

The Archival Legacy of the Kurdish Institute of Paris: A Comprehensive Overview

I. Introduction to the Kurdish Institute of Paris and its Archival Mission

A. Foundation and Institutional Identity

The Kurdish Institute of Paris (Institut kurde de Paris) was established in February 1983, marking a significant milestone in the preservation and promotion of Kurdish culture and heritage in the diaspora.¹ It operates as an independent, non-political, and secular organization, a characteristic that has allowed it to engage with a wide spectrum of Kurdish society and international partners.¹ The impetus for its creation came from a collective of distinguished Kurdish intellectuals and artists, whose diverse origins and fields of expertise underscored a pan-Kurdish vision from the outset. Among these founders were the acclaimed filmmaker Yilmaz Güney, whose work *Yol* earned the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982; the Syrian Kurdish poet Cegerxwin; Hejar, an Iranian Kurdish poet and linguist renowned for translating Avicenna into Persian and the Quran and Omar Khayyam into Kurdish; Tewfiq Wahby, an Iraqi Kurd linguist; H. Cindy, a Kurdish writer from Armenia; and Remzi Rasa, a French Kurdish painter.¹ This varied composition of its founding body, encompassing individuals from different parts of Kurdistan and various artistic and scholarly disciplines, likely fostered a holistic and comprehensive approach to collection development from the Institute's inception, ensuring representation of the multifaceted nature of Kurdish culture, including literary, linguistic, and artistic expressions across regional variations. The Institute is currently under the presidency of Dr. Kendal Nezan, a nuclear physicist, who has guided its activities for many years.¹ A pivotal moment in its history was the French government's official recognition of the Institute as a foundation of public utility (fondation reconnue d'utilité publique) by a prime ministerial decree dated March 2, 1993.⁴ This transition from an association under the 1901 law to a state-recognized foundation not only conferred greater stability and legitimacy but also likely enhanced its capacity to acquire and preserve significant cultural and historical collections. Such official endorsement would make the Institute a more trusted and secure repository for valuable personal papers and archives from prominent figures and their families, and may have facilitated access to public funding or support for its archival endeavors.

B. Core Objectives and Archival Mandate

The Kurdish Institute of Paris has a clearly defined mission centered on the preservation and promotion of Kurdish language, history, and cultural heritage, primarily within the Kurdish

community itself.¹ Beyond this internal focus, it aims to facilitate the integration of Kurdish immigrants in Europe into their respective host societies and, crucially, to enlighten the broader international public about the Kurdish people, their rich culture, their historical homeland, and their contemporary socio-political circumstances.¹ These dual objectives—the safeguarding of a millennium-old heritage and active support for the contemporary Kurdish community, particularly in the diaspora—inherently shape the scope and nature of its archival collections. This mandate implies a dynamic approach to archiving, encompassing not only historical documents but also materials that reflect the evolving experiences, challenges, and cultural expressions of Kurds in the present day. Consequently, the archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris are not merely a static repository of the past but a living collection that documents ongoing Kurdish life, intellectual output, and cultural vitality.

C. Significance in the Landscape of Kurdish Studies

The Kurdish Institute of Paris holds a distinguished position in the global academic and cultural landscape. It is widely recognized as one of the principal academic centers dedicated to the Kurdish language and studies in Europe.⁶ Its library is frequently described as the largest Kurdish library in the Western world⁷, and by some accounts, the largest globally¹, making its archival holdings an indispensable resource for scholars, researchers, and students worldwide.

The very existence of the Institute and its comprehensive archival efforts represent a profound act of cultural preservation and affirmation for the Kurdish people. As a stateless nation, Kurdish heritage has often been at risk, dispersed, or subject to suppression in various parts of its historical homeland. The Institute in Paris, therefore, functions as a crucial sanctuary for this heritage, ensuring its survival and accessibility for future generations. Its archives are a testament to the resilience and cultural richness of the Kurdish people, offering a counter-narrative to historical marginalization.

II. The Physical Archives: A Repository of Kurdish Heritage

The Kurdish Institute of Paris houses an extensive and diverse collection of physical materials that collectively form a cornerstone for the study and understanding of Kurdish history, language, culture, and society. These tangible archives are meticulously curated to support the Institute's mission of preservation and dissemination.

Table 1: Overview of Material Types in the Kurdish Institute of Paris Archives

Category	Description	Estimated Extent/Quantity (where available)	Languages
Monographs	Books covering a wide range of subjects related to Kurds and	Over 10,000 monographs ⁸ (6,423 specifically on Kurds ⁷)	Over 25 languages ⁸

	Kurdistan.		
Periodicals & Newspapers	Journals, magazines, and newspapers published in and about Kurdistan, and by diaspora communities. ⁸	Extensive collections; "several tens of thousands of published documents"	Various, including Kurdish dialects, major European and Middle Eastern languages
Manuscripts	Handwritten documents, potentially including literary works, historical records, or personal papers.	Implied by founders' work and digitization of "unpublished manuscripts" ⁹	Primarily Kurdish, Arabic, Persian
Photographs	Visual records of Kurdish life, personalities, events, and landscapes.	Significant collections, regularly used by media ⁷	N/A
Film & Video Recordings	Documentaries, feature films (notably by Yilmaz Güney), news footage, and recordings of cultural events.	Growing collection; Institute promotes Kurdish cinema ²	Various
Sound Archives	Musical recordings (traditional and contemporary), oral histories, interviews, and radio broadcasts.	Extensive, including materials for Kurd1 Radyo ⁸	Kurdish dialects, other relevant languages
Posters & Maps	Visual ephemera including event posters, political posters, and cartographic materials of Kurdistan.	Collection of Institute-published and acquired items ⁸	Various
Artworks	Paintings, sculptures, and other artistic creations by Kurdish artists, often featured in exhibitions.	Documented through exhibition activities ¹¹	N/A
Personal Papers	Correspondence, diaries, research notes, and manuscripts from Kurdish intellectuals,	Significant holdings, e.g., Yilmaz Güney, Bedir-Khan/Rondot papers ⁹	Various

	artists, and Kurdologists.		
Documents from Diaspora Organizations	Records of Kurdish associations and groups active in the diaspora.	Implied by Institute's role and general diaspora archiving trends ⁹	Various

A. Textual Collections: Foundations of Knowledge

1. **Monographs and Rare Books:** The Institute's library boasts a substantial collection of monographs. Figures vary slightly across different reports, with one source indicating "over 10,000 monographs about the Kurds, in 25 languages" as part of the broader holdings accessible or targeted by the digital library ⁸, while another specifies "6,423 monographs on the Kurds, in 23 languages" for the physical library at a particular time.⁷ These works cover a comprehensive range of subjects, including history, linguistics, cultural studies, political science, and sociology, offering a rich resource for academic inquiry.⁸ Significantly, the Institute itself is an active publisher. Its contributions include practical language learning guides like *Le Kurde sans peine* by Kamuran A. Bédîr Khan, scholarly grammars such as *Kürtçe Grameri (Grammaire kurde)* by Roger Lescot and Dj. Bedir Khan (translated into Turkish by the Institute), editions of Kurdish literary masterpieces like Ehmedê Xani's 17th-century epic *Mem û Zîn* (edited and commented on by the co-founding poet Hejar), and indispensable reference works like *Saladin's - English-Kurdish Dictionary*.¹¹ These publications, born from the Institute's scholarly activities, subsequently enrich its own archival collection, documenting its significant role in knowledge creation and dissemination.
2. **Periodicals, Newspapers, and Pamphlets:** The archives contain "collections of periodicals and newspapers" of considerable scale.⁷ Such serial publications are invaluable for researchers, providing contemporary perspectives on political discourse, social transformations, cultural debates, and the daily life of Kurdish communities both in their homeland and in the diaspora.

The Institute also publishes its own influential periodicals, which form a core part of this collection:

- ***Kurmancî*:** A biannual linguistic journal initiated in 1987. It serves as a platform for scholarly articles on Kurdish linguistics, with a particular focus on terminology, the standardization of the Kurdish language (especially the Kurmanji dialect), and the dissemination of research from linguistic seminars. Contributions are published in Kurdish, Turkish, French, and English, reflecting its international academic reach.⁵
- ***Études Kurdes*:** Launched in 2000 under the direction of the esteemed Kurdologist Joyce Blau, this biannual research journal is published in French. It features scholarly articles and research on diverse aspects of Kurdish civilization, including culture, history, literature, anthropology, and sociology. A particularly

valuable feature of *Études Kurdes* is its commitment to publishing "documents historiques disparus ou inédits, comme des lettres et des déclarations d'acteurs politiques kurdes de la première moitié du XXe siècle".⁵ This practice directly transforms rare archival materials into accessible scholarly resources for a wider audience.

- **Bulletin de liaison et d'information:** This monthly press review, published in both French and English, offers summaries and analyses of current news and developments pertaining to Kurdish issues globally.⁶

3. **Manuscripts:** While specific inventories of manuscript holdings are not extensively detailed in the provided materials, the intellectual and literary backgrounds of the Institute's founders—such as Hejar, a poet and translator of classical texts into Kurdish¹—and the Institute's own publication of seminal works like *Mem û Zîn*¹¹ strongly suggest an active interest in and potential collection of manuscript materials or their facsimiles. Such items are fundamental for historical linguistic research, literary criticism, and understanding the textual transmission of Kurdish cultural heritage. The general discussion on the digitization of diaspora archives also mentions "unpublished manuscripts" as a category of materials being made accessible⁹, pointing to the recognized value of such items within Kurdish studies.

B. Audiovisual Collections: Capturing Sight and Sound

1. **Photographic Archives:** The Kurdish Institute of Paris maintains significant "collections of photographs".⁷ The historical and cultural value of these photographic archives is underscored by their regular use by international media outlets, including prominent broadcasters like France 2, TF1, Arte, BBC, and ABC.⁷ These collections likely offer a rich visual testimony to diverse facets of Kurdish life, documenting historical events, cultural practices (such as Newroz celebrations), prominent Kurdish personalities (including co-founder Yilmaz Güney¹⁷), and the landscapes of Kurdistan. Photographs from the archive are also frequently featured in exhibitions organized or supported by the Institute.⁷
2. **Film and Video Archives:** The Institute's holdings include "videos"⁷, and it actively engages in "la diffusion du cinéma kurde" (the dissemination of Kurdish cinema).² A cornerstone of this collection undoubtedly relates to the Institute's co-founder, Yilmaz Güney. Materials pertaining to his life and work, including his films, are preserved and promoted by the Institute, which has organized retrospectives of his cinematic achievements.¹ Beyond Güney's oeuvre, the Institute has also been involved in the production or acquisition of documentary films. Examples include "Newroz 84," a film documenting Kurdish New Year festivities in Paris, and "Kurdistan, koloniya dawîn?" (Kurdistan, the last colony?), which explores the situation of Kurds across different regions.¹¹ Furthermore, the Institute's rich archival footage has served as a crucial resource for external film productions, such as the documentary "Leyla Zana, la Pasionaria des Kurdes".¹¹ This indicates a dynamic collection of visual narratives and historical testimonies.

3. **Sound Archives:** An important facet of the Institute's archival efforts is the maintenance of an "archive of sounds and musical recordings" ⁷, which includes "disques et cassettes de musique" (records and music cassettes).²¹ The Institute actively fosters Kurdish musical expression by supporting musical creation, organizing concerts, and editing works of Kurdish music.² A key initiative that brings this sound archive to a global audience is **Kurd1 Radyo**, a web radio station that broadcasts traditional Kurdish music sourced from the Institute's archives 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.¹⁰ While direct, extensive mentions of dedicated oral history projects within the Institute are not prominent in the provided information, the broader context of Kurdish archival endeavors emphasizes the significance of such recordings.⁹ Given the Institute's comprehensive focus on cultural heritage, it is plausible that oral testimonies and interviews form part of these sound archives or represent an area of ongoing collection interest.

C. Artistic and Ephemeral Materials: Visual Culture and Historical Artefacts

1. **Posters and Maps:** The archival collections include "post cards and posters".⁸ The Institute itself has been a producer of such ephemeral materials, having edited and published posters for a variety of its events and advocacy campaigns. These include posters for its inauguration fête, tributes to Yilmaz Güney, Newroz celebrations (e.g., Newroz 1984), awareness campaigns on events like the Halabja chemical attack ("Halabja 'Hiroshima kurde'"), and announcements for art exhibitions such as "Peintres de l'Anfal" and other expositions of Kurdish painters.¹¹ These posters serve as valuable visual records of the Institute's decades of activity, its public engagement, and the evolution of Kurdish advocacy in the diaspora. Maps depicting Kurdistan and its various regions are also likely part of the holdings or are utilized in the Institute's publications ²², providing essential cartographic context for understanding the geographical and political dimensions of Kurdish identity and history.
2. **Artworks and Exhibition Materials:** The Kurdish Institute of Paris plays a proactive role in the Kurdish art scene by organizing and supporting art exhibitions. Notable examples include "Arts kurdes en exil," which showcased the works of 19 artists ¹², and the historically significant "Peintres de l'Anfal" exhibition.¹¹ This engagement implies that the Institute either directly collects or has privileged access to a range of contemporary and historical Kurdish artworks, including paintings and sculptures. Furthermore, the Institute's resource center possesses "several sets of exhibitions of photos, transparencies and documentary films on various aspects of Kurdish life and culture," which are made available on loan to other Kurdish or French associations, municipalities, and cultural bodies organizing events related to the Kurds.⁷ These curated exhibition sets themselves constitute a unique archival resource. The collection of such ephemeral materials, including posters and documentation from art exhibitions, is critical for understanding the trajectory of Kurdish visual culture, the themes preoccupying Kurdish artists, the methods of political messaging employed, and the Institute's own strategies for public engagement and cultural diplomacy over several decades. They offer a rich source for cultural historians and sociologists examining

diaspora identity, artistic expression, and activism.

D. Personal Papers and Special Collections: Voices from the Past

The archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris are enriched by personal papers from prominent Kurdish intellectuals, artists, activists, and Western specialists dedicated to Kurdish studies. These collections offer intimate and often unique perspectives on Kurdish history and culture.

- **Yilmaz Güney Collection:** Given Yilmaz Güney's stature as an internationally renowned filmmaker and his role as a co-founder of the Institute ¹, materials related to his life and work—such as film scripts, personal correspondence, photographs, and documents pertaining to his cinematic productions—are presumed to form a highly significant and valuable part of the archive.¹⁷
- **Papers of Kurdologists and Intellectuals:** The archives house the "private papers of French Kurdologists" ⁹, which are crucial for understanding the development of Kurdish studies in France and Europe. A specific example cited is the correspondence between the influential Bedir-Khan brothers and the French General Pierre Rondot; these documents are part of the Rondot archives, a portion of which was bequeathed to the Kurdish Institute.¹³ Such collections of scholarly correspondence, research notes, and unpublished writings provide deep insights into intellectual exchanges and the evolution of academic thought on Kurdish issues. The papers of figures central to the Institute's intellectual life, such as Joyce Blau—the long-time director of *Études Kurdes* and a key linguist ⁵—would be of immense importance, though not explicitly detailed as a separate fond. The presence of personal papers from both Kurdish historical figures and Western Kurdologists offers a particularly rich resource. These collections enable researchers to explore the complex interactions, intellectual networks, and processes of knowledge co-production that have shaped both Kurdish studies as an academic field and Kurdish political and cultural thought in the European diaspora. Personal letters, diaries, and research notes can reveal informal collaborations, personal motivations, and the genesis of ideas that are often not apparent in formally published works. For instance, correspondence between Kurdish leaders or intellectuals and French officials or scholars can illuminate diplomatic efforts, advocacy strategies, and the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge, essential for writing nuanced intellectual histories or "histories from below" of Kurdish engagement with Europe.
- **Documents from Diaspora Organizations:** While not extensively itemized for the Kurdish Institute of Paris in the provided materials, the general discourse on the development of Kurdish archives highlights the importance of "institutional documents from diaspora organizations".⁹ As a central and long-standing institution of the Kurdish diaspora itself, the Institute's own operational records—minutes of meetings, administrative correspondence, project files—would inherently constitute a significant archive documenting decades of diaspora activity, advocacy, and cultural programming. It is also plausible that the Institute collects records from smaller or defunct Kurdish organizations to ensure their preservation.

The Institute's dynamic role as a publisher of books and journals ¹¹ and a producer of cultural content, such as documentaries ¹¹ and the Kurd1 Radyo webradio ¹⁰, means that its archival

collections are not merely passively accumulated. Instead, they are also actively and continuously generated and shaped by its own multifaceted activities. This creates a unique, self-referential, and evolving collection that documents not only broader Kurdish history and culture but also the history of the Institute's own considerable influence in shaping contemporary Kurdish cultural and intellectual life, particularly within the diaspora.

III. The Kurdish Digital Library (BNK) and Digital Initiatives

Recognizing the importance of global accessibility and modern information dissemination, the Kurdish Institute of Paris has undertaken significant efforts to digitize its vast collections, primarily through the Kurdish Digital Library (BNK).

A. Overview and Objectives of the Kurdish Digital Library (BNK)

The Kurdish Digital Library, known in Kurdish as Pirtûkxaneya dijîtal a kurdî (BNK), was officially launched online on December 10, 2010.²⁴ This major initiative was developed and is maintained by the Kurdish Institute of Paris. The fundamental aim of the BNK is "to make the Kurdish cultural heritage available as digital data"⁷, thereby ensuring that these invaluable resources can be accessed by a broad public across the globe, transcending geographical limitations.⁷ The scale of this undertaking is substantial. Kendal Nezan, the president of the Kurdish Institute, has stated that "More than a million pages of our library's books and archives are digitized and, for the most part, available online at bnk.institutkurde.org".²⁶ This figure underscores a deep commitment to comprehensive digitization. The project has also garnered international support, notably from the International Olof Palme Foundation in Sweden, which recognizes the BNK's significant contribution to civic education and knowledge dissemination through modern information technology.⁷ The BNK, with its substantial multilingual offerings and wide thematic scope, represents a significant step towards democratizing access to Kurdish cultural and historical materials. It effectively bypasses many of the geographical and political obstacles that have historically hindered research and learning about Kurdish topics, particularly for those outside major academic centers or within regions where such materials might be restricted. This initiative aligns perfectly with the Institute's foundational goal of making Kurdish culture known internationally¹ and supports the broader aim of "civic education by spreading knowledge through modern information technology".⁷

B. Content and Thematic Coverage of the BNK

The BNK is primarily constituted of "writings about the Kurds and Kurdistan".⁷ The platform's interface reveals a broad subject coverage, allowing users to browse digitized materials across numerous thematic categories. These include Art, Dictionaries, Dissertations, Economy, General Works, Geography, History, Linguistics, Literature, Medicine, Memory, Music, Philosophy, Poetry, Politics, Religion, and Sociology.⁸ This wide array of themes indicates that the digitization efforts encompass a diverse range of materials from the Institute's collections. A remarkable feature of the BNK is its extensive language diversity. While initial reports mentioned availability in Kurdish, French, and English²⁴, the BNK website itself provides options to filter content by 24 different languages.⁸ These include Arabic, Armenian, Azeri, Basque, Catalan, Czech, Danish, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek,

Hebrew, Italian, Kurdish (likely various dialects), Dutch (Nederland), Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Syriac, Turkish, and Ukrainian. This comprehensive linguistic support dramatically enhances the BNK's utility for an international audience of researchers, students, and the Kurdish diaspora worldwide. In terms of document types, while "writings" is a broad descriptor, the "Latest Digitalized Works" section showcased on the BNK platform provides more specific examples. These have included items such as "The Kurdistan File," educational texts like "Êzidyatî: Wane bo qutabîyê Êzîdya" (Lessons for Yezidi Students), historical books and early newspapers (e.g., "Abdurrahman Bedirhan ve ilk Kürt Gazetesi Kurdistan"), literary works including poetry ("Pêdarî," "Mala xwede"), human rights reports, and academic journals such as "Cemoti : Cahiers d'Etudes sur la Méditerranée Orientale".⁸ This list suggests that the digitization program encompasses monographs, periodicals, reports, educational materials, and potentially other forms of textual documents. The claim of digitizing "over a million pages" ²⁶ strongly implies a primary focus on these comprehensive textual collections. However, the full extent of digitization for audiovisual materials—such as the extensive photographic archives, films, and sound recordings beyond those accessible via the Kurd1 Radyo—is less clearly detailed in the provided information and may represent an area for future development or further inquiry. Preserving and digitizing audiovisual materials often presents greater technical and financial challenges compared to textual documents, which might influence the pace and scope of their inclusion in the BNK for direct online browsing. There appears to be a slight variation in the total number of monographs cited in relation to the Institute's holdings. The physical library was noted at one point to have 6,423 monographs on the Kurds ⁷, whereas the BNK's introductory text refers to the Institute maintaining a library with "over 10,000 monographs about the Kurds".⁸ This difference could be attributed to ongoing acquisitions by the Institute, different methodologies in counting (e.g., all monographs versus those specifically on Kurds), or the larger figure reflecting the total scope of materials from which the BNK draws or aims to digitize. For a comprehensive understanding of the resources managed by the Institute, the larger figure of over 10,000 monographs is likely more indicative of the overall collection depth that the BNK endeavors to represent.

C. Search Functionalities and Accessibility of the BNK

The Kurdish Digital Library is accessible to the public via its dedicated website:

bnk.institutkurde.org.⁸ The platform is designed to facilitate user navigation and discovery of its resources through various search and filtering options. Users can search the digital collections by: Language, Theme, Title, Author, Editor, Date (including date ranges), and specific Keywords.⁸ Additionally, the interface supports browsing functionalities, allowing users to explore content organized by Themes, Authors, Editors, Languages, and Journals, as indicated in the "LIST" section of the BNK website.⁸ While one source noted temporary inaccessibility of the website during a specific browsing attempt ²⁸, multiple other sources confirm its operational status and rich content, suggesting that any such issues were likely intermittent or resolved.

D. Other Digital Initiatives and Online Presence

Beyond the BNK, the Kurdish Institute of Paris maintains a robust online presence through other channels. Its main institutional website, **www.institutkurde.org**, serves as a central portal for disseminating news, providing information about its numerous publications (many of which, like issues of the journal *Kurmancî*, are often available for download ⁶), announcing cultural events, and issuing press releases in multiple languages.¹ The Institute had envisioned

an internet site in both French and English as early as 1998 to make its resources more widely available ⁷, a vision that has clearly been realized and expanded upon. A notable digital initiative in the realm of sound archives is **Kurdî Radyo**. This web radio station, also available as a mobile application, broadcasts traditional Kurdish music directly from the Institute's extensive sound archives, offering continuous 24/7 access to this important aspect of Kurdish oral and musical heritage.¹⁰

IV. Scholarly and Cultural Output from the Archives

The archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris are not merely preserved; they are actively utilized to generate a rich stream of scholarly publications and diverse cultural programming. This dynamic engagement transforms the archival holdings into living resources that contribute to academic knowledge and public understanding of Kurdish culture and affairs.

Table 2: Key Publications and Cultural Activities of the Kurdish Institute of Paris

Category	Details	Examples/Focus	Key Sources
Academic Journals	<i>Kurmancî</i>	Linguistics, terminology, standardization of Kurdish (Kurmanji). Multilingual (Kurdish, Turkish, French, English). Est. 1987.	⁵
	<i>Études Kurdes</i>	Kurdish civilization, culture, history, literature, anthropology, society. Publishes historical documents. French language. Est. 2000.	⁵
	<i>Bulletin de liaison et d'information</i>	Monthly press review on Kurdish issues. French and English.	⁶
Book Publications	Language Learning & Grammar	<i>Le Kurde sans peine, Kürtçe Grameri</i>	¹¹
	Literature & Poetry	<i>Mem û Zîn</i> (Ehmedê Xani, ed. Hejar), <i>Şivanê Kurd / Le Berger kurde</i> (Ereb Şemo)	¹¹
	Political & Social Issues	<i>Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan</i> (Ismail Besikçi), Proceedings	¹¹

		of the 1989 Paris Conference	
	Human Rights	<i>Danezana gerdûnî ya Mafên Mirov</i> (Kurdish translation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights)	¹¹
	Dictionaries	<i>Saladin's - English-Kurdish Dictionary</i>	¹¹
	Art Exhibition Catalogs	<i>PEINTRES DE L'ANFAL</i>	¹¹
	School Textbooks	Series for primary, middle, and high schools in Kurdish for Iraqi Kurdistan (385,000 copies distributed).	¹¹
Cultural Programming & Activities	Art Exhibitions	Painting, sculpture (e.g., "Arts kurdes en exil", Yilmaz Güney expo, "Peintres de l'Anfal").	⁴
	Film Screenings & Festivals	Diffusion of Kurdish cinema, Yilmaz Güney retrospectives, Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris, production/possession of documentaries.	²
	Concerts & Musical Support	Organizes/supports concerts, aids musical creation, edits Kurdish music (Kurd1 Radyo).	²
	Conferences, Symposia & Workshops	1989 Paris Conference, "La Nouvelle Dynamique Kurde" colloquium, ZOZAN workshop, meetings at French Senate.	¹¹
	Lectures & Poetry Readings	Provides platform and support.	²

A. Academic Journals: Disseminating Research

The Institute publishes several periodicals that are central to Kurdish studies:

- **Kurmancî:** Since its inception in 1987, this biannual linguistic journal has played a crucial role in the study and standardization of the Kurdish language, with a strong emphasis on the Kurmanji dialect. It disseminates findings from linguistic seminars and features scholarly articles on terminology, grammar, and lexicography. Its multilingual approach—publishing in Kurdish, Turkish, French, and English—ensures a broad international readership and contribution base.⁵
- **Études Kurdes:** This biannual French-language journal, established in 2000 and long edited by Joyce Blau, is dedicated to a wide array of topics within Kurdish studies, including civilization, culture, history, literature, anthropology, and sociology. A distinctive and highly valuable feature of *Études Kurdes* is its regular publication of "documents historiques disparus ou inédits, comme des lettres et des déclarations d'acteurs politiques kurdes de la première moitié du XXe siècle" (lost or unpublished historical documents, such as letters and declarations from Kurdish political figures of the first half of the 20th century).⁵ This practice directly draws from archival sources, making primary historical materials accessible to the scholarly community and fostering new research. The Institute's strategic decision to publish such historical documents, alongside its initiative to translate and publish the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into Kurdish (*Danezana gerdûnî ya Mafên Mirov*)¹¹, demonstrates a sophisticated use of archival and textual work. This dual approach serves not only scholarly advancement by making rare sources available but also contributes to human rights advocacy by empowering Kurdish speakers with access to fundamental international texts in their own language. This elevates the role of the archive beyond mere preservation, positioning it as an active participant in contemporary intellectual and socio-political discourse.
- **Bulletin de liaison et d'information:** This monthly press review, available in French and English, serves to keep its audience informed about current events, political developments, and human rights issues concerning the Kurds across various regions.⁶ An example, Bulletin No. 421 from April 2020, covered critical topics such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran and Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), and ongoing human rights concerns.¹⁶

B. Books and Monographs Published by the Institute: Building a Kurdish Library

The Kurdish Institute of Paris has a prolific publication program, producing a diverse range of books that contribute significantly to Kurdish literature, linguistics, and cultural understanding.¹¹ These publications span several key categories:

- **Language and Grammar:** Works aimed at preserving, teaching, and standardizing the Kurdish language, such as the practical course *Le Kurde sans peine* and the scholarly *Kürtçe Grameri*.
- **Literature and Poetry:** Editions of classic Kurdish epics like *Mem û Zîn* by Ehmedê Xani (edited by Hejar), and works by modern writers such as Ereb Şemo's *Şivanê Kurd / Le*

Berger kurde, often presented in bilingual formats to reach younger generations in the diaspora and facilitate language learning.

- **Political and Social Issues:** The Institute has published critical analyses of the Kurdish situation, such as Turkish sociologist Ismail Besikçi's *Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan* (Kurdistan, Inter-State Colony), which it published in France in defense of freedom of thought after the book was banned in Turkey and its author condemned. It has also published the proceedings of significant international conferences, including the 1989 Paris Conference on Kurdish human rights and cultural identity.
- **Human Rights:** A landmark publication is the *Danezana gerdûnî ya Mafên Mirov*, the first Kurdish translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which also included the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Each article was presented in Kurdish alongside English, Arabic, French, and Turkish.
- **Dictionaries:** Essential linguistic tools such as *Saladin's - English-Kurdish Dictionary*, a comprehensive volume with 72,000 words.
- **Art Catalogs:** Documentation of important art exhibitions, for example, *PEINTRES DE L'ANFAL*, which showcased works by Iraqi Kurdish painters.
- **School Textbooks:** Perhaps one of its most impactful publishing endeavors has been the production and distribution of Kurdish-language school textbooks. In partnership with organizations like the France-Libertés Foundation and UNESCO, the Institute published a series of textbooks for primary, middle, and high school levels. A total of 385,000 copies covering subjects like Kurdish language, reading, sciences, mathematics, and health education were distributed in Iraqi Kurdistan.¹¹ This extensive program reveals a profound and practical commitment by a diaspora institution to support educational infrastructure and language revitalization within a Kurdish region. Such an undertaking requires significant linguistic and pedagogical expertise, likely drawn from the Institute's rich archival resources and its extensive network of scholars and educators, highlighting a role that extends beyond France to directly impact cultural and linguistic development in Kurdistan.

C. Cultural Programming: Bringing Archives to Life

The Kurdish Institute of Paris is a vibrant cultural center that actively organizes and supports a wide array of events. These activities often draw inspiration and content from its archival collections or, in turn, contribute new materials to be preserved.

- **Exhibitions:** The Institute frequently hosts and curates exhibitions of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and historical materials. Notable examples include "Arts kurdes en exil" (Kurdish Arts in Exile), showcasing 19 contemporary artists¹²; retrospectives dedicated to the filmmaker Yilmaz Güney⁴; the poignant "Peintres de l'Anfal" (Painters of the Anfal) exhibition¹¹; "Les Kurdes d'Arménie : Une minorité dans la minorité : Les Yézidis" (The Kurds of Armenia: A Minority within a Minority: The Yezidis)⁴; and "Qalik : Ali Osman Yanak," an exhibition of paintings.³⁵ The Institute also makes its exhibition materials, including photographs and films, available on loan to other organizations for cultural events.⁷
- **Film Screenings and Festivals:** A strong advocate for Kurdish cinema², the Institute

promotes the works of Kurdish filmmakers, with a special emphasis on its co-founder Yilmaz Güney.⁴ It also supports events such as the Festival des Films Kurdes de Paris, which presents a platform for contemporary Kurdish fiction and documentary films from various parts of Kurdistan and the diaspora.³²

- **Conferences, Workshops, and Public Debates:** The Institute serves as a forum for significant academic and public discussions. It has organized major international conferences, such as the 1989 International Paris Conference on the Kurds: Human Rights and Cultural Identity.¹¹ More recent events include the colloquium "La Nouvelle Dynamique Kurde" (The New Kurdish Dynamic), held in partnership with the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI) and the Arab World Institute (IMA)²³; the ZOZAN artistic research workshop, a collaboration with the Austrian Academy of Sciences, focusing on mobility, cultural heritage, and identity³³; and high-profile meetings and discussions at the French Senate to address the situation of the Kurds.³⁴ These events often feature prominent international scholars, artists, writers, and political figures.
- **Concerts, Musical Support, and Poetry Readings:** The Institute provides crucial logistical support and a platform for Kurdish musicians, singers, and poets, aiding in musical creation and organizing performances.² The Kurd1 Radyo web radio¹⁰ is a direct and continuous cultural output stemming from its rich sound archives.

This diverse cultural programming, ranging from art exhibitions and film festivals to academic conferences, positions the Kurdish Institute of Paris as a central and dynamic hub for the Kurdish diaspora in Europe and for international engagement with Kurdish culture. These events not only disseminate knowledge derived from the archives but also foster new cultural expressions, artistic creations, and scholarly dialogues. These contemporary outputs, in turn, may become part of the future archival record, creating a dynamic feedback loop where the archive informs and enriches contemporary culture, and contemporary cultural production contributes to the ongoing historical and cultural archive of the Kurdish people.

V. Scope and Focus of the Archival Collections

The archival collections of the Kurdish Institute of Paris are characterized by their considerable historical depth and broad geographical reach, reflecting the complexities of Kurdish identity and experience.

A. Historical Scope

The Institute's collections span a significant period of modern Kurdish history. Materials date from at least the **early 20th century**, as evidenced by the publication of historical documents from the first half of that century in the journal *Études Kurdes*.⁵ While general historical accounts of Kurdistan may reference earlier periods, such as the Shaddadid (951-1174) and Rawadid (955-1221) dynasties³⁶, the core strength of the Institute's direct holdings appears to be concentrated on the modern era. Research on 20th-century Kurdish historiography indicates that early studies primarily relied on archives covering the first half of the century.

More recently, this has been enriched by the opening of Cold War era archives and access to personal archives from the Kurdish student migrations of the 1960s.⁹ The Kurdish Institute of Paris, founded in 1983¹, has naturally been in a position to collect contemporary materials from its inception onwards, documenting the experiences of the diaspora and ongoing developments in Kurdistan. These contemporary acquisitions are complemented by its efforts to gather historical documents. Consequently, the Institute's own activities, publications, and the records of events it has hosted since 1983 form a unique and growing contemporary archive. The historical scope, therefore, from early 20th-century documents to contemporary materials generated by the Institute itself, allows for longitudinal studies of Kurdish political, social, and cultural developments. This chronological depth enables researchers to trace patterns of continuity and change across a tumultuous century marked by significant transformations for the Kurdish people.

B. Geographical Scope

The geographical focus of the Institute's collections is inherently broad, reflecting the transnational nature of Kurdish identity. The term "**Kurdistan**" itself denotes a geo-cultural region, not a unified state, traditionally encompassing parts of southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), northwestern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan), and northern Syria (Western Kurdistan).³⁶ Some definitions also extend to include parts of southern Transcaucasia.³⁶ The Institute's archival collections strive to represent this extensive geographical spread, covering Kurdish life, culture, and political realities across these diverse regions. This pan-Kurdish approach is evident from the varied origins of its founding members¹ and is reflected in its publications and cultural programs, which frequently address issues and artistic expressions from all parts of Kurdistan (e.g., the documentary "Kurdistan, koloniya dawîn?" which discusses the situation of Kurds across multiple states¹¹). A significant and growing focus of the collections is the **Kurdish diaspora**, particularly communities in Europe.¹ A core part of the Institute's mission involves aiding the integration of Kurdish immigrants in Europe and making their presence and culture known.¹ The Institute's own research and data collection on diaspora communities is exemplified by its contribution to maps detailing the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, including population figures.²²

The capacity of the Institute's archives to cover both the various regions of historical Kurdistan and the burgeoning global diaspora offers a unique and valuable opportunity for researchers. It enables comparative studies on Kurdish identity, cultural practices, linguistic variations, and political mobilization across diverse national and transnational contexts. This comprehensive geographical perspective is a strength not typically found in state-run national archives, which are usually constrained by their own national borders and official narratives. The Institute's independent status allows it to adopt a more inclusive, pan-Kurdish collection strategy, facilitating research into how Kurdish culture has adapted or been maintained under different state policies and fostering an understanding of the formation of new diaspora identities and their complex connections to their ancestral homeland(s).

VI. Accessing the Archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris

The Kurdish Institute of Paris provides multiple avenues for accessing its rich archival collections, catering to both in-person visitors and remote users.

Table 3: Access Modalities for the Archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris

Access Type	Details	Contact/Location/URL	Key Sources
Physical (Library/Reading Room)	Main library and archive consultation.	106 rue La Fayette, 75010 Paris, France.	⁴
	Opening Hours	Generally Mon-Fri, afternoon hours. <i>Specific hours vary slightly across sources; verification is advised.</i> Library closed Sat & Sun.	⁷
	Contact for Librarian/Catalogue	Phone: +33 1 48 24 64 64; Email options available on website.	⁴
Digital	Kurdish Digital Library (BNK)	Online access to digitized books, journals, documents.	bnk.institutkurde.org
	Main Institute Website	Information on publications (some downloadable), news, events.	www.institutkurde.org
	Kurd1 Radyo (Sound Archives)	Web radio and mobile app for traditional Kurdish music from archives.	Accessible via app stores and web.
Researcher Support & Other	Eligibility	Open to students, researchers, general public.	⁷
	Remote Consultation	Possible by letter/mail for those unable to visit.	⁷
	Workshops/Events	Opportunities for engagement and research collaboration.	e.g., ZOZAN workshop ³³

A. Physical Access to the Library and Archives

The primary location for in-person consultation of the Institute's collections is its library, situated at **106 rue La Fayette, in the 10th arrondissement of Paris, France.**⁴ The library is explicitly open to the public, welcoming Kurdish, French, and other European students,

academic researchers, as well as members of the general public seeking information about Kurdish culture and history.⁷ Regarding opening hours, there is some minor variation across the Institute's different online platforms. The French version of the main website generally indicates that the library is open Monday to Friday, from 13:00 to 18:00.²⁹ The English version of the site has, at times, listed slightly different hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 13:00 to 19:00, and Wednesday from 15:30 to 19:00.³⁰ An older page dedicated to the library mentioned hours from 10:00 to 18:00.⁷ These slight inconsistencies, common for cultural institutions maintaining multiple information channels, underscore the importance for prospective visitors to **verify the current opening hours directly with the Institute before planning a visit**. The library is consistently reported as being closed on Saturdays²⁹ and Sundays.³⁰ Researchers can contact the Institute's librarian for assistance and to consult the catalogue of its holdings.²⁹

B. Digital Access via the BNK and Online Platforms

The Kurdish Institute of Paris has made substantial strides in providing digital access to its collections. The cornerstone of this effort is the **Kurdish Digital Library (BNK)**, accessible at **bnk.institutkurde.org**.⁸ This platform offers access to over a million digitized pages of books, journals, and documents. The Institute's main website, **www.institutkurde.org**, also serves as a vital online resource. It provides comprehensive information about the Institute's activities, news updates, details of its extensive list of publications (many of which, such as back issues of the journal *Kurmancî*, are available for online reading or download⁶), and announcements for cultural events.¹ For those interested in the Institute's rich sound archives, particularly its collection of traditional Kurdish music, the **Kurd1 Radyo** provides continuous access. This service is available as a web radio and through a mobile application.¹⁰

This multi-pronged access strategy—combining a physical library for in-depth research on original materials, a comprehensive digital library (BNK) for broad remote access to a vast corpus of digitized texts, a general informational website for current awareness, and specialized platforms like the web radio for specific cultural content—demonstrates a sophisticated and user-focused approach. It allows the Institute to serve diverse user needs effectively and to maximize the global reach and impact of Kurdish cultural heritage.

C. Guidelines and Support for Researchers

The Kurdish Institute of Paris maintains a welcoming stance towards a wide range of users, from established academics and postgraduate students to members of the general public with an interest in Kurdish affairs.⁷ For individuals unable to visit Paris, the Institute has historically offered the possibility of consultation by letter or mail.⁷ The Institute has a long tradition of engaging with "Western specialists on Kurdish Studies"¹ and actively collaborates on research projects, conferences, and workshops (e.g., the ZOZAN artistic research workshop³³, and various academic colloquia²³). The availability of a librarian contact²⁹ implies that direct assistance is available for researchers needing guidance in navigating the extensive collections. While specific formal "accès aux archives" (archive access procedure) documents were not detailed in the provided sources beyond general contact information and library opening hours³⁷, the overall open and collaborative ethos of the Institute suggests a supportive environment for scholarly inquiry.

VII. Conclusion: The Enduring Significance of the

Archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris

A. Recapitulation of Key Strengths

The archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris stand as one of the most extensive, diverse, and significant collections of Kurdish heritage material available globally, holding a particularly prominent position in the Western world.¹ Its holdings are remarkably comprehensive, encompassing a vast array of textual documents (including over 10,000 monographs, numerous periodicals, and potentially rare manuscripts), rich and varied audiovisual materials (photographs extensively used by international media, films including the works of Yılmaz Güney, and a substantial sound archive featuring traditional music), artistic works, ephemeral items like posters and maps, and the invaluable personal papers of key Kurdish cultural and political figures, as well as those of dedicated Kurdologists (as detailed in Section II). The launch and ongoing development of the Kurdish Digital Library (BNK) has been a transformative initiative, making a substantial portion of these collections—over a million digitized pages—accessible to a worldwide audience, thereby overcoming many of the political and geographical barriers that have historically constrained Kurdish studies (Section III). Furthermore, the Institute does not function as a passive repository; it actively utilizes its archival resources for robust scholarly publishing through its journals *Kurmancî* and *Études Kurdes*, an extensive book production program, and a vibrant, multifaceted array of cultural programming, establishing it as a dynamic and influential center for Kurdish studies and cultural life in the diaspora (Section IV).

B. Role in Kurdish Studies and Heritage Preservation

The archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris play a critical and multifaceted role in the advancement of Kurdish studies and the vital task of heritage preservation. They are a cornerstone in the "archival turn" within Kurdish studies, providing researchers with access to a wealth of primary source materials that enable the construction of new historical narratives, deeper sociological understanding, and more nuanced cultural analyses.⁹ For the Kurdish people, a stateless nation whose culture and history have frequently faced marginalization, suppression, or outright attempts at erasure in various parts of their ancestral homeland, the Institute's archives serve as an essential repository of collective memory and a crucial bulwark against cultural loss. As articulated by its president, Kendal Nezan, one of the Institute's aims was to "give the Kurdish people a glimmer of hope and become a symbol of Kurdish moral unity"²⁶—a role its archives profoundly fulfill. The collections facilitate not only research into the history, languages, and cultures of the various regions of historical Kurdistan but also offer invaluable resources for studying the experiences, adaptations, and evolving identities of the global Kurdish diaspora.

C. Challenges and Future Outlook

Despite its immense cultural and scholarly importance, the Kurdish Institute of Paris has faced significant existential challenges. There have been periods where it was at risk of disappearing or being forced to relocate due to the disengagement of public funding authorities.¹ Public appeals and campaigns, such as "Sauvons l'Institut Kurde de Paris!" (Save the Kurdish Institute of Paris!)², highlight these ongoing vulnerabilities. This precarious operational stability, juxtaposed with the profound cultural value of its archives, is a common plight for many independent cultural heritage institutions, particularly those dedicated to preserving and promoting the heritage of minority or stateless communities. Continued and

consistent financial and institutional support is therefore absolutely crucial for the long-term maintenance, preservation, and development of these invaluable archives. This includes resources for ongoing digitization efforts, the conservation of fragile original materials, and the capacity to continue its scholarly and cultural programming.

D. Final Assessment

The Archives of the Kurdish Institute of Paris are far more than a mere collection of documents and artifacts. They represent a powerful testament to Kurdish resilience and cultural vitality, a dynamic hub for intellectual inquiry and artistic expression, and an indispensable resource for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the Kurdish people, their history, and their enduring legacy. The Institute, through its comprehensive archives and diverse activities, effectively functions as a de facto non-state "national" library and archive for the Kurdish people. It performs many of the core functions that a state-sponsored national library or archive would undertake—systematic collection, long-term preservation, global dissemination of knowledge, support for research and scholarship, and extensive cultural programming. However, it achieves this without the backing of a sovereign state, relying instead on its status as a public utility foundation, grants from various bodies, and the support of the international community and the Kurdish diaspora. This unique position has allowed it to amass collections of unparalleled comprehensiveness for pan-Kurdish studies. In essence, the Kurdish Institute of Paris and its archives serve as a vital cultural embassy on the international stage, meticulously preserving a rich and often fragmented heritage while actively fostering a sense of collective identity and promoting Kurdish culture to the world.

VIII. Works Cited

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