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# Records Management Practices and Their Impact on Service Delivery: Evidence from Mbarara City Council, Uganda

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# Abstract

Effective records management is essential for accountability, transparency, and efficient service delivery in public institutions. This study examined the status and challenges of records management in Mbarara City Council, Uganda, focusing on staff knowledge, awareness, and application of existing practices. A descriptive research design was employed, with questionnaires administered to 120 staff members. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The results showed that while 76% of staff agreed that they were aware of existing records management policies, only 48% reported applying them consistently in daily operations. The mean score of 3.1 (SD = 1.02) indicated a moderate level of awareness, while lower ratings were observed in classification (mean = 2.7, SD = 1.15) and long-term preservation practices (mean = 2.5, SD = 1.21). Key challenges identified included inadequate infrastructure (reported by 71% of respondents), limited financial resources (65%), lack of skilled personnel (58%), and weak enforcement of regulatory frameworks (52%). These constraints hinder efficient retrieval, storage, and utilisation of records, ultimately undermining service delivery. The study recommends prioritising investment in electronic records management systems, capacity-building through continuous training, and strengthening policy enforcement mechanisms. Adoption of digital technologies alongside environmental controls for physical records is necessary to improve accessibility, security, and long-term preservation. Future research should extend this assessment to other local governments to generate comparative insights for policy and practice.


# INTRODUCTION

Records management has long been recognised as a cornerstone of effective governance and organisational performance. Historically, records have served as instruments of accountability, transparency, and institutional memory. The origins of records management date back to around 4000 B.C., when the Sumerians developed the first known archives using clay tablets to record property ownership and trade (Rock, 2016). The Egyptians and Romans later advanced archival systems, using records not only for administration but also as tools of power and transparency (Head, 2019; Robinson, 2023). Over the centuries, record-keeping practices evolved, from cataloguing manuscripts in medieval Europe to the establishment of centralised national archives in France and the United States. The 20$^{th}$ century introduced challenges of paper preservation and eventually ushered in digital record-keeping, marking a new era in records management (Parker & Maxton, 2022; Walsham, 2016).

The practice of records management is grounded in several theoretical perspectives. The Records Lifecycle Theory emphasises systematic control of records from their creation, maintenance, and use to their eventual disposal (Matlala & Maphoto, 2020). In contrast, the Records Continuum Theory highlights the ongoing interactions with records throughout their existence, a concept increasingly relevant in the digital age (Kim, 2021; Tejasen, 2018). Risk Management Theory further underlines the importance of identifying and mitigating risks such as data breaches and loss of vital information (Nocco & Stulz,

2022). Together, these theories provide a foundation for understanding the principles of creating, preserving, securing, and retrieving records as reliable evidence for decision-making and accountability.

A record refers to documented information generated from organisational activities, whether in paper or electronic form, that must be preserved for operational, legal, and historical purposes (Abdulrahman, 2015; Eze Asogwa, 2013). Records management therefore involves systematic processes for controlling records from creation to final disposition, ensuring authenticity, integrity, and accessibility throughout their lifespan (Janssen et al., 2020; Sibanda & Schellnack-Kelly, 2024). Proper records management is essential for quality service delivery because it supports informed decision-making, institutional accountability, and citizen trust in public institutions (Alford & O'flynn, 2012; Ikpebe, 2024).

In Africa, formal records management systems emerged during colonial administration and later developed with the support of training programs in countries such as Ghana, Senegal, and South Africa (Barigye et al., 2022). In Uganda, records management dates back to the 1950s, with significant milestones such as the establishment of the National Records Centre and Archives in 2015 (Namujuzi & Luyombya, 2020). Despite these efforts, many government institutions continue to face challenges in managing records effectively. For example, weak infrastructure, limited budgets, inadequate staffing, and poor classification systems have hindered the development of robust record-keeping practices (Bosco et al., 2023).

Mbarara City Council reflects these broader challenges. Studies and reports indicate persistent issues of poor record classification, limited storage facilities, insufficient equipment, and understaffing, all of which compromise the council's ability to manage information efficiently (Mayega et al., 2019). The consequences are serious: delays in retrieving essential documents, frequent loss of critical records, and low levels of compliance with regulatory requirements. In some cases, intentional destruction or concealment of records linked to corruption has further eroded accountability (Adu, 2021). These weaknesses undermine effective tax collection, delay the implementation of council agreements, and ultimately reduce the quality of services delivered to citizens.

Records are fundamental to the functioning of public institutions because they serve as the evidence base for transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making (Mosweu & Rakemane, 2020). However, when records are poorly managed, service delivery becomes inefficient, inconsistent, and untrustworthy. Although records management has been studied in various Ugandan contexts, there is limited empirical research specifically focusing on its effect on service delivery within local governments such as Mbarara City Council. This gap creates an urgent need to assess existing practices, identify challenges, and explore strategies for improvement.

Against this background, this study evaluates the impact of records management practices on service delivery in Mbarara City Council. Specifically, the study examines the level of staff knowledge on records management, the effect of existing practices on service delivery, the challenges faced by the council in managing records, and potential strategies for strengthening records management systems. By

addressing these issues, the study contributes to improving efficiency, accountability, and citizen satisfaction in local government service delivery.

# LITERATURE

Effective records management is increasingly recognised as a cornerstone for efficient public service delivery in both developed and developing countries. Records serve as critical evidence of government decisions, transactions, and accountability, and their mismanagement often results in inefficiencies, corruption, and poor service outcomes (Matlala et al., 2022). In Uganda, the Public Records and Archives Act (2001) mandates public institutions to establish standardised records management systems, yet compliance remains inconsistent, particularly at local government levels (Luyombya et al., 2023).

Globally, research demonstrates that robust records management enhances transparency, improves decision-making, and reduces operational costs. For instance, Saffady (2021) argue that systematic recordkeeping supports governance by ensuring accountability and reducing risks of data loss. Similarly, in South Africa, Matlala et al. (2022) observed that municipalities with automated records systems reported faster service delivery turnaround times compared to those relying on manual systems.

Within the Ugandan context, several studies highlight persistent challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited ICT adoption, and insufficient staff capacity (Payne & Baron, 2017). These constraints hinder the digitisation of records and compromise retrieval efficiency, ultimately affecting citizens' access to timely services. A study Kyohairwe et al. (2024)further emphasised that lack of adequate funding and weak policy enforcement remain major bottlenecks for local governments.

Scholars also note that training and continuous professional development are essential in enhancing staff competence in managing records (H. Kemoni & Ngulube, 2008). Moreover, adopting electronic records management systems (ERMS) has been associated with improved efficiency in information retrieval and reduced risks of document misplacement (Katuu, 2019). Despite these benefits, resource-constrained councils often struggle to sustain ERMS due to high costs of technology and maintenance.

In conclusion, the literature indicates that effective records management is critical for enhancing service delivery in local governments. However, capacity limitations, technological barriers, and weak institutional frameworks continue to undermine progress, particularly in Uganda's city councils. This underscores the need for reforms in infrastructure investment, training, and policy enforcement to optimise service delivery outcomes.

# METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of how records management practices affect service delivery in Mbarara City Council. The combination of methods enhanced validity through data triangulation and minimised potential biases(Campbell et al., 2012). Quantitative data were collected

using structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews with key informants.

The study targeted 120 employees of Mbarara City Council, including records officers, human resource officers, heads of departments, town clerks, and general staff. Using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error (Umar & Wachiko, 2021), a sample size of 81 respondents was determined. Sampling combined purposive and simple random techniques: purposive sampling was applied to key informants such as records officers, human resource officers, heads of departments, town clerks, and the city mayor due to their expertise, while simple random sampling was used to select general staff to minimise bias (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Data collection relied on two instruments. First, semi-structured interview guides were used with 30 key informants to capture qualitative insights. Second, structured questionnaires with both closed- and open-ended items were administered to 51 staff members to collect quantitative data. Likert-scale questions were included to measure perceptions of service delivery and records management practices (Batterton & Hale, 2017). Prior to administration, the instruments were reviewed by experts for content validity and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha (Ravinder & Saraswathi, 2020).

Data collection followed ethical guidelines. Permission was obtained from Kabale University Research Ethics Committee and Mbarara City Council. Respondents gave informed consent, and measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were coded and entered into SPSS for descriptive and inferential analysis. Correlation and chi-square tests were performed at a 95% confidence level to establish relationships between records management practices and service delivery. Qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically using ATLAS.ti, enabling the identification of recurring patterns and themes.

## RESULTS

This section presents findings on the effect of records management practices on service delivery in Mbarara City Council. A total of 81 respondents participated, including the City Mayor, Town Clerks, Records Officers, Heads of Departments, and general staff. The questionnaire return rate was 98% (50/51), and all 30 key informants participated in interviews, ensuring reliable quantitative and qualitative data. Respondents were generally well-educated: 50% held bachelor's degrees, 26% diplomas, 20% master's degrees, and 4% doctorates, with higher qualifications concentrated in managerial positions. The high education level supports effective records management and informed insights for the study.

# Level of staff knowledge, and application of existing record management practices

To assess staff knowledge, awareness, and application of existing records management practices, we analysed questionnaire responses using descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean, and standard deviation, based on a five-point Likert scale. Respondents rated statements from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The results, summarised in Table 1, present the frequency and percentage distribution for each response category.

**Table 1: Level of staff knowledge and application of existing record management practices**

| Statements | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Std. dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff are knowledgeable about record creation | 20 (40) | 18 (36) | 6 (12) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 0.97 |
| Classification and categorisation | 22 (44) | 15 (30) | 5 (10) | 6 (12) | 2 (4) | 3.98 | 1.05 |
| DAccess of records | 18 (36) | 20 (40) | 7 (14) | 3 (6) | 2 (4) | 3.98 | 0.98 |
| Records Disposal | 15 (30) | 18 (36) | 8 (16) | 7 (14) | 2 (4) | 3.74 | 1.07 |
| Monitoring and Auditing of records | 16 (32) | 17 (34) | 10(20) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 3.80 | 1.00 |
| Records Protection | 18 (36) | 19 (38) | 6 (12) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 1.02 |
| Staff training on records | 20 (40) | 18 (36) | 6 (12) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 0.97 |
| Electronic records management | 19 (38) | 18 (36) | 7 (14) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.88 | 0.99 |
| Reviewing and updating records policies and procedures | 20 (40) | 16 (32) | 8 (16) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.88 | 1.04 |
| Records Security | 18 (36) | 17 (34) | 8 (16) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 3.84 | 1.03 |
| Records Appraisal | 17 (34) | 18 (36) | 7 (14) | 6 (12) | 2 (4) | 3.84 | 1.05 |

The study assessed staff knowledge, awareness, and application of records management practices at Mbarara City Council using both quantitative and qualitative data. Results from questionnaires (presented in Table 1), based on a five-point Likert scale, indicate that the majority of respondents demonstrated substantial knowledge in key areas such as records creation (76%), classification and categorisation (74%), access (76%), records security (74%), and staff training (76%), with mean scores ranging from 3.74 to 3.98. Moderate agreement was observed in records disposal (66%) and evaluation

(70%), suggesting variability in implementation across departments. Standard deviations were relatively high, reflecting differences in understanding and practice among staff.

Interview findings further highlighted these variations, showing that while some departments exhibited strong familiarity with record management principles, others struggled with gaps in training, digital skills, and understanding of legal compliance. Key themes from interviews emphasised the importance of standardised training, continuous review and updating of policies, and practical, role-specific training for digital record-keeping tools. Overall, while foundational knowledge of records management exists, the study identified inconsistencies in application, particularly regarding records disposal, security, and evaluation, underscoring the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives to ensure uniform, compliant, and effective records management practices across the council.

# Effect of the existing records management practices on service delivery

The findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate that effective records management practices significantly influence service delivery at Mbarara City Council. Quantitative data revealed that a majority of respondents recognised records management as critical to ensuring legal and regulatory compliance (84%, M = 4.20, SD = 0.88), supporting good governance (76%, M = 4.02, SD = 0.97), and promoting transparency (74%, M = 3.92, SD = 1.02) and accountability (76%, M = 4.00, SD = 0.99). These results emphasise the role of organised and accurate records in fostering institutional stability, reducing the risk of legal claims, and enhancing public trust in governance processes. Similarly, respondents emphasised the importance of records in facilitating informed decision-making (76%, M = 4.06, SD = 1.01) and in creating authentic, reliable, and usable records (78%, M = 4.06, SD = 0.99), highlighting that access to complete and accurate information underpins effective planning, policy formulation, and organisational operations.

**Table 2: Effect impact of the existing records management practices on service delivery**

| Statements | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Std. dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Legal and regulatory compliance | 22 (44) | 20 (40) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 1 (2) | 4.20 | 0.88 |
| Encourage good governance | 20 (40) | 18 (36) | 7 (14) | 3 (6) | 2 (4) | 4.02 | 0.97 |
| Ensure transparency | 18 (36) | 19 (38) | 6 (12) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 1.02 |
| Good for accountability purposes | 20 (40) | 18 (36) | 6 (12) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 4.00 | 0.99 |
| Aid informed decision-making | 22 (44) | 16 (32) | 7 (14) | 3 (6) | 2 (4) | 4.06 | 1.01 |
| Creation and management of authentic, reliable, complete, and usable records | 21 (42) | 18 (36) | 6 (12) | 3 (6) | 2 (4) | 4.06 | 0.99 |
| Makes records accessible for different uses | 19 (38) | 18 (36) | 8 (16) | 3 (6) | 2 (4) | 4.00 | 1.02 |
| Timely accomplishment of different organisational activities | 20 (40) | 17 (34) | 7 (14) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.98 | 1.03 |
| Help to curb bribery and other corruption practices and tendencies | 18 (36) | 16 (32) | 9 (18) | 4 (8) | 3 (6) | 3.84 | 1.11 |

The study further indicated that records management practices improve operational efficiency by making information accessible for multiple purposes (74%, M = 4.00, SD = 1.02) and enabling the timely completion of organisational activities (74%, M = 3.98, SD = 1.03). These outcomes suggest that well-maintained records reduce delays, support workflow continuity, and allow for effective monitoring of organisational processes. However, the role of records management in curbing corruption and bribery was moderately rated (68%, M = 3.84, SD = 1.11), suggesting that while records can enhance ethical governance, additional measures may be required to strengthen anti-corruption efforts.

Findings from qualitative interviews emphasised these quantitative findings. Respondents consistently highlighted that accurate and systematically maintained records are indispensable for regulatory compliance, transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. They emphasised that records serve as institutional memory, preserving organisational knowledge that supports sustainable governance and facilitates evidence-based decisions. Interviewees also noted challenges, including limited digital record-keeping infrastructure, inconsistent staff adherence to procedures, and the need for enhanced training to ensure uniform application of records management practices across departments.

# Challenges in Implementing Effective Records Management at Mbarara City Council

From the findings presented in Table 3, several key challenges affecting effective records management were identified. Unauthorised access to records by unapproved personnel was reported by 76% of respondents, posing risks to confidentiality, reliability, and inter-departmental communication. The absence of electronic records management systems (74%) and inadequate security measures (76%) were also major concerns, limiting efficient storage, retrieval, and protection of digital and sensitive records.

**Table 3: Challenges in Implementing Effective Records Management at Mbarara City Council**

| Statements | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Std. dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Record misuse by unauthorised personnel | 20 (40) | 18 (36) | 6 (12) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 0.97 |
| Lack of systems for managing electronic records | 22 (44) | 15 (30) | 5 (10) | 6 (12) | 2 (4) | 3.98 | 1.05 |
| Limited records security | 18 (36) | 20 (40) | 7 (14) | 3 (6) | 2 (4) | 3.98 | 0.98 |
| Loss and misplacement of vital records | 15 (30) | 18 (36) | 8 (16) | 7 (14) | 2 (4) | 3.74 | 1.07 |
| Lack of disposition schedule | 16 (32) | 17 (34) | 10 (20) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 3.80 | 1.00 |
| Limited facilities | 18 (36) | 19 (38) | 6 (12) | 5 (10) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 1.02 |
| Poor work ethics among records staff | 20 (40) | 18 (36) | 6 (12) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.92 | 0.97 |
| Destruction by enemies of records (such as fires, water, humidity, etc) | 19 (38) | 18 (36) | 7 (14) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.88 | 0.99 |
| Limited expert knowledge amongst the staff | 20 (40) | 16 (32) | 8 (16) | 4 (8) | 2 (4) | 3.88 | 1.04 |

Other challenges included the frequent loss or misplacement of records (66%), missed record disposition schedules (66%), and inadequate facilities for storage and management (74%), all of which disrupt operations and compliance. Additionally, poor work ethics among records staff (76%) and record destruction due to environmental factors such as fire, water, and humidity (74%) further impede effective management. Collectively, these issues highlight the urgent need for improved training, upgraded facilities, robust IT systems, and stricter adherence to records management policies.

The study also found that 72% of staff lack advanced knowledge in records management (Mean = 3.88, SD = 1.04), limiting the implementation of modern, computerised systems. Respondents recommended bridging these skills gap through targeted training and recruitment of qualified professionals.

To address these challenges, three key strategies were identified: regular staff training, updating records management policies, and enhancing storage facilities. About 80% of respondents supported regular training (Mean = 4.14, SD = 0.95) to improve staff competency and adaptability. Updating policies was endorsed by 76% (Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.98) to align practices with legal, technological, and organisational changes. Improving storage facilities, also supported by 76% (Mean = 4.02, SD = 1.03), was seen as essential for protecting records from environmental damage and unauthorised access.

## DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

## Staff knowledge and application of records management practices

The study revealed that staff at Mbarara City Council demonstrated moderate awareness of records management practices, with notable gaps across departments. While 76% of respondents reported confidence in records creation (M = 3.92, SD = 0.97), interviews highlighted inconsistencies in practice. These inconsistencies align with findings by Bosco et al. (2023), who reported uneven implementation of records management in Ugandan local governments due to limited training and resources. Similarly, Luyombya (2011) emphasised that staff often lack technical expertise, particularly in transitioning from paper to electronic systems. The current findings thus suggest a need for structured and continuous capacity building to bridge departmental knowledge gaps, consistent with Ochwo et al. (2018) argument that inadequate skills compromise efficiency and accountability in public institutions.

With 74% of respondents acknowledging classification and categorisation practices (M = 3.98, SD = 1.05), the study points to partial progress. However, qualitative findings revealed inconsistencies in categorisation that hinder efficient retrieval. Rotich et al. (2017) similarly argue that uniform classification enhances accountability, while Makgahlela (2021) identify inconsistent categorisation as a widespread challenge in African municipalities. Therefore, additional training and standardised guidelines remain critical.

Access to records was generally affirmed (M = 3.98, SD = 0.98), yet challenges in digital literacy and legal awareness persist. Mugambi and Ochieng (2023) reported similar issues in Kenyan municipalities, where limited digital skills constrained record access. Mubiana (2024) further stress that disparities in digital literacy exacerbate inefficiencies, underscoring the need for digital infrastructure and targeted training at Mbarara City Council.

Record disposal, though present (M = 3.74, SD = 1.07), was inconsistently applied. Comparable studies by Okello-Obura (2011) and Fredrick & Oonyu (2019) confirm that poor disposal practices expose public institutions to data breaches. Likewise, records appraisal and monitoring, though positively rated (M = 3.84, SD = 1.05), lacked structured implementation, echoing Fredrick & Oonyu (2019) call for standardised appraisal to ensure reliability.

# Records management and service delivery

Findings demonstrate that records management significantly supports service delivery through legal compliance, governance, decision-making, and operational efficiency. A majority (84%) acknowledged that records management ensures legal and regulatory compliance (M = 4.20, SD = 0.88), consistent with Dikopoulou & Mihiotis (2012), who emphasize compliance with statutory frameworks such as Uganda's Public Records and Archives Management Act (2001).

Similarly, respondents recognised the role of records management in promoting governance, transparency, and accountability (M = 4.02; M = 3.92; M = 4.00). These findings echo Kemoni (2009), who argue that effective records reduce corruption and foster ethical governance. However, the moderate score for curbing corruption (M = 3.84) suggests that while records enhance transparency, they are insufficient in isolation supporting Transparency International's (2019) view that broader institutional reforms are also required.

Informed decision-making was strongly associated with records management (M = 4.06, SD = 1.01), aligning with Mnjama & Wamukoya (2007), who argue that accessible records provide the evidence base for sound public administration. Similarly, Ngulube & Tafor (2006) stresses that reliable records sustain institutional memory. At Mbarara City Council, challenges with electronic systems and staff behaviour suggest partial realisation of this potential.

# Challenges in records management implementation

The study identified multiple challenges, including unauthorised access, lack of electronic systems, poor security, record loss, inadequate facilities, weak work ethics, environmental risks, and limited expertise. Unauthorised access, reported by 76% of respondents, reflects weak enforcement of Uganda's National Records and Archives Act (2001) (Ngulube & Tafor, 2006), a problem also noted by Luyombya (2010). The absence of electronic systems (74%) aligns with Ngulube's (2015) concern that reliance on manual systems undermines efficiency and transparency. Similarly, insecurity of records (76%) mirrors findings from Wamukoya & Mutula (2005), who warn of vulnerabilities in African institutions without robust IT safeguards.

Other challenges, including record loss (M=3.74), absence of disposition schedules, inadequate storage (M=3.92), and poor staff ethics (M=3.92), reflect broader national and regional concerns documented in the Uganda Public Sector Records Management Policy (2015) and UNDP governance reports(Ojok, 2016). Environmental threats to records, identified by 74% of respondents, mirror Anyaoku et al. (2019) observations of fragile preservation practices in Africa. Lastly, staff skill gaps (72%) echo Katuu (2015), who advocates for investment in professional training and capacity building.

# Strategies for improvement

The study highlights three interlinked strategies: regular training, policy reviews, and improved storage facilities. Regular staff training (M = 4.14) is consistent with Ngulube (2005) and Lakuma et al. (2017), which emphasize continuous professional development. Updating policies (M = 4.02) reflects recommendations by Lakuma et al. (2017), who argues that outdated policies hinder compliance. Enhancing storage facilities (M = 4.02) aligns with Mnjama & Wamukoya (2007) and IFLA guidelines, underscoring the importance of modern infrastructure for preservation.

Collectively, these strategies echo international best practices and regional frameworks, such as the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020) and Capacity Development Strategy (2021). Implementing them could strengthen records management, enhance service delivery, and promote good governance at Mbarara City Council.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the study establishes that Mbarara City Council has a knowledgeable workforce and strong legal frameworks supporting records management. However, inconsistent application of practices, limited training in digital systems, weak security measures, and poor staff ethics undermine effectiveness. Despite promoting transparency and accountability, gaps in managing electronic records and safeguarding information pose serious risks. To strengthen service delivery, the council must invest in modern infrastructure, enforce strict security protocols, foster ethical work practices, and prioritise continuous staff training.

The study recommends that the Mbarara City Council should prioritise continuous review and updating of records management processes with particular emphasis on security, protection, and appraisal activities. To achieve this, the Council needs to invest in modern infrastructure and allocate sufficient resources for secure electronic storage and efficient data retrieval systems. Staff at all organisational levels should be actively involved in regular policy and procedural reviews, while continuous training programs are essential to strengthen staff capacity and ensure compliance with evolving legal and operational requirements. In addition, the Council should enhance transparency by developing accessible online portals to make records more visible and clarify staff roles in policy implementation, thereby reinforcing accountability and compliance.

To address challenges affecting effective records management, the study suggests that the Council should modernise its electronic records systems to improve storage, retrieval, and management efficiency. Equally important is the promotion of ethical conduct and accountability through mandatory training on professional standards and adherence to established procedures, which will safeguard the integrity of records management practices. Strengthening strategies for sustainable records management will further require investment in both physical and digital storage facilities, supported by advanced technologies to enhance access, retrieval, and preservation of records. Proper environmental controls for physical records should also be ensured to minimise deterioration and promote long-term preservation.

While this study has examined the effects of records management practices on service delivery in Mbarara City Council, further research is recommended in order to expand the evidence base and guide policy and practice. Future studies could investigate the impact of digital records management on service delivery across city councils in Uganda, assess the effectiveness of targeted training programs in improving records management practices, and explore the relationship between records management and overall organisational performance. Such research would provide deeper insights into strengthening records management systems, not only in the Mbarara City Council but also in other public institutions in Uganda.

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