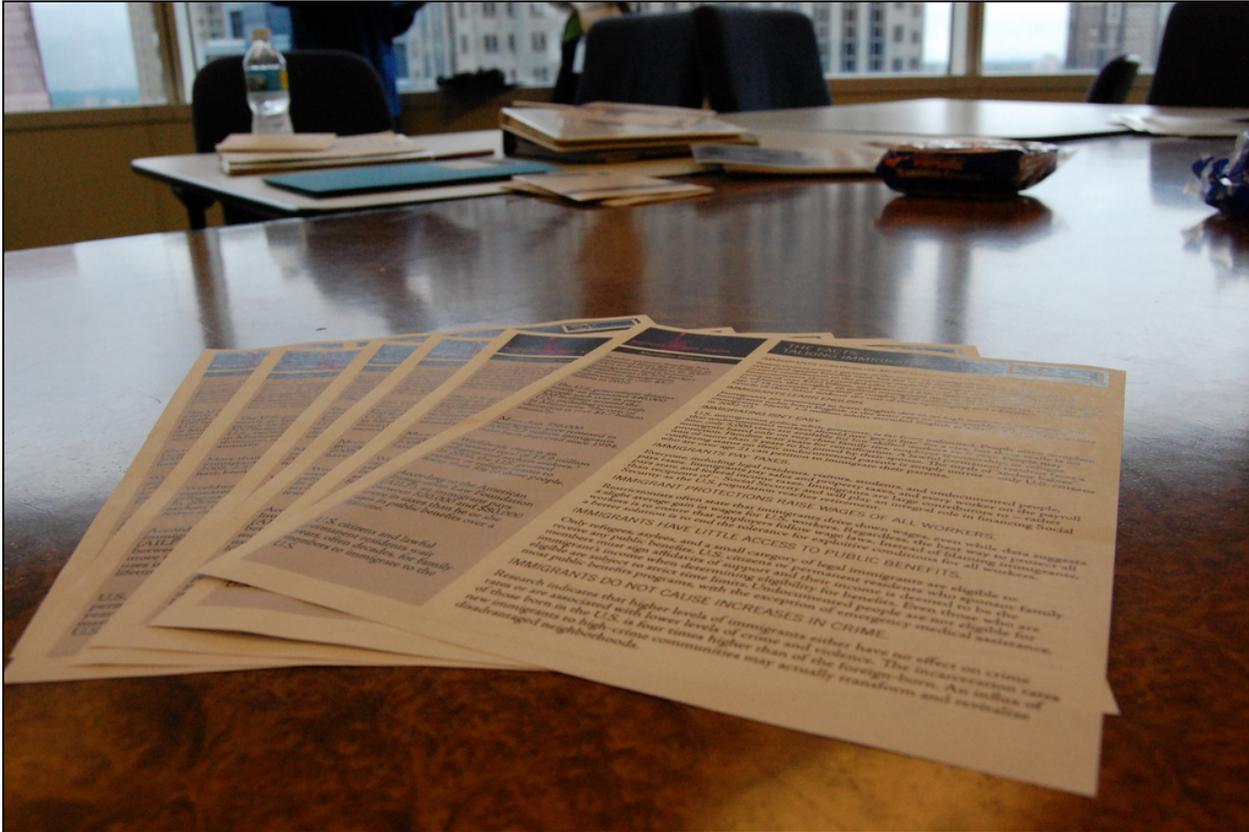


Appendix A. Document Storage



Advocates must decide how to store the data they collect during the monitoring process. The following provides an overview of storage techniques by medium. In general, physical data storage media are longer lasting than digital storage media, and are therefore preferable for archival purposes. However, digital storage media provide a more cost-effective way to store, disseminate, and index data. The mix of data storage techniques advocates employ might depend on many factors, including their budget, their planned use for the data, and the level of confidentiality their project requires.

Printed documents and microfiche

Many archivists agree that printed documents are an excellent way to permanently record information, but that digital formats are more suitable for immediate use and dissemination.¹ The estimated storage life of properly maintained documents is 500–1000 years,² and 500 years for microfiche.³ Storing printed documents can be a resource-intensive endeavor and may not be realistic for some projects. Especially for organizations with limited space, it may be difficult to maintain files on site for any length of time. Besides occupying a large amount of space, printed documents are more difficult to index and disseminate than digital formats. Finally, where proper storage conditions are not practical, printed documents are extremely sensitive to damage from fire, theft, and degradation.

¹ Louis Bickford, Patricia Karam, Hassan Mneimneh, and Patrick Pierce, *Documenting Truth* (New York: ICTJ New York, 2009), 20. Also available online at http://www.ictj.org/static/Publications/ICTJ_DAG_DocumentingTruth_pa2009.pdf.

² ASTM D 3290-00, "Standard Specification for Bond and Ledger Papers for Permanent Records," section 3.2.3.2 and Appendix X1.

³ Steve Dalton, "6.1 Microfilm and Microfiche," in *Preservation Leaflets* (Northeast Document Conservation Center), accessed Nov. 16, 2010, <http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/6Reformatting/01MicrofilmAndMicrofiche.php>.

Like printed documents, microfiche is cumbersome to index and more suitable for archival preservation of data than the convenient dissemination of information. Unlike paper files, microfiche is an exceedingly compact format and therefore very inexpensive to store. Unlike paper files, however, microfiche requires the intervention of an archival professional to convert documents into that medium—as well as the money to do so.

If advocates seek to form a partnership with an academic archive to permanently store a project's data, they might consider converting their files to microfiche as a cost-effective way to preserve data for posterity. Because microfiche medium enables an archival organization to store a large volume of information in a small amount of space, the long-term cost of preserving data is much lower than for paper documents, which require a larger amount of space.

Also, advocates can consider scanning physical documents and saving them in electronic form as a PDF document. They should consider their server capacity and whether the documents will overburden storage space.

Library-style documentation

If advocates choose to store their data in paper form, it will probably be necessary to impose some unifying organizational scheme over the information. The human rights documentation NGO, HURIDOCs, provides a comprehensive set of resources detailing how to document and store information collected in the course of human rights work. The HURIDOCs website features a number of publications, from a systematic way of recording names⁴ to establishing a controlled vocabulary to use in your documentation.⁵

Databases

Databases provide the optimal medium to store, share, and analyze large amounts of information. With proper database software, it is easy to systematically document events using a standardized reporting format. Information entered into a database can be immediately shared with other database users, and the format of the database itself helps ensure that data is collected according to specified parameters. The advantage of using a database—and in particular, the advantage of using an off-the-shelf human rights database—is that the software itself imposes a scheme upon users which enables them to document comprehensively. However, advocates who rely on paper will need to form their own method to document, sort, file, and cross-reference data. Another disadvantage of databases is that they may be excessive depending on an organization's goals: for small projects narrowly focusing on a specific inquiry, it may be unnecessary to set up a database system.

Simple databases can be constructed using software such as Microsoft Access. Also free, off-the-shelf database solutions have been specifically designed for use by human rights organizations: Martus⁶ and OpenEvSys.⁷ Both programs are specifically adapted to human rights projects because they provide a standardized format to record victim, perpetrator and type of abuse.

Martus

Martus is a secure database system that enables human rights organizations to document events. Unlike OpenEvSys, Martus features strong data encryption to protect information. Organizations wishing to use Martus must first install Martus software on local computers. Users input information into the Martus database by using this software. Next, human rights organizations must either set up a Martus server locally or make arrangements

⁴ Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation Series, "How to Record the Names of Persons," accessed Nov. 10, 2010, <http://www.huridocs.org/resource/how-to-record-names-of-persons>.

⁵ Human Rights Data Analysis Group, "Controlled Vocabulary," accessed Nov. 10, 2010, <http://www.huridocs.org/resource/controlled-vocabulary/>.

⁶ The Global Human Rights Abuse Reporting System, "Martus," <http://www.martus.org>.

⁷ HURIDOCs, "OpenEvSys—for Documenting Violations," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, <http://www.huridocs.org/openevsys/>.

with an existing, public Martus server.⁸ After the server infrastructure is established, advocates may upload reports to the central server where they will become readable and searchable by others within an organization. The developers of Martus offer assistance to human rights organizations in both setting up the software and providing initial training to organization workers.

OpenEvSys and Huridocs

HURIDOCS⁹ is an NGO specializing in helping other NGOs develop human rights data management systems. As a part of this mission, HURIDOCS provides both detailed information about how to document human rights violations in addition to developing the OpenEvSys database system.¹⁰

OpenEvSys is largely comparable to Martus, except that it does not use secure encryption technology. As with Martus, OpenEvSys users must establish a server after installing the software on local computers. As the HURIDOCS website cautions, using a complex database system such as OpenEvSys is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and OpenEvSys may not be suitable for smaller human rights projects. Because it provides comprehensive support for human rights documentation, however, an organization can implement a data management solution appropriate for its needs.¹¹

IT SOS: Forming partnerships with other organizations

Smaller organizations may lack the resources and expertise necessary to implement a complex digital data management scheme. In this case, advocates might find it helpful to seek the help of an outside organization in setting up their IT infrastructure. Beyond consulting with other human rights NGOs, advocates might form partnerships with private firms in with extensive IT departments, academic institutions or other non-profit organizations.

Free online storage media

The proliferation of free, online data storage services offered over the Internet presents a low-cost vehicle for human rights organizations to save and disseminate data. With the advent of Flickr, Facebook, and other online networking and data sharing forums, there are numerous tools for publishing information. As with other electronic storage media, however, advocates might consider both the level of security required for their project and their long term plans for the data before selecting an option.

The advantages of online storage media are legion. First, online storage media present a free, turnkey solution for advocates' data storage and sharing needs. With free online services, there is a minimum of work and expense entailed in getting a project off the ground. Second, online storage media provide an easy way to share information among colleagues both in the office and in the field. Through online storage services, data collected remotely may be quickly saved and relayed to the central office for examination. Finally, online storage media require neither additional physical storage space nor the expense of additional employees. Particularly for smaller organizations with limited budgets and non-existent IT staffs, online storage media may provide an attractive means to store photographs, text documents, sound files, and videos.

While free online storage media are both cheap and convenient, they do present several drawbacks of which advocates should be aware. First, they offer limited data security in comparison with other electronic storage media. While most services allow users to password protect the data they post to their accounts, the security of

⁸ Martus, "Martus Servers," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, <http://www.martus.org/products/servers.shtm>. (As of this writing, the Martus web site lists three public Martus servers.)

⁹ HURIDOCS, "Home Page," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, <http://www.huridocs.org>.

¹⁰ HURIDOCS, "How to record the names of persons," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, <http://www.huridocs.org/resource/how-to-record-names-of-persons/>.

¹¹ HURIDOCS, "OpenEvsys—for Documenting Violations," *supra* note 7.

this information is much weaker than encrypted private databases such as Martus.¹² Before advocates use free online storage media, they might consider the level of confidentiality their project necessitates. If advocates anticipate quickly publishing all of the data they collect, online storage may be a viable option. However, if the data is being prepared in contemplation of litigation, advocates might consider a more secure alternative.

Free online storage media also present a second problem. Like all forms of electronic data storage, online storage is not an archival medium. If an organization wishes to preserve data for posterity, it should consider using an alternative medium. Of course, advocates need not choose one medium to the total exclusion of the other: rather, advocates might initially store data digitally and then later preserve the information in an archival format.

Forming a retention policy

Advocates eventually face the question of how long they should retain the data they collect. The answer to this question depends on a number of factors, including the resources available to advocates for storing the data and advocates' ability to form partnerships with archival organizations to permanently preserve the data. While there are several rules of thumb to guide the development of an organization's data management scheme—advocates should, for example, make best efforts to preserve original source materials—there is no single answer to how long advocates should keep documents.

Ad hoc organizations and the long-term preservation of data

One facet of this inquiry is the capability of advocates to maintain files over the long term. If an organization is an established, ongoing concern with dedicated office space and permanent employees, then maintaining extensive files in-house remains a viable possibility. However, if an organization is an ad hoc group convened solely to produce a single report, then maintaining files over any length of time will require partnership with an outside organization. For example, though the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission disbanded after publishing its final report in 2006, its web site is still being maintained by a local Internet Service Provider.¹³ Copies of the Commission's final report are being held by several academic libraries.¹⁴ Thus, though the Commission no longer exists, its work continues to inform the public because of the Commission's partnership with outside organizations.

Maintaining confidences

In the field of human rights work, NGOs often collect information on extremely sensitive topics. There are many reasons why the information a person provides could be harmful. Very real legal or extra-legal consequences may flow from the disclosure of confidential data to third parties. Thus, when advocates design an organization's data management scheme, they must weigh how heavily they wish to emphasize the protection of respondent confidentiality.

Maintaining respondent confidentiality has several aspects. Confidential data must be protected against security breaches. Before implementing an organization's data management system, advocates should ask themselves several pertinent questions: How is the data stored? Who has access to it? What precautions have been taken against the disclosure of confidential information? For projects entailing the use of physical data, information

¹² Martus, "Frequently Asked Questions," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, <http://www.martus.org/concept/faqs.shtml>. (Martus employs an easy-to-use encryption system to protect data available on its website.)

¹³ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Homepage," accessed Nov. 10, 2010, <http://www.greensborotrc.org/index.php>.

¹⁴ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and other Public Bodies on May 25, 2006* (Greensboro, NC: Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2006). Also available online at <http://www.worldcat.org/title/final-report-examination-of-the-context-causes-sequence-and-consequence-of-the-events-of-november-3-1979-presented-to-the-residents-of-greensboro-the-city-the-greensboro-truth-and-community-reconciliation-project-and-other-public-bodies-on-may-25-2006/>.

security is a relatively straightforward affair. However, where data is digitized and placed on a network, advocates may have to consult an information technology specialist to adequately protect the confidentiality of a project's data.

To share or not to share? The historian's dilemma

In light of the concerns advocates may face regarding the confidentiality of the data they collect, one further issue is whether an organization plans to share the data it collects with an archival organization. The dilemma is thus: perhaps that an advocate has promised his respondent total confidentiality, and the advocate is thus ethically bound to prevent harm from coming to his respondent. However, the best way for an advocate to allow future generations to remember an event is by preserving data collected from respondents, and in particular, preserving the first hand accounts of victims. Thus, advocates may need to contemplate how they will navigate the dual imperatives of protecting their respondents and preserving the memory of an event. How will advocates balance the need to protect respondents and respect their wishes while also preserving the memory of an event? This is not an easy question to answer, and advocates should carefully consider this issue before making representations to an interviewee about how his information will be stored.

The importance of primary sources

Primary sources such as interview notes, interview transcripts, observation notes, and other forms of evidence advocates collect, should be preserved to the extent possible. This is a standard archival principle to which, for example, human rights documentation NGO HURIDOCS subscribes.¹⁵ Interviews with subjects, field notes, photographic documentation, and other primary sources are worth preserving after publication for several reasons. First, original sources provide credibility to final reports advocates publish. Without original sources on hand to substantiate the claims made in final reports, advocate publications would be subject to attack from adversaries. Additionally, original sources provide a means for posterity to understand a particular event. While a final report may contain a useful synthesis of the data it has collected, the original data itself permits future generations to develop a deeper understanding of an event. Without the preservation of original source materials, historians will be unable to re-examine the event advocates seek to document.

Web sources: The limited memory of the Internet

In many cases, it will not be necessary to preserve secondary sources because they will be readily obtainable by readers of a report. One exception to this rule is for data obtained from web sites. Because the Internet is such a highly dynamic medium, content often appears and disappears with little notice. Though some projects exist to archive the ever-changing content of the world wide web,¹⁶ it is generally impossible to view content which has been removed from the web. For this reason, advocates might consider retaining copies of secondary sources which they cite in their final report. As with primary sources, the principal reason to preserve secondary sources is to maintain the credibility of a final report. Because the web sites advocates cite are less likely to be of lasting historical importance than the first-hand accounts they collect as primary sources, it may not be necessary to keep them for very long beyond the publication of the report.

The value of partnering with outside archival organizations

Many human rights organizations are not equipped to perform the task of long-term archival storage of primary sources. If advocates have collected data which might be of interest to posterity, they might consider making arrangements to store the data with existing human rights archives and libraries. One useful source for finding an archival repository for original sources is the Center for Research Libraries Human Rights Archives and

¹⁵ Manuel Guzman and Bert Verstappen, "What is Monitoring," vol. 1 of *Human Rights Monitoring and Documentation* (Versoix, Switzerland: HURIDOCS 2003), 18.

¹⁶ Internet Archive, "Wayback Machine," accessed Jan. 23, 2014, <http://www.archive.org/web/web.php> (as an example).

Documentation Program (HRADP).¹⁷ This program works specifically to find proper archival storage places for human rights documents. By contacting HRADP, advocates might be able to find a permanent storage solution for their original sources.

¹⁷ Center for Research Libraries, "HRADP," accessed Nov. 10, 2010, <http://www.crl.edu/grn/hradp>.

Photograph and Image Credits

Appendix A

page A-1 John Getsinger, The Advocates for Human Rights