

# **Pustaka's role for sustainable preservation of Public Records and Archives**

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## **Abstract:**

*This paper aims to highlight the approach implemented by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak's in the preservation of public records through initiatives and programs. The legal framework through the establishment of Sarawak State Library Ordinance 1999, circulars, and guidelines related to records and archives management effectively support initiatives and programs in Sarawak State Government departments and agencies. Preservation and conservation of records and archives are important to safeguard the authenticity of records and making sure it remains accessible and usable for future reference. The paper records will deteriorate over time, but the lifespan of records can be prolonged based on how they are managed, preserved, conserved and stored throughout their lifespan. Through collaboration with various agencies, Pustaka's has conducted various initiatives and programs such as campaigns, training, advisory services, and workshops related to records and archives management that ensure the sustainability of the public records and archives for public accountability, business, historical and evidential value.*

**Keyword:** *sustainability of public records, preservation and conservation of public records, records and archives management, legal framework, public accountability, evidential value, authenticity of records, public records, public Archives*

## **Introduction**

Pustaka Negeri Sarawak's has two (2) main functions, which are as a Library and as State Records Repository. Functioning as the State Records Repository, Pustaka is responsible for acquiring and preserving public records transferred by Sarawak State Government departments and agencies to Pustaka for permanent preservation. At the State Records Repository, the Sarawak State Government records are stored following the provisions of International Standard on the Physical Storage and provide storage and retrieval services with Archival Records Management System (ARMS). Pustaka Negeri Sarawak observes the world's best practices in all aspects of its services and operations, including the preservation and conservation practice and method applied to the public record<sup>1</sup>. This is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all under Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is implemented accordingly for public records. Preserving the public records and archives are important to ensure the sustainability of the records remains accessible and usable for future reference. The paper records will deteriorate over time, but the lifespan of records can be prolonged based on how they are managed and stored throughout their lifespan.

Besides, Pustaka is the agency responsible for ensuring best practice in all aspects of official record-keeping throughout the Sarawak State Government. Hence, Pustaka has introduced various initiatives and program to support the preservation and conservation of public records.

### **Initiatives**

Under Sarawak State Library Ordinance 1999, Part IV State Depository, Section 14(1) – (d) to maintain, preserve and keep public records which are more than twenty-five years old, and other documents, papers, instruments, and statutes, statutory orders, regulations, or decrees, directed by State Depository on account of their historical value or public importance. Special provisions for public records, No.22 – (1) 2 (a) it shall be the duty of the Director to notify the State Secretary of any public records transferred or delivered pursuant to this Part, to the State Depository, which, in the opinion of the Director, contain information likely to prejudice the administration of the Government or would not be in the public interest, to be preserved or maintained in the State Depository.

Based on the statement in the ordinance, all Sarawak State Government department/agencies are mandatory to transfer their records with archival value to State Records Repository. Hence, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak take the initiative to spread awareness to all Sarawak State Government departments/agencies about records and archives management.

Good and systematic records management at the government department should be implemented starting from the record's creation until the preservation and conservation stages. This is to ensure accountability and transparency of records management in Sarawak State Government departments/agencies is practiced. This step is important because it will determine the physical condition of the records either it suitable or not for permanent preservation. Hence, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak emphasizes to all Sarawak State Government departments/agencies to comply with the following circulars.

<sup>1</sup> Sarawak State Library Ordinance, 1999

- *Surat Pekeliling Bil.1 Tahun 2011, Pemandahan Rekod-Rekod Awam ke Pustaka Negeri Sarawak*<sup>2</sup>.

- *Surat pekeliling Bil 1 tahun 2015 Memperkasakan Pengurusan Keselamatan Perkara Terperingkat Kerajaan Negeri Sarawak*<sup>3</sup>.
- *Surat Pekeliling No.24 Tahun 2019 Tanggungjawab Jabatan Dan Peranan Pustaka Negeri Sarawak Dalam Pengurusan Rekod Awam Dan Arkib*<sup>4</sup>.

To prepare a comprehensive blueprint on records and archives management for the Sarawak State Civil Service, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak has organised Blueprint for Sarawak's Records on 13th and 14th August 2014. The 3-days programme with the theme "Our Records, Our Heritage" started with a forum on 12th August, followed by 2-days' workshop from 13th – 14th August 2014. The outcome of the forum and workshop is a Blueprint for Sarawak's Records.

To support the preservation and conservation effort for public records, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak has organised Records Management & Archives Forum in year 2016 for Sarawak's state departments and agencies. This forum aims to provide information on records management and archives as well as to provide guidance and governance aspects that must be complied with by all civil servants. In addition, the relevant government departments and agencies was briefed on the methods and means of managing the classified records available at the state government departments and agencies. This forum successfully gathered 439 participants from 137 department/agencies.

To ensure that Sarawak State government departments have a platform to share information related to records and archive management in the department, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak has organized Symposium on Records and Archives Management on 3rd and 4th September 2018 at UCSI Hotel, Kuching. The theme for this symposium is "Creating Sarawak's Records Management Catalysts". The symposium objectives are to further improve records management in Sarawak Civil Service; to improve the knowledge and skills of staff dealing with records management; and to make known Pustaka's role in records and archives management. The Sarawak Civil Service needs to improve their knowledge and skills in records management because it related to the preservation step for public records at the department/agencies before the public records transfer to the State Records Repository for permanent preservation. This symposium successfully gathered 367 participants from 150 department/agencies.

<sup>2</sup>Surat Pekeliling Bil.1 Tahun 2011, Pemindahan Rekod-Rekod Awam ke Pustaka Negeri Sarawak.

<sup>3</sup>Surat pekeliling Bil 1 tahun 2015 Memperkasakan Pengurusan Keselamatan Perkara Terperingkat Kerajaan Negeri Sarawak.

<sup>4</sup>Surat Pekeliling No.24 Tahun 2019 Tanggungjawab Jabatan Dan Peranan Pustaka Negeri Sarawak Dalam Pengurusan Rekod Awam Dan Arkib.

Then in year 2019, the symposium been renamed to *Taklimat Penyelarasan Rekod dan Arkib Negeri Sarawak*. The briefing was organized on 25th September 2019 at the Pullman Hotel,

Kuching and aim to promote the service offered by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak especially records and archives and obtaining information on the departments/agencies establishment history background, relationship and Departmental Record Officer and Focal Person. This briefing successfully gathered 241 participants from 124 department/agencies. For year 2020, the briefing was conducted through online platform because of the Covid-19 pandemic situation and the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO). Through the online platform the briefing successfully gathered 626 participants from 122 agencies/department and get 1,242 views at the Pustaka YouTube Channel.

Sarawak Records and Archives Networking (SARAN) previously known as Symposium on Records and Archives Management and *Taklimat Penyelarasan Rekod dan Arkib* was organized virtually on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and focus on the delivery of services and information to users during the Covid-19 pandemic. The objectives are to share initiatives taken by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak and other archival institutions in Malaysia in delivering services to users during a pandemic; and to provide a platform for knowledge sharing among experts in the field of records and archives. This program successfully gathered 1,385 participants and get 4,171 views at the Pustaka YouTube Channel.

In year 2021, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak has launched the guideline book entitled "*Garis Panduan Pengurusan Rekod dan Arkib untuk Jabatan dan Agensi Kerajaan Negeri Sarawak*"<sup>5</sup> on 17th February 2021 in conjunction with the Chairman's Annual Address Pustaka Negeri Sarawak virtual program. This guideline is provided as a guide for Sarawak State Government departments and agencies in managing records and archives in their respective departments to ensure the storage environment and the physical condition of the records is remains in good condition and suitable for permanent preservation. It also covers the other aspect in records and archives management. It can be accessed on the official website of Pustaka Negeri Sarawak here [https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/document\\_uploaded/1605924955.pdf](https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/document_uploaded/1605924955.pdf).

The first stage in the public record preservation conducted towards the transferred public records by Sarawak State Government departments/agencies was the processing of public records must be carried out properly according to archival standards. Hence, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak have introduced the Guideline Processing of Transferred of Public Records and Archives or known as e-preservation which can be access at Pustaka official website here <https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/apps/epreservation/>. Another initiative introduced by the Pustaka Negeri Sarawak to facilitate the processing process for public records before the transferred session is providing the Attachment Area at the State Records Repository. This area is equipped with processing equipment. Departments/agencies that have transfer files can apply to use this area.

<sup>5</sup>Garis Panduan Pengurusan Rekod dan Arkib untuk Jabatan dan Agensi Kerajaan Negeri Sarawak

At the State Records Repository, the Sarawak State Government records are stored following the provisions of International Standard on the Physical Storage<sup>6</sup>. This standard requires the

physical storage to have proper environmental controls, fire protection, security system, and disaster management plan. Following are the characteristics of good physical storage.

*a. Environmental controls*

For monitoring and controlling the temperature in each repository, the centralized air conditioning system for fully operation (24 hours) and a rotation system (12 hours) for non-centralized cold conditioning. Each repository is equipped with dehumidifier to control the humidity. The optimum temperature is set between <sup>6</sup>18 Celsius to 21 Celsius and air humidity between 50% - 55%.

*b. Fire protection*

For early preventive measures, smoke detectors were installed at each repository room where the records were stored. The use of water sprinkler and fire extinguisher are essential to prevent any minor incidents for fire disaster.

*c. Security*

In 2015, State Records Repository was gazetted as a protected area by Chief Security Government Office (CGSO). Fully closed-circuit television (CCTV) operation for security surveillance were used with High-Definition Motion capture to increase the security level in State Records Repository. All the repositories were locked with thumbprint access and only can be accessed by specific designated officer.

*d. Disaster Management*

An integral part of disaster management is to prevent the disaster and minimise the damage of records if the disaster occurred. Through disaster management planning and procedures of restoration after disaster, it will help Pustaka Negeri Sarawak in ensuring the collection can be rescue by proper handling and restoration process involved. Regular checking and maintenance with Building Management Unit in yearly basis is important to ensure the fire protection system complied with Fire and Rescue Department Of Malaysia requirement.

**Activities and Programs**

Under Sarawak State Library Ordinance 1999, Part IV State Depository, Section 14(1) – (d) also required Pustaka Negeri Sarawak to maintain, preserve and keep public records. Hence, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak has created various activities and programs to support the records and archives management practice in Sarawak State Government department/agencies.

<sup>6</sup>National Information Standards Organization. Environmental Guidelines for the Storage of Paper Records. Technical Report NISO-TR01-1995.

To ensure the Sarawak State Government department/agencies have awareness in records management and are effective in records management practices, the Records Management

Division, Depository Services Sector, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak actively conducted advisory visit and inspection, briefing and training with the Sarawak State Government department/agencies. As for the department/agencies who wish to transfer their public records to Pustaka Negeri Sarawak for permanent preservation, a records appraisal shall be conducted by Records Management Division. This process is to identify which records has a value to the department/agencies, to the state and the country before any transfer session been approved. All the activities conducted by Records Management Division is very important because it is the first step in the preservation of public records. Sarawak State Government department/agencies must ensure their public records are in good condition, so when the public records been transfer to Pustaka Negeri Sarawak it was in good condition for preservation.

To ease the transfer of public records to State Records Repository, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak, the *Kempen 1 Fail 1 Minggu* have been launched in February 2017. This campaign aims to train the Sarawak government department/agencies officers who responsible for the management of the records at their respective department/agencies on how to process public records for transferred to State Records Repository. The *Kempen 1 Fail 1 Minggu* is a program to meet the requirements of the Sarawak State Library Ordinance, 1999 (incorporating all amendments up to 30th November 2010) Part II, Establishment and Management of Sarawak State Library, (m) to establish, manage and maintain public archives in the State; (n) to promote efficient and effective records and archives management practices in the State; (p) to provide training and guidance in the management of public records and public archives. Through 3 modules included in the program: Module 1: Records and Archives Management Briefing, Module 2: Practical Processing of Agencies' Records, Module 3: Transfer of Records & Archives; the program has successfully trained 599 Sarawak State Government staff from 226 department/agencies across Sarawak. *Kempen 1 Fail 1 Minggu* managed to increase the files transfer by Sarawak State Government department with 51,937 records transferred to State Records Repository from 2017 until 2020.

To assist the Sarawak State Government department/agencies in the process of transferring public records to State Records Repository, the Rescue Government Records and Archives Program (REGRAP) have been introduced in year 2018. The Sarawak State Government departments/agencies, which categorized as critical based on following status will be invited to join this program to ease their transfer session.

- a. Delayed in transferring files/records after been approved by the State Records and Archives Retention Committee (SRARC) Meeting.
- b. Lack of manpower to do the process of transferring files/records.

REGRAP managed to assist seven (7) department in the files transfer process with total of public records transferred 1,130 records from 2018 until 2020.

At the State Records Repository, upon receiving the transferred public records, the preservation process will start with the in-house fumigation. Fumigation is important because this process will ensure all the records received from the government departments are clean and biologically free from any insect's threat. This in-house fumigation will require 21 hours of fumigation using Bio Master Fumigation Machine before the records to be sent to the repository.

Pustaka Negeri Sarawak was appointed as the State Microfilm Service Provider in the Sarawak Information Technology and Resources Council (SITRC) Meeting on Microfilming in 2016. The provision of digitization and microfilm conversion services were introduced in 2017 with

the aim of preserving and providing access to state records and archives. Digitization and microfilm have been chosen as one of the preservation and conservation methods for public records. Microfilm has been chosen as a carrier because if it has been preserved properly, it will have a life expectancy of 500 years. In addition, it is fake proof and resistant against viruses or worms and cannot be manipulated by hackers. The purpose of the preservation of public records through digitization and microfilm is to extend the life of the physical public records in order to reduce the risk of damage and slow down records impairment. As of 2020, the total digitization of public records is 16,6350 records, and 132,189 have been converted to microfilm.

*Bengkel Pemuliharaan Ringkas Rekod Selepas Bencana* was introduced in 2020 to provide post-disaster records management training in Sarawak State Government departments/agencies. This workshop was attended by 64 *Pegawai Rekod Jabatan* and *Pegawai Seranta Jabatan* who are responsible for managing records in their respective departments. The aimed for this workshop is to expose the participants with different techniques on salvaging the records after disaster. Through this workshop, the participants took four (4) modules consists of 1) Preservation and conservation 2) Disaster Action Plan 3) Conservation Records (Post Disaster) 4) Demonstration and Practical Session.

Conservation activities at State Records Repository focusses on the vital and damages records and paper-based materials. As of the year 2020, the total number of public records that have been preserved was 6,332 records. With various online courses and training attachment, the improvement and additional techniques of conservation such as wet paper tissue repairing, deacidification, encapsulation and humidification were added to several work process specifically for collection that require major conservation.

Pustaka Negeri Sarawak also organized various activities to celebrate International Archives Week (IAW). This program is an annual program introduced by the International Council of Archives (ICA) with a different theme each year. As for this year, the theme is "Empowering Archives". International Archives Week 2021 (IAW2021) program organised by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak successfully gathered 1,355 participants and get 4,295 views at the Pustaka YouTube Channel.

*Khazanah Rekod dan Arkib* was an online program introduced in 2020 due to the pandemic Covid-19 outbreak and the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO) by the government. This program aims to provide a virtual platform for information sharing related to records and archives management. Through this virtual platform, Pustaka Negeri Sarawak has shared videos related to preservation and conservation activities. The videos can be view at Pustaka YouTube Channel here [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrCnBpYDEv-Ix5vVH\\_S6Bd78Qo\\_YfEjm8](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrCnBpYDEv-Ix5vVH_S6Bd78Qo_YfEjm8).

## **Services**

In 2017, Fumigation Services at the Department was initiated by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak to promotes the awareness on the importance of good records management practice in government departments and agencies. The paid services offer the clients the protection from insect threat which usually cause damaged to the agencies' records and maintaining the conducive environment by eliminating bad odour in the records storage area.

## **Recommendations for Future Preservation Initiatives**

Preservation is an ongoing process that requires analogue and digital management. The following points need to be emphasized and reviewed:

1. The question of whether analogue carriers should be preserved also needs to be considered in the process of preservation and conservation of public records. It is a question that needs to be examined in depth because carrier preservation requires different expertise than the preservation of the content of the record itself. Is it worth it for the carrier to be preserved? How much storage needs to be allocated for it?
2. Cooperation should be further encouraged between government, memory institutions, and the private sector in the preservation of the state and national heritage to support life-long learning.
3. Conservation and preservation techniques need to be further improved to ensure that conservation work is carried out in line with technological developments.

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Pustaka Negeri Sarawak is conceived as a major information resource centre and as the hub of information services for the public and private sectors.

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