

The Role of Archives in Realising Accountability in Office Administrative Services

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Office administrative services are increasingly required to operate in an accountable manner in response to growing demands for transparency and service quality within organizations. Accountability in office administration is closely associated with the ability to provide service evidence, ensure process traceability, and justify administrative decisions and actions. In this context, archives, understood as organizational archives, play a crucial role not only as the outputs of administrative activities but also as integral components that support accountability mechanisms. However, archives are often narrowly perceived as stored documents, which limits their strategic use in strengthening administrative accountability. This article aims to examine the role of archives in realizing accountability in office administrative services through a conceptual literature review approach. Relevant literature on office administration, archival management, and service accountability is analyzed using a descriptive-analytical perspective to identify and synthesize key concepts and relationships. The analysis demonstrates that archives function as supports for administrative processes, sources of administrative evidence, and foundations for organizational accountability. Systematic and integrated archival management enables the availability of traceable and verifiable information, thereby reinforcing accountable office administrative services. This article underscores the need to reposition archives as strategic instruments within office administration practices to strengthen accountability in administrative services.

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INTRODUCTION

Office administrative services constitute an important part of organisational life because they serve as the primary means for the implementation, documentation, and accountability of various work processes. Through administrative services, organisational activities are formally carried out and recorded as the basis for the legitimacy of actions and decisions taken. From a broader perspective, archives are not only understood as an internal organisational necessity, but also as part of the public interest with a social function. Archives enable the public and stakeholders to understand, assess, and oversee organisational actions and decisions in a transparent manner. Thus, the existence of archives places office administration in a direct relationship with the public interest and the social responsibility of organisations (Jimerson, 2008).

This relationship becomes increasingly important when office administration is confronted with demands for accountability. Accountability is a key principle in administrative services because it relates to the obligation of organisations to account for every action, decision, and work outcome produced. In this context, archives play a central role because they function as administrative evidence that documents processes, decisions, and service outputs. Without adequate archives, accountability tends to be normative in nature and difficult to realise in practice. Therefore, the relationship between archives and accountability is not supplementary, but inherently embedded in the administration of office services (Hurley, 2006).

In addition to serving as an instrument of accountability, archives are also understood as part of the public good that supports the sustainability of responsible organisational governance. Archives enable organisations to maintain institutional memory, explain the basis of decision-making, and ensure continuity of accountability over time. Within this framework, archives do not only serve short-term administrative interests, but also long-term public interests related to transparency, legitimacy, and trust in organisations. This perspective affirms that archives occupy a strategic position within office administrative systems oriented towards the public interest (Cox & Wallace, 2002).

Along with the development of modern governance paradigms, archives and information management are increasingly viewed as a prerequisite for the realisation of transparency and accountability in services. Proper archival management enables administrative information to be available in a timely, accurate, and traceable manner, thereby supporting oversight processes, performance evaluation, and organisational decision-making. Therefore, archives

cannot be separated from efforts to strengthen governance and improve the quality of administrative services oriented towards the public interest. In other words, the quality of administrative services is largely determined by how archives are managed and utilised within office administrative systems (de Mingo & Cerrillo-i-Martínez, 2018).

The interrelationship between archives, accountability, and public service indicates that the quality of administrative services depends not only on formal procedures, but also on the organisation's ability to provide service evidence that can be accounted for. Poorly organised archives can hinder the traceability of service processes and weaken the organisation's ability to explain the basis of its actions. Conversely, systematic archival management supports process transparency, strengthens performance evaluation, and enhances service users' trust in the organisation. This affirms that archives are an essential component in the realisation of accountable and sustainable administrative services (Svard, 2013).

In conceptual discourse at the national level, archives are also understood as part of public information that has a strategic role in supporting transparency and accountability in administrative services. Archives do not merely function as archives of organisational activities, but also as a means of fulfilling the public's right to information and as the basis of institutional accountability. This perspective reinforces the argument that archives need to be strategically positioned within office administrative systems, not merely as the final product of administrative activities, but as an integral part of service accountability mechanisms (Surtikanti & Haryanti, 2023).

Recent archival scholarship has further expanded the understanding of archives beyond their traditional role as repositories of organisational records. Archives are increasingly viewed as organisational capabilities embedded within recordkeeping routines, governance arrangements, socio-technical infrastructures, and shared organisational understanding. From this perspective, the effectiveness of archival functions depends not only on the existence of records, but also on the organisational capacity to create, manage, and utilise archival information in support of institutional objectives and accountability requirements. This broader perspective highlights the strategic position of archives within organisational systems and underscores their contribution to administrative effectiveness and accountability (Sanbein, 2026).

Despite the growing body of literature examining archives, records management, and accountability, existing studies have largely discussed these concepts from separate perspectives. Archival studies commonly emphasize records preservation, information

management, transparency, and governance compliance, whereas office administration literature tends to focus on administrative efficiency, service effectiveness, and procedural performance. As a result, limited attention has been given to understanding archives as an integral mechanism that connects office administrative processes with accountability outcomes. Existing studies generally acknowledge that archives support accountability, yet they rarely explain how archives function conceptually within office administrative systems to produce traceability, evidence-based decision making, and accountable service delivery.

Furthermore, contemporary administrative environments are increasingly shaped by digital transformation, information governance, and public demands for transparency. These developments require a broader conceptual understanding of archives beyond their traditional role as documentary outputs. However, the literature remains fragmented regarding the strategic position of archives within office administration and their contribution to accountable administrative services. Therefore, a conceptual synthesis is needed to clarify the relationship between archives, office administration, and accountability, while identifying the mechanisms through which archival management contributes to accountable service systems.

Responding to this conceptual gap, this study aims to examine the role of archives in realising accountability in office administrative services through a conceptual literature review. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss archives as information repositories or governance instruments, this article positions archives as strategic components embedded within office administrative systems. The study contributes to the literature by developing a conceptual understanding of how archives support service traceability, administrative evidence, transparency, and accountability, and by proposing an integrated perspective linking archival management with accountable office administration.

METHOD

This study employed a Conceptual Literature Review (CLR) approach to examine the role of archives in realising accountability in office administrative services. The CLR approach is particularly appropriate when the objective is to develop conceptual understanding, integrate fragmented knowledge, and clarify relationships among concepts rather than test empirical hypotheses. Through conceptual synthesis, the study seeks to explain how archives function within office administrative systems and contribute to accountability in administrative service delivery (Torraco, 2016).

The review materials were obtained from scholarly journal articles, academic books, and



book chapters related to archives, records management, office administration, administrative services, accountability, transparency, and governance. Literature searches were conducted using three academic databases, namely Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search process employed combinations of keywords including “archives”, “records management”, “archival governance”, “office administration”, “administrative services”, “accountability”, and “transparency”. To ensure the relevance of the analysis to contemporary administrative practices and developments in information governance, the review focused on publications published between 2015 and 2026.

The literature selection process was conducted in several stages. First, publications were identified through database searches based on the predetermined keywords. Second, titles and abstracts were screened to assess their relevance to the objectives of the study. Third, full-text publications were evaluated according to inclusion criteria, namely: (1) discussing archives, records management, accountability, transparency, or office administration; (2) providing conceptual, theoretical, or empirical insights relevant to the relationship between archives and accountability; and (3) being published in scholarly sources. Publications that lacked direct relevance to administrative accountability or focused solely on technical information systems without broader governance implications were excluded from further analysis.

Following the screening and evaluation process, 24 core publications were selected for in-depth conceptual analysis. The selected literature consisted of both national and international publications that were considered representative in explaining the functions of archives, accountability mechanisms, and administrative service systems. Consistent with the principles of conceptual literature review, the selection prioritised conceptual relevance, theoretical contribution, and analytical richness rather than exhaustive coverage of all available publications (Snyder, 2019).

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical synthesis approach. The selected literature was first reviewed to identify key concepts related to archives, accountability, transparency, administrative services, and governance. Subsequently, recurring themes and conceptual patterns were grouped into broader thematic categories. The analysis then examined the relationships among these themes to develop a more integrated understanding of how archives support administrative processes, provide evidence for decision-making, facilitate transparency, and strengthen accountability (Torraco, 2016; Webster & Watson, 2002).

To guide the synthesis, the analysis was organised around three interrelated dimensions:



archives as administrative infrastructure supporting office operations, archives as evidence enabling accountability and transparency, and archives as governance instruments contributing to organisational legitimacy and service quality. The results of the synthesis are presented narratively to explain the conceptual relationship between archival management and accountability in office administrative services and to develop a broader understanding of the strategic role of archives in accountable administration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Role of Archives in Office Administration

Office administration is essentially a work system that relies on the orderliness of processes, continuity of information, and clarity of responsibility. Within this system, archives play a role as an element that connects the planning, implementation, and evaluation of administrative work. Archives enable administrative activities to be carried out in a structured and documented manner, and therefore cannot be separated from the basic function of office administration as a support for organisational services. In this context, archives are understood as part of the administrative work system that supports the overall effectiveness of administrative management, rather than merely as the final product of administrative activities that is stored after work processes have been completed (Amalia et al., 2024).

As part of the administrative system, archives function to provide information required in service processes and administrative decision-making. Archives enable organisations to refer back to archived processes and policies that have been implemented, thereby supporting consistency, orderliness, and clarity of administrative workflows (Ardiana & Suratman, 2021). The availability of well-organised archives also helps to minimise administrative errors resulting from incomplete or difficult-to-trace information. In the practice of office administrative services, this condition contributes to the smooth running of service processes and enhances the reliability of administrative work, particularly when organisations are required to handle services repeatedly and on an ongoing basis (Chaterera, 2016).

The role of archives is also closely related to the continuity and stability of office administration. Archives function as the organisational working memory that enables the continuity of administrative activities over time (Caroline et al., 2022). Through archives, organisations are able to understand the background of policies, procedures, and administrative decisions that have been taken, so that continuity of work is maintained even when changes in personnel or organisational structure occur. This function positions archives as an important

element in maintaining the stability and coherence of office administrative systems, as well as in preventing information disruption in the implementation of administrative tasks (Sutanto, 2021).

In the context of operational performance, integrated archival management contributes to improvements in the efficiency and coordination of administrative work. Well-organised archives accelerate access to information, facilitate coordination among work functions, and support more optimal use of resources (Khaudli & Muna, 2022). In addition, the existence of archives enables various administrative units to work based on the same and verified information, thereby reducing information gaps and the potential for administrative conflict in the implementation of office tasks involving multiple parties (Tanaiyo, 2022).

The development of information technology also influences the way archives function in office administration. The digitalisation of archives expands the accessibility and flexibility of administrative information management, and strengthens the integration of archives within office administrative information systems (Brown & Toze, 2017). Nevertheless, whether in physical or digital form, the essence of the role of archives remains grounded in their ability to ensure orderliness, traceability, and continuity of administrative work processes. Thus, technology does not change the position of archives within office administrative systems, but rather expands the ways in which archives support the effectiveness and reliability of administrative work in a more adaptive manner (Kalinda, 2019).

In addition to supporting administrative systems and performance, archives also play a role in the formation of professionalism in office administration. Proper archival management reflects work discipline, measurable administrative standards, and the quality of internal organisational governance. In this context, archives function as an indicator of the quality of administrative work that demonstrates the extent to which organisations are able to carry out administrative practices in an orderly and accountable manner (Patricia & Riyanti, 2024).

In the long term, archives function as a source of organisational learning that enables evaluation of administrative work practices that have been implemented. Through the utilisation of archives, organisations are able to retrace work processes, identify administrative patterns, and recognise procedural weaknesses that require improvement (Bajwa & Rafiq, 2025). In addition to serving as a means of evaluation, archives also support the formation of a professional administrative work culture oriented towards service quality. The availability of organised and traceable archives encourages administrative personnel to work in a more

disciplined, consistent, and responsible manner with regard to every administrative action undertaken (Ako, 2025).

Conceptually, the role of archives in office administration cannot be understood as an additional activity or merely as a final output, but rather as an inherent part of the administrative work system. Archives simultaneously support process orderliness, information continuity, work coordination, as well as administrative efficiency and professionalism. Within this framework, the quality of office administration is largely determined by the extent to which archives are positioned and managed as a systemic element integrated with administrative service workflows. This understanding affirms that the strengthening of office administration cannot be separated from the strengthening of the function and position of archives within organisational administrative systems.

Archives and Accountability in Administrative Services

Accountability is a fundamental principle in administrative services because it reflects an organisation's ability to account for every process, decision, and service outcome delivered. In this context, archives play a role as the primary instrument that enables accountability processes to be carried out systematically and in a verifiable manner. Archives provide administrative evidence that documents the course of service delivery, so that accountability does not stop at normative statements, but is realised through documentation that can be traced and examined rationally. This role positions archives as the factual foundation of accountability in administrative services (Nurhafni et al., 2025).

From the perspective of public administration, service accountability cannot be separated from the principles of information openness and transparency. Archives function as sources of information that enable the public and stakeholders to understand how administrative services are carried out and how administrative decisions are made. When archives are not properly managed or access to information is restricted, transparency becomes weakened and accountability is more difficult to enforce. In the context of digital transformation, transparency increasingly depends on the ability of public institutions to manage and provide access to reliable information through digital administrative systems. Therefore, archival management has a direct relationship with efforts to strengthen transparency and accountability in administrative services (Slabu, 2022).

The relationship between archives and accountability is also associated with regulatory frameworks and organisational governance. Archives do not only function as documentation

outputs, but as instruments that support organisational compliance with accountability principles. Archival management that is aligned with governance frameworks enables organisations to demonstrate conformity between service procedures and prevailing accountability standards. Within this framework, archives function as a link between administrative service practices and organisational accountability mechanisms in a structural sense (Bangura, 2025).

In modern administration, archives are also understood as part of a system that supports sustainable public transparency and accountability (Sholikah & Oktarina, 2018). Archives enable service processes to be retraced, both for internal evaluation purposes and for external oversight. Through archives, organisations are able to explain the basis of decision-making and service workflows in a more open manner. This function indicates that archives are an important prerequisite for the realisation of administrative service accountability oriented towards the public interest (Dewi, 2025).

Archives play an important role in supporting the evaluation of administrative service performance because they provide the data and information required to assess the conformity between service implementation and established procedures and objectives. Performance evaluation based on archives enables assessments to be conducted in a more objective and measurable manner, as they are grounded in documented administrative archives (Farrell et al., 2023). Without adequate archival support, performance evaluation processes tend to be subjective and difficult to verify, thereby weakening accountability in administrative services (Widiyawati et al., 2023).

In addition to supporting performance evaluation, archives also play a role in ensuring administrative legitimacy and legal certainty in administrative services. From legal and administrative perspectives, archives function as administrative evidence that enables organisations to account for service actions and decisions before authorised parties (Figuerola, 2015). The existence of complete and well-organised archives provides a rational basis for organisations to explain and defend administrative decisions taken, thereby supporting the principles of fairness and administrative certainty in service provision (Kashaija, 2019).

Developments in information technology have also expanded the role of archives in supporting accountability in administrative services. The presentation of archives through digital media enables service information to be accessed more widely and encourages more active transparency (Pacios & La Torre Merino, 2018). In addition, the proactive provision of archives strengthens the relationship between organisations and the public by positioning

archives as a means of communication and organisational social responsibility (Pacios et al., 2022). Nevertheless, service accountability continues to depend on the reliability of archives as legitimate and accountable sources of information, particularly in the context of administrative services that are strategic in nature and have wide-ranging impacts (Permana, 2024).

Conceptually, archives have a role that is inseparable from efforts to realise accountability in administrative services. Archives enable process traceability, the provision of service evidence, performance evaluation, and organisational accountability to the public and stakeholders. Within this framework, accountability in administrative services is not only determined by the existence of formal procedures or regulations, but by the capacity of administrative systems to provide documentation that is legitimate, consistent, and traceable. This understanding affirms that strengthening accountability in administrative services requires the positioning of archives as strategic instruments integrated within office administrative systems.

Discussion

Archives need to be understood as a key element in an accountable office administrative system, rather than merely as the final product of administrative activities. In office administrative practice, archives are often treated as a follow-up activity carried out after service processes have been completed. This perspective causes archives to function in a reactive and limited manner, so that their contribution to the quality and accountability of administrative services does not develop optimally. However, thematic synthesis shows that archives have a more fundamental role in shaping the orderliness and rationality of administrative work.

When archives are positioned as an integral part of the administrative work system, the orientation of office administration shifts from merely completing procedures towards managing information and documentation that support the entire service cycle. Within this framework, archives function as a link between administrative procedures, the information produced, and organisational responsibility. Archives do not only record what has been done, but also shape how administrative work is planned, implemented, and evaluated. With this position, archives contribute directly to the quality of the administrative system, not only to its final outcomes.

Accountability in administrative services also cannot be separated from the way organisations manage their archives. However, the literature suggests that the existence of archives alone does not automatically generate accountability. Archives contribute to accountability only when they are systematically integrated into administrative workflows, governance structures, and information access mechanisms. Poorly organised archives may result in fragmented documentation, limited traceability, and difficulties in verifying administrative actions, thereby weakening accountability despite the formal existence of records. This indicates that accountability depends not merely on record availability, but on the organisational capacity to transform archival information into verifiable evidence for decision-making, evaluation, and public scrutiny.

The relationship between archives and accountability also indicates that the main issue in administrative services does not lie solely in the availability of standard operating procedures or administrative technologies, but in the integration of archives into service system design. In contemporary administrative environments, this challenge becomes more complex as accountability increasingly depends on digital records and information governance systems. While digitalisation expands information accessibility and service transparency, it also raises concerns regarding information authenticity, long-term preservation, and the reliability of electronic records as evidence. Consequently, accountable administrative services require not only effective archival management but also governance mechanisms capable of ensuring the integrity, accessibility, and trustworthiness of archival information throughout the service lifecycle.

The repositioning of archives as strategic instruments also has implications for office administrative work culture. This understanding encourages administrative personnel to work with a higher level of documentary awareness. Every administrative action is understood not merely as task completion, but as part of the organisation's accountability system. Such a work culture strengthens administrative professionalism and reduces ad hoc or informal work practices, which often become sources of weak service accountability.

In a broader context, the placement of archives within office administrative systems influences how organisations view services as processes that can be audited and evaluated. Archives enable organisations to reflect on service practices that have been implemented, identify weaknesses in administrative systems, and design evidence-based improvements. Thus, archives not only support retrospective accountability, but also contribute to improving service quality in the future.

Conceptually, the findings suggest that archives operate as a mediating mechanism linking administrative processes with accountability outcomes. Through their role in preserving administrative evidence, enabling process traceability, and supporting information transparency, archives transform administrative activities into accountable service systems. This synthesis proposes a conceptual relationship in which archives function not merely as documentary outputs, but as strategic infrastructures connecting administrative operations, transparency, accountability, and service quality. More specifically, archives provide administrative evidence that enables process traceability; process traceability strengthens transparency; and transparency ultimately reinforces accountability and service quality. Such a perspective extends existing discussions that primarily position archives as information repositories by highlighting their role as active components of accountable office administration.

Implications of Archival Management for Service Accountability

Understanding archives as instruments of accountability carries conceptual implications for how organisations design office administrative systems. Archival management can no longer be positioned as a supporting administrative activity, but rather as part of the service system architecture that underpins traceability and accountability. This implication demands a paradigm shift in archival management, from a storage-oriented approach towards an integrated service system orientation.

A further implication relates to how accountability in administrative services is understood. Accountability is not sufficiently understood as procedural compliance, but as the capacity of administrative systems to provide documentation that is legitimate, consistent, and verifiable. Within this framework, archives function as mechanisms that enable service accountability to be carried out in a rational and transparent manner, so that accountability becomes a system quality rather than merely a normative attribute.

Conceptually, these implications affirm that strengthening administrative services cannot be separated from strengthening the position of archives within office administrative systems. Archives need to be positioned as strategic instruments that shape the logic of service accountability and traceability. This implicative framework provides direction for the development of office administration that is not only efficient, but also accountable and oriented towards the public interest.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that archives have a strategic role in office administration and in the accountability of administrative services. Archives cannot be understood merely as the final product of administrative activities, but as an integral part of service systems that support process orderliness, service traceability, the provision of administrative evidence, and organisational accountability. Integrated archival management enables office administration to operate in a more orderly, efficient, and professional manner, while at the same time strengthening transparency and service accountability. Thus, strengthening accountability in administrative services cannot be separated from the conceptual repositioning of archives as strategic instruments within office administrative systems. This understanding provides a conceptual foundation for the development of policies and archival management practices oriented towards improving the quality and accountability of administrative services.

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