

# **A NEW CHALLENGE FOR ARCHIVES - CASE STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS IN KOREA USING ARCHIVES -**

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## **1. Introduction**

It has been sometime that archival reference services began to evolve into more user-centered archival information services from being more focused on the preservation of the records concerned. The National Archives of Korea (NAK), for its part, contented itself with providing only lists of the records sealed or unsealed on its collection until the late 1990s or so, and welcomed only few users who were interested in those records in the first place enough to seek out the NAK on their own. However, as the Korean government enacted the Public Records Management Act in 2000 and began to require a widening range of services for more diverse users, the NAK was also compelled to adopt a new role as a service organization.

In 2006, the NAK launched a new organization in charge of developing user-centered contents and services. The new organization thus began to make available to the public a broad array of records kept at the NAK, including land registries, architectural drawings of buildings built in the Japanese colonial era, written court orders concerning Korea's independence activists, records of the Japanese Government-General of Korea, the list of Koreans detained by the colonial forces, and the like. The new organization also began to develop new service contents specific to given current or policy issues. The new contents nonetheless failed to stimulate the public's interest, as they introduce merely records as it is. Until then, it was believed that the analyzing and evaluating contents of records were the purview of either historians or writers, and not archivists. Archivists, however, soon began to realize that the traditional perception of their role and archives had to change in order for records to create new values for users.

## **2. Existing awareness on archives, new demand**

Freeman once pointed out:

Archivists think that the pool of users of their services is limited to academic researchers or elite members of a bureaucratic organization. They think that these users are well conversed in the records they are accessing and clearly aware of what archivists do, and also believe that these users well understand how archives are run. Archivists thus think that users are ready to go out of their ways to access and use the records they need. All this is, however, archivists' guesswork only....A typical user neither is well conversed in records nor well understands archives (Freeman, 1983, p. 113-114).

As Freeman's description indicates, archivists firmly believe that they are "ones who arrange records, and users have to come to them to see and use those records" (O'Toole, 1997, p.103-116). In other words, archivists think that their main role is to furnish users with well-preserved records by reviving the original contexts in which those records were created as faithfully as possible, while leaving it all up to users to decide whether they understand the contents and values of the records

they see. A fellow archivist has once commented to me: "Our mission is not to explain historical facts. Our mission is to preserve and introduce records in our charge as best as we can so that users themselves can read our records and develop their own views of history." In commenting thus, the archivist was implicitly warning the view that archivists should re-write the contents of records, as should historians and creative writers.

Users, however, complain that records as presented by archivists are often too difficult and cumbersome to read. An elementary school teacher I know once advised me: "Archives are in dire need of change; they need to outgrow the passive mode of presenting records as they exist and waiting for users to discover those records. Instead, they need to become more proactive in targeting and attracting users of their records and services." Although archives have been developing new contents to increase the public's interest in their records, these contents have sadly failed to satisfy users' wants and needs so far. What do users today want from archival information? This is the question that archivists should be asking as they leave the closed and dusty repository and overcome their old paradigm on archival services.

### **3. Case study on the development of educational videos in Korea using archives**

#### 3-1 Framing the problem

The existing archival online contents to the public until now can be roughly divided into two types. One is the type of records, such as pictures and drawings, that are included into texts in their fragmentary forms. In this case, the texts serve the main function, while the records play only secondary and ancillary roles to the texts. The second type involves presenting records first, and attaching written descriptions or explanations later. Archivists tend to prefer this latter type, as it highlights records. Yet it strikes many users as unbearably boring and difficult to comprehend. Records presented in this manner tell only fragments of the whole events that took place, and fail to users feel realism. Moreover, both types of records fail to form a natural whole with the accompanying texts both visually and content-wise. Archivists, however, are too often victims of their own obsessive compulsion that these certain types of formatting and presentation must be kept.

As a matter of fact, however, this insistence on the old formats of records is precisely behind the widening distance between users and archives. According to a poll on teachers' and students' use of online contents from the Presidential Archives of Korea in 2012, users found the records impossible to use in learning because of the difficulty of their contents and vocabularies. The absence of contents directly or clearly relevant to the given curriculum was another major problem, along with the near impossibility of using the provided records without guidelines and explanations. Most importantly, users answered that the records currently available were not capable of holding students' interest. Some also pointed out the dearth of diverse visual records like photographs and video recordings, as well as the lack of detailed descriptions.

The poll, in other words, revealed that the new online contents that the NAK developed, with the hopes for supporting learning in classrooms, were little used in schools in reality. That was mainly because the records were presented in forms not suited to classroom learning, carried contents often far too difficult to understand, and were also inaccessible in themselves. Furthermore, it was impossible to explain an entire historical event effectively with only a few fragmentary records. Either the core records necessary to reconstruct a given event were hidden from the public view, or

the necessary records were scattered among multiple sources, making it nearly impossible for users to arrange them in a proper order. Historical records themselves are more products of their creators' intents than unbiased reflections of the truth. There is therefore always the possibility of disparity between records and what actually happened. Moreover records tend to strike readers as dry and much less dramatic than creative writings, and thus fail to convey the true significance of dynamic historical events and facts. Records are also often tied to the forms or the media in which they were originally created, and may not be viewable to the modern-day users without special technology or devices.

The NAK tried its hand with developing educational contents in the past. In 2007, the NAK attempted to develop a supplementary textbook using records so that it can be actually used to teach students in middle schools. The archivists thus analyzed the given curriculum at the time, identified important topics and themes, and sought to design a textbook that catered to students' interest, curiosity, and aptitude. The archivists decided on specific topics to tie all the chosen records together, and designed the textbook so that it engaged students in in-depth analysis of each single given record. Archivists would have been quite satisfied with this textbook, but it found no use in actual school settings.

The first and foremost reason was that the textbook did not tie into any of the things actually being taught in classrooms. Although the archivists selected topics and themes based on their analysis of the given curriculum, the textbook did not closely reflect the flow of learning in classrooms. Second, the content was too difficult for understanding. The content was structured and written in a language comprehensible to modern history majors. The fixed focus on records led to in-depth, but ultimately very difficult, analyses. Each record was given an analysis of its source, structure, context, content, and related historical events and figures, as well as translations of Chinese characters used, main learning topics related to the record, main questions to ask, and a description of how the record is relevant to the curriculum and what other supplementary materials and sources may be used. The textbook, in other words, concentrated on providing detailed knowledge and not digestible knowledge for target students. Third, there was an issue with the format. The book form struck students as rather dull and flat, and failed to pique their interest and curiosity.

Thanks to the Internet, information seekers today obtain most of the information they need from online sources and not paper books. The learning environment in Korea has evolved accordingly, with almost every class incorporating the use of various multimedia sources and devices. Beginning in 2015, digital textbooks will replace paper ones. Students today expect their learning experience to be multidimensional. Videos therefore may be better suited to enhance learning effects than books.

### 3-2 Process of developing educational videos

In 2014, the NAK made a new attempt to overcome the shortcomings and defects of the existing contents and services it provided. The first and most pressing issue was that users don't read or utilize records in the NAK. Teachers continue to emphasize that, in order for archival documents to be used in classrooms, they must be relevant to what is being taught in classrooms. They point out that archives need to develop new learning contents that students can actually apply to learn and solve problems. Second, new contents and services need to outgrow the record format. Archivists until now have refused to see records as pieces of information, and thus insisted on treating the content, format, and structure of a given record as an inseparable whole. This view of records appears to originate from archivists' obsession for preserving records. The insistence on the old

habit, however, has prevented the use and spread of records into fields other than archival studies, such as education and culture at large. It is therefore crucial that records be made available in formats preferred by users. Third, archivists also tend to flood users with excessive amounts of information without careful consideration of users' ability to understand and process it. This, in turn, discourages users from exploring the records further. The NAK therefore embarked on its new project with the goal of producing contents in a more accessible format so that they can be actually applied to classroom learning. The focus this time was on enabling students to understand their learning materials better, rather than on introducing as many records as possible.

The new project thus involved extracting the contents of records from their original formats, in either part or entirety, so as to enable students to engage in the contents as if they were experiencing the featured historical events themselves. Records representative of historical facts and events were chosen and excerpted, and mixed with narrations and other audiovisual effects to form educational videos. In other words, records were used to produce new records. Relevant records were brought together and important contents were highlighted so that users can grasp the historical facts in question with greater ease. Motions, background music, and narrated and written explanations were added to records to stimulate not only students' sight, but also their hearing and emotional responses.

Moreover, the NAK made the unprecedented move of recruiting outside experts to make the result more collaborative and effective. The NAK's archivists, teachers, and a video developer worked together as a result. Archivists searched and retrieved records relevant to given themes. Teachers analyzed the curriculum to identify themes, and wrote scripts by tying the themes and records together. The video developer then edited and processed the records according to the teachers' scripts and produced educational videos.

The video development team first identified themes and topics based on an analysis of the modern history curriculum for elementary schools as well as the amount of learning performed in each class. The resulting themes were the major turning points in Korea's modern history, including the establishment of the republican government, the Korean War, the April 19 Revolution, the May 18 Democratization Movement, the Economic Development Plans, and the foreign exchange crisis called IMF. The teachers defined the scope of information to be included in the video by taking into account the ability of fifth and sixth graders to understand and process historical information. After writing scripts based on these considerations, the teachers wrote storyboards incorporating related records. Each video required 20 to 30 archival documents, including documents, photographs, and video and voice recordings. The most effective records were included in the videos. For instance, to explain the defeat of Japan in World War II, the video replayed the voice recording of the Japanese Emperor declaring capitulation on radio. Korea's liberation from Japan involved the replaying of the Liberation Day song and lyrics. The escalating ideological conflict during the period leading up to the Korean War was explained with a video recording from 1945, featuring such key figures as Kim Gu, Rhee Syngman, Yeo Un-hyeong, and officials of the U.S. Military Government in Korea. The establishment of the republican government was accentuated with an image of the original text of the Korean Constitution and a photograph of the ceremony celebrating the establishment of the government. Symbols and explanations were thus mixed in ways to engage students' interest and curiosity. Considering students' attention span, every video was made to run five minutes or less.

In this process, archivists extracted contents from analyzing relevant records, and finding the informations that the teachers and the video developer required. In the past, archivists focused on grouping relevant records in the light of the original contexts in which they were created. For

instance, as for policymaking, archivists kept records on the proposal, execution, and outcomes of a policy in an attempt to provide a complete range of records relating to the background of that policy. Such groups of records may be indispensable to professional researchers. In order for records to become part of culture at large, however, a few leading records must be selected and presented in ways that allow the public to reconstruct the featured historical event or fact with ease. The new NAK project required archivists to extract relevant information from each single record, and reconstruct the related event or fact from an objective perspective. Archivists were thus required to outgrow the familiar ways of arranging and describing records, and instead to attempt at deeper analyses of records as well as effective organization of scattered and fragmented information.

#### **4. Application of the educational videos**

Teachers express distress that modern history is a particularly difficult subject both to teach and learn in classrooms. Nevertheless, the public awareness of the importance of historical education is on rise, and the NAK sought to facilitate this important endeavor by producing educational videos using archives.

Once the videos were completed, the NAK tested them in actual classroom settings at three elementary schools and conducted users' satisfaction survey. Teachers concluded that the videos provided substantial help with preparing for classes, and also effectively enabled students to understand key facts of Korea's modern history. As these videos allow students to grasp the flow of related historical events at once, teachers agreed that the videos can be played at both the start and the end of each class. Students also felt that as if they actually met historical figures or relived historical events, such as the Korean War, that they learned about only from textbooks until now, and answered that they were willing to watch the videos repeatedly. The NAK also used these videos in programs for students on field trip to the NAK. The video on the establishment of the Korean government, played to audiences of elementary and middle school students, proved effective in holding their focus and interest. With these videos, archives helped students to get their historical facts straight and even take greater interest in history.

The videos, moreover, dissolved the barriers of boredom and difficulty that lay between users and archives by allowing users to experience history with vividness. The project revealed that, in order for the public to make active and significant use of records, the records should be presented in new and interesting formats, with archivists making active judgments as to which records would most effectively help users to understand historical facts properly.

#### **5. Significance of the project and future comments**

Critics claim that it was not proper of the NAK to edit, appraisal, and selectively provide historical records, instead of allowing users to interpret records on their own from multiple perspectives. In order to ensure active use of records in culture and creative industries, however, archives will necessarily have to change the ways and manners in which they have provided records until now. In order to achieve such change, archivists need to analyze and appraise actively contents of archival documents, deciding which records would produce new values.

The National Institute of Korean History(NIKH) has recently announced that it has completed its analysis of *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, and found materials that can be turned into new cultural and industrial products. Some of these materials have been transformed into TV drama

series and aired to wide popularity. Until recently, *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* was an almost exclusive property of historians. With the efforts of the NIKH and other institutions, however, more and more historical records are being used to create new values and products. In order for archival documents to maintain their relevance and competitiveness in the information-oriented society, archivists need to make active efforts to informationize them. Archivists' role in the future is no longer exclusively in determining whether to extend the life spans of archives. Rather, archivists will be increasingly required to make judgment as to how valuable and usable archival documents are as key pieces of information for modern society.

The NAK's educational video project revealed the shortcomings and unsuitability, in the interest of cultural industries, of the traditional way of arranging records that archivists have used so far. Records tend to be fragmentary and scattered across multiple sources, and it is particularly difficult to find a core illuminating record. Gathering all seemingly relevant records together and presenting them to users, in the hopes that users themselves will find the core illuminating records, is a very passive form of archival service. Users want maximum information in minimum time possible. Archivists need to re-organize the helpful records users want among heaps of records. Archivists' service is crucial to ensuring and maximizing the value of archival documents among different types and sources of information. It is also crucial that the selected records be submitted to objective review by experts so that they will not be manipulated or arbitrarily reconstructed.

The formats of presenting records should also be updated. Presenting one record after another, without any effective editing and interventions, fails to tell a significant story. It is important to add depth to records with other elements, such as music and visual effects. Archivists need to outgrow their narrow definition of archives, and find ways to ensure how these records can coexist with and benefit today's evolving culture, society, and technology.

The NAK project on developing educational videos is one among many factors that prompt the paradigm shift on the roles and functions of archival services. As the progress of informatization accelerates, we wonder why archives exist at all, what roles archivists should play, and how records keeping and management should evolve in the future. The recent project tells us that archives and archivists can find their place in modern society only when they become active organizers of records and their contents, helping the public realize the specific meanings and values of these records.

The project, furthermore, attests to the effect of videos based on records. The reconstruction of records in a format or a medium other than the one in which it was originally created helps to clarify the content and significance of those records. The NAK project therefore bears important implications for the re-formatting of records, not only in video forms, but also in other forms or media. The project also affirms the strategic importance of collaboration with experts in fields other than archival studies. Collaborations between archivists and outside experts will help extend the scope of archival services into various sectors of society and culture. More discussions are thus needed on how to form and sustain collaborations between archives and other fields of society and culture over and beyond certain occasions and projects.

## References

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