National Archives of Pakistan: Resources, Services and User Satisfaction

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Abstract:

National archives are organizations where records related to a nation are maintained and preserved as cultural heritage and historical evidence to be used by present and future generations. After independence, the Pakistan Archives and Records Commission was established in 1948 to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of Pakistan. Later on, a Directorate of Archives and Libraries was established in Karachi in 1951. The foundation stone of the building of the National Archives of Pakistan was laid down in Islamabad in 1981.This study has been conducted to explore the user satisfaction with the resources and services of the National Archives of Pakistan (NAP). Survey method was used to obtain users' opinion. Fifty-three out of sixty respondents participated in this study. Data were analyzed using the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Findings of the study showed that most of the participants are satisfied with the resources and services of the NAP. The areas which need improvement include arrangement and cleanliness of materials, air conditioning services and publication services. Majority of the participants were highly dissatisfied with the NAP location. Recommendations include improvement in archival collection, repairing and cleaning of materials, provision of air-conditioned environment and starting of shuttle service for the visitors.

Keywords: Pakistan, archives, records, user satisfaction, archival materials, cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

The word 'archives' is among those words which may be either singular or plural and it has multiple meanings. First, archives are non-current records preserved by organizations or individuals. These records have continuing value and are used as evidence by historians, researchers and government officials. The other definition of archives is the building or place where archival materials are placed, while third definition of archives is the agency which

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acquires, preserves and maintains the archival materials for evidence and research purposes (Pederson, cited in Santurk, 1987).

National archives are organizations where records related to a nation are maintained and preserved as cultural heritage and historical evidence to be used by present and future generations. The National Archives of Japan's mission statement describes the importance of national archives in following words;

"The work of the national archives has a vital significance for the future. The present is built on the past. The present gives rise to the future. The records of our past and present must be preserved and handed down to the next generation of people, who will explore their own future with our history in mind" (https://www.archives.go.jp/english/abouts/ourvision.html).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Qasmi (2015), there was no archives department in Pakistan at the time of independence in 1947 which could be regarded as national archives. The Punjab Archives, Civil Secretariat, Lahore was the only archives having important colonial and pre-colonial records.

After partition of the British India in August 1947, most of the decisions of the Partition Council were violated by India. The Indian government did not provide historical records and other official documents to Pakistan which were relating to the territories constituting Pakistan and which were available in the National Archives of India, despite clear-cut directions of the Partition Council to provide new born state with its historical records and important documents. Hence Pakistan was deprived of its share of archival resources which were built-up over the years under the British rule from joint resources. Therefore, Pakistan had to start from the beginning to establish and develop an archival institution (Ali, 1993).

Other main archival resources of mutual interest to Pakistan and India are still housed in the India Office Library and Records, London. Although an agreement exists between the India Office Library and Records, London and the National Documentation Wing, Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad for free exchange of microfilmed records as and when required by both the parties, however the case regarding division of historical records / assets has so far to be decided (Haider, 2006).

After independence of Pakistan, Dr Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, a prominent educationist and historian proposed at the first Pakistan Historical Conference held at Karachi in December 1947, that a Historical Records and Archives Commission may be established by the Government of Pakistan (Haider, 2006).

As a result, the Pakistan Archives and Records Commission was established in 1948 to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of Pakistan. Dr Qureshi was appointed as first president of the Commission. Main responsibilities assigned to the Commission were protection of the cultural heritage of Pakistan and to manage, preserve and publish public records. The Commission in its first meeting in 1948 recommended that a Directorate of Archives may be established in Karachi, the then capital of Pakistan, and six regional survey committees may be established in the provinces (Haider, 2006).

As per recommendations of the Commission, a Directorate of Archives and Libraries was established in Karachi by the Government of Pakistan in November 1951. In the same year, a Central Records Office was established in Karachi with Riaz ul Islam as its Deputy Director. The office was consisting of few record rooms. This step was beginning of the National Archives in the country (Haider, 2006).

Until 1958, the National Archives faced many problems and developed very slowly. Later, the independent Directorate of Archives was established with its headquarters in Islamabad in 1973. Atique Zafar Sheikh, the officer-in-charge of Quaid-i-Azam Paper Cell, Ministry of Education, was assigned the responsibility of establishing and developing the National Archives of Pakistan. First task ahead was to transfer the records, staff and equipment from Karachi to Islamabad. At first, the Directorate was shifted from Karachi to Rawalpindi in a rented building, and in 1976 it was moved to Islamabad in another rented bungalow. Due to less space, expanded activities and collection of the Directorate, it was again shifted to another rented building having adequate space in 1981. In the same year the foundation stone of the long-awaited project of the building of the National Archives of Pakistan was laid down in Islamabad. After completion of the building of the National Archives of Pakistan all the records, equipment and staff were shifted to it in 1988 (Ali, 1996).

National Archives of Pakistan (NAP) is responsible to acquire and preserve the records of the federal organizations and prominent national personalities. Other main functions of the NAP include;

- preserving and maintaining the Category "A" files of Ministries, Divisions and other organizations of the federal government
- microfilming of the sensitive records of the government and other important historical records
- acquisition and preservation of private collections of national and historical importance
- creation and preservation of oral archives
- maintaining of liaison with other member institutions of International Council on Archives
- advise Provincial Archives and other archival institutions in conservation and restoration of important documents
- acquisition and maintenance of government publications, periodicals, newspapers
- maintain and strengthen the reference library
- implementation of the Archival Material (Preservation and Export Control) Act of 1975
- publication of finding aids like catalogues, accession and guides of available collections
- organization of seminars, workshops, exhibitions and training programs

NAP is headed by a Director General, who is responsible for overall administration and management of the institution. There is one post of Director who assists the Director General in day-to-day administration of the NAP. The professional work of the NAP is divided into three sections namely Public Records Section, Private Collections Section and Technical Section. Each section is headed by a Deputy Director (DD). Supporting staff of the DDs include archivists, assistant archivists, microfilming and Photostatting officers, archival chemist, administration & accounts officer, technical assistants and laboratory assistants etc.

Major holdings of the NAP include more than 15000 "A" category files of federal ministries, 59 private collections, gazettes, debates of the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan, census reports, oral archives, microfilmed records, digital records of important historical documents, gazetteers, statistical surveys, catalogs and finding aids etc. (National Archives of Pakistan, 2023). Users / customers have much importance for a service organization. Being a service organization, user satisfaction is one of the core objectives of archives. The main objective of anarchives department is to preserve and maintain archival materials. However, in addition to this main objective the archives have the mission to provide information and records services to its users. Hence user satisfaction is top priority of an archives organization.

User satisfaction surveys help archives to improve the quality of services. User satisfaction studies of archives are being conducted since 1980s (Senturk, 2011).

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) (2009) found that eighty percent of its customers are highly satisfied with its services. This study indicated that there was little but sound improvement in its services as compared to the first survey conducted in 2006 to measure the customer satisfaction.

A survey conducted by Chepukaka (2021) stated that users were not satisfied with the internet services, online catalog, digitization, staff behavior and sitting space of the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service.

The aim of this study is to identify the problems faced by the users while using the resources and services of the National Archives of Pakistan (NAP) and to recommend solutions to their problems. Furthermore, this study will help the NAP to improve its resources and services up-to the optimum level and for satisfaction of its users.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method has been used in this study. This researcher had also conducted a survey of the NAP in 2020 for his Doctoral level research (unpublished). This is the second survey of the NAP by this researcher. For this survey, a questionnaire was designed and distributed by hand among 60 respondents in May, 2023. Convenience based sampling has been used in this study. Fifty-three respondents filled and returned the questionnaire, whereas, seven of the respondents did not return the questionnaire within the stipulated period. Hence the response rate is 88.33%. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Following are the findings of the study;

1. **Gender of the Respondents**

Table1. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	28	52.8
Female	25	47.2

Printed questionnaires were distributed to sixty respondents manually, on convenience basis. Fifty-three (88.33%) of the respondents participated in this study and seven (11.66%) respondents did not return the questionnaires even after several requests by the researcher. Out

of fifty-three participants, twenty-eight (52.8%) were males while twenty-five (47.2%) were females. Hence male participants are participation-wise dominant in this study.

2. Occupation of the Respondents

Table2. Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
MS Scholar	41	77.4
PhD Scholar	7	13.2
Teacher	5	9.4

Findings of the study show that majority of the participants were the MS scholars i.e. forty (77.4%) & seven (13.2 %) participants were conducting doctoral level research and five (9.4%) teachers participated in the survey.

3. Age of the Participants

Table3. Age of the Participants

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	34	64.1
31-40	8	15.1
41-50	10	18.9
Above 50	1	1.9

Dominant age group participated in this survey is '25-30 years' group which has 64.1% participation. There is only one participant of 'above 50 years' age group. Results indicate that majority of the participants is young.

4. Frequency of NAP Usage

Table4. NAP Usage by the Respondents

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	1	1.9
Weekly	12	22.6
2 days in a week	4	7.5
Fortnightly	8	15.1
3 days in a week	2	3.8
Rarely	26	49.1

Regarding frequency of the visit to NAP, results indicate that majority (49.1%) of the participants visit NAP rarely. Second highest response is (22.6%), in which participants' visit the NAP on weekly basis.

5. Users' Purpose of Visiting the NAP

Table5. Users' Purpose of Visiting NAP

Purpose of Visiting NAP	Frequency	Percentage
Research	38	71.7
General Study	15	28.3

Table 5 indicates that majority of the participants i.e. 38 (71.7%) visit the NAP for research purpose.

6. Users' Level of Satisfaction with NAP Resources

Table6. Users' Level of Satisfaction with NAP Resources

Statements	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatis-fied	Highly Dissatisfied
Print Archival Resources	10 (18.9%)	38 (71.7%)	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.54%)	-
Digital Resources	3 (5.7%)	35 (66.0%)	12 (22.6%)	3 (5.7%)	-
Access to Print Resources	14 (26.4%)	36 (67.9%)	3 (5.7%)	-	-
Access to Digital Resources	3 (5.7%)	30 (56.6%)	14 (26.4%)	6 (11.3%)	-
Arrangement of Materials	2 (3.8%)	22 (41.5%)	1 (1.9%)	27 (50.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Cleanliness of Materials	1 (1.9%)	17 (32.1%)	1 (1.9%)	33 (62.3%)	1 (1.9%)
Physical Conditions of Materials	3 (5.7%)	38 (71.7%)	10 (18.9%)	2 (3.8%)	-
Environment	2 (3.8%)	27 (50.9%)	1 (1.9%)	31 (58.5%)	2 (3.8%)
Staff Attitude	6 (11.3%)	29 (54.7%)	1 (1.9%)	12 (22.7%)	5 (9.4%)
NAP Library Collection	3 (5.7%)	44 (83.1%)	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.5%)	1 (1.9%)
NAP Location	1 (1.9%)	10 (18.9%)	1 (1.9%)	20 (37.7%)	21 (39.6%)

To assess level of satisfaction of respondents with NAP resources, eleven statements were included in the questionnaire. Majority i.e. thirty-eight (71.7%) & thirty-five (66.0%) participants were satisfied with the print archival resources & digital archival resources of the NAP respectively. Similarly, most of the participants were satisfied with (i) access to digital resources thirty-six (67.9%), (ii) physical conditions of materials thirty-eight (71.7%), (iii) attitude of the NAP staff twenty-nine (54.7%), and (iv) NAP library collection forty-four (83.1%). Whereas, mostof the participants were dissatisfied with (i) the arrangement of the materials of the NAP twenty-seven (50.9%) (ii) cleanliness of materials thirty-three (62.3%) and (iii) environment of the NAP thirty-one (58.5%). Results show that the location of the NAP is most problematic concern for the participants. Regarding location of the NAP building, twenty-one (39.6 %) participants were highly dissatisfied and twenty (37.7%) of the participants were dissatisfied with the NAP location.

7.   Users' Level of Satisfaction with NAP Services

Table7. Users' Level of Satisfaction with NAP Resources

Statements	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied
NAP Overall Services	1 (1.9%)	41 (77.4%)	1 (1.9%)	10 (18.9%)	-
Digitization	2 (3.8%)	30 (56.6%)	4 (7.5%)	16 (30.19%)	1 (1.9%)
Reference Services	2(3.8%)	45 (84.9%)	2 (3.8%)	4 (7.5%)	-
Air Conditioning Services	2 (3.8%)	7 (13.2%)	2 (3.8%)	26 (49.1%)	16 (30.2%)
Working Hours	1 (1.9%)	37(69.8%)	2 (3.8%)	8 (15.1%)	5 (9.4%)
Library Services	2 (3.8%)	47 (88.7%)	2 (3.8%)	2 (3.8%)	-
Microfilming/ photocopying Services	5 (9.4%)	25(47.2%)	18 (34%)	5 (9.4%)	-
Publication Services	1 (1.9%)	9(17%)	3 (5.7%)	39 (73.6%)	1 (1.9%)
Canteen/ Cafeteria Services	1 (1.9%)	31 (58.5%)	1 (1.9%)	12(22.6%)	8 (15.1%)

Participants' satisfaction with the NAP services was assessed using nine statements. Findings of the study show that majority of the participants were satisfied with the NAP services. Table 7 indicates that forty-one (96.2%) participants were satisfied with the overall services provided by the NAP to its users. One (1.9%) participant was highly satisfied with the overall services of the NAP. Majority of the participants were satisfied with the digitization services (56.6%), reference services (84.9%), working hours (69.8%), library services (88.7%), microfilming / photocopying services (47.2%), and canteen / cafeteria services (58.5%). Two (3.8%) participants each were highly satisfied with the digitization services, reference services, air-conditioning services, and the library services of the NAP. One (1.9%) participant each was highly satisfied with the working hours, publication services and canteen / cafeteria services. Five (9.4%) participants were highly satisfied with the microfilming / photocopying services.

CONCLUSION

The National archives preserve the records related to a nation. These records are used by present and future generations as cultural heritage and historical evidence. After partition of the British India in August 1947, the historical records and other official documents which were built-up over the years under the British rule from joint resources were not provided to Pakistan by the Indian government. Hence Pakistan had to start working about establishment of National Archives from the beginning. The Pakistan Archives and Records Commission was established in 1948 to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of Pakistan. Later the Directorate of Archives and

Libraries was established in Karachi in 1951. The National Archives of Pakistan was shifted to its new building in Islamabad in 1981.

This study was conducted to obtain users' opinion about the resources and services of the NAP with the purpose to give recommendations for their improvement. Survey method was used to collect data from the respondents. A questionnaire was designed and distributed by hand among 60 respondents using Convenience based sampling.

Findings of the study showed that majority of the participants were satisfied with the resources of the NAP. Most of the participants were satisfied with print resources, NAP library collection, physical conditions of materials, access to digital resources and with the attitude of the NAP staff. However, majority of the participants were highly dissatisfied with the location of the NAP.

Majority of the participants were satisfied with the digitization services, reference services, working hours, library services, microfilming / photocopying services, and canteen / cafeteria services. However, the participants were dissatisfied with the arrangement and cleanliness of materials, air conditioning services and publication services. Majority of the participants were highly dissatisfied with the NAP location. The most problematic issue for the participants is to reach and access the NAP building. As the NAP building is located in the most sensitive area the users have to walk by foot or by using personal conveyance only for about 1 kilometer to reach the NAP. No other conveyance is available to reach the NAP building.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on the findings of the study are mentioned below;

i)   The NAP may improve collection of print archival resources.
ii)   The damaged materials may be got repaired on priority basis so that user may benefit from them.
iii)   Planning for providing air conditioning services in the NAP building may be got initiated on top priority basis.
iv)   The NAP collection may be got cleaned and physically upgraded by lamination etc.
v)   A shuttle service may be got started for the NAP visitors. Other government departments like Pakistan Secretariat, Benazir Income Support Program Headquarters, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Headquarters etc. situated nearby the NAP may participate in this project and a combined shuttle service may be got started urgently.

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