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Cameroon: The Case of the University of Bamenda, 2010–Present**



Records and Archival Practices in Higher Education Institutions in Cameroon: The Case of the University of Bamenda, 2010–Present

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study uses the case of The University of Bamenda to examine records and archival practices in higher education in Cameroon from 2010 to the present by: (i) investigating the current state of records and archival practices; (ii) identifying its challenges at The University of Bamenda; and (iii) suggesting ways that The University of Bamenda, Cameroon, can manage records and archives to better support teaching, learning, and research.

Methodology: The study adopts a mixed-method research design. This involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Fifty questionnaires were administered to personnel in charge of records and archives in key offices of The University of Bamenda, using a random sampling technique, with a 100% return rate. The data were analyzed descriptively and represented in tables.

Findings: The findings revealed that both paper and digital records and archives are managed, while most of the records generated and managed are academic, administrative, and financial in nature. Furthermore, The University of Bamenda hosts a designated records/archives division, which serves as a repository of the institution's collection of files, correspondence, minutes, and reports. However, some of the challenges faced in records and archival practices include insufficient storage facilities and a lack of trained personnel.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: This study demonstrates the relevance of the Records Continuum Model (RCM) in Sub-Saharan African higher education, highlighting its seamless integration of records creation, capture, organization, and preservation. It also extends Schellenberg's appraisal theory, showing how distinguishing primary and secondary values supports strategic records management in resource-limited universities. Together, these frameworks strengthen institutional memory and governance, offering a replicable model for future scholarship.

Keywords: *Archival Practices, Cameroon, Higher Education Institutions, Records, University of Bamenda.*

JEL Codes: *D73, D83, I23*

Introduction

Records and archival management constitute a critical pillar of effective university administration; particularly as institutional growth intersects with demands for accountability, transparency, and digitalization, since operational processes cannot function effectively without sound records practices. Higher education globally is shifting from traditional records management toward more integrated, technology-driven systems, a transition that exposes both opportunities and structural challenges, especially in emerging institutions, where inadequate infrastructure, limited professional expertise, weak policies, and slow digital adoption are common. The University of Bamenda serves as a compelling case study for this dynamic, as its administrative efficiency, academic integrity, and institutional memory depend heavily on how it manages records, from student academic files to personnel, financial, and research documentation, which serve as vital evidence of institutional activity and strategic assets for planning and decision-making. Against this backdrop, the article examines the university's current records and archival practices, evaluates existing frameworks, identifies gaps, and considers the implications for institutional effectiveness and sustainability, contributing to broader discussions on strengthening records management in developing higher education contexts. Ultimately, the study underscores the urgent need for policy intervention, capacity building, and the adoption of modern records management technologies to position universities like the University of Bamenda to meet both present and future information needs.

Statement of the Problem

The management of records and archives is a vital function in higher education institutions. Its importance for administrative efficiency, accountability, institutional memory, and compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks cannot be overstated. The growing volume and complexity of academic, administrative, financial, and student records poses significant challenges to effective records and archival practices. Despite the vital importance of proper records management for institutional performance, there is considerable concern that existing systems and procedures may be inadequate or inconsistent.

At The University of Bamenda, records are often created and maintained across departments and services without standardized policies, leading to duplication, loss, misclassification, and difficulties in retrieval. The transition from paper-based to digital records management requires technological infrastructure, skilled personnel, and clear guidelines for digital preservation, which appear to be inadequate in the context of The University of Bamenda, resulting in ineffectiveness. Ineffective records and archival practices can have serious implications for decision-making, transparency, and service delivery, both in the present and future of the university. These challenges raise questions about the extent to which current records and archival systems at The University of Bamenda meet acceptable standards of efficiency, reliability, and sustainability. Additionally, the lack of scientific evidence on records and archival practices in higher education in Cameroon, particularly at The University of Bamenda,

further compounds the problem under investigation, making this study novel in this context. This study bridges this gap by examining records and archival practices with a view to improving policies, facilities, and staff training at The University of Bamenda.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the current state of records and archival practices at the University of Bamenda, Cameroon.
2. To examine the challenges faced in managing records and archives at the University of Bamenda, Cameroon.
3. To suggest ways that the University of Bamenda can manage records and archives to better support teaching, learning, and research.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on two complementary theories. The first, Frank Upward's Records Continuum Model (RCM), rejects the idea of a strict boundary between “active” records and “archived” ones, proposing instead that records can be captured, classified, used, and preserved as a continuous process from the moment they are created, rather than waiting until they become inactive before archival concerns apply. The authors apply this model to Bamenda by arguing that adopting a continuum mindset, treating creation, organization, access, and preservation as interconnected stages rather than a one-way pipeline, would help the university build stronger collaboration between records managers, archivists, and other stakeholders, ultimately improving accountability and long-term access to institutional records.

The second framework draws on T. R. Schellenberg's appraisal theory, which holds that records carry a primary value to the office that creates them (as evidence of their own activities) and a secondary value to outside researchers and future users. Schellenberg proposed judging a record's worth by its uniqueness, the form in which information is captured, and its overall importance, with the originating institution's needs generally taking precedence over outside interest, though historical significance still matters. The authors map this onto Bamenda's own records: administrative and financial records carry primary value because they sustain daily operations, while historical, research-related, and informational records carry secondary value because they serve future teaching, learning, and scholarship. They argue that distinguishing between these value types would let the university prioritize its limited resources, deciding which records need the most rigorous protection and which can be managed more lightly, while still keeping records of long-term research or institutional-history value accessible to those who need them.

Empirical Literature Review

The literature review surveys a body of African and South Asian studies on records and archival management in universities and government bodies, drawing consistent parallels with conditions

at the University Bamenda. Abdulrahman's study of Nigerian universities found that manual, alphabetic, and subject-based filing systems dominated, with storage limited to cupboards, wooden shelves, and box files, and recommended better filing systems, more space, and ICT training for staff, conditions the authors say mirror Bamenda's own reliance on similar low-tech storage and filing arrangements. A larger scoping review by Yidana and Akuna, covering 65 studies across 15 African countries, found that many institutions have informal records systems that do not align with, or are not guided by, formal policy, and that digital adoption is held back by weak IT infrastructure, limited digital skills, and resistance to change; the authors note these same constraints recur at Bamenda.

Several further studies reinforce the link between sound records management and institutional performance. Aleru's work in Rivers State, and a related study by Gesmundo and colleagues at a Philippine polytechnic, both connect good record-keeping to stronger administrative and staff performance, with the latter recommending structured training through workshops and seminars, an approach the authors see as equally relevant to Bamenda. Studies from the University of Punjab (Bajwa and Rafiq) and a private university (Barut and Cabonero) both point to inconsistent, self-developed procedures and a shortage of professionally trained archival staff, problems the authors identify as present at Bamenda as well, where standardized practice and in-depth archival expertise are similarly lacking.

Several Nigerian and Ugandan studies add further detail. Bakare and colleagues, examining local government councils in Ogun State, found paper records still dominant, storage facilities inadequate, and security reliant mainly on restricted access rather than formal safeguards, closely matching the university of Bamenda's continued dependence on paper records. Ngunengen and colleagues, studying two institutions in Ibadan, found that although records policies existed and were largely implemented, storage space remained limited and basic preservation steps such as fumigation were rarely carried out; they recommended digitization, automation, and clear retention schedules, recommendations the authors consider directly applicable to Bamenda's university own space constraints. Kenneth and David's study of a Ugandan university registrar's department described files stored on tables and floors due to poor conditions and limited staff competence, a picture the authors say closely resembles what is found at the University of Bamenda.

Two further sources address the physical and technical preservation challenge directly. Bernadetha and colleagues identified inadequate staffing, insufficient storage, weak technological integration, and poor maintenance as recurring problems affecting both the accessibility and survival of archival materials, issues the authors observe again at Bamenda. Oweru and Minjama, examining Tanzania's national records and archives department, found incomplete preservation legislation, no dedicated preservation policy, exclusive reliance on paper preservation, poor environmental storage conditions, and a shortage of trained conservators, problems the authors say apply just as directly to Bamenda, where no preservation policy yet

exists and trained archival personnel remain scarce. Taken together, the authors position these studies as confirming that the challenges facing Bamenda, weak policy frameworks, inadequate infrastructure, limited digital capacity, and a shortage of trained staff, are not unique to the institution but reflect a broader pattern across higher education and public-sector record-keeping in the region, which is the gap their own study sets out to address specifically for Bamenda.

Research Methodology

A mixed-method research design was adopted for the study, involving both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative approach was aimed at gaining a deeper insight into records and archival practices, particularly regarding the current state of records and their challenges, while the quantitative approach complemented this process by quantifying records and archival practices. Descriptive survey research was adopted, using questionnaires for data collection. The population comprised fifty (50) records and archival personnel in key offices across the university, including administrative personnel, heads of divisions, schools, and faculties, as well as personnel handling records and archives in the central administration of The University of Bamenda. Structured and semi-structured questionnaires were administered using a simple random sampling technique, to give every respondent an equal chance of being selected. A research assistant was recruited and trained for two days on records and archival practices in higher education institutions. A total of fifty questionnaires were administered in accordance with the Taro Yamane formula, all of which were completed and returned, representing a 100% return rate. The data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS Version 21.0, and the findings were presented using tables.

Results

The study was designed to investigate records and archival practices in higher education institutions in Cameroon, with a focus on The University of Bamenda from 2010 to the present. Having analyzed the collected data, this section presents the findings derived from the questionnaire responses, organized according to the objectives of the study.

Objective 1: Current State of Records and Archival Practices

The first objective was to investigate the current state of records and archival practices at The University of Bamenda. The responses from respondents are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Records and Archival Practices

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SDEV
1	Records in my unit are created and received in a systematic manner	9 (18%)	32 (64%)	8 (16%)	1 (2%)	2.9	.65
2	Both paper-based and electronic methods are effectively used for records management	9 (18%)	30 (60%)	8 (16%)	3 (6%)	2.9	.76
3	Records in my unit are stored in a secure and organized manner	13 (26%)	30 (60%)	5 (10%)	2 (4%)	3.1	.72
4	There is a standardized filing system in my unit	10 (20%)	21 (42%)	15 (30%)	4 (8%)	2.7	.87
5	Records are retained for an appropriate period before disposal or transfer	22 (44%)	17 (34%)	7 (14%)	4 (8%)	3.1	.94
6	There is a designated archive office at the university	15 (30%)	19 (38%)	11 (22%)	5 (10%)	2.9	.96
7	Old records from my unit are regularly transferred to a central archive	5 (10%)	13 (26%)	20 (40%)	12 (24%)	2.8	.96
8	Archival records are properly preserved in secure conditions	9 (18%)	24 (48%)	9 (18%)	8 (16%)	2.6	.96
9	Digitization and backups are used to safeguard archival records	9 (18%)	27 (54%)	8 (16%)	6 (12%)	2.8	.89
10	Archival practices at The University of Bamenda are effective	6 (12%)	21 (42%)	19 (38%)	4 (8%)	2.6	.81
11	I am aware of a university-wide Records Management Policy	6 (12%)	18 (36%)	15 (30%)	11 (22%)	2.4	.87
12	My unit complies with existing Records Management Policy	12 (24%)	18 (36%)	14 (28%)	6 (12%)	2.7	.97
13	Staff in my unit have received adequate training in records and archival management	10 (20%)	19 (38%)	15 (30%)	6 (12%)	2.7	.94
14	There are regular workshops or sensitization sessions on proper records handling	11 (22%)	19 (38%)	13 (26%)	7 (14%)	2.7	.98
15	University management supports effective records and archival practices	6 (12%)	27 (54%)	14 (28%)	3 (6%)	2.7	.76
Average Total		32.4 (64.8%)		17.6 (35.2%)		2.8	0.9

Source: Field Work

The descriptive statistics reveal important trends regarding records and archival management practices at The University of Bamenda. Overall, the responses indicate that records management practices are moderately effective, although shortcomings remain, particularly in policy awareness, archival transfer, and staff training. Most respondents agreed that records in their units are created and received systematically, with 64% agreeing and 18% strongly agreeing, producing a mean score of 2.9 and a low standard deviation of .65, indicating that creation procedures are fairly consistent across units. Furthermore, 78% of respondents agreed that records are retained for an appropriate period before disposal or transfer (Mean = 3.1; SD = .94), indicating relatively strong compliance with records retention practices. Storage and security of records also showed positive trends, with 86% of respondents indicating that records are stored in a secure and organized manner, yielding one of the highest mean scores (Mean = 3.1; SD = .72).

However, some areas show only moderate effectiveness. The existence of a standardized filing system received a mean score of 2.7 with a relatively higher standard deviation of .87. Although 62% agreed or strongly agreed, 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting inconsistencies in filing practices across units. Similarly, while both paper-based and electronic methods are reportedly used (Mean = 2.9; SD = .76), the results indicate that digital integration is not yet fully optimized. Archival management practices appear weaker than records management practices overall. Only 36% of respondents agreed that old records are regularly transferred to a central archive, while 64% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Mean = 2.8; SD = .96), indicating that archival transfer procedures are either irregular or poorly implemented. Although 66% believed archival records are preserved under secure conditions, the mean score remained relatively low (Mean = 2.6), reflecting concerns about preservation standards. Digitization and backup systems also appear moderately implemented, with a mean score of 2.8 (SD = .89), suggesting that the effectiveness of these systems varies across units.

The effectiveness of archival practices at the university received mixed responses overall. Only 54% agreed that archival practices are effective, while 46% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Mean = 2.6; SD = .81). Policy awareness emerged as one of the weakest areas: fewer than half of the respondents (48%) indicated awareness of a university-wide Records Management Policy, while 52% were unaware or disagreed (Mean = 2.4; SD = .87). Training and sensitization also appear insufficient. Although a slight majority acknowledged receiving some training, 42% still disagreed or strongly disagreed (Mean = 2.7; SD = .94), with similar trends observed regarding workshops and sensitization sessions (Mean = 2.7; SD = .98). Finally, respondents moderately acknowledged management support for records and archival practices, with 66% agreeing or strongly agreeing (Mean = 2.7; SD = .76), suggesting that while some institutional commitment exists, additional support and resource allocation may be required. Summarily, records creation, storage, and retention practices are relatively effective at the university. However, weaknesses remain in policy awareness, archival transfers, digitization consistency, and staff training,

pointing to the need for stronger institutional policies, regular training programmes, improved archival infrastructure, and enhanced digitization strategies.

Objective 2: Challenges Faced in Managing Records and Archives

The second objective was to examine the challenges faced in managing records and archives at The University of Bamenda. The responses are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 2: Challenges Faced in Managing Records and Archives

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SDEV
1	The university lacks a clear policy on records and archives management	12 (24%)	19 (38%)	15 (30%)	4 (8%)	2.8	.91
2	Top management does not provide adequate support for records management	13 (26%)	17 (34%)	15 (30%)	5 (10%)	2.8	.96
3	Storage facilities for records and archives are inadequate	18 (36%)	23 (46%)	8 (16%)	1 (2%)	3.2	.77
4	Limited financial resources hinder effective records and archives management	23 (46%)	20 (40%)	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	3.3	.85
5	There is a shortage of trained staff in records and archives management	19 (38%)	18 (36%)	12 (24%)	1 (2%)	3.1	.83
6	Staff do not receive regular training on modern records management practices	16 (32%)	21 (42%)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)	3.0	.88
7	The university lacks a functional electronic records management system	21 (42%)	21 (42%)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)	3.0	.88
8	Poor internet connectivity affects digital records management	35 (70%)	12 (24%)	3 (6%)	0	3.0	.88
9	Records are at risk from environmental hazards (dust, pests, humidity)	21 (42%)	25 (50%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	3.3	.68
10	There is no disaster preparedness plan for safeguarding archives	18 (36%)	20 (40%)	9 (18%)	3 (6%)	3.1	.89
11	Receipt of records is often delayed due to poor classification	14 (28%)	28 (56%)	8 (16%)	0	3.1	.66
12	Lack of proper records management negatively affects decision-making	18 (36%)	26 (52%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)	3.2	.71
13	Lack of ICT support limits the preservation of records	14 (28%)	27 (54%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	3.1	.77
14	Lack of space is a challenge to records management in my unit	28 (56%)	18 (36%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	3.4	.81
15	Poor filing systems affect the accessibility of records	28 (56%)	18 (36%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	3.5	.71

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SDEV
Average Total		40.8 (89.6%)		9.6 (19.2%)		3.1	0.81

Source: Field Work

The descriptive statistics on challenges reveal that respondents generally perceive records and archival management as being affected by a wide range of institutional, financial, technological, and infrastructural problems. Most statements recorded high mean scores ranging from 2.8 to 3.5, indicating strong agreement that these challenges exist. Inadequate storage facilities and lack of space were among the most prominently identified challenges, with mean scores of 3.2 and 3.4 respectively, and 82% and 92% agreement rates. Financial constraints were also widely acknowledged, with 86% of respondents agreeing that limited financial resources hinder effective records and archives management (Mean = 3.3; SD = .85).

Poor filing systems emerged as the most critical challenge, recording the highest mean score of 3.5 (SD = .71) with 92% agreement, indicating that ineffective filing practices significantly impede the retrieval and accessibility of records. Related to this, 84% agreed that receipt of records is often delayed due to poor classification (Mean = 3.1; SD = .66). Human resource challenges were equally prominent: a majority agreed that there is a shortage of trained staff (Mean = 3.1; SD = .83), and 74% indicated that staff do not receive regular training on modern records management practices (Mean = 3.0; SD = .88).

Technological challenges are also evident. Most respondents agreed that the university lacks a functional electronic records management system (Mean = 3.0; SD = .88), and 94% identified poor internet connectivity as a challenge to digital records management. Environmental and disaster-related risks were strongly acknowledged, with 92% agreeing that records are at risk from environmental hazards such as dust, pests, and humidity (Mean = 3.3; SD = .68), and a significant proportion noting the absence of a disaster preparedness plan (Mean = 3.1; SD = .89). Institutional and policy-related challenges were also identified, including the lack of a clear policy on records management (Mean = 2.8; SD = .91) and inadequate management support (Mean = 2.8; SD = .96). Finally, 88% of respondents agreed that poor records management negatively affects decision-making (Mean = 3.2; SD = .71), underscoring the broad institutional consequences of these challenges.

Objective 3: Suggestions for Improvement

The third objective was to suggest ways that The University of Bamenda can manage records and archives to better support teaching, learning, and research. The suggestions are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Suggestions on the Improvement of Effective Records and Archival Practices

Theme	Frequency	Representative Responses
Digitalization of Records and Archives	22	"We need to go all digital and blend in with modernization."; "Digitalize the records management system."; "Cloud storage is encouraged."
Training and Capacity Building of Staff	24	"Regular workshops should be organized."; "Train more staff on records and archives policies."; "Frequent organization of seminars and workshops for staff training."
Infrastructure and Storage Facilities	18	"There should be a special building dedicated to archiving."; "Adequate space should be provided for the records and archives unit."
Institutional Policy and Management Support	11	"Strong institutional policies should be adopted."; "Top management should provide adequate support for records management."
Security, Backup, and Preservation	7	"Develop disaster recovery plans."; "Each service should have a backup external hard drive."
Improved Internet and Network Connectivity	15	"Internet connection should be provided in offices."; "Improve internet facilities."
Efficient Filing and Records Retrieval Systems	9	"Better filing systems should be implemented."; "A systematic filing system should be adopted to facilitate the accessibility of records."
Human Resource Improvement	6	"Train more personnel in records and archive management."; "Records and archival service personnel should be more committed and diligent."

Source: Field Work

Participants strongly emphasized the need for digital transformation in records and archival management. Respondents believe that electronic systems, cloud storage, improved internet services, and modern ICT infrastructure would enhance the accessibility, efficiency, and security of records management at The University of Bamenda. Many respondents also highlighted inadequate staff knowledge and skills in records and archives management, viewing continuous professional development through workshops, seminars, and retraining as essential for improving archival practices. Concerns about insufficient physical infrastructure for records preservation were widespread, with respondents recommending the expansion of storage spaces, construction of dedicated archival facilities, and the provision of modern filing equipment.

Participants stressed the importance of institutional commitment in ensuring effective records management. Strong records policies, financial investment, standardized procedures, and administrative support were identified as critical factors for sustainable archival practices. Reliable internet services and online archival systems were also considered essential. Systematic

filing, easy retrieval, and cataloguing were highlighted as strategies for guaranteeing sustainable records and archival management at The University of Bamenda. The frequency data in Table 4 indicates that staff training and capacity building and digitalization of records and archives were the areas considered most important by respondents, reflecting the urgent need for both technological advancement and human resource development.

Discussion of Findings

Current State of Records and Archival Practices

The current state of records and archival practices at The University of Bamenda is best described as moderately functional, with relative strengths in storage and retention but notable weaknesses in policy awareness, archival transfer, digitization, and staff training; mean scores across the fifteen indicators ranged from 2.4 to 3.1, reflecting inconsistent application across units. This pattern aligns with the Records Continuum Model (Ngoepe, 2008), as only 36% of respondents confirmed that old records are regularly transferred to a central archive (Mean = 2.8), echoing the fragmented, non-standardized procedures Bajwa and Rafiq (2023) observed at the University of Punjab. Policy awareness recorded the lowest mean score (2.4), with fewer than half of respondents aware of a university-wide Records Management Policy, consistent with Yidana and Akuna (2025) and with Bakare et al. (2016), who linked weak policy frameworks to disorganized records practices in Nigerian local government councils. Although 86% of respondents agreed that records are securely stored (Mean = 3.1), this contrasts with low overall archival effectiveness (Mean = 2.6; 46% disagreed), a unit-level versus institution-wide gap also reported by Barut and Cabonero (2020), underscoring the need for systemic rather than unit-level interventions.

Challenges Faced in Managing Records and Archives

Records and archival management at The University of Bamenda is constrained by interlocking institutional, infrastructural, technological, and human resource challenges, foremost among them poor filing systems (Mean = 3.5; 92% agreement), a finding consistent with Abdulrahman (2015) in Nigerian universities, alongside inadequate storage facilities and lack of space (Mean = 3.4 and 3.2), conditions Kenneth and David (2024) similarly documented at All-Saints University in Uganda. Technological deficiencies compound these problems, with 84% of respondents citing the absence of a functional Electronic Records Management System and 94% citing poor internet connectivity, corroborating Yidana and Akuna (2025) and Bernadetha et al. (2025) on inadequate IT infrastructure and digital skills across African higher education institutions. Human resource gaps are equally significant, with shortages of trained records staff (Mean = 3.1) and insufficient professional training (Mean = 3.0) echoing Gesmundo et al. (2022) on the link between training and administrative performance, while environmental and disaster-related risks, including threats from dust, pests, and humidity (Mean = 3.3; 92% agreement) and the absence of a disaster preparedness plan (Mean = 3.1), mirror Oweru and Minjama's (2014)

findings in Tanzania. Collectively, these challenges carry institution-wide consequences, with 88% of respondents agreeing that poor records management negatively affects decision-making (Mean = 3.2), affirming Aleru's (2024) assertion that records management is foundational to sustainable administrative performance.

Suggestions for Improving Records and Archival Practices

Respondents' suggestions for improving records and archival practices at The University of Bamenda converged on four priority areas: digital transformation, staff training, infrastructure development, and institutional policy, with digitalization and staff capacity building cited most frequently (22 and 24 responses respectively), reflecting recognition that sustainable improvement requires both technology and human competency, in line with Yidana and Akuna (2025), Ngunengen et al. (2022), and Bernadetha et al. (2025). Infrastructure improvement (18 responses) and stronger institutional policies (11 responses) were also emphasized, consistent with Abdulrahman (2015) and Bakare et al. (2016) on the importance of adequate storage and formal policy frameworks. Schellenberg's appraisal theory offers a useful lens for prioritization, suggesting that by distinguishing records of primary value (administrative and fiscal) from those of secondary value (historical and informational), the university can strategically allocate limited resources toward the protection, digitization, and accessibility of its most critical records, grounding respondents' practical recommendations in a coherent, value-based institutional framework.

Summary of Findings

The study examined records and archival practices at the University of Bamenda across three objectives: current state, challenges, and improvement suggestions. Findings reveal a moderately functional system with relative strengths in records creation and secure storage, but significant weaknesses in policy awareness, archival transfer, digitization, and staff training. Notably, fewer than half of respondents were aware of a university-wide records management policy, and only 36% confirmed regular transfer of records to a central archive, indicating fragmented governance that falls short of the Records Continuum Model ideal.

The challenges identified are interconnected and wide-ranging. Poor filing systems (92% agreement), inadequate physical storage, the absence of a functional Electronic Records Management System, poor internet connectivity (94%), and a shortage of trained staff collectively undermine records accessibility and preservation. Environmental threats such as dust, pests, and humidity, compounded by the lack of a disaster preparedness plan, further jeopardize institutional memory. These deficiencies have real administrative consequences, with 88% of respondents acknowledging that poor records management negatively affects decision-making.

Respondents proposed four priority areas for improvement: digital transformation, staff capacity building, infrastructure development, and stronger institutional policies. Digitalization and

training were most frequently cited, reflecting an understanding that sustainable reform demands both technological investment and human resource development. These suggestions align with Schellenberg's appraisal theory, which advocates value-based prioritization of records to guide strategic resource allocation within a coherent institutional framework.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that while The University of Bamenda performs basic records management functions, including the creation, storage, and retention of paper and digital records, and benefits from a dedicated records and archives division, the overall quality and consistency of its practices remain moderately functional at best, undermined by interconnected deficiencies in storage infrastructure, policy direction, staff training, and digital transformation, with policy awareness emerging as the most critical gap. These challenges compound one another: inadequate funding limits infrastructure and technology acquisition, weak policy direction produces fragmented unit-level practices, insufficient training leaves personnel ill-equipped, and environmental risks alongside the absence of a disaster preparedness plan threaten the irreversible loss of institutional memory—collectively impeding administrative efficiency, transparency, and informed decision-making. Anchored in the Records Continuum Model and Schellenberg's appraisal theory, the study argues that records management must be treated not as a peripheral function but as a strategic institutional priority that integrates creation, classification, preservation, and access within a coherent, continuum-based policy framework recognizing records' administrative, fiscal, historical, informational, and cultural value. Addressing this requires a multi-dimensional response: adopting a university-wide records management policy aligned with international standards, investing in a secure Electronic Records Management System backed by improved internet infrastructure and staff training, expanding physical storage facilities, and fostering an institutional culture where effective record-keeping is a shared responsibility at all levels. Ultimately, with deliberate policy reform and sustained investment in infrastructure and human capital, The University of Bamenda can overcome its current deficiencies and position itself as a model of archival excellence within Cameroon and the wider Central African sub-region.

Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the need for a comprehensive and systematic approach to records and archival management at The University of Bamenda. The following recommendations are proposed:

First, the university should develop and implement an institution-wide records management policy aligned with recognized international standards. Second, the institution should prioritize the digitization of its records by adopting a secure Electronic Records Management System (ERMS). Third, there is a pressing need for continuous capacity building among personnel who handle records and archives, particularly in digital records handling and data protection. Finally,

the university should foster an institutional culture that recognizes effective record-keeping as a shared responsibility across all administrative and academic units.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or affiliations that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to its submission for publication.

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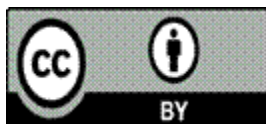
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