **Disposal actions:** The Policy stresses the importance of ensuring the disposal of records. In consultation with the National Archives, it is the responsibility of designated officers to implement required disposal actions, including in electronic systems, after carrying out due diligence i.e., complying with national laws and regulations. The disposal actions, documented in retention schedules (see 7.1.2), can include further retention, destruction, moving them to a records centre, and transferring the records to an external archives authority.

8. Preservation

8.1 Preservation is a shared responsibility. The preservation of records in whichever format is a systematic process requiring different resources to be marshalled in its overall management. It is vital that a preservation policy for public and private organisations guides organisational processes and actions. This National Policy recommends that the Sri Lanka National Archives develops a preservation policy and standards that reflect the specific preservation challenges in Sri Lanka, so that the senior management of public authorities and private organisations can use it to prioritise preservation and allocate necessary resources. The National Archives should also offer state-of-the-art preservation services that are trustworthy of use by holders of sensitive records.

8.2 The Policy stresses that the crisis in records management extends to digital records (see Section 2: Rationale). Given the ubiquity, fragility and ever-changing nature of digital records, the Policy recognises the importance of digital preservation, which is a set of processes, actions and tools to ensure their long-term accessibility and use. Furthermore, all organisations require trained professionals to ensure that authentic, reliable, complete and usable digital records are properly managed from their point of creation, classified, ingested into systems and subject to necessary preservation workflows.

8.3 The following are some of the key considerations in prioritising preservation within an organisation:

8.3.1 **Managerial support:** If preservation is to be systematically addressed and instituted within public and private organisations, then senior management, as key decision-makers, must understand its importance and support the implementation of preservation programmes within organisations. In order to sustain the prioritisation of preservation, concrete evidence of its requirement—in terms of the condition of records, inadequacies within repositories and the different forms of risk— must be consistently documented so as to guide decision-making.

8.3.2 **Technical resources:** Most preservation activities require highly technical resources without which it is very difficult to satisfactorily address the challenges to preservation and to maintain compliance with standards. In order to avoid ill-suited technical resources and to minimise unnecessary spending, organisations are required to select fit-for-purpose resources, which includes both equipment and expertise, according to specific preservation decisions that are based on assessments, standards and guidance.

8.3.3 **Financial resources:** Along with adequate funding made available for preservation activities within organisations (see sub-section 11.1.1), the allocation of resources needs to be

prioritised based on the most urgent preservation actions. For example, purchasing costly, state-of-the-art digital preservation systems is pointless if policies are not developed, workflows are not established, and organisations do not have the professionals required to operate the systems.

9. Access to archives and records

9.1 Access means that archives and records are made available for use. Notwithstanding the restrictions required by laws, policies and ethical frameworks, the National Policy commits to ensuring the widest possible access to archives and records as well as providing efficient services to users on equal terms.

9.2 In June 2023, the Sri Lanka National Archives became a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Archives (UDA), which states that the global community of archives and archivists undertake to collaborate so that “Archives are made accessible to everyone...” This principle should be upheld at all times and the National Archives should be guaranteed the freedom to ensure that access decisions are made impartially and with the user in mind.

9.3 Furthermore, the Policy recognises the *Principles of Access to Archives* formulated by the International Council on Archives, which dictates that institutions holding archives must “...adopt a proactive approach to access”.

9.4 Access arrangements encompass all interfaces with the public. They enable archives and records to be used for different purposes by all members of society, whether it be for advancing accountability and supporting public interest campaigns or for protecting people’s rights and enabling historical research.

9.5 Current legislation on access to records and archives

9.5.1 At present, records shall be transferred to the National Archives for “permanent preservation” as per authorised retention periods. The records may be retained in their office of origin for a further period if required for administrative or other purposes. As long as confidentiality and personal privacy do not warrant closure for a period of time, the records may be accessed and used.

9.5.2 The last amendment to archival legislation took place over 40 years ago. The National Policy strongly recommends, based on the *Principles of Access to Archives*, that future archives legislation, when reviewed and redrafted, should, *inter alia*, further recognise a right of access to archives and records, ensure that access restrictions are based on legislation and that access is based on equal and fair terms.

9.6 Archivists and records managers for accessibility

9.6.1 The Policy affirms Principle 3 of the *Principles of Access to Archives* which states that “archivists have a professional responsibility to promote access to archives.”

9.6.2 To make archives and records accessible, trained professionals in archives and records management are required to develop access policies and procedures based on law and on the unique information recorded about archives and records in schedules, indices and finding aids/catalogues. Moreover, they are tasked with the duty of providing services that shall be accessible to all members of the public.

9.7 Language for accessibility

9.7.1 For archives and records to serve a purpose in society, they need to be retrievable and/or findable. The Policy seriously recommends that public authorities shall to the best of their ability provide information about the archives and records held by them in the two official languages and/or the link language of the country. A user shall not experience a barrier to access because officials who are responsible for the management of archives and records do not understand and/or cannot communicate the information recorded about them.

9.8 Inclusion for accessibility

9.8.1 All public authorities and private organisations shall over a period of time institute measures for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in access arrangements. This includes access to the built environment of repositories, communication of access information through Braille and sign language, the use of information and communications technology to aid access to archives and records, the provision of special services and spaces, and sensitivity training for officials.

9.9 Information for accessibility

9.9.1 The Policy recognises that a vital part of ensuring the accessibility of archives and records is the provision of information about them. All public authorities and private organisations shall provide information about the context, structure and content of archives and records in their repositories through the development of classification schemes, metadata and other tools. Metadata, which means ‘data about data’, aids the retrievability, interpretability, usability and overall management of archives and records.

9.10 Digitisation for accessibility

9.10.1 The Policy recognises that the digitisation of archives and records is a standard global practice providing numerous benefits to paper-logged repositories and film-based audio-visual records. In general, digitisation ensures that deteriorating archives and records are copied, ingested into management systems, assigned metadata, securely stored and preserved. This enables faster retrievability, integration with digital systems, reduction in storage space and, fundamentally, promotes accessibility within the country and across borders.

9.11 Open access

9.11.1 The Policy recognises the *Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities*, a foundational document regarding Open Access that was developed by a number of advocacy groups and academic institutions in 2003.

9.11.2 The Policy further stresses that public authorities and private institutions shall, whenever possible, adopt open access arrangements—free, unrestricted and available online—in relation to archives and records whilst respecting the requirements of national laws. The benefits of doing so include the wider accessibility of material to a diverse range of users and greater visibility as well as dissemination of information.

10. Standards

10.1 The Policy recognises several international standards that establish the principles, methods, practices and requirements for effective archives and records management (see Annex 1). These standards, where applicable, shall be enforced by public and private organisations to improve practices, inform decision-making and measure performance. It is important to underscore that these standards, if centralised within organisations, can enable self-regulation and thereby eliminate the burden on legislative intervention. The Policy further stresses that standards are vital for the overall organisation, development and advancement of an archives and records management sector in the country.

10.2 In addition, standards-compliant practices have the potential to minimise liabilities in the conduct of business by strengthening the stringency of processes, increase cost savings by focusing on recommended best practices, and to increase local and international cooperation by promoting uniform frameworks, systems, and formats.

11. Resource allocation

11.1 The National Policy recognises the importance of allocating adequate resources to support the effective implementation of records management practices across all sectors. By recognising the need for resource allocation, the National Policy aims to ensure that sufficient financial, human, technological, and infrastructure resources are allocated to support the implementation of effective archives and records management practices. This commitment to resource allocation will enable the achievement of the objectives of the Policy and contribute to the overall success of archives and records management efforts.

11.1.1 **Financial resources:** For the National Archives to perform at an optimum level, the government is committed to the allocation of sufficient funds for its operations. The Policy acknowledges that financial resources are essential for the establishment and maintenance of robust archives and records management systems. It encourages organisations and institutions to allocate sufficient funds to support the acquisition of appropriate technologies, infrastructure, staffing, training, and ongoing operations related to archives and records management.

11.1.2 **Human resources:** The Policy highlights the critical role of qualified and skilled personnel in implementing effective archives and records management practices. It underscores the need for adequate staffing levels, training programmes, and professional development opportunities to build and maintain a competent workforce capable of managing archives and records efficiently.

11.1.3 **Collaborative resource sharing:** The Policy promotes collaborative resource sharing among relevant stakeholders. It encourages partnerships, consortia, and cooperative arrangements among government agencies, local and international organisations, and institutions to pool resources, share expertise, and leverage economies of scale in archives and records management.

12. Priority Issues and Points of Action

12.1 The following are the issues and points of action prioritised by the National Archives and Records Management Policy:

12.1.1 Issue: *Legislation concerning archives and records management.* The National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973 (as amended by the National Archives Amendment Act No. 30 of 1981) shall be revised in order to address the issues raised in the Policy, including digital records, records management guidance and the accessibility of archives and records in both public authorities and private institutions.

12.1.1.1 Point of action:

- 12.1.1.1.1 The Government shall review the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973 (as amended), carry out necessary revisions and reconcile other relevant legislation in order to address the requirements, responsibilities and points of action outlined in the Policy.

12.1.2 Issue: *Compliance with records management guidelines and standards by public authorities.* Recordkeeping practices within public authorities are inconsistent and non-compliant with international standards. The loss, misplacement and/or poor management of records can impact the users of services and impede accountability as well as transparency. The systems in place must ensure that authentic, reliable, complete and usable records, created and received during the conduct of business, are captured and maintained as evidence. Furthermore, frameworks that guide decision-making on managing the appraisal, retention and disposition of records shall be developed.

12.1.2.1 Points of action:

- 12.1.2.1.1 The Cabinet of Ministers shall ensure that adequate resources are provided for public authorities to adopt and maintain standards-compliant records management systems;
- 12.1.2.1.2 The Sri Lanka National Archives shall ensure that records management guidance is provided to public authorities, including on appraisal, retention, disposition, preservation and access;

- 12.1.2.1.3 All public authorities shall have a Records Manager to ensure that records are properly managed from creation to disposition.

12.1.3 Issue: *Training professional archivists and record managers.* The absence of a specialised qualification in archives and records management makes it very difficult to produce trained professionals and to improve standards in records management in public authorities. The risks in terms of mismanagement include the inability to find and retrieve records, unlawful destruction of records of evidential value, unauthorised disclosure of confidential information, and the integrity of records being negatively impacted due to inadequate controls. These risks can be mitigated by records management professionals who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to ensure the capture, classification, storage, accessibility, retention and disposition of records.

12.1.3.1 Points of action:

- 12.1.3.1.1 Given the necessity of trained archives and records management professionals, the Sri Lanka National Archives and the Information Studies programmes of various universities shall work together to introduce a specialised qualification;
- 12.1.3.1.2 All public authorities shall incentivise current staff managing records to pursue a qualification in records management and preservation.

12.1.4 Issue: *Ensuring adequate storage and controls.* Records in any format and maintained in any system require adequate storage—in terms of physical storage locations and digital storage—to ensure their proper management over time. There are specific controls required to identify and retrieve records located in storage, including filing systems, unique identifiers and location information. All public authorities will be required to make decisions, based on guidance issued by the Sri Lanka National Archives, on packaging and storage equipment, environmental conditions of storage spaces and on the storage of digital records created, received and maintained by organisations (see Annex 1 for standards on conservation and storage).

12.1.4.1 The Policy recommends that regular risk assessments are carried out to determine requisite actions and to develop business continuity plans in order to respond to emergencies and disasters, such as power failures, sabotage, civil unrest and floods.

12.1.4.2 Points of action:

- 12.1.4.2.1 The Sri Lanka National Archives shall assess the storage spaces—both physical and digital—in public authorities to determine the gaps, strengths and weaknesses of current practices and infrastructure;
- 12.1.4.2.2 The Cabinet of Ministers shall allocate adequate resources for the construction or upgrading of storage facilities and for the expansion or procurement of digital storage at public authorities;

- 12.1.4.2.3 In Policy issue 12.1.2, the Cabinet of Ministers shall make it mandatory for public authorities to comply with guidelines on storage and instituting required controls during the management of records.

12.1.5 Issue: *Adopting technology for the comprehensive management of digital records.* The capture of digital records to dedicated systems is the most effective way to systematically manage records as evidence of an organisation’s decisions and actions in the conduct of its business. The use of electronic document and records management systems—either specifically developed or available commercial applications—would enable organisations to manage records in a variety of formats whilst increasing operational efficiency, strengthening security, protecting the authenticity and integrity of records, facilitating accessibility and use, ensuring legal and regulatory compliance, and reducing some of the risks identified under 12.1.3.

12.1.5.1 Points of action:

- 12.1.5.1.1 All public authorities shall ensure that records created and received in the conduct of business are captured, classified, stored and made accessible.
- 12.1.5.1.2 The Sri Lanka National Archives shall issue the specific standards and functional requirements related to electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS).
- 12.1.5.1.3 The Cabinet of Ministers shall direct the agency responsible for all digital matters across state structures to work in collaboration with the Sri Lanka National Archives to develop a dedicated, standards-compliant EDRMS or to procure existing commercial applications for use by all public authorities in the country.

12.1.6 Issue: *Providing state-of-the-art preservation services.* Preservation services play a pivotal role in the safeguarding and accessibility of the documentary heritage of our society. There is a growing requirement in the country for quality restoration services of paper records, at times involving highly sensitive records. Furthermore, with the rapid digitization of information and the ever-increasing volume of archival materials, employing state-of-the-art preservation services is essential to address the unique challenges faced by archivists. One crucial aspect of state-of-the-art preservation services in archives is the adoption of advanced imaging and digitization techniques. High-resolution scanning, optical character recognition (OCR), and metadata extraction technologies enable archivists to capture and preserve documents in a digital format. This not only enhances access and searchability but also reduces the need for physical handling, minimizing the risk of damage to fragile materials. To perform these services to existing international standards it will be necessary to ensure an adequate revenue stream.

12.1.6.1 Points of action:

- 12.1.6.1.1 Cabinet shall review current legislation to set up a national conservation, restoration and digitisation service.

- 12.1.6.1.2 The National Archives shall liaise with international agencies to incorporate cutting-edge conservation and preservation methodologies.

13. Review

13.1 The Policy shall be reviewed after five years or as required to reflect the necessary policy responses to new laws, standards, declarations and practices in the archives and records management sector.

13.2 The review will ascertain if the Policy is relevant, up-to-date in terms of legislation passed after its publication and if any new policy issues need to be urgently addressed.

13.3 The review committee will be appointed by the National Archives Advisory Council.

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Annex 1: Standards

ISO 15489-1:2016 – Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: Concepts and principles

ISO 30301:2019 – Information and documentation — Management systems for records — Requirements

ISO 30302:2022 – Management systems for records – Guidelines for implementation

ISO/TR 21946:2018 – Information and documentation — Appraisal for managing records

ISO/TR 18128:2014 – Information and documentation – Risk assessment for records processes and systems

ISO 16175 – Information and Documentation – Principles and functional requirements for records in electronic office environments

ISO 23081 Series – Information and documentation – Records Management Processes - Metadata for Records

ISO/TR 13028:2010 – Information and documentation – Implementation guidelines for digitization of records

ISO 13008:2022 – Information and documentation – Digital records conversion and migration process

BS 4971:2017 – Conservation and care of archive library collections

BS EN 16893:2018 – Conservation of cultural heritage: specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections

ISAD (G) – General International Standard Archival Description, International Council on Archives

ISAAR(CPF) – International Standard for Archival Authority Records (Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families)

ISDF – International Standard for Describing Functions

ISDIAH – International Standard for Describing Institutions with Archival Holdings

DCMI – Dublin Core Metadata Initiative

Annex 2: Related Legislation

Evidence Ordinance No. 14 of 1895

Commission of Inquiry Act No. 17 of 1948

The National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973

Special Presidential Commission of Inquiry Law No. 7 of 1978

National Archives Amendment Act No. 30 of 1981

Electronic Transactions Act, No. 19 of 2006

Computer Crime Act, No. 24 of 2007

Right to Information Act, No. 12 of 2016

Personal Data Protection Act, No. 9 of 2022