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**International Council of Archives (ICA)**

**POSITION PAPER**



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ARCHIVES

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## The International Council on Archives and the World Summit on the Information Society: Position Paper for the WSIS Preparatory Committee 3

Archives and records provide the evidence of human activity and guarantee the preservation of and ongoing accessibility to authentic and reliable information. It is therefore imperative that archives and records, along with other information formats, systems and services, remain part of the WSIS Final Declaration and Action Plan 2003 and that they be integrated into the final documents of the Tunis phase as key elements in the construction of an inclusive, fair and open Information Society.

Records and archives are crucial for the implementation of Good Governance and of the Global Compact, and they are a tool for development – good management of records and archives is the condition for the continuity, efficiency and transparency of public (and private) services and their accountability to stake- and share-holders.

Archives and records enable democracy to be effectively implemented and maintained; they underpin individual and collective rights (evidence of identity, property etc.); they underpin the right to information (Freedom of Information) and the right to truth, justice and reparation (evidence of human rights violations, etc.).

Archives and records are the sources for the identity of individuals, families, villages, communities, businesses and societies.

Archives and records enable people to comprehend and explain the present and to understand and write their histories. They are valuable sources for diverse economic and cultural activities (TV, radio, press, books, films, exhibitions, etc.).

These unique sources are preserved with information documenting their creation, thus allowing a critical approach to the authenticity and accuracy of the knowledge they contain.

Archives and records professionals are experienced keepers and providers of information and are thus key players in an Information Society; they ensure sustainable information and data management, which is particularly important in this digital era; and they protect the privacy of individuals against the misuse of personal data contained in archives and records.

## **Recommendations**

After the Geneva and Tunis summits, it will be a high priority to create technical solutions for problems such as technological obsolescence in order to ensure the longterm survival of informational contents for future generations.

New forms of cooperation and communication must be found. Shared access to technology is critical, as is on-line and traditional training for information professionals, in order to close the digital divide worldwide and within specific regions and countries.

Everyone must be able to have access to archival materials wherever they are because, in this interdependent world, the content of national or even local archives may be of considerable importance elsewhere. For all the above reasons, the International Council on Archives asks the participants in the WSIS to ensure that:

- archives and records are acknowledged as one of the essential elements of an inclusive and open Information Society;
- archives and records professionals are acknowledged as impartial mediators of information between the past, the present and the future, as well as between countries;
- the authorities recognize their responsibility for providing the means and conditions enabling national archives institutions to preserve their historical holdings and accommodate new and digitally created records.