

# Focusing on Evidence not Information: the Grand Convergence between Archives and Policymaking in the Knowledge Society

*TRIANTAFILLIA KOURTOUMI, Ph.D.*

Sr Archivist- Historian, The General State Archives of Greece, The Historical Archives of Macedonia  
e-mail: frini95@yahoo.gr

Focusing on Evidence not Information: the Grand Convergence between Archives and Policymaking in the Knowledge Society

## *ABSTRACT*

In the knowledge society supporting the archival paradigm for the benefit of policymaking involves effective dissemination of evidence to where it is most needed and the development of efficient functions of providing wide access to archival information and knowledge. The pathway to evidence-informed policy requires that archivists and policymakers remain hermeneutic consistent with the sorts of research methodologies and context sensitive about the types of evidence best suited to different circumstances. A first key step towards achieving this objective is to ensure that both policymakers and archivists have a shared understanding of what archival evidence is and of the role of research evidence in helping to inform policy decisions. In the trajectory to put archives into policymaking the paper proposes a portfolio of methods and tools to effectively advance evidence-informed policy, thereby offering to policymaking and society the possibilities for adding texture and accurate meaning to information found in evidence.

**Key words:** knowledge society, archives, policymaking, evidence

Concentrarsi sulle prove e non sulle informazioni: la grande convergenza tra archivi e politica nella società della conoscenza

## *SINTESI*

Nella società della conoscenza sostenere il paradigma archivistico per il beneficio della politica comporta un'effettiva diffusione delle prove là dove è più necessario, e lo sviluppo di efficienti funzioni per fornire un ampio accesso alle informazioni ed alla conoscenza archivistica. Il percorso per una politica informata richiede che archivisti e responsabili politici restino coerenti con i tipi di metodologie di ricerca e sensibili ai tipi di prove più adatta alle diverse circostanze del contesto. Un primo passo fondamentale verso il raggiungimento di questo obiettivo è garantire che sia i responsabili politici e che gli archivisti abbiano una comprensione condivisa di quale sia l'evidenza archivistica e del ruolo delle evidenze della ricerca nel contribuire a informare le decisioni politiche. Nell'ottica di effettuare una politica attuativa per gli archivi il presente articolo propone una serie di metodi e strumenti per promuovere efficacemente una politica informata, offrendo così alla politica ed alla società la possibilità di aggiungere consistenza e significato preciso alle informazioni in evidenza.

**Parole chiave:** società dell'informazione, archivi, politiche attuative, evidenza

Osredotočanje na dokaze ne na informacije: veliko zblíževanje med arhivi in politiko v družbi znanja

## *IZVLEČEK*

Družba znanja podpira arhivsko paradigmo v korist oblikovanja politike in vključuje učinkovito razširjanje dokazov tja, kjer je to najbolj potrebno ter razvoj učinkovitih funkcij, ki zagotavljajo širok dostop do arhivskih informacij in znanja. Pot do politike, ki temelji na dokazih zahteva, da arhivisti in oblikovalci politike še naprej ostajajo hermenevtično skladni z vrstami raziskovalnih metodologij in občutljivi na kontekst o vrstah dokazov, ki najbolj ustrezajo različnim okoliščinam. Prvi ključni korak k uresničitvi tega cilja je zagotoviti, da tako oblikovalci politike kot tudi arhivisti razumejo, kaj so arhivski dokazi in vlogo raziskovanja dokazov kot pomoč za oblikovanje političnih odločitev. V želji, da se arhivi vključijo v oblikovanje politike, avtor v prispevku pre-

dlaga predlaga nabor metod in orodij za učinkovit informiranje politike, kar bi omogočilo politiki in družbi možnosti dodajanje natančnega pomena informacij, ki jih vsebuje arhivsko gradivo

**Ključne besede:** družba znanja, arhivi, politika, dokazi.

Εστιάζοντας στην απόδειξη όχι στην πληροφορία: Η μεγάλη σύγκλιση αρχείων και στρατηγικού πολιτικού σχεδιασμού στην κοινωνία της γνώσης

### ΣΥΝΟΨΗ

Στην κοινωνία της γνώσης η συμβολή της αρχειακής παρουσίας στο στρατηγικό πολιτικό σχεδιασμό προϋποθέτει την αποτελεσματική διάχυση της αποδεικτικής δύναμης των αρχείων σε έγκαιρο χρόνο και την παράλληλη ανάπτυξη των κατάλληλων λειτουργιών ώστε η αρχειακή γνώση να είναι διαθέσιμη σε ανοικτή πρόσβαση. Η διαμόρφωση πολιτικών επιλογών, που υποστηρίζεται από τη γνωσιολογική δύναμη των αρχείων, απαιτεί από τους αρχειονόμους και τους υπεύθυνους εγχάραξης πολιτικής ένα ελάχιστο σημασιολογικής εμβάθυνσης στην ενυπάρχουσα γνώση των αρχείων και ευαισθητοποίησης ως προς το περιεχόμενο των αρχειακών τεκμηρίων. Ένα πρώτο μεγάλο βήμα για την επίτευξη του στόχου είναι η κατανόηση της ιδιαίτερης φύσης του αρχειακού τεκμηρίου και η αναγνώριση της σημαίνουσας συμβολής του στη λήψη πολιτικών αποφάσεων. Στην τροχιά ένθεσης των αρχείων στη διαμόρφωση πολιτικής το άρθρο προτείνει μια ατζέντα μεθόδων και εργαλείων για την ενίσχυση της διαδικασίας που αξιοποιεί τα αρχειακά τεκμήρια, δημιουργώντας για την πολιτική και την κοινωνία τις προϋποθέσεις πρόσδοσης περιεχομένου και έγκυρου νοήματος στην αποδεικτική γνώση.

## 1 Introduction

Rapid development and widespread implementation of networked digital information technology has presented a knowledge-based economy that offers a broad information base, creating a major challenge for archival documentation to contextualizing evidence for policymaking. Encoded archival description (EAD) and standard generalized mark-up language (SGML), document type definition and open access (OA) policies, social networks and services help disseminate archival descriptive information on the Syntactic Web, mapp onto other kinds of metadata in digital information resources on the Semantic Web and turn existing information into personally relevant information on the Pragmatic Web. In this knowledge economy the attention is focused on the archival evidence-based micro data, examining issues in survey design, questionnaire content, data quality, and dissemination policy that are important from the perspective of policymaking. The quest for the interest of policymakers in the potential of archival evidence-gathering techniques for basic and applied archival documentation, as well as policy uses, is crucial.

## 2 Dissemination of archival evidence

In the international community the archival context acquires new perspectives; it initially works within the Syntactic Web by letting end-user customizable agents extract information out of existing (HTML) Web pages; in parallel with Semantic Web, it utilizes the agents that access ontologies and make inferences based on these representations; also, in accordance with the Pragmatic Web, it allows policy makers as users to change modalities to make information show up at the right time, and to fuse information from multiple sources into new formats (*for an overview, see Caron and Brown, 2011 and Moss, 2008*). Thus, occurs the great challenge that brings an evidence-based approach to the management of recorded knowledge for policymakers, providing them control to archival information, consuming them as end-users and enabling them to express computationally how to turn existing information into personally relevant information and knowledge (*Hyde and Rezek, 2014*). Yet with a note of methodological caution, good archival research only provides an indication of what has or has not worked in the past, rather than a definitive solution. Instead of expecting policymaking to be archival evidence-based, it should be seen as archival evidence-informed in the broader framework of evidence-informed policy where archives function as platform and their mission is participatory (*Theimer, 2014*). Assumptions in such a policymaking approach can be identified by asking simple questions: What kind of question is the policymaker asking and what kind of answer is he/she looking for? Is the question descriptive? Taxonomic? Analytic? Interpretative? Explanatory? Evaluative?

This approach is fundamentally concerned with the organizational and personal processes and contents through which knowledge is created in archives as well as the ways in which archival evidence –in accordance with its societal role on the potential of social networking instruments- reflects those processes (see *ArchivesNext.blog* and *Archives2.0Wiki.blog*). As to the concept of knowledge, in policymaking the quest for knowledge rather than mere information is the crux of the study of archives. All the key words applied to archival records –provenance, *respect des fonds*, content, context, evolution, inter-relationships, order- imply a sense of understanding, of “knowledge” (Cook, ed., 2011 and Harris, 2011). The essential principles supporting the archival paradigm for the benefit of policymaking are as follows: the sanctity of evidence, provenance and original order, the life cycle of records, the organic nature of records and hierarchy in records and their descriptions. These principles directly derive from the five main characteristics of archives –impartiality, authenticity, naturalness, interrelatedness and uniqueness- and are stemming from understanding of the very concept of archival nature (Eastwood, 1994 and Roberts, 1994). They reflect the concerns of the archival profession that is interested in information as evidence and in the ways in which the context, form and interrelations among materials help policy making to indentify, trust, interpret and make relevant decisions about those materials (Connolly, 2014).

However, evidence in the archival sense, as used in the paper, can be defined as the passive ability of documents and objects and their associated contexts to provide insight into the processes, activities, and events that led to their creation for legal, historical, policy, and other purposes (Kourtoumi, 2009)<sup>1</sup>. Along these lines, “flat information” that statistical purviews, data-mining, and keyword searches tend to provide as quantitative form of knowledge, is only one type of evidence which it is not obviously superior in nature to the qualitative form of knowledge. According to Lazo (2014, pp. 181-186), once associated with close-reading of archival evidence, the qualitative form of knowledge is described as “hermeneutics of archival materials”, or otherwise as an entire process of reading what goes beyond the text itself. Both forms of knowledge indicate the unique principles, inherent characteristics and organic value of archives and promote their beneficial use for policymaking purposes.

As to the concept of the societal role of archives in policymaking, making policy that is based on evidence seems obvious in the knowledge society, both at the front-end and in the back-office. At the front-end policymakers approach archives as an extension of their personal and community memories embedded in (media)scape: social media, mobility, connectivity, multimedia –these and more define the social and cultural ecology of which archives are a part (Biesecker, 2006). Nevertheless, in the back-office putting the principle into practice is another matter. In the real world, policy is developed in a fluid environment, is subject to competing vested and political interests, and can be driven by pressure to act quickly to solve headline-grabbing problems (Head, 2008). Ideally, policymakers need systems that are informed by evidence at each stage of policy process, from when an issue is first identified (“development”), to the advancement of the most appropriate response (“implementation”), and subsequent assessment of its effectiveness (“evaluation”) (Bowen and Zwi, 2005). This is even more important when dealing with complex problems, i.e. juvenile delinquency or communications regulation, when the evidence on which responses must be based is shifting rapidly and involves many different interactive elements (Marston and Watts, 2003 and Edwards, 2001). Even when dealing with less complex issues, if policymakers are to successfully integrate evidence into the policymaking process, they must have good evidence to begin with (Craig, 2002). This means collecting archival data and investing in archival research, while ensuring that policymakers recognize that this evidence is reliable and useful. Archival evidence should also be open to rigorous public and professional debate. As well as validating archival evidence, transparency can help governments to gauge community reaction to ideas before they are fully formed and so better anticipate the politics of pursuing different courses of action. However, this does add to the challenge for policy makers, as transparency takes time and effort, and governments often have a need for speed.

1. Evidence-based policy (in contrast to opinion-based policy) is not to be confused with the archival information as evidence for policy making, stated here as archival evidence-informed policy. Evidence-based policy has been defined as an approach which “helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation (Davies et al. ed., 2000). As to the general notion of evidence in policymaking there is at least one claim to be stated: evidence (archival as well) can only inform, it can never resolve, political debate. However, evidence-based policy-making will always be influenced, if not, determined by pre-existing values, rather than the other way around.

### 3 An archives- policymaking cooperation

The use (or non-use) of archival evidence in policy making is an issue of growing interest and concern among both archivists and policymakers in the knowledge society<sup>2</sup>. Part of the dialogue lies in the nature of the archival evidence itself and the extent to which it addresses the complexities of the issue being researched. However, part of it also lies in the way that evidence gets communicated and transmitted to those intended to benefit from, or act on, it. As *Procter et al. (2006)* declare the relationship between the archival sources that underpin policy is an interesting one, and in the era of the impact agenda in an international context, of increasing importance. Yet, there is evidence of deeper barriers to the confluence of archives and policy.

In an effort to have some success in bridging the archival evidence to policy divide, the consideration of evidence-informed policy making from both sides of the coin is crucial<sup>3</sup>. From the policy perspective, archives are being understood as the raw material of humanities. Even though a number of academic policy institutions highlight their importance, policymakers are usually unaware of any which specifically linked archival sources to the development of contemporary policy. This does not mean that they do not concern about archival contribution to policy, but that they do not always seem to underpin the influence of archives to current policy (*Luckin, 2010*). *Chambers (2007, quotation 93)* in her survey states that they may be clear about the archives-policy nexus or they might feel that archives are distinctive from contemporary politics because of “conscious connection of the latter with issues of contemporary importance”. They may also state the influence as much about the present informing the study of the past and vice versa or even feel strongly about the issue but they stick to their discipline, thus creating a subsequent gap in realizing the issue and applying it in their cases. From the archival perspective, there is also evidence of deeper barriers to the convergence of archives and policy. Archivists may tend to emphasize the difference between archives and policy, perhaps anxious of blurring the boundaries seen to give archives their distinctive character. All in all, this may represent an understandable wariness of the risks of being the handmaid of politics while the search for tailor-made versions of the past that suit present preferences are also serious concerns.

*Jonson and Williams (2011)* observe that this gap is undoubtedly slightly felt or at least somewhat perceived by both sides and, thus, the foreseen convergence between archives and policymaking becomes worth exploring. On an academic level, a scheme to address this gap would be more than useful and welcome by both sides. On a more practical level, it is also clear that both some policy-makers and archivists are reluctant to engage archives with policymaking. The firsts could possibly cite a level of ignorance about what archives are available as reasons for not fully exploring and exploiting available sources. The latter could possibly arise questions on how can archives inform policy during emergencies, when policy has to be made more than quickly and cannot wait lengthy research approaches. Interestingly, despite the heat of the issue as seen in debates in the public sphere and in the communities of the archivists or policymakers alone, there is little evidence that the debate has emerged in academic literature of both sciences<sup>4</sup>.

It is well understood by all sides that today more than ever, policymakers need evidence to help inform major decisions about program design, implementation, and funding (*Parsons, 2001*). Whether assessing the likely effectiveness of a new initiative, comparing competing approach to a given problem, figuring out where to cut, or refining a program’s rules to make it more cost effective, decisions based on rigorous evidence make better use of scarce public money and improve outcomes for either funding or not funding the program. In other words, if an initiative or program has not been proven effective, it is not evidence-informed and it should not be implemented. In reality, policy development occurs in multiple stages and extends over time. New policies emerge in response to problems and needs, possible approaches are advanced and debated, new policies are adopted and implemented, and established policies are critiqued and refined (*Evidence Network, 2002*).

2. The nature of policy issue in its droader sense as used in the paper is relevant not only to practitioners of politics and public administration but also for scholars and scientists in institutions and organizations of different governments, businesses and NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs) and civil society in general.

3. The basic statement here is that it should be the role of the contemporary archives not to serve as a gatekeeper waiting for decades before making the raw materials of history available to policymakers, but rather as the trusted guardian and provider of useable evidence.

4. This is mainly estimated as a part of the general debate concerning the social sciences-policymaking nexus.

Archival evidence can add value at every stage of this process, involving a rich understanding of the implicit and explicit values of materials at creation and over time. Archives are an invaluable tool of data gathering for policymaking that is focused on the past and is impacted on the present. They are created to enable the conduct of business and accountability, but they also support a democratic society's expectations for transparency and the protection of rights, they underpin citizen's rights and are the raw material of our history and memory. The careful analysis of archives can provide valuable information on the life, concerns, and aspirations of individuals and groups, as well as on the activity, structure, mission, and goals of associations, organizations, and institutions. In the knowledge society the archives-policy-making nexus derives from archival evidence's basic information quality guidelines, most likely in accordance with the evidence-informed treatment of what, why, how, where and when: influential information, information utility, information integrity and information objectivity (*Cook, 2001*). However, the questions decision makers need to answer differ from one stage to the next. More specifically, policymakers need evidence to help them diagnose problems and underlying causes; design new policy options and assess the likely effects of alternatives; demonstrate and evaluate the impacts of new, model programs; monitor program implementation, measuring costs and performance and their sensitivity to different settings; evaluate the long-term impacts and cost-effectiveness of existing programs (*McDonald, 2002*). As archivists look to show their relevance, demonstrable influence on current policy formation can act as powerful evidence. It is crucial to state that specific capacities from both sides, the archivists' or the politicians', such as the individual's skills, experience, and participation in networks, influence the adoption and adaptation of context sensitive archival evidence in practice<sup>5</sup>.

In the new communication space questions about the impact of archival collections for policy-making cannot be answered solely on the basis of official statistics made available in tabular format. To match today's broad array of policy questions, there exists an equally broad array of credible archival evidence-gathering techniques. Instead, policymakers and practitioners need a portfolio of rigorous research method and tools to effectively advance archival evidence-informed policy<sup>6</sup>. Rather than academics exclusively setting the agenda, in a concerted effort to review such matters and argue in favor of research that is more attuned to the needs of policy makers and practitioners, a paradigm shift is used in the way in which archival evidence-informed research can be produced and consumed. This approach to knowledge co-creation can be useful for policymakers and those they are seeking to address in the process of working together to define the research questions, agree the methods, and assess the implications of the data analysis and findings for policy and practice (*Datta, 2012*). An archives-policy-making engagement denotes the need for closer relationships between archivists and policymakers, requiring co-creation of coherent content and greater involvement in the promotion of results. Achieving this is only possible through active participation in networks, through which research findings and concepts circulate and can be gradually filtered (*Greijn, 2008*). Think tanks, advocacy coalitions, policy streams, policy communities and national and regional networks can be frequently cited as being important in this regard.

#### 4 An archives- policymaking convergence

In the trajectory to put archives into policy, often the link between archives and policy, or evidence and practice, is viewed as a linear process, whereby a set of research findings or lessons shift from the "archival research sphere" to the "policy sphere", and then has some impact on policy makers' decisions and programmes on the ground. Reality tends to be much more dynamic and complex, with two-way processes between research, policy, and practice, shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge (*Cox and Wallace, 2002 and Jimerson, 2009*). As *Bowen and Zwi (2005)* admit it is obvious then that no single research tool or methodology can deliver the evidence policymakers need to make informed decisions at all stages in the process "adopt-adapt-act". In this process the archival

5. There is growing interest globally in making better use of research evidence in decisions related to health. As an example see *Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIIPNet)*, <http://www.who.int/rpc/evipnet/en/> website, <http://evipnet.bvsa-lud.org/php/index.php> website. Also check at *UK government's Policy Hub*, <http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/policyhub/index.asp> website.

6. The *Yale University Open Data Access Project (YODA)* has entered an agreement with Johnson & Johnson that will enable scientists around the world to gain access to the company's clinical trial data assets and the *Harvard Open Access Project (HOAP)* fosters the growth of open access to research, within Harvard and beyond, using a combination of consultation, collaboration, community-building, and direct assistance.

community has an important role to play in engaging the attention of public and policy makers. Evidence from archival and records-informed research on various issues should help to stimulate a wider debate about social, economic and political needs, and how they should be met<sup>7</sup>. Good quality research, effectively disseminated, can raise awareness, notify evidence-informed policymaking, and service development. Richly layered metadata make the archive more robust, thus offering to policymaking and society the possibilities for adding texture and accurate meaning to information found in evidences, thereby enhancing their understanding (*Cook, 2011*).

The effort to emerge a core discussion of how archives could inform evidence-informed policy outlines certain observations. Many of today's problems have also occurred in the past so that supposedly new or current issues are nothing of the sort while some problems could be intractable through time with an equally frequent incidence of failure at dealing with them successfully. However, in most problems awareness of the past is crucial in the avoidance of previous mistakes or failed solutions, while in some cases lateral thinking can transform archival knowledge into new ideas for contemporary implementation. All aspects considered, either as indicated above or not, it is well understood that taking a longer view in archival documentation implemented in evidence-informed policy can expand the range of current policy debate by exhuming past solutions to current problems or resurrecting past problems to current solutions. There is also the option "to even change the nature of policy debate by revealing its dynamics, challenging current categories" (*Weiss 1997, p.531*).

The pathway to evidence-informed policy and practice involves three active stages of progression, influenced by the archival context. In accordance with the triptych "development-implementation-evaluation" of the policy process, the three stages refer to sourcing the evidence, using the evidence and implementing the evidence (*Nutley et al., 2002*). The pathway also involves decision-making factors and a process, already termed above as "adopt-adapt-act". Each stage in this pathway is underpinned by a variety of individual, organizational and system level values. In the first level of adopting, the policy idea is sourcing by archival evidence, influencing knowledge and research on the specific issue. Once adopted, evidence about implementation is usually adapted or changed before use in the policy context. In this second level of adapting, the policy idea uses the archival evidence by introducing and applying knowledge utilization. Policy actors and practitioners rightfully need to understand and decide how best this evidence should be acted upon in each circumstance. In that third level of acting, the policy idea can be implemented, considering capacity to implement knowledge derived from individual-, organizational-, or policy-content archival evidence (*Rich, 1995*).

In describing and analyzing the outcomes of this grand convergence between archives and policymaking in the knowledge society, it is crucial to identify emerging themes and explore ways in which archive services from a portfolio of (1) methods and (2) tools, based on the pathway to evidence-informed policy and practice, might implement similar initiatives. Against the backdrop of methods and tools, traditional approaches to communicating archival research to policymakers are inadequate. Nevertheless, no single method or research tool can deliver the archival evidence policymakers need to make informed decisions at all stages. Instead, policymakers and practitioners need a portfolio of rigorous research tools to effectively advance evidence-informed policy.

In the knowledge-based economy archivists share the field of knowledge production and communication with many others, and where appropriate, those archivists who view their role in relation to policy, should be prepared to engage with stakeholders affected by policy issues and expose archival evidence to human interaction, review and scrutiny by others. On the other hand, the challenge for policymakers is to ensure through archival evidence that the decision-making process effectively meshes different types of knowledge such as scientific knowledge, knowledge of the local context and wider knowledge of what has worked or has not worked in the past; and, do this whilst involving different types of organizations, being main archival material providers, such as line ministries, public agencies, non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, local delivery bodies and citizens (*Shanley and López, 2009*). For policymakers it is a challenge to keep on top of the vast array of knowledge being developed and who is developing it, the speed at which it is emerging, and the potential of social media and other information and communication technology (ICT) tools to improve access to archival information. In the case of archival evidence, commitment to documentation, and the trust and credibility underpin the convergence (*Harvey et al, 2012*).

7. There are now hundreds of books and articles by historians, archivists and others on the politics of memory and relative processes through the presence and/or absence of records.

## 5 Functions of archival evidence in the policy process

Policymaking is a messy, iterative process, and the opportunities for archival evidence to inform and strengthen decisions are numerous and varied. Instead of relying on a single tool, policymakers should draw from a flexible portfolio of (1) methods and (2) tools to effectively advance archival evidence-based policy. Applying flexible implementations to the policy question at hand can inform public debate, help decisionmakers allocate scarce resources more effectively, and improve outcomes for people and communities.

The portfolio of methods expects that archivists work to establish a short but flexible engagement strategy that presents a package of material targeted at policymakers and practitioners as key stakeholders. Five functions of this knowledge broker are essential: informing, linking, matchmaking, focused articulation, and strategic collaboration (*Sen and Hoare, 2005*). However, in this process flexibility is key, since strategies and plans should never be set in stone. Ensuring that the strategy builds in opportunities for scanning the external environment for engagement opportunities, several guidelines should be kept in mind. Specifically, involving policymakers throughout the initiative requires a not just during dissemination time (*Nutley et al., 2008*). Using a policymaking stakeholder mapping tool can be useful to ensure everyone involved in the initiative understands which stakeholders are involved, who the key stakeholders are, and what the plan is. Walking a few miles in these stakeholders' shoes, the consideration is of what they already know about a topic, what their views or positions are, and how they tend to access archival information regarding the topic. It is also important to understand the current political and social landscape of what currently shapes the agenda and where does the initiative fit within that context (*Carden, 2009*). Investing in stakeholders who are already engaged in the topic, or with whom the archival organisation has a long-standing relationship is not enough. There is need to seek out influential stakeholders who might need convincing of the importance of the issue, while carrying political demands, social pressures, practical solutions and the power to make social change. Finally, planning for the expected is necessary, while being in a position to take advantage of the unexpected is unavoidable, since opportunities always arise, requiring policymakers and -consequently- archivists to always be on the lookout (*Mulgan and Puttick, 2013*).

The portfolio of tools includes quantitative and qualitative research variables, formulating evidences from huge archival data bases available from indicative sectors representing public policy, human services, criminal justice, inequality, education, labor, public health etc. Empirical evidence, analytical studies, time series analyses, observations, experiences and case reports along with before and after studies are valuable sources, derived from archival sources. Knowledge and information as types of evidence focus on results of consultation processes with groups/networks, published documents and reports, including policy evaluations and statistical analyses. Ideas and interests as types of evidence refer to opinion and view, expert knowledge of individuals, groups and networks shaped by past personal and professional experience, values and skills. Politics as types of evidence consist of information relevant to the agenda of various governments, political risk assessment and saleability, opportunities and crises. Economics as types of evidence codify finance and resource implications, cost effectiveness and other forms of economic evaluations, and opportunity cost reports (*Kingdon, 1995 and The Cabinet Office, 1999*).

The portfolio as a whole utilizes quantitative methods (unchanging static data) such as analysis of public administrative data, random controlled trials, microsimulation models, and qualitative research (divergent dynamic reasoning), which includes site visits and interviews (*Turner, 2013*). As to public administrative data, archival data bases contain a tremendous volume of information about benefit recipients, enforcement actions etc., public agencies collect at every level of government. These data can be systematically linked, monitored over time, and analyzed to produce reliable evidence for policymakers. In many cases, administrative data provide the building blocks for microsimulation modeling or the outcome measures in random control trials. But rigorous analysis of administrative data can also provide answers to immediate questions about program design and implementation. More extensively, random controlled trials -in which archival data are randomly assigned to participate in a program or serve as controls- are often referred to as the "gold standard" for evidence about whether a program is effective. And indeed, this approach is extremely powerful because it compares outcomes for a program's participants to the outcomes comparable people achieve without the program (*Mills, 2011*). Microsimulation models can forecast outcomes under a wide range of "what if" scenarios. Since the develop-

ment of credible models is complex and time-consuming, already existing models as archival sources can be used to quickly and efficiently analyze a wide range of alternative policies. Using in-person observation and in-depth interviews, qualitative research focuses on groups to dig deep and explore the behavior of people and institutions. It can also explain and enrich findings from archival statistical data, highlighting key issues that might otherwise be missed, and revealing hypotheses for further testing (*Hatry and Davies, 2011*).

## 6 Conclusions

In the knowledge-based economy, supporting the archival paradigm for the benefit of policymaking involves effective dissemination of evidence to where it is most needed and the development of efficient functions of providing wide access to archival information and knowledge. The pathway to evidence-informed policy requires that archivists and policymakers remain hermeneutic consistent with the sorts of research methodologies and context sensitive about the types of evidence best suited to different circumstances. Meeting these conditions does not guarantee that research and other forms of archival evidence triumph over other inputs into policy, but they at least increase the prospect of a more democratic and less simplistic conceptual and practical relationship between robust evidence and policy outcomes.

A first key step towards achieving this objective is to ensure that both policymakers and archivists have a shared understanding of what archival evidence is and of the role of research evidence in helping to inform policy decisions. Along these lines, the trajectory to put archives into policy can be enriched by a portfolio of methods and tools to effectively advance evidence-informed policy, thereby offering to policymaking and society the possibilities for adding texture and accurate meaning to information found in evidence. The need to continue building on this progress calls for conceptual uses of research, whereby archives change the way that problems, solutions, and their interrelations are framed and understood, among other benefits, also warrant exploration. In the end, then, commitment to documentation, and the trust and credibility underpin the convergence, answering questions about functionality and effectiveness of archival evidence in the policy process and influencing the adoption and adaptation of a coherent body of knowledge in practice, based on its inherent value.

## Reference list

- ArchivesNext.blog*, *ArchivesNext: well, what will come next?* Available at: <http://www.archivesnext.com/> (accessed on 15.04.2014)
- Archives2.0Wiki.blog*, *Archives 2.0*, Available at: <http://archives2point0.wetpaint.com/> (accessed on 15.04.2014).
- Biesecker, Barbara A. (2006). Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 9 (1), pp. 124-131
- Bowen S., Zwi A.B. (2005). Pathways to “evidence-informed” policy and practice: A framework for action. *PLoS Med* 2(7): e166. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed
- Carden, Fred (2009). Knowledge To Policy: Making The Most Of Development Research. *SAGE Publications-Incl/IDRC*
- Caron, Daniel J. and Brown, Richard (2011). The Documentary Moment in the Digital Age: Establishing New Value Propositions for Public Memory. *Archivaria* 71, pp. 1-20
- Connolly, Brian (2014). Against Accumulation. *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, pp. 172-179. doi: 10.1353/jnc.2014.0017
- Cook, F. L. (2001). Evidence-based policy making in a democracy: exploring the role of policy research in conjunction with politics and public opinion. Paper delivered to The 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, 30 Aug-2 Sept
- Cook, Terry (2011). ‘We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are’: Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 32(2), pp. 173-189. DOI:10.1080/00379816.2011.619688
- Cook, Terry, ed. (2011). Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions. *Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Society of American Archivists



**Triantafyllia KOURTOUMI: Focusing on Evidence not Information: the Grand Convergence between Archives and Policymaking in the Knowledge Society, 59-69**

- Cox, Richard and Wallace, David, eds. (2002). *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society*. Westport CN and London: Quorum Books
- Craig, Barbara L. (2002). Rethinking Formal Knowledge and its Practices in the Organization: The British Treasury's Registry Between 1900 and 1950. *Archival Science* 2 (1-2)
- Datta, Ajoy (2012). Deliberation, Dialogue and Debate: Why Researchers need to Engage with Others to Address Complex Issues. *IDS Bulletin Volume*, 43 (5)
- Davies, H. T. O., Nutley, S. M. and Smith, P. C. (Eds), (2000). *What works? Evidence-based Policy and Practice in Public Services*. Bristol: Policy Press
- Eastwood, Terry (1994). What is Archival Theory and Why is it Important?. *Archivaria* 37, pp. 122-130
- Edwards, M. (2001). *Social Policy, Public Policy: From Problems to Practice*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin
- Evidence Network 2002, The History of Evidence Network*. Available at: <http://www.evidencenetwork.org/history.asp> (accessed on 15.04.2014)
- Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet)*. Available at: <http://www.who.int/rpc/evipnet/en/> webcite, <http://evipnet.bvsalud.org/php/index.php> webcite (accessed on 15.04.2014)
- Chambers, Vanessa Ann (2007). Informed By, but Not Guided By, the Concerns of the Present: Contemporary History in UK Higher Education- Its Teaching and Assessment. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44 (1): pp. 89-105
- Greijn, Heinz (2008). *Linking research-based evidence to policy and practice*. Capacity org, 38, p. 3. Available at: [http://www.capacity.org/capacity/export/sites/capacity/documents/journalpdfs/CAP35\\_1108\\_RPP\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.capacity.org/capacity/export/sites/capacity/documents/journalpdfs/CAP35_1108_RPP_ENG.pdf) (accessed on 15.04.2014)
- Harvey, Blane, Lewin, Tessa and Fisher Catherine (2012). Introduction: Is Development Research Communication Coming of Age? *IDS Bulletin*, 43 (5), pp. 1-8
- Hatry, Harry and Davies, Elizabeth (2011). *A Guide to Data-Driven Performance Reviews*. Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government. Available at: <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/report/guide-data-driven-performance-reviews> (accessed on 15.04.2014)
- Head, B.W. (2008). Three Lenses of Evidence-Based Policy. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 67 (1), pp. 1-11
- Harris, Verne (2011). Archons, Aliens and Angels: Power and Politics in the Archive. In: Hill, Jennie (ed.), *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader*. London: Facet Publishing
- Jimerson, Randall C. (2009). *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists
- Johnson, Valerie and Williams, Caroline. (2011) Using Archives to Inform Contemporary Policy Debates: History into Policy?. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 32 (2), pp. 287-303
- Kingdon, JW (1995). *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman
- Kourtoumi, T. (2009). Knowledge Management and Lifelong Learning in Archival Heritage: Digital Collections on a Semantic Scope for Educational Potential. In: M. Lytras, & P. Ordóñez de Pablos (eds.), *Social Web Evolution: Integrating Semantic Applications and Web 2.0 Technologies*, pp. 116-131. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference
- Lazo, Rodrigo (2014). Accounting for Textual Remains. *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, 2 (1), pp. 179-186
- Luckin, Bill (2010). A Kind of Consensus on the Road? Drink Driving Policy in Britain, 1945-1970. *Twentieth Century British* 21, pp. 350-374
- Marston, Greg and Watts, Rob (2003). Tampering With the Evidence: A Critical Appraisal of Evidence-Based Policy-Making. *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 3 (3), pp. 143-163
- McDonald, C. (2002). Forward via the past: Evidence based practice as strategy in social work. *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 3 (3), pp. 123-142
- Mills, Gregory (2011). Alpha Testing and Randomized Control Trials: Improving on the Gold Standard. In: *MetroTrends (blog)*. Available at: <http://blog.metrotrends.org/2011/10/alpha-testing-randomized-control-trials-improving-gold-standard/> (accessed on 15.04.2014)

Triantafyllia KOURTOUMI: Focusing on Evidence not Information: the Grand Convergence between Archives and Policymaking in the Knowledge Society, 59-69

- Moss, Michael (2008). Opening Pandora's Box: what is an archive in the digital environment?. In Craven, Louise (ed.), *What are archives? Cultural and theoretical perspectives: A reader*, pp. 71-87. Aldershot: Ashgate
- Mulgan, Geoff and Puttick, Ruth (2013). *Making evidence Useful. The case for new Institutions*. UK: Nesta
- Nutley, S., Davies, H. & Walter, I. (2002). Evidence based policy and practice: cross sector lessons from the UK. *Keynote paper for the Social Policy Research and Evaluation Conference*. Wellington, New Zealand. 2-3 July
- Nutley, S., Walter, I. and Davies, H. (2008). Past, Present, and Possible Futures of Evidence-Based Policy. In: Argyrous, G. (ed.), *Evidence for Policy and Decision-Making: A Practical Guide*. Sydney: UNSW Press, pp. 1-44
- Parsons, W. (2001). Modernising policy-making for the twenty first century: The professional model. *Public Policy and Administration*, 16 (3), pp. 93-110
- Procter, Margaret, Cook, Michael G., and Williams, Caroline, eds. (2006). *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists
- Rezek, Joseph (2014). Introduction: The Aesthetics of Archival Evidence. *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, 2(1), pp. 155-162
- Rich, R.F. (1997). Measuring knowledge utilization: processes and outcomes. *Knowledge and Policy: The International Journal of Knowledge Transfer and Utilization*, 10, pp. 11-24
- Roberts, John (1994). What is Archival Theory and Why is it Important? Response to Terry Eastwood's Paper. *Archivaria*, 37 (1), pp. 131-133
- Sen, Kunal and Hoare, Geoff (2005). *Rates of Return to Research: A Literature Review and Critique*. London: Enterplan in association with ODG-DEV and CEG
- Shanley, Patricia, and López, Citlalli (2009). Out of the Loop: Why Research Rarely Reaches Policy Makers and the Public and What can be Done. *Biotropica*, 41(5), pp. 535-544
- The Cabinet Office (1997). *Professional policy-making for the 21st century*. London: The Cabinet Office
- The Harvard Open Access Project (HOAP)*, <https://cyber.law.harvard.edu/research/hoap>
- Theimer, Kate (2014). *The Future of Archives is Participatory: Archives as Platform, or A New Mission for Archives*. Available at: <http://www.archivesnext.com/> (accessed on 15.04.2014)
- Turner, Margery Austin (2013). Evidence-based policymaking requires a portfolio of tools. *Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Subcommittee on Human Resources Committee on Ways and Means, July 17*. United States House of Representatives: The Urban Institute
- UK government's Policy Hub*, <http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/policyhub/index.asp> website
- Weiss, Carol (1977). Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research. *Policy Analysis*, 3(4), pp. 531-545
- Yale University Open Data Access Project (YODA) agreement with Johnson & Johnson*, [http://medicine.yale.edu/core/projects/yodap/leadership\\_contact.aspx](http://medicine.yale.edu/core/projects/yodap/leadership_contact.aspx)

### SUMMARY

Policymaking is a messy, iterative process, with many opportunities for archival evidence to inform and strengthen decisions. Archives are an invaluable tool of data gathering for policymaking that is focused on the past and is impacted on the present. In the knowledge society the grand convergence derives from archival evidence's basic information quality guidelines in accordance with the evidence-informed treatment of what, why, how, where and when: influential information, information utility, and information integrity and information objectivity. The attention then is on issues shaping archival data quality and dissemination policy that are important from the perspective of policymaking. However, in the new communication space questions about the impact of archival collections for policymaking cannot be answered solely on the basis of official statistics made available in tabular format. To match today's broad array of policy questions, there exists an equally broad array of credible archival evidence-gathering techniques. In bridging the archival evidence to policy divide we discuss the interest of archivists and policymakers in the potential of an archives-policymaking cooperation and convergence. In accordance with the **tritych** "development-implementation-evaluation" of the policy process, we propose a pathway to evidence-informed policy and practice involving three active stages of progression, influenced by the archival context: sourcing the evidence, using the evidence and implementing the evidence. The pathway also involves decision-making factors and a process, termed as "adopt-adapt-act". Furthermore, archi-

---

**Triantafillia KOURTOUMI: Focusing on Evidence not Information: the Grand Convergence between Archives and Policymaking in the Knowledge Society, 59-69**

vists and policymakers have to remain hermeneutic consistent with the sorts of research methodologies and context sensitive about the types of evidence best suited to different circumstances. We review different types of qualitative and quantitative models and their data requirements. We propose that policymakers and practitioners should draw from a portfolio of methods and tools to advance archival evidence-informed policy effectively. The portfolio of methods requires an engagement strategy that presents a package of material targeted at policymakers and practitioners as key stakeholders. Five functions of this knowledge broker are essential: informing, linking, matchmaking, focused articulation, and strategic collaboration. The portfolio of tools includes quantitative methods, such as analysis of public administrative data, random controlled trials, microsimulation models, and qualitative methods including site visits and interviews. The paper concludes by arguing that there are ways of making archives more amenable to the needs of policymakers and policymakers more sympathetic to the organic value of archives by investing in greater analysis of the links between archival documentation and policy.

Typology: 1.02 Review article

Submitting date: 19.12.2013

Acceptance date: 07.02.2014

