Improving Public Record Management System at Government Ministries and Agencies: Factors to Consider and Action Steps to Take

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Abstract:

The way in which government ministries and agencies managed and preserved its records is crucial for its survival in a rapidly changing society. The study concentrated on exploring factors posing challenges to the management and preservation of public records as well as determining action steps needed for improving public record management systems at government ministries and agencies in Liberia, it was expected to cover the three main specific objectives: record keeping system, policies for keeping records and ways to improve public records management system. The researcher employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey in order to quantitatively examine the challenges faced by government institutions. A researcher-administered opened-ended questionnaire was used as a data collection tool to study a stratified sample of seven (7) members from an estimated population of twenty-seven (27).

The data were collected from the fields, both primary and secondary data. The collected data and findings were analyzed and computed both qualitatively and quantitatively to get reliable and valid data using tables, charts, and explanations. The data collected was from five record departments of the government ministries and agencies whose population formed the sample size and the targeted sample. Findings on the types of systems used in record keeping revealed that most problems are experienced when using the manual system, as it is not very efficient in keeping mostly for a long period of time. Records are lost easily, mix-recording of the transactions and fail to correct due to bureaucracy in correcting. Although there were sporadic cases of record keeping, a greater number of respondents revealed that government entities lack the facilities, equipment, education and trained/skilled personnel to apply correct records management procedures in their daily administration. The findings on the policies revealed that most 60% percent of government entities do not have written policy on records management and preservation while 40% percent of some government entities agreed that they have records policy. Some workers are aware about the few written policies which are kept, but fail to follow them. This is due to that activities are made in a usual manner even with no policies as each one sees. The aspect of record keeping is a reluctant procedure. Procedures are present also but not well identified by most of the respondents. The findings also revealed patterns and trends of non-compliance with records management standards and guidelines.

Keywords: Archives, Preservation, Records, Public Records, Record management, record keeping.

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Managing as well as preserving public records at various government ministries and agencies is a challenge. Most government ministries and agencies lack proper record management systems, storage facilities and trained record officers. Because of this deficit, the Center for National Documents and Records, the agency responsible for collecting, organizing and storing public documents and records, for the past 12 years, has been unable to attest to the status of public records. According to Liberia's former National Archives Director General, record management and preservation systems are archaic and do not meet current-day reality due to the lack of adequate professional and well-trained archivists and librarians to effectively perform archival, public records and library functions. (N Daitouah Personal Communication, May 5, 2019). ''It is also a fact that Liberia has no national records center to house documents and records from other government ministries and agencies for appropriate organizing and archiving'' Daitouah notes further. In the article ''Effects of Bad Record Management and How to Deal with It'', Anderson (2017) argues that ''poor records management can injure an organization, halting proficiency, sucking up valuable time, and causing superfluous worry for workers''.

On page three of the 2012 CNDRA Records Management Manual, it is underscored that records are the backbone of any Information System. Without properly created and well managed and preserved documents, requesters for information will be stymied and the overall recordkeeping system will not reach its full potential. Therefore, in improving public record management system regime, incredible attention and effort must be placed on assuring that appropriate records management systems are developed and maintained.

If the Liberian public record management and preservation systems remain as they are currently without improvement, the level of poor record management at government ministries will dramatically increase in years to come. Henceforth, it is necessary to find out factors posing challenges to proper public record and preservation as well as determine action steps to take in order to enhance good recordkeeping systems at government ministries and agencies.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore factors posing challenges to the management and preservation of public records as well as determine action steps needed for improving public record management systems at government ministries and agencies in Liberia. At the end of the study, Government Record Officers may possibly be able to institute austerity measures in managing public record at various Ministries and Agencies of government properly.

1.3 Research Questions

The researcher seeks to answers three research questions, as follows:

1. What type of recordkeeping system does the ministry or agency have?
2. Are government ministries encountering challenges regarding public record records management and what are causing those challenges?
3. How can record management and preservation be improved at Government ministries and agencies?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This research study covered government ministries and agencies with specific focus on the records departments in the various ministries, agencies and commission. It is a semester research project, conducted at six ministries, a commission and one agency. The entities in questions are the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Ministry of Information, Ministry Labor, General Auditing Commission, Ministry of Post & Telecommunications; the lone agency is the Center for National Documents and Records Agency/ National Archives of Liberia.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Some of the employees under certain circumstances were not able to provide information beyond the scope of the researcher since some of the information was confidential to the public. The researcher had limited time to visit all of the government ministries and agencies. The time used by the researcher was not enough to gather all the data. The researcher was forced to stay for some time for the respondents to get settled with their activities and collect data. The researcher overcame this limitation by collecting the available data which had been already provided by the workers through the face to face interview. Financial aspects were as limited as the researcher financial budget exceeded the planned budget due to a lot activities associated in the whole process of research. The researcher overcame this by trying to reduce unnecessary spending and some of the respondents were not all familiar with the questions and thus created limitations in some of the questions not to be well answered and also others did not respond at all to the interviews which were submitted to them.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is significant for number of reasons. Findings of the study may help government ministries to identify the importance of good record keeping. Findings could help ministries to solve problems associated with public record management by adopting recommended action steps and by being aware of factors that pose challenges to effective and proper record management systems. The study may be useful to other researchers as a lead for future reference for those who may embark on similar area of study. This study could be helpful to other students who could use it as a reference.

1.7 Definitions of Key Words

Record is a document that memorializes and provides objective, evidence of the activities performed or events occurred, results achieved or statements made.

Records management (RM) is the supervision and administration of digital or paper records, regardless of format.

Record keeping is the process and system of maintaining business documents so that such records can be found quickly and easily. (Barly, 2005)

Stores are the quantity of stock or supply of something that is kept for use as needed in the future terms.

A store is a record of materials showing receipts, issues and balances of materials in quantities and value. It is maintained by the costing department and is outside the control of store keeper. This ledger is maintained in order to ensure correct stores accounting. (Allan et al, 2009)

Preservation is a set of activities aimed at prolonging the life of a record, book, or object while making as few changes as possible.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one contains the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the limitations of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of key terms. Chapter two covers the literature reviewed for this study. Chapter three is the research methodology with the following sections: the research design and method, the study population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations. Chapter four contains the findings of the study, and chapter five is the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a summary review of the central theories of records and archives management. It contains summaries of literature relevant to the subject matter of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 What Are Records?

Records are documents created or received by institutions or individuals through transactions. They form a part of or offer proof of transaction and maintained by people in charge of administrative and executive transactions. These designated individuals retain records for the future use of their successors with genuine concern in them. Even though records is value for research purposes, they are not necessarily created for future researchers or archivists. Records are created on paper, in correspondence form, reports, minutes, memoranda, and systematically filed. Also, they are produced on the media, mainly in microfiche, roll microfilm, as photographs, prints, negatives, transparencies and x-ray films, sound recording, prints, computer output and input microfiche; visual and audio visual; as moving images on movies etc.

2.1.2 The Nature of Records

Records are not the only source of knowledge. A published book or an externally hosted database, for instance, will not be considered a record, even though information taken from them and used in a different setting could turn into a record in and of itself. Records are a "snapshot" of an action or occurrence that originates from real-world events. They provide an image of what transpired. There are four key attributes or features of records. They are distinct, authentic, authoritative, and their forms remain unchanging.

2.1.3 Records are Static

A document will go through a phase of development and change while being created as a record. For instance, draft minutes of a meeting will be created and authorized after review by the committee members. A document can be deemed a record if the drafting process is complete and the document is deemed complete. Now that the record is set and cannot be altered, it can no longer serve as proof. A record that has been altered or tampered with no longer serves as proof of the transaction it was meant to document. The minutes of a meeting cannot be regarded as an accurate record if they are altered after they have been authorized.

2.1.4 Records Have Authority

Records provide the 'official' evidence of the activity or transaction they document. Records must be reliable and trustworthy. The reliability of a record is linked to its creation. Signatures, letterheads, seals

and office stamps are obvious indicators of the official nature of records. However, not all records have official stamps or seals. The continuous safekeeping of records can also protect their reliability. If the official version of the minutes is filed by the records manager and thus protected from change, the unauthorized version will not form part of the official record. The authority of the official version will remain authority.

2.1.5 Records Are Unique

Records are distinct in that they are a part of an exclusive compilation or transaction sequence when kept up to date within their proper context. Records are not discrete informational units. Because they were produced during a specific transaction or business activity, they have meaning. The documents make sense when viewed in the perspective of the entire tasks and undertakings of the person or entity that produced or utilized them. They are distinct from other records because of their relationship with them.

2.1.6 Records Are Authentic

Records must be verifiable to be what they purport to be. A record's legitimacy stems from the record-keeping system in which it was made, received, kept up to date, and utilized. If it can be confirmed that a record is exactly as it was when it was originally sent or set aside for retention, then it is considered legitimate. A letter that is received in an office, for instance, might be registered, date-stamped, and filed. The letter's file is kept track of throughout its use and is kept in a records office while not in use. These days, records can be created using a variety of platforms and kept on a variety of media, such as paper and electronic formats; many copies can be kept in.

2.1.7 Public and Private Records

Records are created by all sorts of people and institutions. Individuals, families, businesses, associations and groups, political parties and governments all create and use records every day. Records created by government agencies or other institutions within the public sector are usually specifically designated as 'public records'; their management is ought to be governed by legislation, which determines how they are to be managed throughout their life.

When acquiring privately created records, repositories may have to consider issues of confidentiality or privacy. In general, whether the repository cares only for its own government or corporate records or acquires a broader range of materials, the agency must adhere to principles of access and codes of ethics laid down in legislation or in corporate or professional guidelines.

2.1.8 Records and Archives

An organization keeps a lot of records for a limited period of time in order to support the creating agency with documentation or data. Some records are more valuable with time because they provide information or proof of the activities or operations of an agency. "Archives" are records that are valuable enough to keep forever. An archival institution is often where archives are kept.

2.2. Types of record keeping systems

According to Megill (2005), Recordkeeping systems are those systems that capture, manage and provide access to records over time. Recordkeeping systems are different from generic information systems in that

they maintain linkages to the activities they document and preserve the content, structure and context of the records.

Electronic records; if stock records are stored electronically, it is important for the organization to develop its policies and procedures for information management and technology, including system maintenance, monitoring access and staff training. (Wild, 2004).

Written records; are common and cheap but at times difficult to read due to varying and unique hand writing. The other disadvantage is making duplicate copies for transmitting to other people or agencies. (Wild, 2004)

Manual Recording System : According to Susan and Michael, (2000) accuracy of inventory records is necessary to provide satisfactory customer service, determine replenishment of individual items; ensure that material availability meets repair or project demand, analyze inventory levels and dispose of excess inventory. Records keeping become increasingly difficult to handle to an organization and business, especially who much equipment and property entering too are manually based and hereby of adequate time to evaluate and storage to organization that's its proper register is required. (Rosetti et al, 2008)

2.3 Effects of Bad Record Management and How to Deal with It?

Many private and public institutions have disregarded and underrated proper record management often thereby resulting to fundamental issues. Poor records management causes huge disorder in working environment, hampers skills, ruins precious time, worried employers, hurts an organization and results to the loss of very important data. At times, the working space turns storage facility for storing of printed materials making the institution to spend more money for report storage, spend plenty of time checking disorganized filling cabinets, files get lost, burned, destroyed, and used as toilet tissues.

Moreover, active communication between workers tend to crumbles as workers feel demotivated in sharing documents.

B. Basic Symptoms

These are the signs that your organization is experiencing poor records management:
➢ Documents are inaccurately filled and the chances of discovering and recovering them are difficult.
➢ Stockpiling papers consumed more space
➢ Documents dissemination increases
➢ Volume of printed materials are faster than documented records

Solving a Case of Bad Records Management

Here are few answers for terrible records management issues.

Firstly, using a data management system is one of the perfect ways in solving poor records problems. This will help in improving sorting of documents to meet your business needs and searching for a document becomes easier and quicker in dealing with valuable volume of documents appropriately and adequately.

Secondly, shifting to cloud is another best alternative in this digital era of records management. The services of cloud storage have become easy as well as helpful for storing of information and records. With cloud storage, one can access and manage records from anywhere as organization storage capacity can be extended.

Thirdly, storing records offsite can also solve a case of bad records administration mainly when dealing with printed materials. Offsite capability helps free significant portion of office space that were previously occupied by misfiled records, keeps important records in a secure ambience and aids transfer the of records other destinations required.

2.4 Reasons Records are neglected

Notwithstanding the fact that many public servants and advisers to the public sector have firsthand experience with the issue of failing recordkeeping systems, records and records management remain a neglected area of public sector reform. It appears that people have taken records for granted. Governments and donor organizations have a tendency to assume that records will always be available to support constitutional arrangements and serve as an institutional memory because they are so essential to the idea of a democratic society. Because the decline in record keeping has been so gradual, most people have not noticed it.

A common misconception is that there is nothing that can be done to address the issue because it is so pervasive, deeply rooted, and unappreciated. The effective application of sustainable solutions is hampered by this and other incorrect presumptions about the nature of the issue and its causes. Governments can no longer defend their actions by pointing largely or entirely to past results or future objectives. Additionally, when they can combine services and save money, they cannot justify providing parallel or duplicate services. More and more significant duties include providing client service, completing tasks to a high standard, and producing quantifiable results. All of these services rely on easily accessible and useable records. In both government and business settings, efficient and effective records management is essential to accountability.

2.5 Organizing and Controlling Records

In order to control information creation and use, safeguard sensitive data from loss or damage, and maintain efficiency and economy in office operations, current records management is necessary. At their place of origin, in a related records office, or in a registry, current records are often kept up to date. Although other agencies (like the Auditor General's Department or its equivalent) may have access rights

under certain conditions, they are mainly used by officers of the creating office. Generally speaking, current government records are not available for public research, with the exception of those in nations with laws pertaining to freedom of information. However, some records, like corporate registers, may be legally accessible for public inspection.

The procedures for keeping track of and managing current records are as follows:
- Records systems analysis, analysis and restructuring, and records system maintenance
- Creating and putting into use classification schemes
- Creating and carrying out a schedule for records; evaluating records; identifying records and keeping those that have lasting value while getting rid of non-current records.

Examining and Modifying Record-keeping Systems

Understanding the creation and use of government records is the first step in creating a functional records management program. Ideally, "business systems analyses," also referred to as "business process analyses," are used to accomplish this task. Business systems analysis (BSA) is the process of methodically and impartially obtaining data about business systems and applying formal analysis to that data. It is an analytical framework that entails analyzing organizations as systems. This entails defining and breaking down business processes, as well as supporting business areas and processes and overarching organizational goals. If the goal is to restructure the organization's information systems and processes in addition to analyzing them, business systems analysis becomes business process re-engineering.

One example of a system is correspondence management. Receiving incoming correspondence and assigning it to the correct respondent (which might require coordinating with multiple departments to determine which agency would be best to answer the letter) are two examples of the various components that the system might include.
- Getting ready to respond (which might entail talking to a number of people
- Typing or word processing the reply (also referred to as the correspondence that is sent out).
- Delivering the final message
- Organizing and classifying all incoming and outgoing mail.

One person may handle the entire correspondence management system in a small business. However, managing correspondence can be a challenging task in a larger organization, like the national government. Many different individuals or administrative units may carry out the six steps listed above. This is displayed below.

First step: Getting new mail

Accountability: Mail room

Step 2: Setting up communication

Accountability: Department personnel and mail room

Step 3: Getting ready to reply

Accountability: Department personnel and other departments

Step 4: Type the answer or process it using Word.

Accountability: Department employees, typing pool

Step 5: Forwarding correspondence

Accountability: Department personnel, mail room

Step 6: Encouraging and discarding letters

Employees in the department and registry bear responsibility.

Analysis of business systems is not limited to enhancing routine office operations like filing and classification. Records management and business systems analysis ought to be closely related. Changes in systems and processes can have a big impact on records systems and how information is created, filed, retrieved, and disposed of. An organization's records manager can provide valuable insights for business systems analysis. He or she can discuss how systems re-engineering affects record keeping, making sure that documents are handled effectively and in compliance with legal or policy requirements. The organization in charge of records and archives may decide to do a systems analysis on the operations of its own organization. The archival institution might, for instance, update procedures like receiving records from creating.

Conducting a Records Survey

One of the ways to introduce records management care into the process of business systems analysis may be to conduct a survey of the state of current records in government offices. This survey may only examine and document existing records or it may offer recommendations for alterations to systems, depending on the level of involvement of the records manager or archivist. It further considers physical condition of the records, storage capacities, location, etc.

The objectives of a records survey include

- Finding origin and purpose of records
- Finding records that are prepare for disposal
- Detecting records that are to be reserved
- Locating facilities for recordkepping, defining procedures, and costs.

Maintaining Records Systems

System maintenance is a crucial part of current record management. The following actions are involved in doing so:

- Preserving control over the paperwork, such as registers and logs that is used to document the creation, use, and disposal of current records.
- Arranging the creation and maintenance of records, including mail, forms, and correspondence, in a methodical manner
- Controlling file creation and usage
- Making certain that records are routinely moved from current to semi-current storage and that out-of-date records are destroyed.

CHAPTER THREE. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Method

This is a descriptive design study. This study is a fact-finding investigation with adequate interpretation (swami, 2003). The researcher used descriptive study because it is precise and specific in focusing on particular dimensions of the problems being studied and it elaborates the state of affairs as it exists at present. In this study, the method of data collection was a key informant interview (face to face interview) using prearranged questions to obtain correct and accurate data from range of respondents also to get as many data as possible.

According to Communication Research website, key informant interview is a type of qualitative in-depth interview. Both Types, key informant and in-depth interviews, forgo preconceived questions to instead focus on the dynamic flow of conversation between researcher and participant(s).

3.2 Study Population

The population of this study included heads of records departments from twenty-seven Government of Liberia ministries, agencies, commissions, and public cooperation's. The reason for drawing the population from the twenty-seven government entities is due to the fact that they may have different perceptions about the public record management system. This, however, has no negative effect on the quality of the research or the diversity of the target participants, which makes it easier for the researchers to obtain more credible information.

3.3 Sample size

The sample size of this study was seven respondents, including five ministries, one agency, and a commission selected through random selection. According to Kothari (2004), sample size refers to the number of items to be selected from the population to constitute a sample.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The researcher used a simple random sampling technique so as to give equal opportunity to each of the study participants. Each ministry's of the population name was written on a white sheet and placed in a yellow box, after which the names of ministries were selected at random by seven nonparticipants for onward participation in the study. Investopedia (updated April 30, 2019) defines a simple random sample as a subset of a statistical population in which each member of the subset has an equal probability of being chosen.

Sampling frame

This study sampling frame was drawn from government ministries, agencies, and commissions. Below is a list of all the ministries, agencies, and public cooperation's. The Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of States. Other are the General Services Agency (GSA), Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), the National Port Authority (NPA), the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Corporation (LPRC), the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC), Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA), the Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Post and Telecommunication, Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS), Liberia Water and Sewage Corporation (LWSC), National Social Security and Welfare (NASSCORP), Ministry of Health, John F. Kennedy Medical Center, Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS), National Elections Commission, General Auditing Commission, Liberia Telecommunication Authority (LTA), LIBTELCO, House of Representatives, and the Liberia Bank for Development & Investment (LBDI).

3.5 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were the sources of data collection in this study. The primary data were obtained from the field using personal interviews, telephone interviews, mailing of opened-ended questionnaires, and through schedules, (Kothari, 2004). The secondary data were obtained through cross-

checking some released record documents which touch on general record management notes, reports, reviewing literatures and reviewing the documents of the ministries, so as to obtain more information concerning the topic. According to Kothari (2004), the secondary data are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process.

3.6 Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the interview responses to enable the researcher Analyze and interpret the data because this helps the researcher better understand the responses after the interview. The respondents answered the questions from their own perspective or experience.

In this case, qualitative data analysis techniques were used to analyze the data collected.

The researcher analyzed the data qualitatively, as it entailed factual and logical interpretations and explanations for the data collection.

In quantitative data, tallies were converted into percentages using frequency distribution table.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

A number of steps were taken to safeguard and protect the confidentiality of all participants throughout all stages of the study period. This includes the following:

All the information provided were treated confidentially in pursuit of the ethical code of conduct in doing research. Participants and their organizations were not named in subsequent write-ups and material submitted for publication. Participants were assured that their names and their locations were not revealed. In written documentation, the participant's first names were changed and coded, while surnames were not used. Participants were sent an information sheet and consent form giving full details of the study (see attached). Participants were sent this information by email or hard copy and asked to bring a signed copy on the day of the interview.

CHAPTER FOUR. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents research findings and analyses. The study was conducted with the aim of improving record management and preservation at government ministries and agencies with the effect of independent variables of the system used to keep records, challenges and policies kept upon record keeping. Data was analyzed using qualitative method and quantitative methods using tables and explanations. Research findings were obtained using open-ended questionnaire through a face -to -face interview with employees, and they were presented based on the research questions and objectives. The main objective of the study was to explore factors posing challenges to the management and preservation of public records as well as determining action steps needed for improving public record management systems at government ministries and agencies.

Specifically, the research study involves three specific objectives:

- Find out the type of recordkeeping system at the ministries and agencies.
- To examine challenges regarding public record management at government ministries and agencies and what is causing those challenges.
- And how can record management and preservation be improved at government ministries and agencies.

The researcher distributed a total of seven questionnaires to the intended ministries, agencies and commissions. A total of five questionnaires were returned to the researcher from record departments, which amounted to 71 percent of the questionnaires returned.

The analysis was done based on the five questionnaires returned from the ministries, agencies, commissions.

4.1 Response Rate

#:	Category	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Percentage %
1	Government Institutions	7	5	71%
	Total			71%

4.2. System Used in Record Keeping

Under this objective the researcher intended to examine the type of system used in keeping records. Upon knowing the type of system used in keeping records, the researcher aim was to see if this would be a factor that affects record keeping, for if the system is not well organized then it may affect the record keeping process. The objective was analyzed using a table or chart.

The researcher also wanted to know the challenges and factors causing those challenges regarding records management. The objective is guided and analyzed by questions such as; what type of recordkeeping does the ministry or agency have; are government ministries encountering challenges regarding public records management and what are causing those challenges; and how can record management and preservation be improved at various government ministries, agencies and commissions?. Of the five questionnaires received, two entities constituting 40 percent of the respondents, are using the manual record-keeping system at their respective entities, while another two constituting 40 percent are using both the digital and manual record-keeping system and one amounting to 20 percent of the 5 respondents is using only the digital or electronic record keeping system.

Chart Indicating Record Keeping System at Government of Liberia Entities:
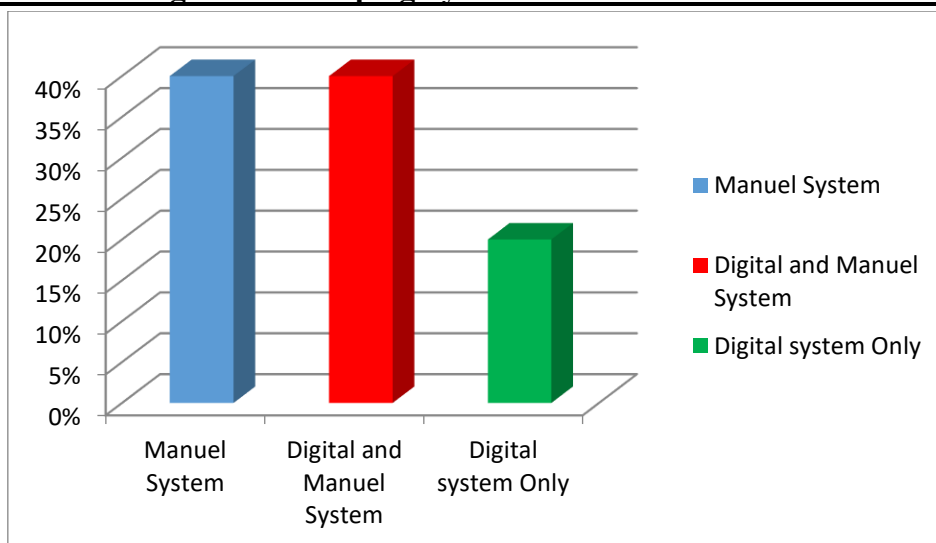
4.3 Is your ministry or agency encountering challenge regarding public record records management and what are causing those challenges?

From the below table, 100% of government ministries, agencies, and commissions lack proper storage facilities for record keeping due to a lack of proper records management and preservation systems. Those who used both the digital and manual systems (80%) said that the system is time and cost-consuming, it's easy to lose records and there is difficulty in making corrections in case the data are wrongly recorded. 20% of the respondents stated that there are power cuts which hinder their smooth working on record-keeping and it is easy to lose records.

Below is the table indicating challenges and causes concerning record management.

IC	System	Challenges	Causes	Percentage%
R1	Manual and Digital recording systems	Lacks record center for the accommodation of public records from government ministries and agencies.	No storage center	80%
R2	Manual and Electronic	The capacity to keep files that have been created.	Limited storage Space for records keeping	
R3	Digital recording system	Public entities constant failure in providing records most especially when conducting audits and as such its hampers our work.	No good record keeping system at public entities.	20%
R4	Manuel recording system	No record is shelved but the records are kept in rice bags, and cartons on the floor.	Small storage room	
R5	Manual recording system	No sufficient record keeping space and materials to enhance record keeping are lacking.	Capacity building and storage room	60%
	Total			100%

4.4 How can record management and preservation be improved at your Ministry or Agency?

From the chart below, 40% of the respondents agreed that there is a serious need for human capacity building on the grounds that without capacity building there can be no improvement in records management and preservation systems. 40% agreed there should be political support from the government through the provision of the requisite materials needed for good records- keeping. 20% of the study participants stressed the need for the introduction of a digital records-keeping system at various government entities.

Chart showing responses on how can record management and preservation be improved at Government entities
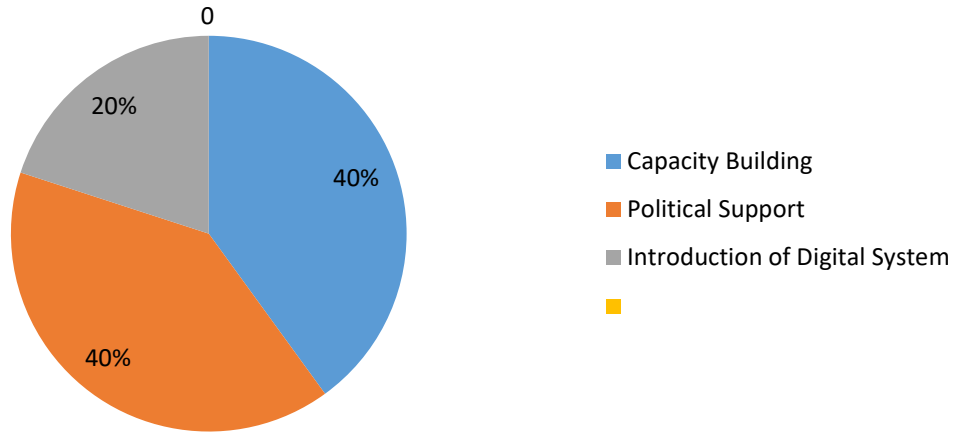
4.5

4.6 Responses on the policy (ies) which have been kept by the Ministry upon record keeping?

The objective was aimed at examining if there are any policies kept that guide upon record- keeping at government ministries, agencies, and commissions. The objective is to know if there are any guidelines that are followed in record-keeping or if government employees just decide on their own to keep records. This is guided by the question that, what are the policies that have been kept by government entities upon record-keeping. 60% of the respondents from government entities agreed that they lack written records management policies, while 40% of the respondents confirmed they have written policies on record-keeping systems. The table below shows a summary of results from respondents who agreed/disagreed about the existence of record-keeping policies.

IC #	Responses	Percentage%
R1	There is need for a policy developer. There is no policy document on records management and preservation.	20%
R2	The policy states that employees must arrange your files according to numbers make sure that you create folder on your computer accordingly to Bureaus, Division, and other top office managers. Never place documents to the other file that is not of the same information.	20%
R3	We have a strong backup policy in everything that we do. We have a manual on record keeping and it's through this policy that we work on our record keeping program.	20%
R4	There is no records management and preservation policy. There is a need to craft one.	20%

R5	There is no records policy.	20%
Total		100%

CHAPTER FIVE. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the recommendations and conclusion. The conclusions and recommendations are made based on the findings from this research work. Conclusions are the final statements on the studies as a result of what has been observed whereas the recommendations are the way forward to improving the public record management system.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of the research study, the following recommendations are made:

- Records managers offer archival and record management training to build up the capacity of their record officer(s) and help set up their records offices with a small cost associated with a proposal;

- That government record management administration takes serious action to create public awareness on the importance of record management and storage and provide guidance to most of the institutions visited in their quest to construct adequate shelves in their separate storage facility that will accommodate their documents;

- The researcher recommends that CNDRA work with all the above ministries, agencies, and corporations to put in place measures that will ensure a safe and protective environment for all public documents for future reference. These institutions must be able to recommend five (5) employees to the National Archives for filing and document handling skills training, and this will enhance and improve efficient and effectiveness in all government institution and bring about transparency and accountability;

- As observed in almost all of the institutions visited, there is an urgent need to provide hands-on training workshops to government employees responsible for filing, labeling, and cataloging documents, as well as training in document indexing, coding, and tracking system for classify documents and in-coming and out-going correspondence. This is because during the study, the researcher realized that only NASSCORP has some standard method or system of filing documents.

- The study revealed that there are compelling necessities for the current government to create a way to harmonize all public records that have reached the age of archiving. With this, it is important that the CNDRA take the lead in encouraging stakeholders and heads of MAC's to provide spaces in their respective institutions for document storage before taking them to the archives; this will alleviate the general problem of records collection by the agency.

- Government entities should enhance an efficient power back-up plan to help workers in dealing with the computerized system not lose frequently their activities when the power cuts off. This is facilitated by instruments like generators and Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPSs). When the network boosters for periods when network seems to be low and also installing the computers with virus detectors and eliminators to avoid frequent virus interruptions to the computer system which may destroy important records stored in the computer.

- More studies have to be done on the factors that make record keeping a challenge at government ministries and agencies, and other institutions. This will help to develop a more efficient and effective way of keeping-records and obtain well-structured records for future use.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the data collected from the study, the general conditions of public records and document management practices are generally very poor and deplorable. This situation requires the urgent and immediate engagement of the government with the necessary stakeholders and financial institutions to provide both financial and logistical assistance. There are some other personal factors that may affect record-keeping activities, such as lack of training, poor skilled personnel, laziness of individuals, and poor communication among workers. These factors have to be considered by launching project seminars and workshops that would equip the workers with low experience with the activities, as well as screening well-qualified applicants who request jobs in the organization. This is based on skilled personnel and providing incentives to workers with good morale at work, which can make them more active and inspire others for more good results in the organizational activities. This study results clearly justify the need for assistance from GOL and partners to support the vision of the Center for National Documents and Records Agency (CNDRA) to decentralize the archives and construct a centralized records center to mitigate this national problem in Liberia. The need for the preservation authority of the government to consistently implement a regular and routine public records inspection and assessment to determine the condition of public records cannot be overemphasized.

Finally, the need for the construction of a National Record Center is a necessity of national importance and an aid to promoting good record-keeping for transparency, accountability, and good governance. Most importantly, it will serve to accommodate the huge volume of public records needed to be brought to the national archives and create rooms for useful office space occupied by public records generated at various GOL ministries, agencies, and public corporations presently.

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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. What type of recordkeeping system does the ministry or agency have?
2. Is your ministry encountering challenge regarding public record records management and what are causing those challenges?
3. How can record management and preservation be improved at your Ministry?

4. What are the policy(s) which have been kept by the Ministry upon record keeping?
5. What guidelines do you follow upon record keeping?

APPENDIX B. RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Improving Public Record Management Systems at Government Ministries and Agencies: Factors to Consider and Action Steps to Take.

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, circle the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in written form by the researcher.
YES / NO

I understand that the research will involve:

• Explore factors that are posing challenges to the management and preservation of public records and determining action steps needed for improving public record management systems at government ministries and agencies in Liberia.

YES / NO

I understand that participation in this research is voluntary and that I'm not required to answer a question I do not want to answer.
YES/NO

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation.
YES / NO

I understand that all information about me will be kept confidential and that I will not be named in any written report arising from this study.
YES / NO

I understand that any data collected will be used solely for research purposes and will be erased on completion of the research.
YES / NO

I understand that study participants will not be named in subsequent write ups and material submitted for publication.
YES / NO

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own record.

Name _____**Signature:** _____

Date: _____**Address:**_____

Email: _____**Telephone:**_____