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Archives, Reading Promotion, and the City

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Archives, Reading Promotion, and the City: Investigating Archival and Library Science Students' Attitudes toward the educational role of historical and literary archives in Reading Engagement

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Abstract:

Purpose - *This study explores the attitudes of students in the Department of Archives, Library and Information Studies (ALIS) towards the educational role of literary and historical archives in Reading Engagement practices. It focuses on literature as a tool for shaping historical memory and the city as a field of reading and experiential involvement.*

Design/methodology/approach - *A qualitative approach was adopted, utilizing focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaires. A total of 42 students participated in four focus groups, with 20 providing valid questionnaire responses. The case study centered on the literary representation of 20th-century Athens.*

Findings - *Participants acknowledged the significant role of libraries and archives in promoting reading culture and fostering historical awareness. They proposed creative practices such as reading groups, collaborations with cultural institutions, and workshops linking literary materials to historical events.*

Originality/value - *This study contributes to understanding the evolving role of Information Science as a mediator of education. It underscores the importance of enhancing literary and archival literacy among future professionals. Furthermore, it highlights the potential of literary and historical collections to foster multiple literacies (historical, cultural, and digital) among users and to support the social role of Information Organizations as interdisciplinary, participatory, and experiential learning environments.*

Index Terms — Archival literacy, Reading promotion, Literary archives, Experiential learning, Cultural heritage, Urban studies, Historical memory, Information behavior, Focus groups

I. INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES IN FOSTERING A READING CULTURE AMONG USERS

Libraries and archives play a pivotal role in literary engagement and serve as key institutions in cultivating a reading culture, particularly among young people [1]. Beyond their traditional mission as custodians of knowledge, they have evolved into dynamic environments of learning and cultural activation [2], offering stimuli that enhance multiliteracy [3] and promote the interconnection between literature, history, and archival literacy [4]. Through exposure to literary works and historical documents, young individuals engage with collective memory, gain insights into identity, and reflect upon their social roles [5].

The encounter between literature and archival material activates experiential processes, rendering narratives multi-layered and interactive. Reading is transformed into an act of identification, participation, and expression, while literary engagement fosters an intertextual approach and a personal relationship with written discourse. A positive attitude toward literature is not confined to the selection of appropriate texts; it also requires active pedagogical practices such as creative writing, digital storytelling, experiential historical inquiry, and interdisciplinary approaches to sources [6]. Consequently, libraries and archives must redefine their role as open, participatory, and creative cultural hubs [7].

In this context, the study explored the attitudes of students from the Department of Archival, Library & Information Studies (ALIS) toward the educational value of literary and historical archives and their contribution to fostering reading motivation. The qualitative research was conducted during the spring semester of 2025 through focus group discussions

[8]-[9] within courses related to Literature, Cultural History, Archival Studies, and the development of academic and professional skills for emerging Information Scientists. At the conclusion of the discussions, those who wished to participate further completed an open-ended questionnaire, reflecting on their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions regarding the pedagogical use of literary and archival documents in educational and cultural settings [10].

II. LITERARY COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVAL LITERACY, AND READING ENGAGEMENT: PURPOSE AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Reading Engagement (or Reading Facilitation) is a structured pedagogical and cultural intervention aimed at fostering interest in reading, strengthening personal connections to texts, and developing creative, critical, and emotional skills [11]. These strategies go beyond simple comprehension or reproduction of content; they promote active participation, emotional involvement, critical reception, and aesthetic appreciation. As a contemporary educational practice, they merge literary experience with creative expression, personal engagement, and interdisciplinary learning.

The concept of Reading Engagement is grounded in a broader theoretical framework of literary mediation, wherein reading is seen as a collective experience and a means of cultural empowerment [12]. Its theoretical foundation draws from various pedagogical and philological traditions, including: a. M. Bakhtin's dialogic theory [13], which views the text as a site of dialogue and polyphony, b. Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory [14], which considers reading a co-creative act between reader and text, c. the critical pedagogies of Paulo Freire [15] and bell hooks [16], which advocate for participatory, emancipatory, and politically conscious learning, d. Reader-Response Theory as articulated by Iser [17] and Fish [18], which emphasizes the reader's role in constructing meaning.

The integration of personal experiences enhances emotional engagement, identification, and self-awareness - core elements in the reading development of children and adolescents- and support the formation of positive reading attitudes in young adults. Experiential Reading, through identification or empathy, paired with an interdisciplinary approach that connects literature to history, sociology, art, and local heritage, provides the foundation for a richer, more expansive reading experience. This set of strategies transforms reading from a passive act into an experiential process, cultivating imagination, empathy, and creativity in learners [19].

The term Experiential or Interactive Reading refers to a dynamic mode of engagement that encourages active participation, communication, and collaboration among readers. This method is implemented across various contexts and thematic units, offering a creative and alternative approach to storytelling. Specifically, it enhances listening, concentration, and expressive skills, while also contributing to the development of social and interpretative abilities, thereby strengthening participants' engagement and sense of agency. Experiential Reading lies at the core of reading communities and aligns with the principles of social-emotional learning (SEL), supporting self-awareness, social awareness, and emotional regulation [20]. Through techniques such as dramatic play, creative writing, personal reading journals, and visual representations, participants are encouraged to enjoy reading, interpret texts through their own experiences, and incorporate them into their personal narratives [21].

Viewed in this light, the process contributes to the formation of narrative identity by providing young people with tools to understand and interpret their experiences [22]. Through guided facilitation, reading is transformed from a static to a dialogic process, whereby participants: a. share personal experiences inspired by the text, b. write or perform as characters, c. explore ethical and existential questions raised by the narrative.

Additionally, the concept of "interdisciplinarity" is inherently connected to the goals and methods of reading engagements, reflecting a contemporary educational imperative to link literature with the arts, social sciences, philosophy, sustainable development, and digital technologies [23]. These practices are situated within the framework of Holistic Pedagogy, which integrates cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions of learning. Through this integration, reading becomes a vehicle for active citizenship and interdisciplinary knowledge [24], while also enhancing metacognitive awareness and a comprehensive understanding of the world [25].

A central role in these processes is played by Archival Literacy, which involves developing skills to locate, interpret, and critically engage with primary sources. By interacting with manuscripts, audiovisual materials, and oral testimonies, participants access authentic traces of the past—not merely as sources of information, but as catalysts for reflection and creative reconstruction of historical experiences [26]. Archival Literacy offers an innovative enrichment to reading engagements by introducing the concept of evidence-based reading. Engagement with primary sources -whether in physical or digital archives, or

drawn from local and family histories- cultivates critical thinking, historical interpretation, and aesthetic literacy [27].

Incorporating authentic archival materials adds historical depth and multiplicity to the reading experience, especially when used through digital storytelling, oral histories, and interactive applications [28]. The use of archival resources also promotes Intergenerational Learning, particularly through family or community heritage narratives and records [29]. Such practices encourage cultural awareness, emotional proximity to the past, and the development of digital literacy [30]. Furthermore, combining literary texts with archival documentation supports the development of critically literate citizens —individuals capable of evaluating the role of memory, historical narrative, and documentation in public discourse. Engagement with archival material also facilitates the processing of traumatic experiences through narrative therapeutic approaches [31].

In this direction, the present study emphasizes the cultural and pedagogical value of literary and historical archives in activities that promote a reading culture. In a time of ongoing transformations in information, learning, and communication, archival and library institutions must redefine their roles as hubs of cultural mediation and active learning environments [32]. This study explores how archival material can be creatively utilized in educational reading engagements within memory spaces such as libraries and archives, activating young people's imagination and cultural participation [33]. It also underscores the evolving role of archivists and librarians as mediators between citizens and cultural heritage.

The aim of this research is to examine the attitudes of students in the Department of ALIS toward the educational role of historical and literary archives in reading engagements, focusing on literature as a medium for shaping historical memory and on the city as a space for experiential and literary exploration. Within this framework, the specific objectives of the study are:

a. To investigate students' perceptions of the cultural and pedagogical role of archives in reading engagements.

b. To highlight literature as a vehicle for historical memory and as a tool for "reading" the city as a social and experiential space.

c. To document attitudes regarding the role of Information Science professionals as mediators who utilize archival collections to foster reading habits and historical awareness.

d. To explore practical applications of creatively using archival material in educational activities for young adults.

e. To enhance understanding of the contribution of literary collections to aesthetic literacy and critical thinking through their association with memory and place.

f. To deepen reflection on the evolving role of Information Science professionals, as perceived by students preparing to enter the field.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN – LIMITATIONS - METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE STUDY

A. Research Design: Criteria for target group and sample selection, limitations, questionnaire design, procedures

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing the method of group discussions (focus groups) to gain an in-depth understanding of the attitudes of students in the Department of Archival Studies regarding the role of historical and literary archives in promoting literary education [34]. To facilitate reflective analysis, a case study was developed under the title *"Literature as a Geography of Memory: The City as a Field of Reading Experience"* focusing on the cultural and social representations of Athens in literary works depicting the city during the Interwar period, the Occupation and Civil War, and the post-Metapolitefsi era. Within this framework, participants were encouraged to reflect on literary portrayals of the city, identifying materials and methods that could foster historical awareness and stimulate reading interest among young adults. Sample selection was based on the critical academic background of students from the Department, deemed essential for the study's aims.

Students enrolled in Archival and Library Science programs were identified as the most suitable population for exploring the intersection of archival education and literary engagement, given that the revised curricula of these departments aim to cultivate such competencies —areas previously underemphasized in earlier curricula. Participation criteria were defined as follows: a. active enrollment in the Department of Archival Studies, b. attendance of at least 7 out of 13 lectures in at least one of the following spring semester 2025 courses: "Literature", "History of the Book and Libraries", "Audiovisual Archives", and "Development of Academic and Professional Skills", and c. participation in a focus group discussion prior to completing the questionnaire. Consequently, failure to meet any of these criteria resulted in exclusion from the sample. Notably, students were allowed to participate in more than one discussion group but could complete the questionnaire only once [35].

The selection of specific courses was guided by their emphasis on the educational role of literary and historical

archives and their contribution to redefining the core skills and knowledge required of Information Science professionals. These courses highlight the necessity for future librarians and archivists to respond effectively to the evolving social and educational missions of information institutions [36].

Focus group discussions were conducted during the third teaching hour of the penultimate lecture in each course. Four groups of 10-15 participants were formed, targeting a total of 40-45 students. Following the discussions, students were invited to voluntarily complete an anonymous, open-ended questionnaire thematically aligned with the discussion topics (5-6 respondents per group). As a result, four groups were formed (each aligned with one course), comprising a total of 42 participants. All discussions proceeded without disruptions and addressed themes such as literature as a vehicle of historical memory, the city as a space of reading and experience, and the contribution of archives and libraries to shaping cultural and reading practices, drawing upon the case study.

Students who wished to continue were invited to complete the anonymous, handwritten questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions relating to the topics discussed. A total of 24 students submitted responses, but 4 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete answers or internal inconsistencies. The final sample of valid questionnaires included: "Literature" (5), "History of the Book and Libraries" (5), "Audiovisual Archives" (5), and "Development of Academic and Professional Skills" (5) — yielding a total of 20 valid responses. The size of the focus groups was considered appropriate for encouraging meaningful dialogue while avoiding discussion fragmentation. Furthermore, the number of completed questionnaires (20) was deemed sufficient to capture a diversity of viewpoints, enable comparative analysis among students from varying academic trajectories, and provide a representative insight into the Department's student community. It was also ensured that no participant completed the questionnaire more than once [37].

The questionnaire explored participants' perspectives on the educational potential of archives and literature, the creative use of archival material by young adults in the context of the case study, techniques to stimulate reading motivation through an activity centered on Athens as a literary landscape, and perceived challenges in educational archival use, along with possible solutions [38].

Specifically, the instrument comprised nine reflective questions directly derived from the issues raised in the group discussions. These questions examined participants' views on selecting texts and archival resources for the exemplary activity proposed by the research team. Participants were asked to assume the role of a coordinator and outline how they would design an educational initiative within a library or archive to foster literary and Information Literacy. The questionnaire was structured into three thematic sections to ensure conceptual coherence and ease of completion. All questions were formulated as open-ended to allow respondents to articulate their views without the limitations of predefined responses. This choice aligns with the exploratory nature of the study, which aims to reveal participants' experiences, perceptions, and personal interpretations — dimensions unlikely to be captured through closed or rating-scale questions [39].

The first section, "Exploring attitudes toward the educational use of archives" aimed to qualitatively investigate participants' opinions regarding the integration of literary and archival materials by educational and memory institutions. This section sought to elicit: a. participants' assessments of archives and libraries as mechanisms for reading promotion, b. their views on the educational and pedagogical roles of librarians and archivists; and c. the criteria for selecting archival content suitable for such initiatives.

The second section, "Exploring methodological attitudes in reading activities and the role of archives: Case Study Analysis", aimed to delve deeper into participants' preferences concerning methodological and pedagogical strategies for incorporating literary and archival materials into reading-centered educational activities. The section adopted an experiential and applied approach to stimulate critical reflection on methodological issues within realistic pedagogical frameworks. Participants were asked to choose from literary texts and archival materials portraying Athens during three key periods: the Interwar years, the Occupation and Civil War, and the post-Metapolitefsi era. Their selections and accompanying commentary aimed to reflect both the literary landscape and the socio-cultural dynamics of each era [40].

The third section, "Exploring attitudes toward specific challenges and creative archival approaches", focused on identifying participants' perceptions of the practical challenges and innovative strategies involved in integrating archival materials into educational reading programs [41].

All data collected were anonymized and limited to participants' written responses. Anonymity and confidentiality were safeguarded throughout the research process and in the dissemination of findings. Participation was entirely voluntary and proceeded only after students

were thoroughly briefed. The study adhered to academic ethical standards, principles of personal data protection, and informed consent. Participants received a detailed explanatory note outlining the research objectives, the nature of the questions, their right to withdraw at any point, and the guarantee of full anonymity. Submission of the completed questionnaire constituted informed consent [42].

B. Limitations

The small sample size of participants and the study's association with specific courses may limit the applicability of the findings to broader populations. Because the sample was drawn exclusively from students drawn solely from students in the Department of Archival, Library and Information Studies (ALIS), their perspectives might not fully represent the views of students in other academic disciplines, even within the broader information sciences. Future research could expand to include students from different departments, universities, or regions to capture a more diverse range of attitudes toward the educational use of literary and historical archives. Additionally, exploring a wider range of archival types, not limited to literary and historical collections could provide a more comprehensive understanding of archival engagement in educational contexts.

Another limitation relates to the voluntary nature of participation and the reliance on open-ended questions in the data collection process. Participants who chose to take part may have been those with pre-existing interests or stronger opinions about the topic, introducing the possibility of self-selection bias: bias introduced by participants' pre-existing interest in the topic. Furthermore, while open-ended responses offer rich qualitative data, they can also lead to variability inconsistency in response length and thematic richness, potentially leading to blind spots or thematic omissions in certain areas of analysis. These factors should be considered when interpreting the study's findings and planning subsequent research.

C. Justification of the Case Study: the city of Athens as a literary "topos" in the 20th century through archival material

Cultural Geography and Literary Theory, with a particular emphasis on Social Semiotics, converge in recognizing the unique aesthetic and ideological role of literature in shaping spatial perceptions [43]. Within this framework, the distinction between physical space and human intervention becomes blurred, as every literary or artistic depiction of urban or natural landscapes inscribes space as a field of human intervention. Accordingly, space is transformed into a "topos" through human perception and operates as a bearer of both individual and collective identity [44].

Under these conditions, "topography" assumes the character of a cultural "topology," whereby space-whether urban or natural landscape-becomes a carrier of cultural values and ideologies. Literature and art propose place as a symbolic construct through which social cohesion is articulated or contested; it thus functions as a mode of cultural self-narration [45]. Through literary mediation, each generation of creators reinterprets the human-space relationship, generating aesthetic representations that reflect either the image of the space itself or that of a dominant social group [46].

No representation of place is ever neutral. The literary depiction of culturally charged spaces contributes to the construction of national identity, thereby assigning literature a crucial sociocultural function. As Bakhtin [47] highlights, language possesses creative and dialogic power, positioning literary texts as sites of cultural negotiation and ongoing redefinition of subjectivity within the social present. Consequently, each cultural inscription of landscape offers a renewed interpretation of its communal significance. In literary and artistic contexts, "landscape" refers to morphological entities endowed with aesthetic, symbolic, or cultural value [48].

From this perspective, the city emerges as a stratified cultural text reflecting processes of urbanization, social transformation, historical memory, and collective identity. Literature often mediates spatial experience through narratives of neighborhoods, public spaces, and demographic shifts, while archival records offer material evidence of these dynamics. The interplay between literature and archive enables a reconstruction of urban identity as a complex constellation of voices, spaces, and histories. Integrating archival material into educational contexts bridges theory and practice, cultivating research, documentation, and narrative skills while reinforcing connections to local history. Libraries, museums, and archives thus operate as dynamic educational environments [49].

Each of the three thematic periods is treated as a distinct unit, enabling correlations between literary production, historical context, and archival material. Interwar Athens is characterized by rapid urbanization and cultural shifts. Writers of the 1920s (K. G. Karyotakis, K. Ouranis) express existential anxiety shaped by the Asia Minor Catastrophe and displacement [50]-[51], while the 1930s generation (G. Seferis, G. Theotokas, M. Karagatsis) seeks new aesthetic and social paradigms, envisioning the city as a site of continuity and renewal [52].

During the Occupation and Civil War, Athens is depicted as a space of deprivation, resistance, and loss. Postwar authors, notably Sp. Plaskovitis, articulate a "novel of ethos," – a novel concerned with ethical reflection and moral testimony – assuming the literary task of preserving traumatic experiences as ethically and politically meaningful narratives [53].

From the Metapolitefsi onward, literature reflects urban transformations – reconstruction, identity crises, and environmental concerns. The second postwar generation (V. Vassilikos, K. Dimoula, M. Koumandareas) critically addresses the altered urban condition, while the 1970s cohort (A. Chionis, L. Poulios, R. Galanaki) assigns political and existential significance to urban landscapes [54]-[55]. Contemporary authors (Ch. Chomenidis, A. Korto, D. Kosmopoulos) further explore urban life through themes of multiculturalism, alienation, and crisis.

This tripartite periodization is structured around four pillars: socio-historical conditions, cultural frameworks, the nature of archival sources, and their pedagogical potential. The methodological approach promotes integrative learning by highlighting the city as a "living text," where temporal layers interact dynamically. Utilizing diverse sources (textual, oral, visual, statistical) enhances educational outcomes by: a) connecting theory with practice through engagement with authentic materials; b) fostering research and documentation competencies; c) encouraging narrative construction inspired by archival content; and d) cultivating a deeper understanding of local history and cultural identity [56].

IV. STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK OF THE COLLECTIVE DISCUSSION BASED ON THE THREE THEMATIC UNITS

This case study centers on a collective discussion exploring Athens through literary texts, structured around three thematic units aligned with distinct historical periods and sociocultural phases of urban life. A brief assessment is provided regarding the chosen texts, associated activities, and archival materials. Each research group made use of participants' prior literary knowledge, tailored to the academic orientation of their respective courses. Qualitative data collection was systematically supported by field journals, wherein team members documented observations and key discussion points during group facilitation. The subsequent section evaluates data from questionnaires completed by a representative participant sample, aiming to identify dominant attitudes and potential pedagogical shifts arising from the activity's implementation [57].

A.1. Thematic unit A: interwar Athens and early urbanization; text, archival sources, and indicative activities

As previously noted, the interwar period represents a formative phase in the development of modern Athens and the Greek nation-state. The integration of Asia Minor refugees, the emergence of new social classes, and the establishment of urban culture are defining features of the era, as reflected in its literary output. The two major poetic generations of the period capture this socio-cultural transition through distinct aesthetic modes: the 1920s generation is characterized by elements of symbolism and neo-romanticism, while the 1930s generation introduces Greek modernism [58].

The selected literary texts, with Athens as their focal point, serve as interpretive gateways to urban experience and collective identity. Representative examples include:
a. "Athens" by K. G. Karyotakis, offering an ironic portrayal of the existential weight of the city,
b. "The Lament of the Refugees" by R. Philyras, foregrounding the trauma of displacement,
c. "Syngrou Avenue II" by G. Seferis, illustrating processes of rapid urbanization,
d. Excerpts from G. Theotokas's *Argo*, *Junkermann* and *The Great Chimera* by M. Karagatsis, and *Starlight* by I. M. Panagiotopoulos.

The integration of literary texts with archival materials— such as photographs, maps, oral histories, newspapers, and public records—enabled a multisensory, hands-on reading method, *positively evaluated by students* lthat fostered historical empathy and cultural awareness. Notably, visual materials depicting refugee settlements in Thiseio (Spelios, 1967) and the film *1922* by N. Koundouros enhanced interdisciplinary engagement between literary and visual arts [59].

This pedagogical strategy was positively evaluated; students regarded the theme of Asia Minor Hellenism as highly pertinent to contemporary issues of identity and migration. Literature students showed stronger familiarity with historical literary movements, while those in the "Audiovisual Archives" and "Academic and Professional Skills Development" modules demonstrated notable technical skills. Participants in the "History of Books and Libraries" course exhibited heightened awareness of the links between social structures and cultural production.

Overall, the activity highlighted the necessity of strengthening training for future information professionals in cultural and literary history as well as archival literacy to support the educational roles of libraries and archives.

Subsequent activities within the first thematic unit exemplify how literary and archival sources can be creatively combined to explore urban history, identity, and social change through contemporary educational practices [60]-[61].

> 1.1 Archival Sources: Refugee letters (or fictional letters grounded in real events); student diaries or literary texts from the era (e.g., school magazines).

> Activity: Compose, individually or collaboratively, a letter or diary entry reflecting the emotional and experiential perspective of a refugee arriving in Athens for the first time. The text may be included in a virtual "Exhibition of Personal Narratives" (e.g., a digital wall display).

> 1.2 Archival Sources: Photographs depicting daily life in refugee neighborhoods; excerpts from housing legislation (e.g., 1923); press reports and political commentary on the refugee issue.

> Activity: Create a podcast or audio collage titled "Voices of Arrival", combining readings from literary texts with historical soundscapes, such as port noises or traditional refugee songs, along with narration.

> 1.3 Archival Sources: Interwar-era maps and photographs of Athens; press illustrations and front pages depicting urban life.

> Activity: Trace the movement of characters from Theotokas's *Argo* on a historical map. Design a digital itinerary based on Alexis' perspective (e.g., "pepper plants," "sunset hues"), and develop an artistic walking diary titled "The City through a poet's eyes."

These activities encourage students to adopt the roles of researcher, creator, and critical reader, using literature as an entry point to explore historical memory and social awareness. In this context, the archive is no longer merely a repository of information but becomes a medium for reflection and inspired interpretation.

A.2. Thematic Unit B: Athens during the Occupation and Civil War

The period of the Axis Occupation and the subsequent Civil War was marked by acute social inequalities, famine, repression, as well as strong networks of solidarity and resistance. Archival documents from this era (including census records, correspondence, and oral testimonies) carry significant experiential and political weight, transforming the city into a stage of daily struggle and acts of resistance [62].

The reading activities focusing on wartime Athens aimed to illuminate the social, political, and psychological dimensions of this turbulent era. Selected literary texts included:

- "Athens 1943" by Nikos Kavvadias, conveying the claustrophobia and irony of urban life under occupation,

- "The Foolish Black Marketeer" (1942) by Kostas Varnalis, a satirical critique of moral decay during the black market boom,

- "The Dog's Howl" by Spyros Plaskovitis (from the collection *The Storm and the Lantern*, 1955), examining existential dread in a city under siege.

Additional readings explored collective traumas, such as: N. Kasdaglis' *The Millstone's Teeth* (1955) and A. Kotzias' *The Siege* (1953), which depict the early signs of the civil conflict that would soon erupt in Athens [63].

The experience was further enriched through selected excerpts from "Resistance" by K. Athanasoulis, "That Morning" by M. Alexiou, "Charis '44" by M. Anagnostakis, *Axion Esti:* "third reading, The Great Exodus" by Odysseas Elytis, "Resurrection" by A. Sikelianos, Volume II of *Invalids and Wayfarers* by G. Theotokas, and *The Descent of the Nine* by Th. Valtinos.

Archival materials enhanced understanding of this complex period and included:
a. wartime photographs of Athens (e.g., by V. Papaioannou, also used in the questionnaires), b. images of soup kitchens and public executions, c. citizens' letters, diaries, and oral accounts from resistance members, as well as censored and underground press articles, d. official documents and registries pertaining to arrests or executions,
e. maps marking sites of conflict or acts of resistance.

These resources enabled participants to connect literary representation with tangible historical evidence, thereby encouraging a multidimensional reading of the city as a polyphonic archive. During the discussions of this thematic unit, students expressed strong interest in texts addressing hunger, suffering, and violence, recognizing both their emotional resonance and historical significance. A majority of participants acknowledged that the informed use of literary collections and archives can contribute meaningfully

to democratic education and the promotion of human rights [64]-[65].

Notably productive was the dialogue surrounding censorship and information access-issues explored across departmental curricula. Additionally, the pedagogical and affective power of photographic archives was emphasized, particularly as a means of fostering creative engagement with literary texts.

Indicative Activities for This Unit:

2.1. Archival Sources: Photographs from the famine of winter 1941-1942; newspaper clippings from the Occupation period; food ration cards and soup kitchen tickets.

Activity: Collaboratively produce a digital comic or visual diary using key phrases from literary texts and selected historical images. The aim is to narrate otherwise invisible stories of ordinary citizens.

2.2. Archival Sources: Censorship bulletins, banned literary works, and excerpts from letters or diaries of the time.

Activity: Participate in a hands-on workshop titled "Censorship and Literature". Analyze censorship documentation, attempt to reconstruct redacted literary passages, and compose original texts exploring freedom of expression and the role of libraries.

2.3. Archival Sources: Oral histories from the Civil War in Athens (e.g., from EAM, ELAS, the December events); urban battle maps; posters and public announcements.

Activity: As part of a Public History workshop in a municipal library, develop an interactive digital chronicle of wartime Athens, incorporating maps, a timeline, and excerpts from oral narratives.

These multimodal activities actively engage young adults with the historical past while deepening their interpretive reading of literary works. Simultaneously, they aim to cultivate a culture of reading and critical thinking, alongside the development of digital and information literacy.

A.3. Thematic Unit C: Athens from the Post-Dictatorship Era to the Early 21st Century

Rooted in postwar Greece and concluding with the fall of the Military Dictatorship (Junta), this period marks the end of a historical cycle characterized by unresolved cultural and social issues stemming from the Occupation and Civil War. The second postwar literary generation, active from the 1960s, documents rapid social transformations in Athens, emphasizing the urban subject and the city's metamorphosis. Literature from this era serves both as a record and interpretation of contemporary urban history, reflecting transitions shaped by industrialization, mass reconstruction, political and social changes, Greece's EU accession, migration, and urban redevelopment [66]-[67].

The literary output of this period—including works such as *The Striker with the number Nine* (1986) by M. Koumandareas, *Omonia 1980* (1988) by G. Ioannou, *I die like a country* (1978) by D. Dimitriadis, and *The City on Its knees* (2002) by M. Fais—offers valuable material for examining residents' psychological makeup, the boundaries between public and private space, and the shaping of collective memory. Kiki Dimoula and M. Koumandareas depict the alienation of the individual in the metropolis; H. Liontakis and D. Nollas, voices of the 1970s generation, introduce the experience of the dictatorship and challenge dominant narratives through reflective or experimental writing. (Vitti, 2003) Contemporary authors such as R. Galanaki (*The Utmost humiliation*, 2015) and C. Chryssopoulos (*The Parthenon bomber*, 2010; *A flashlight in the mouth*, 2012) explore urban life, alterity, and power relations within the cityscape.

The archival material supporting these reading activities includes: a. photographic archives of Athens from the 1970s to the 1990s: building sites, posters, graffiti, daily life in neighborhoods such as Patissia, b. newspaper front pages and advertising leaflets from the period that reflect cultural trends, social changes, or popular perceptions, c. audio recordings and videos from news broadcasts or testimonies regarding crises (e.g., December 2008 riots), d. census records, statistics on urban development, and municipal documents concerning urban interventions and street renamings.

This thematic unit proved familiar to students, enhancing their ability to connect personal experiences with collective urban memories [68]-[69]. Although many were not previously acquainted with the literary works, students recognized their relevance for contemporary readers. They also acknowledged the need to strengthen literary literacy among future Information Science professionals — specifically, their ability to interpret literary texts in dialogue with archival material and to contextualize them within historical, political, and urban narratives.

Below are indicative activity types for the target group:

3.1. Archival material: Contemporary and older black-and-white or color photographs of central Athens neighborhoods from the 1970s to the present.

Excerpts from oral testimonies about everyday urban life (e.g., migrants, workers). Newspaper articles and social policy bulletins (e.g., regarding urban renewal projects).

Activity: Select an excerpt from one of the discussed literary works (e.g., *The City on Its Knees*) and create a short audio narration (1–2 minutes), expressing personal impressions of an area of the city with which you are familiar. The narration may take the form of an interior monologue, testimonial, protest, or lyrical description.

3.2. Archival material: Excerpts from television or radio news from the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., on social issues such as migration). Posters and printed materials from urban movements, cultural initiatives, or social interventions of the period. Statistical tables showing changes in Athens' population composition (e.g., migration, youth unemployment, changes in occupations).

Activity: With your group, choose an excerpt from either *I die like a country* by D. Dimitriadis or *The Utmost humiliation* by R. Galanaki. Create an alternative radio news broadcast or podcast imagining a day in a "fictional Athens," drawing on both the tone of the selected texts and real historical events. The broadcast should blend fiction with archival data.

3.3. Archival material: Excerpts from studies and publications on youth life in Athens from 2000–2015 (e.g., social struggles). Personal blogs that reflect urban experience during times of crisis. Data from statistical surveys on young people's access to housing, culture, and employment.

Activity: Collaboratively write a letter from "the Athens of tomorrow," using as a starting point an excerpt from either *The Parthenon bomber* or *A flashlight in the mouth* by Christos Chryssopoulos. Each letter is stored in a digital folder/archive, accompanied by a photograph or newspaper clipping that "documents" it. You may present your approach to the other groups and exchange perspectives.

These activities highlight the interplay between literature, archival documentation, and personal experience; they foster historical and social sensitivity, encourage creative expression, and cultivate skills in information and digital literacy.

B.1. Qualitative analysis of the data: perceptions and attitudes of participants regarding the educational utilization of literary and historical archives.

This section presents a qualitative analysis of data from open-ended questionnaires completed by 20 students enrolled in four courses within the Department of Archives and Library Science: Literature (Group 1), History of Books and Libraries (Group 2), Audiovisual Archives (Group 3), and Academic Skills (Group 4). The interpretive approach aimed to explore participants' attitudes, perceptions, and proposals about the role of archival and library institutions in promoting reading culture and their educational and social functions. Thematic analysis focused on comparing convergences and divergences across groups [70].

Participants universally acknowledged the role of libraries and archives in fostering reading culture but proposed varied strategies for actively using documentary materials. Groups 1 and 4 highlighted creativity and outward engagement, suggesting initiatives such as "to create reading groups and activities targeting specific audiences" (Group 1: Respondent 3), collaborative initiatives with institutions like the General State Archives (Group 4: Respondent 2), and "various open workshops promoting books" (Group 4: Respondent 3). Groups 2 and 3 emphasized the link between historical memory and reading preferences, focusing on approaches that "highlight their historical value" (Group 2: Respondent 5) and "bring [readers] into contact with the cultural wealth of the past" (Group 3: Respondent 4). These differences mirror each course's thematic focus but converge on recognizing the dynamic relationship among social history, cultural production, and literary experience.

Regarding the role of archivists and librarians, participants consistently identified multifaceted responsibilities, including organizational, managerial, and educational functions. Groups 1 and 3 especially stressed communication and public engagement: "The role... is the promotion and creation of presentations, events, and organization of reading groups" (Group 1: Respondent 1), and "[for] sensitizing readers" (Group 1: Respondent 3). Participants also noted the importance of "curating the selection of material" and fostering "interactivity" (Group 4: Respondents 1 and 4). Groups 2 and 3 highlighted information management as key to equitable access and educational impact, e.g., "to preserve the existing material and to [classify it]... to facilitate access" and "to create a society well-informed about its past" (Group 2: Respondents 1 and 4), alongside "select[ing] appropriate documents, frame[ing] them with a pedagogical rationale, and promot[ing] experiential learning" (Group 3: Respondent 3). Overall, the dual organizational and educational roles of information professionals were recognized, with Group 1 emphasizing literary education as essential for fulfilling the objectives of libraries and archives.

Three thematic axes emerged regarding archival documents suitable for reading promotion among students and youth: a. adaptation to linguistic and cognitive capacities, b. potential for personal/emotional identification, and c. connection to historical-cultural context. All groups stressed linguistic clarity and thematic relevance: "It must be legible […] according to age criteria" (Group 1: Respondent 5), "It must have vocabulary and language appropriate for the target group" (Group 2: Respondent 3). They also emphasized experiential connection and relevance: "To be experientially connected to the reader" (Group 1: Respondent 2), "To allow dialogue and highlight critical issues" (Group 2: Respondent 1), and "to be relevant to a topic that interests [young people]" (Group 4: Respondent 2). Additionally, promoting historical memory and cultural understanding were decisive: "To highlight the historical and cultural value" (Group 1: Respondent 3), "To promote interest in literature, history" (Group 2: Respondent 5), and to "maintain authenticity and […] allow intertextual or intercultural correlations" (Group 3: Respondents 1 and 4).

Differences reflected disciplinary orientations: Groups 2 and 3 adopted academic and critical stances emphasizing accessibility and historical awareness, whereas Group 1 prioritized reading engagement as a pathway to literary education and reading competence. Yet, all groups emphasized participatory activation, pedagogical training, and interactive user-collection relationships: "connection with the [reader's] experiences […] alignment with the present" (Group 3: Respondent 3).

In sum, the shared focus on linguistic adaptation, personal connection, and cultural-historical relevance reveals a common pedagogical foundation that frames archival documents as catalysts for learning, personal engagement, and cultural reflection. Divergences reflect how each course's thematic orientation shapes students' educational expectations.

The second section of the questionnaire examined attitudes toward methodological issues, revealing key challenges for educators and information science scholars in promoting archival and literary literacy. Participants' choices among thematic units -Athens during the Interwar Period, Occupation and Civil War, and Metapolitefsi to the late 20th century- were fairly evenly distributed, with a slight preference for the Metapolitefsi. This theme was valued for its contemporary relevance and diverse sources, as Respondent 4 of Group 1 noted: "the study of this period allows for a better understanding of the organization of social life, literature, and political thought today." The Interwar Period was often chosen for its timeless issues,

such as refugee integration, highlighted by Respondent 2 from Group 1: "the difficulties in integrating other refugee populations into Greek society remain perceptible even today." Some participants, like Respondent 3, proposed combining all three periods, showing an awareness of historical continuity.

Groups 2 and 3 favored the Interwar Period, emphasizing its rich literary output as representative of the era's atmosphere ("it effectively represents the atmosphere of the period," Group 2: Respondent 4), with an interest in urbanization's early social and economic impacts. Preferences for the Metapolitefsi were often pragmatic, linked to material accessibility and familiarity. Across groups, there was a shared focus on lived experience and enduring themes such as refugeehood and censorship, with some attention to literary and historiographical criteria referencing authors like Theotokas, Panagiotopoulos, Ritsos, and contemporary writers including Galanaki, Alexakis, and Vagenas.

In question five, regarding an educational activity for young adults on the Interwar Period, participants chose between a poem by Romos Philyras on refugees and a passage from Theotokas's *Argo* describing an ideal Athens. Thirteen out of twenty selected Philyras's poem, valuing its experiential impact and capacity to foster empathy and historical awareness: "people should learn to see through the eyes of others" (Group 1: Respondent 3). Its contemporary resonance on refugee issues was also stressed: "raising awareness of the refugee issue is particularly important for the holistic education of young adults" (Group 4: Respondent 4). This preference reflects a consensus on literature as a memory and social sensitization tool, despite some concerns about the poetic form's difficulty ("poetic expression is demanding," Group 1). Those favoring Theotokas highlighted the optimistic depiction of Athens before urbanization and its suitability for aesthetic education and artistic activities (Group 3: Respondent 4).

Question six focused on the Occupation and Civil War, asking participants to select literary texts and archival materials for educational use. The literary choices were fairly balanced, with Kavvadias's poem preferred for its emotional accessibility and themes of freedom ("moving, linguistically accessible, with sensitivity to freedom," Group 1: Respondent 3). Others chose Plaskovitis' narrative for its vivid imagery and accessibility or Varnalis' satirical work for encouraging interpretive dialogue on exploitation and censorship (Group 4: Respondent 2; Group 2: Respondent 3). Some proposed interdisciplinary co-reading. All texts were valued for engaging with political themes and the archives'

role in defending freedom of expression: "It sensitizes young people to the value of freedom and shows how literature can speak for every society and era" (Group 1: Respondent 3); "it shows young people [...] the consequences of prohibition and censorship... [revealing] the role of libraries and archives as institutions defending freedom of expression" (Group 2: Respondent 1).

For archival materials (question 6b), personal letters and diaries were favored for offering authentic, experiential perspectives that cultivate historical empathy: "Diary documents in the first person can attract readers' interest, while personal letters would encourage further reading of literature" (Group 1: Respondent 1). Archival photographs, press articles, and theatrical programs were also selected to provide tangible visualization of history and everyday life, enriching literary reading: "The discovery and use of archival photographs and articles from the resistance press of the time constitute useful supplementary material to enrich literary reading" (Group 1: Respondent 2). However, some responses lacked pedagogical justification, which weakened their educational proposals. Overall, participants showed critical awareness of literary education's multimodality and the need for interdisciplinary approaches linking literary reading with historical understanding, viewing archival material as essential for creating comprehensive, experiential, and dialogical reading experiences [71].

Finally, question seven addressed reading activities for the Metapolitefsi and later periods, inviting choices on using archival materials with the poem *Pragmatognosia* by Ch. Liontakis. Responses favored combining creative expression, digital media, and critical dialogue. For example, Respondent 1 (Group 1) highlighted creative expression's role in fostering positive engagement; Group 3's Respondent 5 emphasized cinema's appeal to youth; and Group 4's Respondent 3 stressed digital resources' capacity to enhance audiovisual archives and reading skills. Theatrical techniques combined with critical dialogue were seen as effective in promoting historical empathy and written culture: "these methods foster historical empathy and encourage younger generations to discover written culture" (Group 2: Respondent 1); "critical dialogue reveals deeper interpretations of the text and literature's power to speak about society" (Group 2: Respondent 4); "creative expression through theatrical techniques makes reading more interactive" (Group 3: Respondent 1).

The systematic creation of digital resources (e.g., digital narratives, presentations, websites) alongside other art forms such as cinema underscores the recognized importance of interactivity and multisensory engagement

for attracting new audiences. Overall, responses highlight the necessity of combining experiential, digital, and critical methods to enhance literature reception and foster historical empathy among library and archive users, positioning archival documents as tools for active learning and cultural connection [72].

Regarding challenges in integrating archival material into educational activities (Section C: Question 8), most responses across all groups focused on technical barriers. Issues include file incompatibility or unreadability (Group 3: Respondent 4), with Respondent 1 (Group 1) noting that "some file format from the archives may not open," and in some cases, archival use may be unnecessary as "discussion is a live process." These obstacles can be mitigated through digital adaptation and technical support. Equally important is the linguistic and pedagogical mediation of materials (Group 4: Respondent 4), as Respondent 2 (Group 1) points out that "the lack of appropriate processing and explanation can weaken the effectiveness of the activity," emphasizing the need for "educational exercises that aid understanding" and connect archival content with literary texts. Collaboration with experts (e.g., historians) is also vital to address cognitive challenges related to language, subject matter, and document format (Group 3: Respondent 3).

A significant pedagogical challenge identified is that archival material, if not creatively and interactively integrated, may discourage participants. Respondent 1 (Group 2) states that "the use of archival material increases difficulty and demands critical skills," while Respondent 2 (Group 2) warns that without proper pedagogical care, the process can become "boring." Overcoming these challenges requires institutional and interdisciplinary support alongside creative, experiential design, ensuring archives become tools for engagement and historical empathy rather than obstacles to reading involvement (Group 4: Respondent 1).

Concerning the transformation of archival documents into narrative media within reading promotion (Question 9), participants agree that archives serve as springboards for creative storytelling, adding experiential and interdisciplinary value to educational initiatives. Students do not see documents as static historical traces but as narrative cores to be reconstructed or dramatized, enhancing emotional and semantic connections. For instance, Respondent 1 (Group 1) describes how a letter can initiate a story highlighting "the individual and the conditions that shaped them." This method links literary experience with historical memory and lived experience. Participants highlight diverse techniques such as theatrical exercises, comics, and the use of music and visual arts (Group 4:

Respondent 5). Respondent 3 (Group 3) adds that "a document can become a narrative medium provided it is framed with questions, creative reading, or theatrical utilization." Facilitators' approaches to each document shape its educational impact (Respondents 1, Groups 2 and 4), while Respondent 3 (Group 2) stresses awakening creativity as essential for engagement: "Theatrical storytelling helps young people feel that the archival material concerns their lives." The use of audiovisual material further "gives a more authentic character" to reading promotion activities (Respondent 5, Group 2).

Despite methodological variety, the unifying principle is that documents must connect with participants' present experiences through experiential or multimodal approaches. In sum, these narratives act not merely as educational tools but as catalysts for cultural and emotional activation, enhancing reading engagement and historical awareness.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study affirm the significant educational value of archives as cultural artifacts that can be actively harnessed to cultivate reading culture and strengthen the historical consciousness of young people. Engagement with primary documentary materials —such as letters, diaries, photographs, and administrative records—enables learners to connect with the past in an experiential manner, thereby enhancing their capacity for critical thinking, empathy, and interpretative skills. Archives can bridge school learning, university education, literary education, and public history, fostering a participatory and experiential educational experience.

However, for the broad pedagogical utilization of archives to be feasible, a substantial redefinition of the roles of archivists and librarians is required, with an emphasis on their training to actively contribute to the educational mission of Information Organizations. Professional development for these specialists should encompass topics related to the educational use of documentation, museum pedagogy approaches, digital transformation, and interdisciplinary collaboration with educators and cultural institutions. The collaboration between archives, schools, and universities is not merely desirable but imperative for the creation of educational learning communities.

Future research could focus on documenting best practices in collaboration between archival organizations and schools, developing methodologies for the educational use of archives in digital environments, and investigating the perceptions of library users and educators regarding the role of archives in the learning process through quantitative research. Simultaneously, strengthening the institutional and social role of libraries and archives as spaces for open, lifelong learning and cultural empowerment is essential to transform them into hubs of participatory education and active citizenship.

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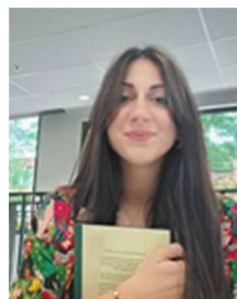
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