

# Historical Digitization Implementations to Classify the Educational and Cultural Resources of the Contemporary Royal History of Iraq 1921-1958

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## Abstract

Many government institutions that oversee archiving and preserving information in public libraries, or in unites of archiving information in research's related institutions, are still archiving documents in a paper form. Additionally, most employees have limited electronic experience of handling those documents or using digital methods. Therefore, and due to the digitization advancement of archiving methods around the world, digitizing the archive of the historical sources of Iraq's contemporary history became an urgent need. The study aims to achieve the following:

1. Save time and efforts for researchers, especially during the stage of collecting information to complete research studies related to Iraq's contemporary history.
2. Employ historical digitization to classify information and tabulating them in a chronical order, or subject order, for example political, economic, and social, or international relations, or biographies or translations of the influential figures in their specialized fields .
3. Historical digitization enhances cooperation between researchers inside and outside the country or with government and non-government institutions by exchanging knowledge and ideas.

**Keywords:** *Iraq; Royal History; digitization; Documents; Contemporary history*

## Introduction

The world is witnessing great changes in the fields of using new technologies, including digitization, which helped greatly, especially in the field of humanities and social studies, in boosting knowledge sharing between researchers and their use of various sources. This became especially important after the digitization of sources, data and information from their paper form into a digital form. Those documents include published and unpublished documents, manuscripts, films and recordings, which now can be used in unlimited ways through smart phones. This is where the idea of this study stems from, the study employed digitization implementation on the sources of Iraq's contemporary royal history (1921-1958).

## The Importance of the Study

This study is especially important because social media became very effective in bringing individuals and communities together. Social media made the world borderless and eliminated obstacles, it created a clear space of knowledge

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sharing and easy education for all. Therefore, achieving the steps of making sustainable development available for historical and social studies. Meanwhile, historical digitization can provide great services for its users with a very little cost and the easiest ways.

### **Problem of the Study**

Many government institutions that oversee archiving and preserving information in public libraries, or in archiving information departments in research's related institutions, are still archiving documents in a paper form. Additionally, most employees have limited electronic experience of handling those documents or using digital methods. Therefore, and due to the digitization advancement of archiving methods around the world, digitizing the archive of the historical sources of Iraq's contemporary history became an urgent need.

### **Goals of the Study**

There is no doubt that the historical digitization implementation of the sources of Iraq's royal history can achieve the goals of the two researchers for this study. The goals are:

- a. Preserve the archive of Iraq's historical sources and keep it away from intentional and unintentional damage.
- b. Save time and efforts for researchers, especially during the stage of collecting information to complete research studies related to Iraq's contemporary history.
- c. Employ historical digitization to classify information and tabulate them in a chronological order, or subject order, for example political, economic, social, international relations, biographies and translations of the influential figures in their specialized fields.
- d. Historical digitization enhances cooperation between researchers inside and outside the country or with government and non-government institutions by exchanging knowledge and ideas.
- e. Historical digitization boosts historical problematic research and opens up to international modern schools such as American Psychological Association (APA) and University of Harvard.

The mechanism, the steps, the conclusions, the suggestions and the recommendations of the study come from the highlights of these ambitious goals of the historical digitization of the sources of Iraq's royal contemporary history.

### **First: Introducing concepts and terms.**

- i. Classifying the historical archive
- ii. The Iraqi contemporary historical archive
- iii. Royal court archive
- iv. Cabinet's office
- v. Electronic Archive
- vi. Digitization
- vii. Government's archive
- viii. Electronic digitization software
- ix. Unpublished documents
- x. Published documents
- xi. Government's publications

**Second: The implementation of Historical Digitization of the Unpublished Documents.**

- a. The unpublished documents of the royal court.
- b. Unpublished Cabinet documents.
- c. Foreign Ministry Documents and the reports of the Iraqi missions abroad.

**Third: Historical Digitization Implementations/ Published Documents**

- a. Parliament's meetings' minutes/ regular and irregular.
- b. Senate meetings' minutes.
- c. Government's departments and ministries' Reports.

**Fourth: Government's Publications and the Historical Digitization Implementations.****First: Introducing terms and concepts**

- a. Organizing the historical archive: it is the process of organizing and tabulating documents and information of the services and production institutions, which is documented in official and unofficial government letters. Therefore, it is included within the historical archive and the heritage of a country.
- b. The Iraqi contemporary historical archive: a group of national documents related to Iraq's history and its heritage since the establishment of the Iraqi state in 1921. These documents include the archive of the institutions of state's three authorities: the legislative, the executive and the judicial.
- c. The royal court archive: It is the royal court and its related departments archive (Al-Marsomi, 1991, P.20). It includes the documents of the royal court of the king of Iraq activities, the documents of the ceremonial department that organizes the king's meetings and the documents of the royal protocol department related to assigning and forming the governments. The details of those documents are archived in the national center to preserved documents in Baghdad (the national library).
- d. The Cabinet archive: It is the preserved documents, the official letters and instructions and regulations issued by the Cabinet and are related to the governments (Al-Bawai, 2023, P.12). It includes the archive of the prime minister's office, the archive of the cabinet that includes the cabinet's reports and the resolutions that are issued after regular and urgent cabinet's meetings. This archive includes the work of 59 ministries that were formed during the royal era from 1921-1958.
- e. The electronic archive: It is the process of digitizing and saving the information in files, it is also known as digital documents. During this process, the documents are changed from a paper form to a digital form saved in electronic files through scanning.(Farhood, 2020, P.9)
- f. Digitization: It is the process of transforming the document and manuscripts from a paper form into a digital form where it can be read electronically. This digital form is formed of smaller units called Pixels, it can be saved in different formats according to how advanced technology is.
- g. The government's archive: It includes the digitized documents of the official government's institutions and general companies; those documents lie under laws and regulations to regulate handling them with or without reservations. The State Institutions and the public companies' managements decide the handling level in accordance with the importance of the document. (Ramidh, al-Rais, 2024).

- h. Electronic digitization software: It is the software used to implement the historical digitization, it includes documents' software: Bitrix 24 that manages client's relations, File Hold, Lonely Office and DMS.M and logic gate. (Electrica Archiving, 2024).
- i. Unpublished documents: They include the government and non-government documents that have not been published in the government's media, publications and prints and have been handled with limitations and according to the importance of the document. Those documents are considered original sources and have a virgin historical content. It is also an important source for historical contemporary studies. (No history without documents). (Taha, 1990, P.91)
- j. Published documents: they include the government documents that have been published in several media outlets such as the parliament's meetings minutes and the governments and non-governmental institutions. They are important because they are a source of knowledge after the unpublished sources.
- k. Government's publications : They are the prints that express the governmental institutions point of views. They are issued as daily, sessional or annual periodic issues. They publish the regulations, (Naji, 2021, P.15) and they are available for everyone such as Alwaqa' Allraqia newspaper. They also include the government documents of the Iraqi ministries during the royal era.

## **Second: The implementation of Historical Digitization of the Unpublished Documents.**

- a. The unpublished documents of the royal court.

These documents were sources for researchers and higher studies students, especially those who are specialized in Iraq's contemporary history during the royal era from 1921-1958. These documents include the documents and the archive of the ceremonies and the reception of the king for official and local delegations, the documents of the department of royal protocols and the document of the king's local and international visits and social events. Most of these documents are saved in the Iraqi National Library and Archive in Baghdad (the national library), in file number 311, they are scanned as microfilm tapes (slides). They were saved using old technology more than three decades ago, they can be used by researchers, but there many problems:

- Low quality preservation method, many documents are hard to read and interpret.
- Many commas between documenting the sequence of the years.
- Fewer devices compared to the number of researchers.
- Fewer experienced technicians in those devices.

Therefore, re-digitizing these documents using today's technology is extremely important using today's technology, by providing scanners, projectors, data show devices, electronic boards and other software i.e. Bitrix 24, File Hold and DMS.M. (Electronic digitization Software, 2024)

- b. Unpublished Cabinet documents.

The archive of the Cabinet's meetings' minutes during the royal era from 1921-1958. The file of these documents is a fundamental source for researchers and higher education students of contemporary history. It is the archive of the meeting's minutes of the Iraqi governments during the royal era; there are 59 governments, which have regular weekly meetings and irregular meetings (Al-Bawi, 2023, P.25). Those meetings' minutes are saved in microfilm tapes as slides preserved in the Iraqi National Library archive in Baghdad. Researchers face the same problems explained in the royal court archive when using these documents. Therefore, there is still a

need to digitize them using historical digitizing and electronic archiving. They must be indexed and complete what is missing in those meetings' minutes. Several experienced employees in the field of electronic archiving must be assigned for this task and they must complete training courses in this field. This study will provide suggestions for carrying out this task.

c. Foreign Ministry Documents and the reports of the Iraqi missions abroad.

The documents of the Iraqi foreign ministry provided major information for researchers and higher studies students, especially the reports of the Iraqi missions abroad, Arab, and non-Arab countries. They recorded the events in the countries they were serving. These reports are inclusive and various: political, social, and economical. These documents are saved in microfilms slides, and researchers face the same technical problems explained earlier. Therefore, they need to be digitized, scanned, their database reorganized, their electronic systems operated and indexed and given a code. It is worth praising the great job that Bait al-Hikma did when they took over the task of collecting the reports of the Iraqi missions abroad including the reprost of the Iraqi mission in Ankara, Sana, Amman and other capitals (Tawfiq, 2002, P.19). Therefore, these documents can be electronically archived, which will facilitate the mission of the researchers to access them easily and rapidly.

**Third: Historical digitization implementation/ Published documents**

a. Parliament members meeting minutes/ regular and irregular

The legislative authority in Iraq formed an integral part of building the system of the Iraqi state from the beginning of forming the Iraqi Constituent Assembly 1924 (Al-Adhamai, 1989, P.10). It was followed by the establishment of the Parliament that represented the Iraq public opinion. It was responsible for issuing law and legislations that regulates the public life in Iraq during all the 16th elections for the period from 1925-1958 (Wamish,2024). The Parliament held regular and irregular sessions depending on the events that were happening in Iraq during the royal era. These minutes are archived and preserved in the Iraqi National Library and Archive in Baghdad in sequenced volumes and organized in specific methods. The parliament's sessions start with the head of the session reading the agenda to discuss the law drafts or discuss issues submitted by the members. Sessions may host the Prime Minister to discuss specific issues. The number and the date of each session is recorded as well as the name of the members who heads the session and the name of which Iraqi district he represents. All the details were recorded in these minutes, which provided very important information for researchers. They were typed using a traditional typewriter with limited copies and they may be the only copies there, therefore students line up to access them and it takes a long time and effort to get the information they need for their researches, because they have to go through hundreds of pages to get to what they want. Therefore this group of documents is in extreme need to be electronically digitized and archived, scanned and organized according to various indexes. Thus, they can be used electronically and saved in digital resprotaries and websites and can be used by researchers easily.

b. Iraqi Senate meetings minutes

Most of the senate members are chosen by the king, they are usually well known political activities or social roles, or former prime ministers, or parliament speakers. The Senate and the Parliament form the National Assembly. The same protocol is followed in each part of the National Assembly, they hold regular and irregular sessions recorded in detailed minutes. The Senate role is mostly for consultation purposes. The Senate minutes are archived in a paperform and they need to be digitized, because it will save researchers and higher studies students time and effort.

c. Government reports of ministries and state's departments.

These documents are one of the main sources of education to learn about the activities of the government's departments and ministries, such as the ministry of foreign affairs, the ministry of defense and the ministry of finance

or the services ministries such as the ministry of education, the ministry of transportation and labor, the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of municipalities and other ministries (Kadhim, 2012, P.406). Most of the reports of the meetings of these ministries and departments are archived and preserved at the Iraqi National Library and Archive in Baghdad. They are rich in information that helps students in their studies and research, but accessing them is very limited and some copies are preserved in the ministries buildings themselves. However, after 2003, many departments and ministries were burned, looted and destroyed and the national archive is one of them, which made it difficult for researchers to access them. Therefore digitization implementation for this group of documents is extremely important in order to be accessed by researchers especially regarding issues related to ministries and government departments that take care of academic studies.

#### **Fourth: Governments prints and the digitization implementation.**

Government prints are a very important source for studying Iraq's contemporary history, because they document the state departments' archive. Al-waqa' al-Iraqia newspaper is one of those documents (ministry of justice, al-Waqa' al-Iraqia website, 2024) that helped publish laws, regulations, resolutions and amendments issued by the legislative authority in Iraq. The first publication of the newspaper was in 1922 and it continued to be published during the history of the Iraqi state from its establishment until today. The publications of the newspaper are now preserved in the Iraqi National Library and the archive of the Ministry of Justice and they are in a desperate need for electronic digitization implementation. Many researchers from different specialties use these publications, especially because they were publishing laws and regulations including preambles and the content of the legislative materials. Digitizations of these publications will facilitate using them especially because there are thousands of them now. It will enable researchers to access them regardless of place and time. As far as other government prints including 1936 Directory (the Directory, 1936, P. 12) and 1960 Directory (the Directory, 1960, P.10), these two books were issued as paper copies, therefore they should be digitally archived. As well as the political, the media and the translations encyclopedias (al-Matba'i 1995) and the encyclopedia of Iraqi tribes and cities. Therefore we are establishing an extremely important project of digital archiving and taking a leading step toward international documentation.

#### **Conclusions, suggestions and recommendations:**

**First:** electronic digitization applications helped boost researchers' abilities to access information of different fields of education including humanities, social and historical studies. This happened through the softwares and the artificial intelligence applications in the field of electronically archiving information, especially in the field of history including published and unpublished documents and other sources mentioned in this study.

**Second:** The digitization implementation technology advancement was reflected upon the rapid completion of researches, whether they were academic research thesis or special researches, it saved researchers time and efforts to complete their projects.

**Third:** Studies have shown that the digitization implementation and electronic archiving of the sources of the contemporary history of Iraq is very limited, especially the unpublished documents. Because they are using microfilm slides and most of them are unclear and part of them are omitted. Only a few devices are available for researchers who face great difficulties using them.

**Fourth:** Digitizing the archive of Iraq's contemporary history can be used to organize historical information and reorganize them following the historical research methods, such as the logical and archeological order of the events. They can also be organized using titles: political, social, and economic and they can also be organized by translations and biographies.

**Fifth:** Digitization implementation of the field of historical and social studies helps students and researchers change the traditional ways of historical research by using modern electronic methods. Thus, we are taking major steps to go alongside historical and international schools.

**Sixth:** The study suggests opening specialized units in the Departments of History in Iraqi universities named as (historical digitization unit) or (electronic library) managed by professional staff in the field of digitization implementation.

**Seventh:** The study suggests creating a new class of historical digitization as a major class in the curriculum of historical research. There is no doubt that this matches the international criteria in the field of historical studies.

**Eighth:** The study recommends adopting a strategic project of short, medium and long term phases of historical digitization. The project must be supervised by professional staff from the ministry of higher education and scientific research and the ministry of culture and artifacts by consulting international companies majored in this field and in accordance with international standards.

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