

World Trade Organization Library and Archives

The World Trade Organization Library and the Records and Archives Management Section aim to identify and provide appropriate access to all relevant internal and external information.

Library & Records and Archives Management Section

The [World Trade Organization \(WTO\) Library](#) is the foremost library on trade and trade-related topics, dedicated to promoting a greater understanding of the multilateral trading system and international economic relations.

The Library collection is comprised of more than 45,000 books and monographs, including the collection of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Library and historical publications from both GATT and WTO; and more than 3000 journals and serials, as well as databases and electronic resources.

The Records and Archives Management Section (RAMS), as well as the Library, is part of the Information Management Services. The Section's main role is to manage the records of the Secretariat during their entire lifecycle, from creation through to permanent preservation or elimination. Organizing information ensures that it can be found easily, that the institutional memory of the Secretariat is preserved and that records are kept only for as long as necessary.

RAMS vision is to lead an enduring records and archives management culture that appreciates the value of information assets. The mission is the custody and control of Secretariat records and informational assets, in both paper and electronic formats, by leading their management, access, retention, storage, preservation and disposition, with the purpose of protecting them as evidences of actions and of ensuring accountability to present and future users and of preserving WTO institutional memory. RAMS manages the records of the Secretariat that have enduring historical and administrative value. The holdings include three fonds and collections comprising two linear kilometres of personal and organizational records related to International trade agreements, trade disputes and trade rules.

The Library collection, facilities, and services are available to and used by WTO staff, training participants, Member state delegations, United Nations and United Nations agencies staff, NGOs, academics and external researchers, and the general public interested in trade and trade-related topics.

The Archives are open to employees of the organization, WTO members and scholars upon request. Public access will be granted gradually from April 2020 to historical records relating to the GATT dating from the mid-1940 to the end of 1995 via a Disclosure procedure.

Participation

The Library participates in reciprocal inter-library loan arrangements with a number of Swiss libraries as well as the libraries in system of the United Nations and United Nations agencies. The Library is also a proud institutional member of the [Association of International Librarians and Information Specialists \(AILIS\)](#) and as such annually helps host association meetings and the association's flagship Library Science Talks.

RAMS develops several programs and services in order to inform their users about their holdings and reference procedures. Furthermore, the Section organizes exhibitions and publish periodically newsletters.

The Library communicates our regular recommendations on our blog, monthly emails with new acquisitions, periodic reading and discussion groups, "Meet the Author" sessions during our public forum as well as co-organising and hosting a range of other presentations, discussions and exhibitions.

With the aim of being aligned with other International Organization's methods, as well as of sharing our experiences, RAMS participate in a working group of archivists from International Organizations based in Geneva and we are members of the Section of International Organization within the International Council on Archives.

Challenges

A primary challenge faced by the WTO Library is one likely familiar to other libraries facilitating research in diverse and interdisciplinary subject areas: how to maximize on the budget available to acquire the best resources for the greatest depth and breadth of topics, even as the areas of work of the organization – and thus the needs of staff and researchers – change and evolve with the demands of policymaking in an international setting. An additional challenge is to identify and address training needs, whether it be for group or individual courses on subjects such as online searching and managing information overload or creation of thematic resource and research guides as new areas of interest are identified.

The Records and Archives Section encounters three main challenges that are probably common to other archival services in International Organizations: first, the lack of regulatory framework in the International environment; second, the constantly evolving digital environment to which professionals must rapidly adapt; and finally, as a consequence of this second challenge, the archivists profiles are becoming more hybrid and IT-oriented.



Katherine Rewinkel El-Darwish

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Résumé

English

The article portrays the services of the World Trade Organization Library and Archives and the challenges the organization faces.

Français

L'article décrit les services de la bibliothèque et des archives de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce (OMC) et les défis auxquels l'organisation est confrontée.

Deutsch

Der Artikel beschreibt die Angebote und Dienstleistungen der Bibliothek und des Archivs der Welthandelsorganisation WTO und die Herausforderungen, denen sich die Organisation gegenüber sieht.