Digital-age trends and perspectives in Korean university archives

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Abstract

Purpose – Contrary to the development of digital libraries at Korean universities, which has been due to the progress of information technologies, university archives are in their early stages and are not fully using the digital environment. This paper aims to evaluate current trends and possible future directions of university archives in Korea via surveys (questionnaires) and interviews with university archives personnel.

Design/methodology/approach – Surveys (questionnaires) and interviews are made at 51 university archives in Korea. Questionnaires, based on university archives guidelines, include 27 questions in 6 categories: foundation principles, functions, process guidelines, facilities, acquisition and management, and access and services.

Findings – Basic foundation principles or process guidelines are not yet completely established. Administrative, preservation, and management functions are strong, but research and educational functions, and access and service functions are very weak. Use of information technologies and digital environment are poor also. Cooperation between internal and external institutions is not active. Future directions should address these weak points. Especially, information technologies can efficiently offer support for the development of university archives from the acquisition stage to the user services and preservation stages.

Originality/value – This investigation of current trends at university archives in Korea through questionnaires and interviews with staff members and archivists points to future directions for such archives, especially in the application of digital methods. The approach taken and suggestions made might be helpful for other university archives.

Keywords Records management, Archives management, South Korea, Universities, Digital libraries

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Korea, which has more than 5,000 years of national history and tradition, is one of the strongest IT (information technology) countries in the world – a status enabled by the rapid development of information technologies and digital infrastructures that began in the 1980s. However, no official system of records management and archives for public institutions was created until 2000, when the first laws were passed. A supplemental law was passed in 2007.

In spite of Korea's long social and cultural history, records management and archives are in very early stages; and a legislative system of university archives remains incomplete. The first association of Korean university archives, "University Archives Records Center (www.uarchives.or.kr/)", was created in 2005, and the first draft of the Korean university archives guidelines (version 1) followed in 2006. Universities and university

libraries, however, have had stable foundations of legislative systems for about 100 years.

In this paper, surveys (questionnaires) and interviews were given to staff or archivists working in 51 university archives in Korea to assess their current trends in detail. Future directions and prospects are suggested according to the results.

Methodology and data collection

First, the Korean university archives guideline (KUA, 2006) and guidelines for college and university archives (SAA, 2005) were examined. Next, six subject categories were chosen to represent basic and essential processes or elements of university archives (foundation principles, functions, process guidelines, facilities, acquisition and management, and access and services). From these six categories, 27 questions were developed. Then, questionnaires were distributed to the 51 university archives. Finally, ten archives that are large-scale and have established environments and systems were selected for visits and on-site interviews.

Target university selection

Target universities for the investigation of university archives were selected by examining two university ranking lists, one made by the Korean Council for University Education (www.kcue.or.kr/) and the other by *Chosun Ilbo* (a prominent national newspaper; www.chosun.com/). Universities that are not on these lists but are members of the University Archives Records Center, which is the association of Korean university archives, were also considered.

Selection of the target universities lasted from June 26, 2007-July 4, 2007 and contacts with staff at the archives were arranged by July 15, 2007.

Questionnaire development

Since most university archives are established and operated according to the university archives guidelines, questionnaires were developed based on the main frames of the guidelines in order to figure out the activities and current status of the university archives. Details of the six categories of the questionnaire are shown in Table I.

Questionnaire distribution and conducting of interviews

Questionnaires were distributed to the 51 universities on July 16, 2007 and by August 17, 2007, 31 complete questionnaires were collected (Table II). Based on the results of the questionnaires, ten university archives were selected that can be considered model university archives in Korea and these were subsequently visited by the researchers to perform more in-depth *in situ* interviews.

Results analysis

As already noted, the basic features and current status of Korean university archives were investigated through quantitative questionnaires. The results show the details concerning foundation principles, functions, process guidelines, facilities, acquisitions and management, and access and services.

First stage: quantitative questionnaires

The questionnaires results according to the six categories were as follows.

	Categories and details (question number)		ct.
1	Foundation principles	Existence of its own regulation (1)	2
		Observation or reference of KUA guideline (2)	
2	Functions	Identity, education, research, administration, services (3)	1
3	Process guidelines	Existence of management regulation of university archives (4)	4
		Existence of acquisition regulations of university archives (5)	
		Authorities related to administrative records (6)	
		Existence of records classification schemes (7)	
4	Facilities	Staff number (including archivists) (8, 9)	5
		Status in organization and work areas (10, 11, 12)	
5	Acquisitions and management	Systematic acquisitions and management (13)	5
		Collecting resources (14)	
		Collection types and management (15, 16)	
		Preservation types of non digital resources (17)	
6	Access and services	Public access to records (online and offline) (18)	10
		Website management types (18)	
		Existence of electronic records management program (19)	
		Providing search tools (20)	
		Main user groups (21)	
		Resources frequently used (22)	
		User education program (23)	
		Cooperation with libraries (24)	
		Cooperation with external institutions (25)	
		Cooperation with association or society of records management and archives (26)	
		Future prospects or comments related to digital environment (27)	

Table I.
Six questionnaire categories and details

Date	Details	Research methods
July 16, 2007	Questionnaires distributed	First stage: quantitative
July 24-August 17, 2007	Complete questionnaires collected	questionnaires performed
After August 20, 2007	Visit 10 universities and performed interviews	Second stage: qualitative interviews performed

Table II.
Details of research processes

Foundation principles. 51.6 percent of respondents reported the presence of internal principles for the foundation of university archives. Among the 48.4 percent who reported a lack of foundation principles, 35.7 percent were in the process of preparing them. Of this 48.4 percent, 48.1 percent were observing or referencing KUA guidelines. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Functions. The main functions currently performed by university archives were investigated (identity, education, research, administration, and service). Identity refers to collecting, managing, and preserving resources related to a particular university's history. Education refers to the usage of university archival materials in classroom lectures. Research refers to the usage of university archival materials in research by professors, students, and others from inside or outside the university. Administration refers to the records management of the university. Service refers to the providing of university archival materials, both offline and online.

The results show that the identity function is the most performed, followed by administration, research, education, service, and miscellaneous (etc.). The publication

Figure 1.
Foundation principles of
university archives
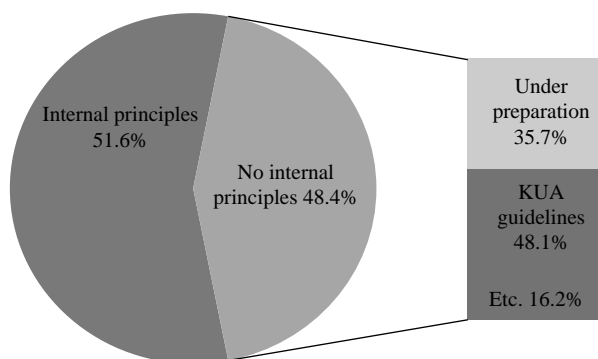
function, which means the publication by university archives of materials on university history through the collection and analysis of university historical resources, is included in, etc. Results are shown in Figure 2.

Process guidelines. Of the university archives surveyed, 54.8 percent were found to have process guidelines that cover collection, preservation, arrangement, use and disposition. Although guidelines for appraisal were also found, they were less detailed than guidelines for the other steps. Among the 45.2 percent of university archives that do not have process guidelines, 71.4 percent reported that no plans are yet in place to prepare them. Results are shown graphically in Figure 3.

The presence of a classification scheme was reported by 71 percent of the university archives. Of these, 52 percent use their own internally produced classification scheme. Public or national universities, which comprised 40 percent of this 71 percent, reported using the classification scheme provided by the Ministry of Governmental Administration and Home Affairs (which is recommended but not mandatory). The results are shown in Figure 4.

Responses to questions about the authorities assigned to university archives showed both high authority and low authority. In the area of records management, the order of high authority to low authority was acquisition and preservation (92.3 percent) > arrangement (88.5 percent) > use (84.6 percent) > disposition (53.8 percent) > appraisal (50 percent). In the area of administration, the order was budget, external collaboration (52.8 percent) > personnel management (26.9 percent).
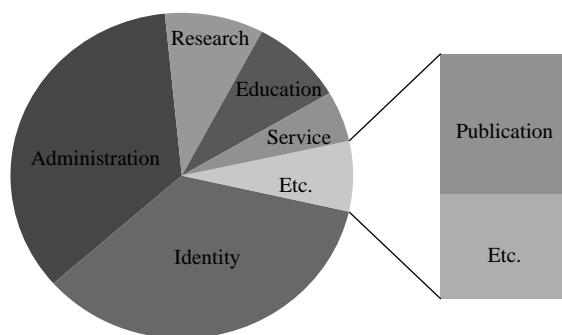

Figure 2.
Main functions of
university archives

Facilities. Basic facilities and infrastructure of the university archives were examined. According to the survey responses of archivists and archives staff, 43.3 percent have one staff member, 26.7 percent have two, 10 percent have three, 13.3 percent have five, and 6.7 percent have none. (Some staff members held dual positions between the archives and other departments.) In response to the question about the number of archivists working in university archives, only 26.7 percent answered that their departments have archivists. Of this 26.7 percent, 25 percent reported having two archivists and 75 percent have only one.

Responses to questions about the status of university archives showed that 25.8 percent of university archives are under the control of university administrations. University archives that are part of libraries or museums showed a similar proportion (22.6 percent). The proportion of independently run university archives was also 22.6 percent.

Responses to questions about work areas showed that 66.7 percent of university archives have their own independent work area and 86.3 percent have their own independent preservation area. Average work space was 73.26 m^2 and average preservation space was 72.44 m^2. Only 13.3 percent answered that they have their own exhibition area, average space 109.92 m^2. Results are shown in Table III.

Acquisitions and management. Of the respondents, 60 percent answered that they have systematic processes for the acquisition of university archives. The acquisition methods for administrative records within each university showed that 46.2 percent

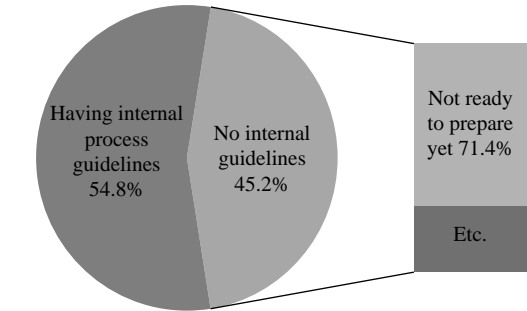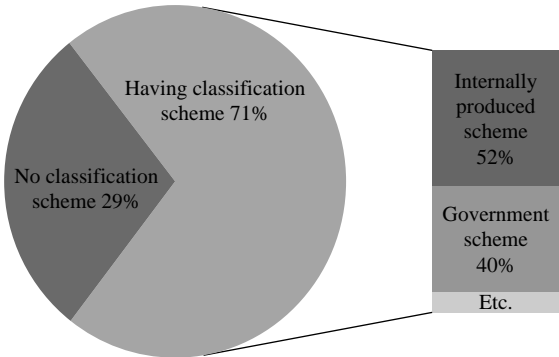**Figure 3.**
Existence of process guidelines

Figure 4.
Existence of classification scheme

Staff, organization and areas of university archives	
Staff	
Full responsibility	
1	43.3%
2	26.7%
3	10%
5	13.3%
None	6.7%
Existence of archivists	
Yes (1 or 2)	26.7%
Organization	
Included in an administrative department	25.8%
Included in a library	22.6%
Included in a museum	22.6%
Independent organization	22.6%
Etc.	6.4%
Areas	
Work area	
Independent space	66.7%
Average space	73.26 m^2
Preservation area	
Independent space	86.3%
Average space	72.44 m^2
Exhibition area	
Independent space	13.3%
Average space	109.92 m^2

collect via offline methods, 30.7 percent do not transfer to archives, and 23.1 percent send records from administrative offices to archives, via online methods (Table IV).

The types of resources that university archives collect most were, in order: publication by university, university directory, photos, donation materials, research reports, white paper, and images. Figure 5 shows the types of university archives acquisition resources (materials related to real estate and from past fiscal years are included in accounts resources). Images refer to materials that can represent a university, such as university logos. Audio and visual materials refer to multimedia resources such as guides to campus life. Drawings of construction and buildings are included in architecture resources.

The university archives collection types shown in Figure 6 include university history, education and research, university administration, alumni, etc.

Acquisition types of university archives showed that 50 percent of materials were donated from within university and 37 percent came from under university transfer regulations.

Collection methods	Portion(%)
Offline acquisition	46.2
Online acquisition	23.1
Not transferring	30.7
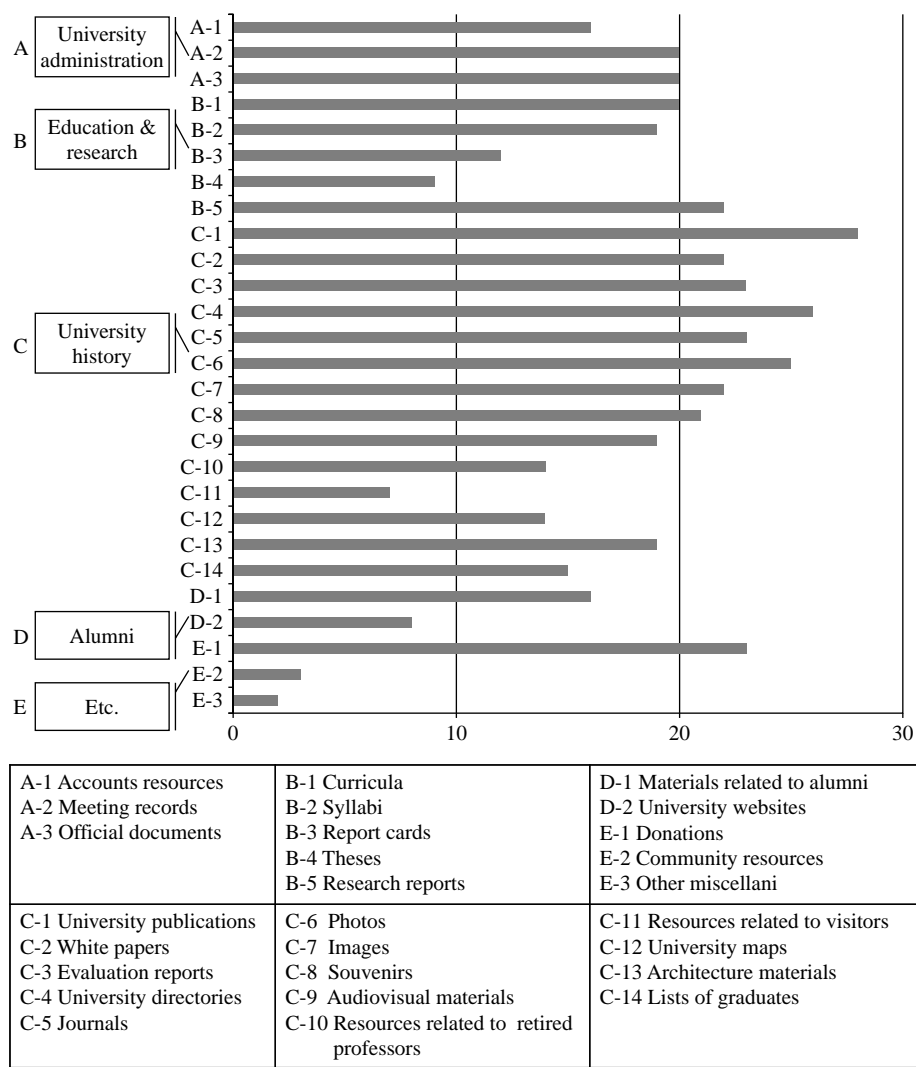
Figure 5.
University archives
acquisition resources by
types

A-1 Accounts resources	B-1 Curricula	D-1 Materials related to alumni
A-2 Meeting records	B-2 Syllabi	D-2 University websites
A-3 Official documents	B-3 Report cards	E-1 Donations
	B-4 Theses	E-2 Community resources
	B-5 Research reports	E-3 Other miscellani
C-1 University publications	C-6 Photos	C-11 Resources related to visitors
C-2 White papers	C-7 Images	C-12 University maps
C-3 Evaluation reports	C-8 Souvenirs	C-13 Architecture materials
C-4 University directories	C-9 Audiovisual materials	C-14 Lists of graduates
C-5 Journals	C-10 Resources related to retired professors	

Donations from external institutions or local communities comprised 9.3 percent and miscellaneous sources (etc.) comprised 3.7 percent. Results are shown in Figure 7.

Responses to questions about types of university archives collections showed that manuscripts, paper prints, and photos made up a large portion. Answers about preservation methods showed that 67.4 percent of materials are preserved in their original formats, 27.9 percent in digitized formats, and 4.7 percent in both digitized and microfilm formats.

The results are shown in Figure 8.

Access and services. Answers to questions about access and services of university archives collections showed that 52 percent allow only reading and photocopying in the university archives building; 35 percent allow uses in the building and internet
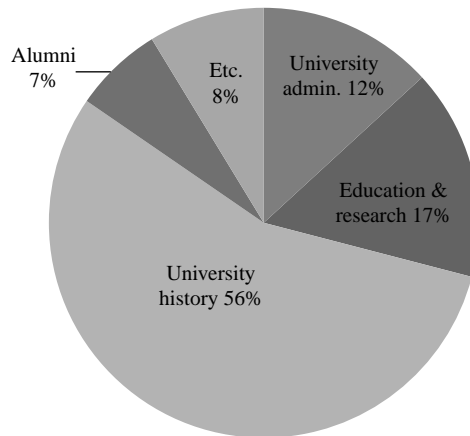
Figure 6.
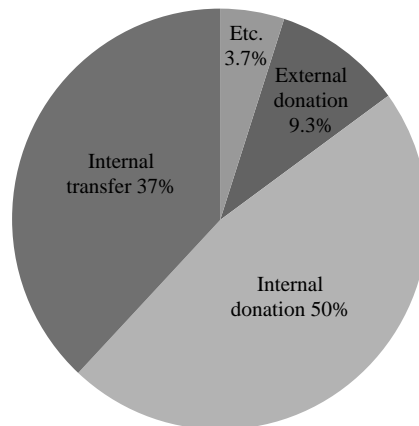Types of university
archives collection

Figure 7.
Acquisition types
of university archives

access; and 10 percent do not offer any services. Three percent reported internet access
only. Results are shown in Figure 9.

University archives that provide services only in the university archives building
and do not yet provide other services were asked about plans for future services. Of
these, 74 percent reported that plans are in place to provide services via the internet.
University archives that already provide services through the internet were asked
about web site management. Of these, 50 percent answered that their universities'
archives websites are being run as independent sites and 50 percent answered that
their universities' archives websites are part of university museum, library, or
administration sites. University archives that provide online services through the Web
were asked about types of search services. Of these, 36.7 percent answered that their
services are organized according to collection types, 21.1 percent by subject categories,
and 21.1 percent by time period. Of the university archives that have electronic records
management programs, most are using internally developed programs (Figure 10).

The main user groups of university archives were reported as university personnel
(non-academic staffs) (35.2 percent), students (21.1 percent), professors (18.3 percent),

Preserved in digital
and microfilm formats 4.7 %

Digitized and then
preserved 27.9%

Preserved in the
same format 67.4%

Figure 8.
Preservation methods of
university archives

Through the web 3%

No service
10%

Use inside the UA &
through the web
35%

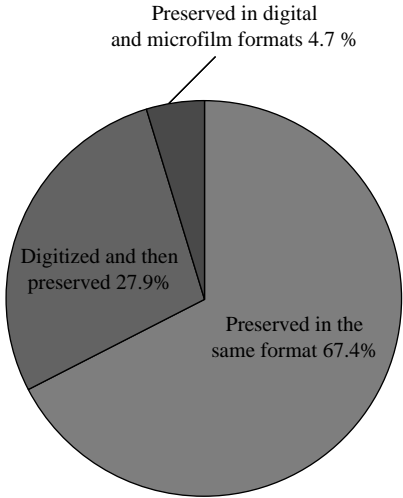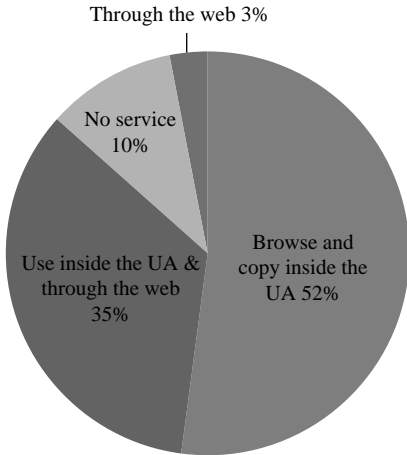Browse and
copy inside the
UA 52%

Figure 9.
Service types of UA

alumni (15.5 percent), and external users (9.9 percent). The most frequently used resources were university publications, followed by evaluation reports, souvenirs, university directories, and meeting records. Results are shown in Figure 11.

Only 25 percent of the university archives reported that they provide user education services that aim to promote efficient searches and overall use of university archives resources.

In response to questions about collaboration, 40.7 percent answered that they cooperate with other university libraries about acquisition and preservation functions (libraries play the main roles in acquisition and archives play the main roles in preservation). The next cooperative functions had to do with web site management, arrangement, and reference areas; a few university archives reported that they cooperate with libraries for library systems, administrative help, public relations, and exhibitions.
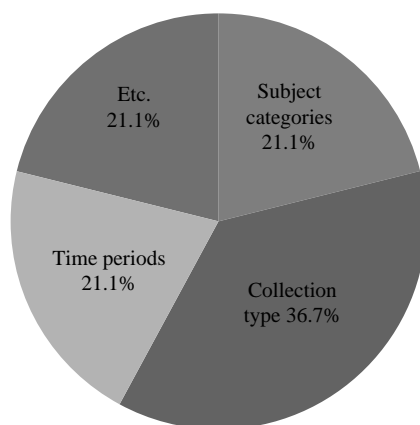
As for collaboration with external institutions, 42.9 percent reported cooperation. Of these, 38.1 percent collaborate with other university archives, 33.3 percent collaborate with governmental administrative departments, 9.5 percent indicated collaboration with other libraries or museums, and 4.8 percent collaborate with local communities and miscellaneous entities (etc.). The main purpose of collaboration with external institutions was reported as information sharing (acquisition, arrangement, preservation, national policies, records management systems, and databases). Of the university archives surveyed, 51.7 percent reported collaborating with academic societies such as Association of Records Management and Archives, the National Archives of Korea, the Association of Korean University Archives, and the Society of Korean Records Management and Archives. Cooperation was undertaken for the purposes of information sharing, acquiring knowledge, acquisition, arrangement, preservation, services, workshop, or colloquium attendance, and to form networks with experts in the field.

Second stage: qualitative interview
Following the distribution of the questionnaires, interviews were also performed for more qualitative investigation. Comments and suggestions acquired from the interviews with the staff and archivists at the ten selected university archives were as follows:

- Building firm and detailed legislative systems for university archives.

- Expanding public relations, so that people can be informed of the usability and necessity of university archives.

- The currently poor situation and environment of university archives in Korea will have dramatically improved within five years. Not only will the numbers of archivists and staff with full responsibility be expanded, as well as basic facilities, university archives will become independent organizations. This, in turn, will enable archives to concentrate on their own work.

- University archives should be independent organizations within universities, with fully trained and equipped staffs. As such, their roles should include not only collection, arrangement, and preservation of university resources, but also publication and description of the history of a particular university (currently, the publication of university histories is carried out by temporary organizations).
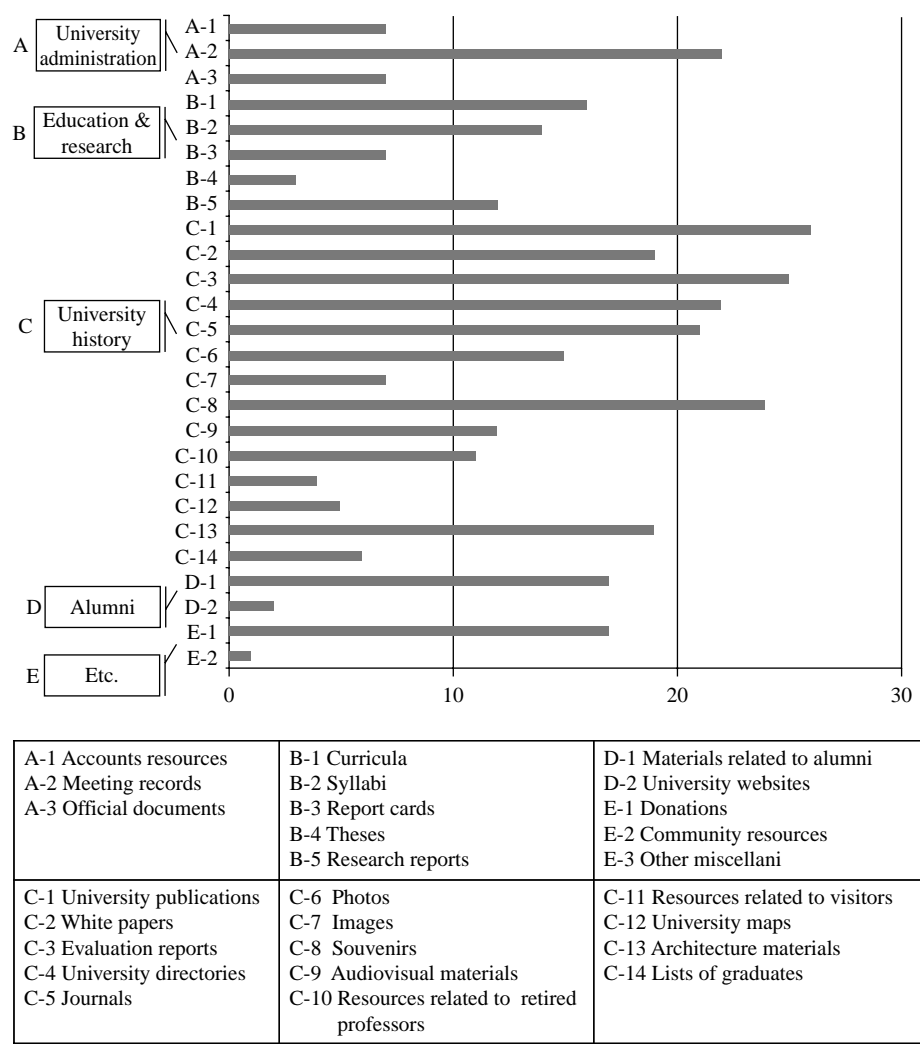
Figure 11.
Frequency of use of
university archives

A-1 Accounts resources	B-1 Curricula	D-1 Materials related to alumni
A-2 Meeting records	B-2 Syllabi	D-2 University websites
A-3 Official documents	B-3 Report cards	E-1 Donations
	B-4 Theses	E-2 Community resources
	B-5 Research reports	E-3 Other miscellani
C-1 University publications	C-6 Photos	C-11 Resources related to visitors
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C-3 Evaluation reports	C-8 Souvenirs	C-13 Architecture materials
C-4 University directories	C-9 Audiovisual materials	C-14 Lists of graduates
C-5 Journals	C-10 Resources related to retired professors	

Summary and discussion

The current trends at university archives in Korea can be summarized as follows.

First, almost half of the university archives surveyed do not have basic foundation principles or detailed process guidelines. Very few university archives were running as independent departments or organizations, with independent work or preservation spaces. Instead, most university archives are under the auspices of administrative departments, libraries, museums, or computer centers, and are responsible to those departments as well as to themselves.

Second, the administrative, preservation and management functions of university archives were shown to be markedly stronger than their education, research and service functions. Moreover, proper arrangements and preservation processes were not

being applied in the management of official records; instead, documents were reported as simply being piled up whenever records are transferred to archives from offices. Acquisition processes were not systematized either: official records were not transferred regularly, and irregular donations composed main part of collection.

Third, both offline and online records management systems were reported to be in poor condition. A few archives were running self-developed systems, but most university archives are still in the early stages of using records management systems.

Fourth, the trial and cognition of usage of digital technologies and online environment in acquisition, management, preservation and providing services to users were weak compared to those in Korean university libraries.

Fifth, collaboration with other university and external organizations were weak. Only partial cooperation with libraries in acquisition, arrangement, and preservation were carried out.

Considering these situations and problems, future prospects can be suggested as follows.

First, legislative systems should be supported for university archives that include procedures for staff and guidelines for space, acquisition processes, management, preservation, and detailed records management systems. These should enable university archives to become independent departments.

Second, along with increased recognition of the high value of university archival resources, education, research, and user service function should be enhanced. Public relations should also be expanded, in order to identify potential users.

Third, active use of digital technology and records management systems is needed for materials transfer, management, preservation, and user access and services. This would enable university archives to perform more efficient and advanced work in records management and user services.

Fourth, systematic collaboration is needed within universities, as well as related organizations such as libraries, museums, and computer centers. Some collaboration details are shown in Figure 12.

Future implications: it and the digital environment

As shown in the results of the questionnaires and interviews, the development of Korean university archives is way behind that of university libraries, especially considering the IT
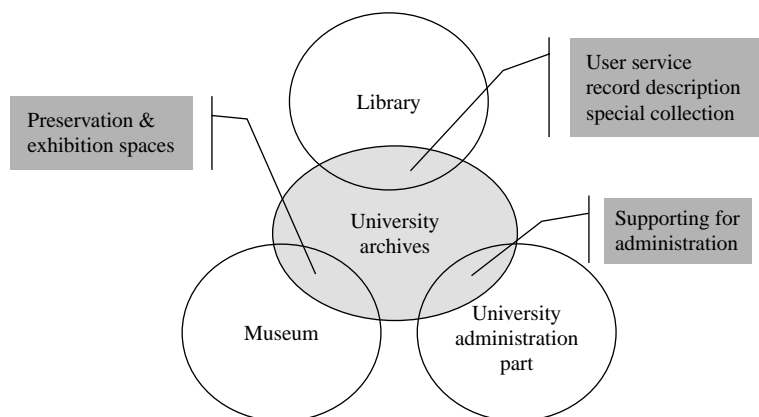

Figure 12.
Collaborations of
university archives with
other institutions

and the digital environments. For Korean university libraries, the movement to establish a digital library (DL) started in the 1980s, and this brought tremendous innovative progress in the collection management and services fields. Through continuous development, current Korean university libraries, for example Yonsei University library, have come to provide state-of-the-art ubiquitous user services, including providing personal information with the RFID system to support pertinent library use.

However, university archives are still isolated from this IT environment, due to the lack of basic policies and understanding, limited budgets, insufficient specialized staff members and the short history of records management and archives in Korea. An archivist, who works as a reference archivist, has commented that there exists a serious gap between user needs and archival services. Users have come to expect IT environment services, yet archives are still collected and managed in a traditional way.

To overcome this discordance, suggestions to connect the IT and digital environments with Korean university archives can be summarized as follows.

Acquisition: the extent of electronic records and archives is continuously increasing. Online acquisition, scanning, and other IT technologies can be used to achieve complete and efficient acquisition.

Description and arrangement: since archives have special features as evidence, value added metadata which can support the evidence function is needed. Considering electronic records, details related to the digital environment concerning electronic records are also needed.

Access and user services: to promote user services, dynamic web interfaces can be considered with user authentication functions, because of the restrictions concerning archives due to privacy or security reasons.

Preservation: digital preservation technologies such as refreshing, migration, emulation, and encapsulation need to be considered for the preservation of digitized archives.

Collaboration: collaboration needs to be enhanced not only with libraries, museums and university administrations, but also with IT departments in universities, in order to cope with the IT environment more proactively and promptly.

Through a balanced development of university archives and libraries, a comprehensive DL, in a broader sense, can be realized.

Conclusion

Given the early advent of Korea into the digital age and the early acceptance of information and communication technologies in Korean university libraries, although university archives in Korea are not efficiently managed at this time, because of the shortage of political and systematic support, future plans, embracing digital methods, should be prepared according to the concerns, history, and heritage of each university, all of which imply valuable resources for the administrative, academic, and social needs of all users. Because the field of records management and archives in Korea is only seven years old, the possibility and potential for rapid progress are high if the information technology and digital environment is wisely and efficiently used, under the proper policies and principles.

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Appendix. Questionnaires

[foundation principles]

1. Do you have foundation principles for your university archives?   ① yes ② no

1.1 (in case of ②) Are you preparing to implement foundation principles? ① yes ② no

2. Do you reference the Korean University Archives Guidelines? ① yes ② no

[Functions]

3. Please rank these active functions in your archives.

   ① identity ② education ③ research ④ administration ⑤ services ⑥ etc. (please describe)

[process guidelines]

4. Do you have process guidelines for the university archives management? ① yes ② no

   4.1 (in case of ①) Please check the area of regulations that you have (more than two can be checked if needed). ①

   acquisition ② appraisal ③ arrangement ④ preservation ⑤ use

   ⑥ disposition ⑦ etc (please describe)

   4.2 (in case of ②) Are you preparing to implement acquisition guidelines? ① yes ② no

5. Do you have a systematic acquisition process? ① yes ② no

   5.1 (in case of ①) How do the acquisition processes proceed?

      ① online   ② offline ③ no transferring   ④ etc (please describe)

6. Please check if authorities have been assigned in your archives to the following processes (more than two can be checked if needed). ① acquisition ② appraisal ③ arrangement ④ preservation ⑤ use

   ⑥ disposition ⑦ budget ⑧ personnel management ⑨ external collaboration ⑩ etc

7. Do you have classification schemes? ① yes ② no

   7.1 (in case of ①) What classification scheme(s) do you use?

   ① classification schemes provided by government ② own classification schemes ③ etc

[Facilities]

8. How many staff are working with full responsibility?   ① one ② two ③ three ④ etc ( )

9. Are there archivists among your staff? ① yes (number of archivists) ② no

10. In what department or organization are your archives included?   ① library ② museum

   ③ administrative offices ④ independent organization ⑤ etc (please describe)

11. Do you have an independent work area?   ① yes (㎡) ② no

12. Do you have an independent preservation area?   ① yes (㎡) ② no

[acquisition & management]

13. Are university publications collected and managed systematically? ① yes ② no

14. Which resources are collected by your archives? (More than two can be checked if needed).

   ① account resources ② meeting records ③ official documents ④ curricula ⑤ syllabi

   ⑥ report cards ⑦ theses ⑧ research reports ⑨ university publications ⑩ white papers

   ⑪ evaluation reports ⑫ university directories ⑬ university newspapers, journals ⑭ photos

   ⑮ images ⑯ souvenirs ⑰ audio visual materials ⑱ resources related to retired professors

   ⑲ resources related to visitors ⑳ university maps □ architecture materials □ lists of the

   graduates □ materials related to alumni □ university websites □ donations □ community

   resources □ etc (please describe)

15. Please check the methods of resources acquisition (more than two can be checked if needed).

   ① within university under the transfer regulations   ② within university by donation

   ③ donation from external institutions or local community ④ etc (please describe)

16. Please check the jobs related to resources acquisition.

   ① transferring ② ask for the donations ③ public relation ④ etc (please describe)

17. What preservation method is used in your archives?

   ① original resource format only ② microfilm type ③ digitized type

   ④ digitized and microfilm types ⑤ etc (please describe)

[access & services]

18. How is access provided to your university archives?

① browse and copy inside the archives ② through the web ③ inside the archives & through the web ④ no services

18-1. (in case of ①,④) Do you have any plan to provide online services? ① yes ② no

18-2. (in case of ②,③) How are your web sites managed?

① independently ② within library web sites ③ within museum web sites

④ within administrative web sites ⑤ etc(please describe)

19. Do you have electronic records management programs ① yes ② no

19-1. (in case of ①) What kind of metadata do you use?

20. What kind of search tools do you use? (More than two can be checked if needed).

① subject categories ② collection types ③ time periods ④ regions ⑤ etc (please describe)

21. Please check your main user groups (More than two can be checked if needed).

① professors ② students ③ university personnel ④ alumni

⑤ local community ⑥ external users

22. Please rank in the order of the most frequently used resources (more than two can be checked if needed).

① account resources ② meeting records ③ official documents ④ curricula ⑤ syllabi

⑥ report cards ⑦ theses ⑧ research reports ⑨ university publications ⑩ white papers

⑪ evaluation reports ⑫ university directories ⑬ university newspapers, journals ⑭ photos

⑮ images ⑯ souvenirs ⑰ audio visual materials ⑱ resources related to retired professors

⑲ resources related to visitors ⑳ university maps □ architecture materials □ lists of the

graduates □ materials related to alumni □ university web sites □ donations □ community

resources □ etc (please describe)

23. Do you have user education programs for using archival materials? ① yes ② no

24. Do you have collaboration networks with your university library? ① yes ② no

24-1. (in case of ①) In what area is the collaboration carried out? (More than two can be checked if needed). ①

arrangement ② acquisition ③ preservation ④ user services ⑤ web site management ⑥ etc (please describe)

25. Do you have collaboration networks with external institutions? ① yes ② no

25-1. (in case of ①) With what institutions do you collaborate?

① other university archives ② local community ③ administrative department of government ④ library ⑤ museum ⑥
etc (please describe)

25-2. (in case of ①) Please briefly describe the collaborations.

26. Do you have collaboration networks with an academic society or association? ① yes ② no

26-1. (in case of ①) With what society or association do you collaborate?

26-2. (in case of ①) In what area is the collaboration carried out?

27. Please share your opinions or any comments about the future prospects of the university archives in the digital
environment.   Thank you very much.

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