

APPENDIX B
THE FIRST DEBATE:
ARCHIVISTS VERSUS ADMINISTRATORS

Nearly every unit of a university or government would like to do more than it has money for. As a result, almost every unit regularly asks the higher administrators in the establishment for more money, with the administrators almost always having to deny them some or all of what they ask for. Archives have rarely been at the top of an administrator's list of the most important things to fund.

To clarify the issue of fundraising, and to begin to focus on how archives might obtain better financing, we asked the participants to divide themselves into two groups—'archivists' and 'administrators'—for a role-playing debate. In this debate the archivists were supposed to ask the administrators for a 10% increase in their budgets and the administrators were supposed to justify why they were going to cut the archives budgets. They were given about 30 minutes to prepare their arguments. The archivists sat out on the grass, the administrators in the comfort of the meeting room (we wanted them to get into their roles). After the first round (the requests and the reasons for denial), the teams regrouped and then returned to answer the earlier arguments that were made against them.

Since everyone who works in an archives will at one time or another experience this kind of meeting, we include some verbatim pieces from the debate. Readers may find one side or another clever, instructive or silly—but they may also find some useful ideas amidst the humour and invective.

Parties to the Debate

Archivists represented by: Grace Koch, Dietrich Schuller, Endo Suanda, Maxwell Addo, Marialita Yraola, Valmont Layne, To Ngoc Thanh.

Administrators represented by: Gert Wegner, Larry Witzleben, Olavo Alen Rodrigues, Don Niles, S.C. Biswas, Ali al-Daw.

Arbitrators: Anthony Seeger, Shubha Chaudhuri.

Argument: The Archivists Address the Administrators

Gert (*an administrator*): Gentlemen, the Prime Minister told me to approach you because your archives has sent him a petition—he was concerned about our limited attention to your archives.

Grace: We thank you very much for making time and to be with us and talk about this. We wanted to speak to you about increasing our budget particularly for staff salaries and for our facilities.

Dietrich: Audiovisual documents are of ever-increasing importance for a number of cultural studies, intellectual life and cultural documentation. In our country, the orally-transmitted cultures can only be adequately documented using audiovisual materials.

In addition to preserving our cultural heritage, we also face problems preserving our current digital records. Our world is getting more and more electronic as you all know. The daily administration and the governments on local, regional and federal levels are increasingly part of the electronic world. These electronic documents are very volatile, as you may know, Mr Administrator. As it happens, the technical preservation and safeguarding for audiovisual and electronic documents are very similar. Your government needs proper knowledge of the information sources of today and these are audiovisual and electronic documents.

Now comes something technical: audiovisual and digital media are not as secure as paper. They do not last nearly as long. Most recordings are slowly deteriorating and it is also generally true that the more modern our media are, the more vulnerable they are. In the environment of hot and humid countries, which are extremely rich in orally-transmitted cultures, the climatic conditions accelerate the deterioration of such documents.

In order to face these problems and preserve the cultural heritage of our country we must have more funds, more trained specialists and more room to expand our collections.

Gert: As we are all aware, the national cultural and ethnic revival in our country is a depressing political issue and the Prime Minister assured me that he wants to make this a major topic during his election campaign. So I will need your support.

Grace: We appreciate your support, of course. We have been able to do a very good job in the past. However, things are changing. We do need to increase our budget and it is very important for us all to pull together to improve our archives.

Argument: The Administrators Address the Archivists

Larry: We thank you for your presentation and we agree with the Prime Minister that you have done very important work, which is why we have been funding you for so long. However, we do have priorities, and our priorities are things like building roads and hospitals which, I am sure you will all agree, are much more essential to the nation's future and present than things like music. Within the collections, we wonder how much is enough because you have been collecting these things for years and years and the last CD you made only sold 50 copies whereas we spent \$10,000 to produce it.

We also find that so much of your request is for staff salaries and we believe that anyone can run a tape recorder and type labels and turn on and off air conditioners—so why do we need the people with PhDs?

You mentioned the importance of our media. Our national radio station is doing an excellent job of presenting our country's culture so our recommendation is that the archives' holdings should perhaps be taken over by the national radio station. One other point, I believe we feel that this emphasis on preservation is giving a somewhat backward image of the nation overseas. And we would much rather spend the money on our national song and dance troupe who will present a modern forward-looking presentation of the musical culture.

Olavo: Last time we visited you, we didn't find the documents we were looking for. They really were very important documents. It was quite shameful.

Don Niles: Wouldn't you say it would be better to use limited funds given to us to promote the living traditions as my colleague mentioned—an international dance troupe to enable these traditions to continue. Why must we continue pouring money into this archives which you have? It seems to me, frankly, that you are wasting some of the scarce funds we give you to just make multiple copies. Why aren't you happy with just one copy? Why do you need multiple copies of the same thing?

Biswas: Look at the colossal national archives of printed material. How much is actually being used? Why do you want to have a separate archives only for the audiovisual medium?

You yourself have mentioned that things are changing so fast in electronics and technology that whatever you produce today will again be out of date. Why not have everything at the national centre which already exists? It would be much easier to give funds to one place and develop and collect everything over there.

Don: I understand you were invited to international meetings recently. I think in December there was a meeting in Delhi. You came back and gloriously told me about the wonderful progress made by institutions like the Smithsonian and their publications and about the Ford Foundation pouring tremendous amounts of money into various archives. What are you doing? Why don't you bring in these kinds of funds? Why aren't you generating some money?

Biswas: There is one example in Delhi—an archives called the ARCE which does not receive government money at all. But they are running one of the best institutions there is with funds from other sources. So this is one example in a developing country. Try and find some other sources instead of us. Because we do not have a lot of funds and are trying to use what little we have for socioeconomic development.

Ali: So look, you've been trying to design your programme to support you own career, collecting music and giving nothing to the performers. Better to support the radio station or TV because there one can find money and prestige and such things.

Larry: If I have noted this correctly, to continue the activity of the archives you need proper management and actually, we agree with

that. We suggest that someone from our civil services should be appointed to oversee the administration, staff promotion and other activities so that you have real professionals.

Don: I think the previous head of the department of Agriculture would be the right choice.

[**Anthony:** Any more arguments?

Olavo: Isn't this enough?!

The Responses

Archivists Defend Themselves

Grace: We have been thinking about what you said to us and we appreciate that you commented on what we've said. You challenged us of course. You have mentioned roads and hospitals and their importance to our country. We must say to you that all these are part of our national and cultural heritage—roads, hospitals, our cultural background, our cultural traditions. These are every bit a part of our identity, as much as the buildings or anything else that you are doing. I really think you have to think about this.

You talk about marketing and the fact that we haven't really sold our CDs. Well, we really didn't have enough money from you so that we could afford a proper marketing person who could come and help us. We have somebody in mind who has done a very good job of marketing whatever we have produced, and could help us accomplish more.

Dietrich: You have been talking about the radio and TV archives and suggesting that we give them our collections. You have also been talking about a cultural renaissance in our countries and a reconsideration of cultural and indigenous values. It would not be a good idea to hand over these archives to the radio or TV station which in the past have been channels for international industrial entertainment. Also, looking at Europe, as radio and TV stations become more and more privatized they need to generate revenues from their operations. They will not necessarily support the archiving or the safeguarding of national cultural heritage unless it is profitable. In many countries, radio and TV archives are handing over their own materials to well

organised national archives like ours—not the other way around as you suggest.

Gert: I had another cozy talk with the PM and he said there will be transfer of some administrator in the near future.

Endo: You asked about the number of people using our archives. I think one point about the archives is that we cannot only think about today, we have to think about the future. Today, if we want to know the music of 150 years ago, there is no way to find out. With the help of these archives, 150 years from now people will be able to gain access to the material because we preserved it in archives. That is what we should keep in mind. Without an investment today, there will be no documents to consult in the future

Regarding our CD production, right now it is true that that it is very hard to find the market and people who are interested in these things. But with more and more international interest in our culture, we cannot just think about only sales income. Think about other aspects of our society—for example tourism. Don't we receive hard currency from tourism? What are tourists interested in about our country? It is our culture! In other words, our cultural programmes will support the other sectors of our country's businesses. Archives are important part of the future of our country. They should not have to be self-supporting.

Addo: There has been a steady increase in revenues from the tourism, a 600% increase has been reported. More than 40% of the increase in tourists is because of our archives. We have records of the research and development department to support this point.

Marialita: You want to support the national troupe that is going around. But may we remind you that these troupes present performances based on materials that are in our archives? You wouldn't want them to present an identity that is different or even non-existent in our culture would you? So we think that basic research which archives do and also preserve, deserve your support.

Val: In comparison with hospitals and roads, I think cultural archives are also important for society. I don't think it is a question of choosing between roads and hospitals versus culture and archives. I

think it may be more productive to see them as things that are inter-related to one another, part of a coherent whole. I think in the same way that roads and hospitals provide infrastructure for society to function properly and the economy to move more efficiently, in the same way cultural institutions like archives are a form of infrastructure for culture to find its proper expression. If it could be seen this way it would be beneficial to society in very real ways. So I would move away from the notion that one has to choose between one and the other. I think they are very much part of a whole and we should see them that way.

Tho: Vanishing culture cannot be collected afterwards. In Vietnam we have 54 ethnic minorities. We need to collect the remaining broken elements and restructure our culture and without the archives it cannot be done. We need archives as we cannot restore everything at once. We need the archives as a centre for study, as a centre for reference. Our cities are rapidly changing with urbanization, globalization. We need archives so that Western scholars can study our culture.

A Note to the Reader of this Debate

Imagine what you would say here to reply to the criticisms of the administrators, and support the activities and functions of your own organization.

The Administrators Reply

Biswas: The whole information revolution, the transfer and transmission information has become rapid and globalised because of the Internet. Do you really think that we need individually small units and pockets rather than have one centre, and you have access to it? Technically, I think it is quite reasonable. Whether it is the Smithsonian or it is the ARCE it doesn't matter, as long as you have access to those materials and one copy is retained somewhere. That is enough.

The other thing is to look for funds, but they are limited. Ours is a developing country and we have very limited funds. You have our sympathy, we wanted to help but our resources are so limited. I have heard that in Indonesia an association formed by archivists and artists

has started working together, and have found their own resources. Why don't you give a thought along those lines too?

Olavo: In many Caribbean countries there are no musical archives. But if you go to the beach you see people playing music and they are very happy. [Being unanswerable due to hilarity all around the table, this statement virtually ended the debate.]

Observation by Anthony Seeger, Arbitrator

I think both sides presented excellent arguments—some of them very familiar to the rest of us. Here are six things I think the archivists didn't use that might have been helpful.

Archives could appeal to UNESCO guidelines. There is a document, signed by many countries, called the '1989 Recommendations on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore' that goes into archiving in some detail. Your countries may have signed this or other international conventions that might be appealed to as well.

Archives at universities could argue about their importance to academic programmes such as Ethnomusicology, Folklore and Anthropology. You might, for example, argue that most of the best ethnomusicology programmes in the USA have associated archives, among them UCLA, Seattle, Illinois, Indiana and Harvard. Or cite the Chinese University of Hong Kong, The University of Ghana, the University of Khartoum, the University of the Philippines and the Catholic University of Peru (all present here) for International examples.

Archives as a community service of the University. Universities often have as part of their missions some form of outreach service to the general population. Archives are one way for administrators to demonstrate that they are serving the general public by helping people preserve their culture and retrieve it.

Archives could point to the loss of national cultural heritage and the increasing hegemony of mass media on the national arts. If that is important in your country, supporting archives might be a justifiable expense.

I recommend going to other units within your organization in

order to obtain support from them before you visit the administrator. A lot of your arguments talked about archives as isolated units having no relationship to other institutional or national endeavours. I have already mentioned ethnomusicology programmes but you could also turn to composers, acousticians, recording technology programmes, oral history programmes. Outside of universities you might go to the Ministry of Sports (had you thought of collecting songs of sports?), Ministry of Transportation (remember the train songs and oral histories) and so forth. While this workshop is about archives, the survival of a particular archives often depends on its ability to create supportive alliances.

In the archivists' arguments it became clear how important information about the use of your archives can be. It is very important to keep the statistics on use: who is using the archives and how many people are using the archives. You might keep guest books and save thank you letters. You can answer the question from the administrator whose friend couldn't find what he wanted if you can say, 'I am sorry about your friend, but we had 1,200 other users who found what they were looking for—and here is a file of 150 thank you letters that specifically mention how organized our archives is.' Statistics on use are very important—the question comes up over and over again. You can't afford to let people pick up single examples and not be able to answer them with some kind of data. Of course you want to pick your moment and context; millions of people use roads every day and only a few use archives.

Resolution

It became clear in the debate that archives need to do a better job of educating both administrators and the general public about what they do. They need to forge better relationships with other parts of their institutions, with communities whose materials they hold and with other archives in their countries and around the world. In an era of high-speed communications, there is less excuse to be a lost unit in a larger organization.