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Translating the *Universal Declaration on Archives*: working with archival traditions and languages across the world

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ABSTRACT

Translating archival concepts used in the *Universal Declaration on Archives* into languages with varying archival traditions is challenging. It is essential to make the *UDA* understandable for the general public without altering the meaning of the original text while ensuring coherence with archival practices in all countries where the target language is spoken.

Twelve translators were surveyed on the translation of key *UDA* terms: *archives*, *archivists*, *records*, *memory* and *open access*. They reported on archival terminology resources and strategies they used to resolve difficulties in translating English or French archival terminology into languages that do not possess precisely equivalent concepts.

KEYWORDS

Universal Declaration on Archives; international archival concepts; archival translation; validating translations

Introduction and background

*The Universal Declaration on Archives*¹ (*UDA*) was developed to secure a global understanding and acceptance of the purpose, value and scope of archives and archivists as well as of records and recordkeepers. It promotes the role of archives and records management in protecting a whole range of human rights and in establishing collective memory, striving to ensure the preservation and universal accessibility of the world's documentary heritage. In so doing it covers access, digital records, good governance, preservation and conservation, appraisal, description, buildings, human rights, intellectual property, professional training, legislation and records management.

The principal audience of the *UDA* is specifically those who are *not* professional archivists: the *Declaration* was written *by* archivists *for* non-archivists. The word 'Universal' in the title points to the general public across every country, culture and language group. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the message about the importance of archives reaches as widely as possible across political and cultural boundaries, translated widely and carefully using words that help people to understand why archives need to be created and their rights of access to them.

This paper documents ICA's process for translation of the *UDA* and explores the difficulties that translators must resolve when translating from English or French into languages that do not offer a direct translation for particular words or concepts either in

their general vocabulary or in their own professional archival lexicon. Some of these challenges have been apparent from the time of the development of the *UDA* in English and French, but have not previously been shared in the literature. Archival terminology is highly developed and very specific in some cultures, particularly those that speak and write in the dominant European languages, but is often not so specifically developed in minority languages, or may even be absent. Usage of archival terminology is frequently not harmonised across languages, and varies according to how practice and theory have developed independently in each information culture. This inherent lack of clarity in comparative meaning and usage of archival terminology across languages, and particularly between English and French terminology, sets a major challenge before the translators.

Development of the Universal Declaration on Archives

The *UDA* was inspired by the 2006 Quebec Declaration on Archives² and in 2007 the International Council on Archives (ICA) directed the Section of Professional Associations (SPA) to prepare a Universal Declaration on Archives following the Quebec model. The Declaration was unanimously adopted at the 2010 ICA Annual General Meeting in Oslo. The text of the *UDA* was developed simultaneously in English and French in a collaborative process over several years by an International Council on Archives Working Group, aiming to ensure that anyone should be able to understand the *Declaration*, and thus the role of archives in society, whether they be ordinary citizens, professionals other than archivists, decision-makers or political leaders. Therefore, it was written in day-to-day terms. To the best of our knowledge, there are no records of debates among the drafters of the *UDA* about archival terminology and definitions and their comparability in English and French. Following acceptance by ICA in 2010, the *UDA* was endorsed by the 36th session of the General Conference of UNESCO on 11 November 2011.³ In endorsing the *UDA*, the official record of the General Conference's 36th Session refers to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*' provision that 'everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers' as well as UNESCO's own Constitution's aspiration to help 'maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge'. The record mentions the work of the Memory of the World Program and that of the International Committee of the Blue Shield in preserving and protecting archives around the world and acknowledges both that the *UDA* is an 'important instrument for raising awareness of these problems', and 'the important role that archives play in support of democratic rights of citizens'. Finally, the International Conference congratulated ICA on its work in developing the *UDA*, endorsed it and encouraged Member States 'to be guided by the principles ... when planning and implementing future strategies and programs nationally.'

It was always intended that the *UDA* should be made widely available in multiple languages and even before its adoption by UNESCO, translations were in progress in Arabic, Catalan, Croatian, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Ukrainian.⁴ ICA endorsed the *UDA* as a key pillar of its outreach and advocacy strategy and encourages its translation into as many languages as possible because 'it is an important step in improving understanding and awareness of archives among the general public and key decision-makers. It is a powerful, succinct statement of the relevance of archives in modern society.'⁵ Making the *UDA* available in local languages facilitates and promotes understanding of archives, what they are and why they are important.

ICA's Advocacy Expert Group (AEG) was tasked with advocating for the promotion and use of the *UDA* and to solicit new translations, guiding them through completion, validation and publication by ICA. At the time of writing, the *UDA* is available in 43 languages on the ICA website, testifying to how highly it is valued as an advocacy tool across the international archives community.

The process and workflow for producing a new translation

Best translation practice is for a translator to translate from a foreign language into their own native language. Translating the *UDA* requires a high level of language literacy in both the source language and the target language (the language into which the document is being translated), as well as expertise in archival terminology. Translators without a solid archival background are unlikely to be able to meet ICA's scholarly and professional standards.

The first step towards translating the *UDA* into a new language is to contact ICA AEG, which initially ensures a translation is not yet available or in progress in the proposed language. The AEG outlines the translation and approval process and remains in contact with the translator during the entire translation project. It is also useful if the translator can be supported by a dedicated translation committee, selected to provide expertise in translating into the local language and in archival terminology, as well as ensuring the work of project management, translating, debating and deciding correct terminology. Proofreading is shared and the translation progresses to successful completion.

ICA has a validation and approval process for *UDA* translations which is completed where possible before a new translation is published on the ICA website. This usually involves the relevant National Archives or national professional association. However, in at least one case the national language authority was the validator. Other options for validation might be a regional authority, or commissioning a highly experienced but independent archivist. In a few cases, existing translations have been reviewed to produce a new version. The translator submits the final translation, together with a link for the alphabet used for the translation (if applicable) and, if possible, an official letter from the validating organisation to confirm the translation is accurate and can be published. The ICA Secretariat in Paris then formats and brands the translation and the translator reviews the final version in poster format before it is published on the *UDA* page of the ICA website.

In 2016 ICA began work on changing to a new poster format and colours, resulting in some translations becoming unavailable for a considerable period, particularly those using non-Roman alphabets. The design and testing process has taken around three years, but the process is not yet complete. While the goal is to transfer all translations to the new poster and style, most translations are still on the earlier blue and gold poster.

Archival concepts in the literature

Translation is a far more complex challenge than attempting to match a word in one language with a word that carries the 'same' meaning in the target language. Translators of the *UDA* require creativity to transfer archival values and concepts such that they are understandable by the general public without altering the meaning of the original text. For some widely spoken languages, coherence with archival practices used in all the countries where the target language is used must be ensured. Many scholars, not all from anglophone

cultures, have contributed to the literature of archival science in English, analysing and defining the concepts of archives and records.⁶ Very few have attempted a comparative approach, exploring these concepts across languages and analysing the significant differences in professional practice and culture that they reflect. Eric Ketelaar explored the idea that culture influences both language and professional practice and suggested:

Before we can decide on “sameness”, before we can codify global theories and principles, and before we can afford to build and implement universally applicable models, we have to study the differences.⁷

He went on to note that:

Archival science is challenged to describe each “local domain” carefully, and in the appropriate idiom, before strategies and methodologies can be separated from pure archival theory and then compared with what is found elsewhere. ... Only as an outcome of such an analysis might one reveal universally guiding or controlling principles.⁸

This paper cannot claim to describe the local domains of the translators who responded to the survey. The situation is made even more complex for them because *UDA* translations must mix archival science and plain words to be meaningful for the public at large. The purpose of the survey was to encourage translators to share some insights into their archival environments, the cultural, legislative and administrative context in which they work, the resources available to them that influenced their thinking or the lack of resources that tested their creativity in translating the concepts expressed in the *UDA*.

Research design and method

This study of translators’ experiences in translating the *Universal Declaration on Archives* document arose out of the authors’ involvement in various aspects of ICA’s work to promote the *UDA*, their involvement with ICA’s advocacy work and in the development and delivery of an online training program about how the *UDA* can be used to advocate for archives.⁹

A survey was developed to collect information on the process used by translators to transfer the original English and French archival values and concepts into their own language. The survey questions were based on the *UDA Terminology*,¹⁰ a list specifically developed as a teaching tool to explain key terms for the ICA online course *Understanding and Using the Universal Declaration on Archives*, in the absence of any formal ICA definitions for terms used in the *UDA*. The words selected for this survey were: ‘archives’ (noun), ‘archivists’ (noun), ‘memories’ (noun), ‘record’ (noun), ‘to record’ (verb), and ‘open access’ (adjective and noun). ‘Recordkeeping’ (noun) was added to the survey, because it is a relevant term that is interpreted differently in various cultures. However, the translators’ responses concerning ‘recordkeeping’ are not reported in this article because the term is not used in the *UDA*.

The survey was emailed to a group of twelve representative *UDA* translators across the period 2009–2020. Translating the *UDA* is an ongoing process and each year there are new translations, and occasionally revisions of translations. It was also important to submit the survey to those who had translated the *UDA* into Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish which are, with English and French, the 6 UNESCO languages that ICA aspires to for its publications. Some languages spoken by smaller populations, such as Papiamentu (spoken in the Caribbean Netherlands) and Catalan, were deliberately

included to reflect the work of translators and commitment of their communities to the *UDA*, regardless of the relatively small population of speakers for their language.

We explained that we wanted the translators to identify and describe the difficulties they resolved when translating English or French terminology used in recordkeeping standards into languages that do not share the same archival values and concepts. The survey instrument is provided in [Appendix A](#).

Twelve respondents, who can be categorised into three types, were contacted: 1) those from professional associations; 2) experts in archival terminology and translations; 3) translators who were not expert in archival terminology but were asked to translate, supported by some coaching and supervision. There was also one informant who was a partial exception to these three types. When the translator for one language stopped responding, the authors appealed to this colleague, who is expert in archival terminology but was not involved in the translation for this language, to provide answers to some of the survey questions. In this paper, respondents who are not translators are called 'colleagues'. Every one of the twelve translators who were contacted responded, covering the following languages: Arabic, Catalan, Chinese, Dutch, Filipino, Hebrew, Italian (two respondents), Papiamentu, Persian, Russian, Spanish. Languages are used as identifiers, to ensure anonymity for those who requested it. Individual translators are quoted where appropriate, with permission. Of these, only the Arabic translator worked from the French version of the *UDA*. All the other translators used the English version as their source.

Survey responses and analysis

We did not specifically ask and do not know whether the translators referred to other translations of the *UDA* for cross-checking when producing their translations. The Arabic translator highlighted the absence of matching and relevant Arabic terms when there are several terms in French and English; this leads to many different terms which don't belong to the Arabic archival world. In addition, few documents in the field of archival science are published in Arabic and consequently it was difficult to select the right terminology. Differences also exist among Arabic-speaking countries and these differences render selection of the right terms even more difficult.

In addition to *archives*, *records*, *memory*, *memories* and *open access*, translators cited additional *UDA* terms which were difficult to translate, including: *the multiplicity of format*, *initial education*, *information specialists*, *the diversity of archives in recording every area of human activity*. These words presented challenges because they had various meanings or did not match practices in the translators' countries. The translators based their translation of these words on terminology in their own language, their understanding of the concepts, their experience as archivists and their information culture. They selected words in their own language which would best express the original idea or concept. Archival best practices are fairly new in several countries and several languages are still adapting, developing and expanding to cover archival concepts and create the right terminology.

Resources and challenges

Resources created by and for translators

Survey question 8 and its sub-questions asked about the resources available to translators, including published dictionaries of archival terminology, terms and definitions in legislation and what alternative sources they turned to when a translation or definition was not available to them. This section begins with an account of the work by ICA over the years to compile and publish multilingual dictionaries, followed by published dictionaries for specific languages shared by the translators.

Multilingual dictionaries and lists of terminology

Archival scholars and practitioners have produced both single-language and multilingual terminologies over many years, variously aiming to document usage, produce standard definitions and facilitate international communication. In the 1990s, the ICA Section for Archival Educators (ICA-SAE) produced an extensive bibliography entitled *What Students of Archival Science Learn*,¹¹ predominantly limited to works published after 1980. It contains a short section on Archival Terminology, in which a number of single language works are listed in English, Bulgarian, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese and Romanian, but there are also five multilingual works, three of which were published by ICA. These are confined to European languages (English, French, Dutch, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) but one, the *Dictionary of Archival Terminology* (1988) edited by Peter Walne,¹² was also translated into Turkish by Bekir Kamal Ataman¹³ (undated). This *Dictionary of Archival Terminology* later inspired the *Nordic Archival Terminology*,¹⁴ last updated in 2003, which provided translations in Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish for a list of English terms. The preface noted that it 'is not a scientific work or a standard, but a practical tool to facilitate Nordic archival cooperation.' It also stated that Nordic terms that have no equivalent in English were not included. Angelika Menne-Haritz coordinated and edited the draft third edition of the *ICA Dictionary of Archival Terminology* (1999),¹⁵ which presented terms and definitions in languages regularly used by ICA at that time. It was formerly maintained on the website of the Marburg Archives School. When ICA-SAE and the InterPARES Trust Project began to develop the *Multilingual Archival Terminology* (MAT) encompassing twenty-four languages, both the *ICA Dictionary* and the *Nordic Archival Terminology* were contributed to the project and proved important initial sources.¹⁶ The Persian translator indicated that their terminology is now accessible through the MAT (where the language is listed as Farsi) and the Hebrew contribution is in progress.

The *Multilingual Archival Terminology*¹⁷ avoids producing a single, approved dictionary definition for the terms it includes and, where possible, aims to avoid privileging English. It compiles examples of usage of the terms, thus enabling a wider understanding, and enables tracking changes in usage over time. The MAT remains open to new contributions in either the current languages or new languages.

Some translators shared information in response to question 8b which focused on multilingual dictionaries published for their language, and national lists of terminology. The most recently published is the 2019 *Dictionary of Contemporary Archival Science English, French, Arabic* (2019),¹⁸ although there are two earlier editions of an archival dictionary in Arabic published in 1990 and 2007. Russia, formerly the USSR, compiled and published a significant number of multilingual dictionaries of archival terminology in the

twentieth century.¹⁹ The translator of the *UDA* into Russian remarked in the survey response:

Almost all words and concepts are somehow reflected in the dictionaries, but the problem is in their understanding and interpretation. Due to the fact that English terms are not always understood in the same way in English speaking countries and even in ISO standards. It is quite difficult for representatives of the non-English world to interpret them accurately. We made such an attempt in our English-Russian dictionary, trying to clarify the specifics of the use of the term in the areas of records/document management, information technology in both English and Russian.²⁰

Two extensive English-Russian dictionaries of standardised terminology have been published recently, on Document Management (2017)²¹ and Management of Documents and Archives (2019),²² as well as an electronic resource entitled *Archival Terminology: French-Russian Archival Dictionaries* (2018).²³ The Italian translators pointed to Paola Carucci's *Le fonti archivistiche: ordinamento e conservazione* (1983).²⁴

The Dutch colleague noted that there have been dictionaries and terminologies in Dutch since Muller, Feith and Fruin (1898),²⁵ while the Papiamentu translator said they used *Archiefterminologie voor Nederland en Vlaanderen*.²⁶ The Chinese translator wrote that there is a Chinese dictionary of archival terminology and also English-Chinese dictionaries of archival and information management terminology.

A comprehensive dictionary of archival terminology in the source language is invaluable to translators, particularly where no multilingual dictionary has been compiled by the profession. Among those using the English version of the *UDA* as their source, the Iranian translator cited *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* by Richard Pearce-Moses²⁷ as an essential source, now superseded by the Society of American Archivists' online *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*.²⁸ For those whose source language is French, there is the *Dictionnaire de terminologie archivistique 2002*²⁹ or the considerably longer Canadian *Terminologie de base en archivistique* (2015).³⁰

Alternative sources and strategies

Only the Russian, Arabic and Persian translators used the non-archival dictionaries listed in question 8h, also mentioning other similar non-archival translation resources. Most of the translators referred to recent and historical literature where it was available, but the Arabic, Persian, Filipino and Russian translators lamented a lack of literature specifically on terminology in their languages. The Arabic translator wrote he had to:

write an archival dictionary because archival science is young in Arab countries and because there are differences in archival practices between each country and sometimes within the same country. The dictionary will help the Arab archival community to think about issues in archival terminology and also think more seriously on Arab archival issues.³¹

There are no published dictionaries of archival terminology for either Filipino or Papiamentu. The Filipino translator noted that

... there are very few references written in Filipino that are about/mention archives and records management, while the rest are in English. ... By going through this exercise, I realized that there's a need to write a material/reference in the Filipino language about these terms and concepts.³²

The process of translation in Filipino involves:

- (1) *pagtutumbas* (finding an equivalent word or concept in any of the languages in the Philippines);
- (2) *panghihiram* (borrowing of words from foreign languages: a) Spanish, and b) English); or
- (3) *paglikha* (creation of the word).³³

He added that the process of translation and validation in Filipino, working with the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (Commission on Filipino Language) to achieve a Certificate of Evaluation ‘for me, actually legitimised the translation that we have sent to ICA’.³⁴

The Papiamentu translator wrote:

Considering the fact that Curaçao is part of the Dutch Kingdom. The official languages within the Dutch Kingdom are Dutch, Papiamentu and English. Within the Curaçao government, the Dutch language is mostly used for laws and policy documents. So in this aspect the use [of] Dutch – or English terminology is considerable, as long as the archival terms have not yet been translated into Papiamentu.³⁵

She also noted that ‘In the case of the *UDA*, the available dictionaries were sufficient to perform the required translation. I anticipate that the translation of such a document as the “Code of Ethics for Archivists” will require a dictionary of archival terminology.’ She added that ‘The final decision was up to our National Archivist, as the highest official in the field of archiving in Curaçao.’

The Dutch translator noted that ‘we used our Archival Terminology³⁶ and the translation was a job done by the “archival crowd” with a substantial contribution of the University of Amsterdam (Archival Science). The translation was officially approved by the Dutch and Flemish associations.’³⁷ The Persian translator wrote ‘If I couldn’t find a Persian equivalent of a word at the time of translation of *UDA*, I would use a sentence to describe it, but this rarely happened.’³⁸

The Russian translator also reported very little scientific literature on international archival terminology, apart from three textbooks³⁹ for university courses, noting that:

As a rule, the translation depends on the type of the text. If it is a scientific article, then explanations in brackets can be given. If it is a translation of the ISO standard, we try to convey the meaning as accurately as possible and use Russian language terms. If there are no literal and exact terms, then we use the term descriptively or “mirror” it.⁴⁰

She further noted, in response to question 8e that:

The official sources for terminology in Russia are the legislative acts and the terminological standard GOST R 7.0.8-2013 “Recordkeeping and archiving. Terms and definitions” focused on the Russian-language terminology. This standard is being developed jointly by the Federal Archival Agency (ROSARCHIV) and the Federal Agency for Technical Regulation (ROSSTANDART) together with experts from the professional archival community including Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH).⁴¹

The Chinese translator noted that there are two national industrial standards developed by the National Archives Administration of China for Archival Work and for Electronic Archives Management.⁴² The Italian translator reported that the Italian National

Archival Association (ANAI) contributed to the UNI Standard 11536 describing requirements about knowledge, skills and competences of archivists, which provided some definitions. There are also some glossaries online, or published as an appendix to archival science handbooks.⁴³

On translating the key terms

The concepts of 'archives' and 'archivist'

The first concept explored in the survey was 'archives'. The *UDA* starts with the English words 'archives record decisions, actions and memories.' The role of archivists is described as 'trained professionals with initial and continuing education, serving their societies by supporting the creation of records and by selecting, maintaining and making these records available for use'.⁴⁴

The English verb 'to record' means 'to capture text, images or sounds to preserve the facts for future reference'⁴⁵ and provide evidence of decisions and activities. The *UDA* was developed concurrently in English and French, so it does not present the English concept of records. In the English concept only some records, those with permanent value as primary source material testifying to the history of the creating entity, become archives; not all records become archives; records with no permanent value are eliminated. In addition, in the English concept, archives are never eliminated. On the other hand, in the *UDA* archivists look after records from their creation; in this international concept, records are archives managed by archivists; some archives will be selected by archivists for permanent preservation and use; other archives will be eliminated.

In French archives are called *archives* from creation; they keep their name of archives throughout their life cycle from creation to elimination or permanent preservation. They are defined in French legislation as all documents produced or received by a person or organisation during an activity. The French language does not have the equivalent of the English term 'record'.⁴⁶ In the same way, the concept of archives in the Dutch sense is not restricted to documents of long-term value, archives can be destroyed if they have no value anymore.

In French and Italian, the term *archivio* refers to both archives and records. Italian archivists define *archivio* as the whole of the documents created or received by a person, a family, or a public or private entity in the course of their activity. This definition is similar to the French one. In other words, the Italian term *archivio* does not refer only to documents selected for permanent preservation. It can also refer to temporary records. If necessary, adjectives are added to distinguish one from the other (*archivio corrente/archivio storico* meaning *current archives/historical archives*) because the Italian tradition uses the word *archivio* to indicate both current *records* and historical archives. The same term *archivista* is used to refer to a records manager and to an archivist.

The Spanish concept of archives also includes the different phases of the life cycle, from management and administrative archives to historical archives. In the first two phases, archives are conceived as a source of administrative consultation for decision-making and a source of information for citizens as a guarantee of their rights. In the third phase, archives are recognised as a source of historical research. Within the first two phases, archives are made up of records, most of which will not be preserved permanently.

In China the concept of archives (*dang an*, as cited by the UDA translator) refers to materials used as evidence or reference information because of their temporary, long-term or permanent value. Both records managers and archivists are called *dang an ren*, which means 'archivist', the professional responsible for managing archival records of short, long-term or permanent values.

In Russia the *archive document* is 'subject to storage because of its importance', it is appraised for its value before destruction or permanent storage. There are three periods of storage: temporary, 'term' (up to 75 years) and permanent. In principle, documents not 'subject to storage' cannot be considered permanent archives.⁴⁷

In Tunisia, for historical reasons, the concept of archives, including current, intermediate and permanent documents, was influenced by France; archives are managed from their creation to elimination or preservation. Tunisian legislation also defines the *gestion des documents* or *documents management* as a process including a conservation calendar based on life cycle.⁴⁸ Archivists manage documents and follow the principle of the three ages (current, intermediate and permanent) found in Tunisian legislation. However, in practical life their work has no impact on current archives although they are at least responsible for classification systems and conservation calendars.

In the same way, the Dutch concept of archives is not restricted to documents of long-term value and archives can be destroyed if they have no value anymore, as reflected in the UDA concept. The role of an archivist in the Netherlands and in Catalonia is identical to the one described in the UDA.

In the Philippines the concept of archives 'refers to public and private records in any format selected for permanent preservation'. The 2009 Act No. 10066 on National Cultural Heritage defines archives as an organisation⁴⁹ 'whose main responsibility is to appraise,⁵⁰ arrange, describe, conserve, promote and make archival materials available for reference and research'. This principle of appraisal involves elimination of archival materials without any value and consequently in the Philippines, the terminology conforms with that in the UDA.

The native languages of the Philippines had no word to express the concept of archives; the Filipino word *artsibo* is borrowed from the Spanish word *archivo*. Similarly, the UDA translator used the term *artsibero*, borrowed from the Spanish *archivero*, for the word *archivist*.

The Filipino concept of archives has its roots in the colonisation of the Philippines by Spain and the United States of America. Through the Treaty of Paris in 1898, Spain ceded to the United States of America all its colonial authority over the Philippines. This Treaty also placed into American possession the Spanish documents created by the former colonial administration. The American government of the islands collected the Spanish colonial documents and housed them in a central repository that became the National Archives of the Philippines. The concept of archives in the Philippines is the legacy of colonial domination but now the archives are seen as contributing to the formation of a 'national consciousness' and, ironically, they serve to reinforce the idea of nationhood for the formerly colonised territory.⁵¹ Unfortunately, in the Philippines there is a lack of professionally trained archivists, possibly due to the fact that they have no university offering a degree in archives and records management.⁵²

Summary. Most translators of the English version of the UDA use the word *archives* or a word for archives that does not exactly match the concept of archives as used in anglophone archives and records management practice. These UDA translators see archives as documents created or received by a person or an organisation during an activity. These archives will be destroyed if they don't have permanent value. Thus, the translators in this survey confirmed that their use of the term archives, as found in the UDA, follows the international concept of archives, which is different from the English concept.

The English concept of 'records'

Some languages do not have a specific word for records. Arabic, Chinese, French, and several romance languages, such as Italian and Spanish, use words such as *documents* to cover the English concept of records, even if their concept of documents is different from the English concept of records. Translators using Papiamentu and Chinese also confirmed they did not have a specific term or equivalent for the concept of records. Israel, Iran and the Philippines are in a unique situation because they do not have anglophone cultures but they adopted the English concept of records. Dutch, Filipino, Hebrew, Persian and Russian do have a word for *records*, but this does not mean their concept is the semantic equivalent of the English concept of records.

The life cycle paradigm is important and was presented in the survey as a standard. It covers stages in the life of archives in a very specific order, including creation, active and inactive stages and permanent preservation.

In French the concept of *archivage* (*archiving*) does not include management of documents from creation. *Archivage* is a transfer of inactive documents to either archival storage or storage from which they will be destroyed.⁵³ Catalonia has a very similar concept. In Catalan the word *archives* (*arxius*) gives its name to *recordkeeping* which is *arxivística* or *arxivar*. The terminology *arxivística/arxivar* can include both records management and looking after historical collections. However, Catalan uses the terms *gestió documental* (*document management*) specifically for the concept of records management and, from a social standpoint, the term *arxivística* is synonymous with 'historical fonds'.

Since Italian uses the same term *archivio* both to refer to records and to archives, Italian archivists stress continuity in the life cycle of archives. Even if the *archivi correnti* (current archives) have mostly a practical use, they state that archives have cultural value from their creation. Conversely, although documents selected for permanent preservation mainly have cultural value, archivists stress that they can also have a practical use.⁵⁴

In Latin America, where the anglophone concept of records does not exist, the words *archival document* are used in Spanish as the closest term.

In the Netherlands records are documents in any form received or created by an administrative authority which, by their nature, are designed to be kept by that authority as long as they have value.

Russian does not have a single understanding of the concept of *record*. It ranges from a document without any legal force and value to a legally significant document on the basis of which the most important administrative decisions are made. In Russia the concept chimes with the expression *to record*, the meaning of which ranges from recording to

documenting the information. A key point is that in Russia information can be recorded in many ways, but documented only according to established rules.

In Israel the Governmental Records Management Department has four main functions including supervision of the management of active and non-active records in government offices, disposal of records without value, acquisition of records of archival interest and training of staff engaged in records administration. This Department periodically surveys the records of different Ministries.⁵⁵ The professional term for semi-active or inactive material which has been removed from an office is records. Appraisal can be done at this stage; records with permanent value are transferred to an archives and become archives. Other records to be kept for the period of time required by legislation are transferred as records to a records centre until their specified destruction date.

Iran follows concepts borrowed from the Society of American Archivists in its archives science programmes and in work conducted in its National Archives. The concept of records is used for documents when they are created. Archives are defined as valuable and permanent records preserved for next generations. The country offers formal training in universities where archivists can get a Master's degree. The National Archives of Iran provide also continuous and in-service training to its employees.

Israel, Iran and the Philippines, despite not having English as an official language, follow the anglophone concept of records. At the time of creation, all documents are named records. After appraisal records with permanent value become archives and are permanently preserved. In some cases, even at the time of creation, a record can be identified as archives, depending on the appraisal by the creator. Records management refers to activities including records creation, maintenance and use, transmission, retention and disposition in order to achieve adequate and proper documentation of policies and transactions. Consequently, the practice of records and archives management in the Philippines, especially in the public sector, is based on anglophone concepts because the Filipino political system and government are largely based on that of the USA.

However, the KWF, the official Philippine government organisation responsible for developing, preserving, and promoting the various local Philippine languages, has a rule on using Spanish terminology in translation rather than English. It suggests refraining from too much dependence on English since Spanish is closer to Filipino in pronunciation and spelling than English.⁵⁶

Summary. Several translators presented different ways to deal with the English word *record* found in the UDA. This offers an additional challenge to those translators using the English text as the original document to be translated.

Usually, each translator will have followed professional terminology, such as that used in ISO and ICA standards, as well as specific rules set by institutions, employers and governments. When a concept did not exist in their language and information culture, translators looked for the closest they could find or borrowed from elsewhere. Some, subject to the approval of their relevant authorities, created a new word. Wherever possible, the process of validation was added as a final stage in the translation process. For example, the Filipino translator translated on behalf of his institution, the Department of Foreign Affairs. The translation was sent to the KWF. Experts from this Commission validated the translation after exchanging calls and emails with the translator to understand better the concepts being translated. After finalising the translation, a Certificate of Evaluation from the KWF

was issued as validation. The *UDA* is now available on the Republic of the Philippines official website.⁵⁷

The concept of 'memories'

In English, memories are 'incidents remembered from the past'⁵⁸ which occur in our consciousness but which when captured as text, image or sound become records and potentially archives.

The metaphor of archives as memory is commonly used. However, 'insofar as memory relates chiefly to process, archives are more like "memory factories" and, above all else, they serve as "a medium of memory"', according to Yvon Lemay and Anne Klein. These authors refer to Eric Ketelaar seeing archives as time machines.⁵⁹ The concept of memory or memories is not universal. Memories can be personal or belong to a group, a tribe or a region.⁶⁰ Jimerson sees four types of memories: personal memory, collective or social memory, historical memory and archival memory. Each type is distinct and helps us to examine our past. Memory is fragile, so we create ways to make it stable through archives.⁶¹

The *UDA* translators provided a range of very different answers to Question 4, 'What is the impact of your language and culture on the concept of "memories"? Or in other words: What are "memories" in your culture?' Their varied answers demonstrate the complexity of understanding memory and memories.

In Russia the concept of memories is not officially used in the literal sense of the word. In general, it is perceived as a type of documentary source of unofficial, usually personal origin, representing the personal point of view of its author and therefore it cannot be considered as records which are official by nature. However, a new scholarly concept is developing in modern Russia, it is called documentary memory and it is the closest to the common understanding of the term 'memories'. Officially this term has not yet been fixed in the national terminological standard GOST R 7.0.8.-2013.

In Papiamentu culture, memories contain cultural concepts and relate to information regarding historical events that had and will continue to have an impact on the Curaçaoan population. The word Papiamentu means conversation and refers to a narrative culture. Centuries ago, when Papiamentu was an oral culture, narrators were people who used songs to memorise events. Thus, memories in Papiamentu are usually transferred by songs and narratives.

In Italy, *memoria* is a polysemic term. When it is used in relation with archives, it generally refers to historical memory, collective memory, or the power that documents can have in order to preserve memory of past events. It can mean psychological consciousness of what happened in previous times, but also complexity of evidence coming from the past. Italian society often uses this word without paying much attention to its specific meaning. In China it seems there is no consensus on the concept of memories. Generally, this word refers to recalled pasts. Archival work is 'more and more recognised as an important work of keeping memory'.⁶²

In the Philippines memory is perceived as entwined with history. Consequently, historians there recognise archives as fundamental sources in writing history and in shaping collective memory. The importance given to the management of historical archives, through laws and archival practices, indicates archives are increasingly recognised as being vital to document Filipino memory and identity.⁶³

Dutch society sees memories as the valuable elements which a community, at local, regional or national level, should remember. In Hebrew memories can be the memory of an individual or the collective memory of many. The Arabic word for *memory* in the archival context refers to permanent archives. On the other hand, in Persian, the concept of memory is not limited to written archives: historical monuments and oral history are preserved as memory. In Catalan the concept of memories (*memòria*) can be related both to an institution or a person. It has a cultural and historical meaning; in archival literature it is different from the concept of evidence. In Spanish, archives are memory in terms of cultural heritage as evidence and testimony of past activities. It is common to associate the concept of archives with memory, but not with memories. The concept of memories refers to images from the past.

Summary. In English the *UDA* uses both ‘memory’ and ‘memories’. Several *UDA* translators found it challenging to translate these concepts if the words did not exist in their language or if these words had several meanings in their culture. An added difficulty came from using these concepts in a very official declaration when terminology for these concepts has no official status and when translators are unable to back up their choice of words on a solid consensus in their own language.

The concept of ‘open access’

The *UDA* supports open access to archives as a means to enrich knowledge of human society, promote democracy, protect citizens’ rights and enhance the quality of life. The *UDA* does not define the concept of open access. *UDA* translators interpreted the concept of open access for their audience in various ways.

In addition to the *UDA*, the *Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities* and the *ICA Principles of Access to Archives* are two official international documents which guide archivists in providing the widest possible use of archival sources. The *Berlin Declaration* of 22 October 2003 defines open access as ‘a comprehensive source of human knowledge and cultural heritage’. The concept of open access in this *Declaration* requires that ‘the author(s) and right holder(s) of such contributions grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and a licence to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works’.⁶⁴

The *ICA Principles of Access to Archives*, adopted in August 2012, promote ‘the widest possible use of archives, consistent with the framework of laws, regulations, and agreements within which archival institutions work’. Nevertheless, these *Principles* recognise that there are ‘materials that must be withheld from the public for a period of time’. This concept also accepts restrictions as required by laws and other authorities, ethics, or donor requirements, but when these restrictions are unavoidable, they must be clear and limited in scope and duration.⁶⁵

Several *UDA* translators understand the concept of open access to archives as open to the greatest extent possible as outlined in these *ICA* principles, even if degrees of access, based on legislation and institutional practices, vary between countries. The concept of open access in Russia is based on the definitions of this term in *ISO* standards. The *Law on Archiving* implies some access restrictions to documents containing ‘secret information’ (related to state, commercial, personal and family activities) to documents covered

by copyright and/or intellectual property, to archival documents in poor physical condition and to original valuable and unique documents which are made available via surrogates.⁶⁶ In the first two cases it is the access to the information that is limited, while in the last two it is the access to the medium.

The National Archives of Iran provides regulations and facilities for public access. If documents are not classified because of national security or personal dignity, they are open for access. Iran is committed to protect privacy according to international standards.⁶⁷ In China archival institutions wish to make their open archival materials available to the public; in addition, individuals and organisations have the right to apply for access to and use of the open archival materials if they have a valid ID. The public right of access to archival materials is mentioned in the Israeli Archives Law of 1955. The Access Regulations, approved in 1966, set access conditions and were later followed by several more. The 2010 Access Regulations include Restricted Access Periods for archival materials in accordance with their type and sources. Restricted access periods can extend for many years. However, the restricted access periods are not periods of complete confidentiality and each request for access should be examined on its merits.⁶⁸

Open access is very important in the Philippines. One of the objectives of archival legislation is to 'ensure the accessibility of public records that are relevant to the promotion and preservation of Philippine cultural heritage'.⁶⁹ Legislation covers open access and restricted access. 'Open access records' will have been in existence for a number of years and are classified as open access records to which public access has not been prohibited.⁷⁰ The right to access information (including archives) is also mentioned in the Philippine Constitution⁷¹ and the Filipino *UDA* is published on the Government website.

The Dutch meaning of open access is free access without obstacles and equal for everyone, in a broader sense such as expressed in the *Berlin Declaration*.

In Italy open access is the status of archives when limits of access are at the lowest possible level. It also means that access to governmental archives is free, except for the limits set by the law. Such limits protect other fundamental rights and are necessary in a democratic society. Italian archivists aim at enforcing administrative transparency and their code of ethics requires them to maximise access but to respect privacy and other legal obligations. The *UDA* Italian translator interpreted the concept of open access by the words *accesso agli archivi* meaning access to the archives. The word open was not added to access. Several laws of France have an impact on access to archives.⁷² In addition to two main laws promulgated in 1978 and 2008, other laws manage access to certain types of documents or information.⁷³ Official French websites on access mention open data, free access without barriers, and open archives. This choice of words replaces the English concept of open access. It is often explained that the concept of being free means there are no barriers for users rather than being free of charge.⁷⁴

The French version of the *UDA*, used as the source for the Arabic translation, did not use the terminology 'open access' and replaced it by 'the widest access to archives'. In a very similar situation, Arabic does not have any archival word to mean open access. Legislation on access is very recent and the archival community has not yet developed a settled understanding of the concept of access. In Catalan open access generally means free access to information but use depends on the context and the person using this term.

Summary. In conclusion, the concept of open access is not similarly interpreted in each country. It is possible to perceive open access as the widest possible access to archives, or access based on legislation bringing rules and restrictions, or access based on conditions set by an institution, or as free access to all. The concept of free access can be also interpreted as access without obstacles, or access free of monetary charges, or access without copyright protection or intellectual or commercial property restrictions on archival documents, or access without any fees to pay for reproduction of archival material or for use of this material in a publication, a display, a website or a commercial product. Cultural, political and administrative practices impact on terminology and concepts. Differences in the interpretation of the concept of open access were also increased by *UDA* translators striving to avoid use of professional jargon in communicating better with citizens in their own countries. Thus, *UDA* translators were following an important advocacy rule, that of using words the public can understand.

Concluding remarks

The *UDA* translators confirmed they had access to a range of terminology resources that varied from language to language. They solved other challenges by discussing with colleagues the *UDA* concepts and terminology. The *UDA* tool kit on the ICA website was also helpful in explaining the meaning of some concepts.⁷⁵ Translators for some languages struggled with concepts found in the *UDA*, finding it necessary to use a sentence to cover a *UDA* concept that was a single word in the original language. This use of several words brings another challenge because all translations of the *UDA* are published on the same, single-page poster and consequently all translations need to have a similar word length to fit the template.

Adding words to facilitate communication of concepts is entirely acceptable, because all translators produced a *UDA* which professionals, citizens and other stakeholders could understand and use in their own countries. This practical aspect is the most important thing to bear in mind when translating the *UDA*. It is a promotional and advocacy tool, and a statement about the relevance and importance of archives to the general public. It is therefore essential that people in any country around the world can understand the concepts. The *UDA* is presented for acceptance outside of the archives and records management field and the concepts must remain simple enough in any language to be understood by as many people as possible, who are asked to support the *UDA* by signing the online register: <https://www.ica.org/en/register-your-support-universal-declaration-archives>. In exchange for this support, we should accept that the translation and use of concepts might be slightly different in each language used by the *UDA* translators.⁷⁶

The major challenge came from the need for the public at large to understand, accept and use the *UDA* translated into their own language. The translated *UDAs* are the work of professionals but they must be understood in each country by as many people as possible being asked to support the profession by signing the *UDA* online register on the ICA website. The number of signatures will indicate whether the translators were successful and reached their main goal which is to promote the profession by explaining the importance of archives.⁷⁷

This article demonstrates the richness, variety and complexity of archives and records management language and practices around the world and the challenge of defining and

explaining them in one language, let alone multiple languages and cultures. ICA does not have a system for consulting about or attempting to fix terminology and definitions through its Program Commission or across its various expert groups and special interest sections. Although such a system might seem attractive, it would be an enormously complex undertaking that is unlikely to be achievable. Best practice standards and statements are regularly under review; definitions of the terms used in them change to reflect advances in research and practice, making it difficult to pin down a moving target. Outcomes of such a strategy would quickly become outdated. On the other hand, the strategy of the *Multilingual Archival Terminology*, to build a database of quotations which demonstrate usage of terminology across languages without privileging any particular language, could be more useful to prospective translators, enabling users to track whether or not use of a term has changed over time and through the varying aspects of its usage. It would be commendable for ICA to encourage the addition of quotes from translations of the UDA to the *Multilingual Archival Terminology*, demonstrating usage of archival terminology which aims to communicate the relevance of archives to people in all walks of life.

The work of ICA and the UDA volunteer translators in interpreting and explaining archival terms and concepts in a way that is clear for the ordinary citizen is invaluable in promoting awareness and understanding of archives and records as vital components of transparent, accountable and informed societies.

Notes

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Appendix A. Survey on translating the *UDA* into your own language



Archives record decisions, actions and **memories**. Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. Archives are managed from creation to preserve their value and meaning. They are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions. They play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory. **Open access** to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life. (from the *UDA*, first paragraph)

• The *UDA* states in this paragraph that '**archives record** decisions, actions and **memories**.'

The *UDA* uses the word 'archives' to include records which will not be preserved for future generations if their evidence does not have long-term value.

The word 'record' is an English verb meaning to capture text, images or sounds to preserve the facts for future reference and provide evidence of decisions and activities.

In English word 'memories' are incidents remembered from the past which occur in our consciousness but which when captured as text, image or sound become records and potentially archives.

The *UDA* states that '**open access**' is given to archives. This means archives are used, in a context of accountability and transparency, to verify actions, decisions, events and memories, to monitor the activity of administrators and elected representatives and officials and to support citizen and human rights.

Question 1: Does the concept of archives managed from creation and potentially not preserved for future generations apply easily to archival concepts in your culture? Or in other words: What are 'archives' in your culture?

Question 2: Do you have words in your language for the concept of 'records' or 'to record' or 'recordkeeping'?

Question 3: Can you explain the impact of your language and culture on the concept of recordkeeping? Or in other words: What is 'recordkeeping' in your language and culture?

Question 4: What is the impact of your language and culture on the concept of 'memories'? Or in other words: What are 'memories' in your culture?

Question 5: Can you explain the concept of 'open access' in your language and culture? Or in other words: What is 'open access' in your culture?

• The *UDA* also defines 'the role of archivists as trained professionals with initial and continuing education, serving their societies by supporting the creation of records and by selecting, maintaining and making these records available for use'. This means that, in the *UDA*, an archivist is a professional responsible for managing archives and this includes the records management profession.

Question 6: Please explain the role of an archivist in your country.

Question 7: How do archivists, in your country, ensure objectivity and impartiality, when acquiring, selecting and making available, and is this possible?

• We would like to know whether you had to make any very difficult translation decisions. If you needed to choose between two or more possible words in your language to translate any of the English words or concepts listed in Questions 1–7, we would like to understand, from the following questions,

- How you decided which words to use and
- What were the reasons for your decision?

Question 8 a: Did you check for recent and/or historical usage in the professional literature in your language?

Question 8 b: Has a dictionary of archival terminology been published in your language?

Question 8 c: If there is a dictionary, which (if any) of the words and concepts you needed when translating the *UDA* were NOT covered?

(Continued)

(Continued).

Question 8 d: Can you provide references to dictionaries and wordlists you used, if they are publicly available?

Question 8 e: Are there word lists and definitions provided by national archival institutions, the national standards organisation, professional associations or similar bodies?

Question 8 f: Did you discuss the problem with colleagues? How did these discussions help you?

Question 8 g: Did you use any non archival dictionaries, such as Linguee, Reverso, Wordreference, and so on? If yes, which ones?

Question 8 h: If none of the above was helpful, what influenced your final decision?

Question 8 i: Do you have any other comments about how you resolved difficult translation issues to share with us?

Question 9: What was the most difficult problem you experienced when translating these concepts into your language?

Question 10: Were there any other words or concepts used in the *UDA* that were difficult to translate into your language? Did you have to be creative to find a solution?
