auri research brief

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A Scheme for an Integrated System of Architectural Archives

As architectural archives are collected and managed in a variety of ways by numerous entities, there needs to be a systemized method for building, managing, and retrieving data for its effective use. Recently, the management of architectural information is transitioning to digital means, and past data are also being scanned for building a digital archive. As such, the amount of information has increased rapidly, and information is being acquired digitally. Hence, in order to efficiently manage and service large-scale archives, it is necessary to build and utilize an integrated digital system of individual architectural archives.

Currently, architectural archives are being built by various institutions and the state is planning to systematically manage urban and architectural archives through establishing the Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture. Against this background, the building of an integrated system of architectural archives should be discussed with respect to the planned archives of the Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture. This will provide the basis of an integrated system of architectural archives considering a comprehensive approach to the subject of archives, its expansion, and use.

Preservation of Architectural Records

In South Korea (hereafter, Korea), most of the nation's major architectural data are managed by the state or public institutions that manage historical data. National records from the Korean Empire(1897~1910) and the Colonial period(1910~1945) to the current Republic of Korea are currently managed by the National Archives of Korea. Among the records are information related to modern architecture and urbanism, as well as the planning, construction, and management of public facilities. Architectural records on cultural heritage or buildings with high cultural preservation values are being managed by the Cultural Heritage Administration, the National Museum of Korea, the Seoul Museum of History, the National Folk Museum of Korea, and the National Palace Museum of Korea. In addition, institutions such as the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, the Academy of Korean Studies, and the National Institute of Korean History collect and manage historical records related to architecture. Recently, public architecture-related organizations such as local governments have established a system to preserve and collect data not only of historical architecture but also public buildings that are currently in progress. For example, the Seoul Center for Architecture and Urbanism operates its own archive and provides information through the Seoul Hall of Urbanism and Architecture. The Korea Territorial Development Museum manages archives related to national development, and the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, the Seoul Museum of History, and the Anyang Foundation for Culture and Arts are aiming to build archives of architects and administration experts.

Despite these recent efforts, architectural records of public projects are still not managed systematically. Records of modern architecture are spread across various institutions, and even then, only a small number of records exist. The architectural records after 1945 are not much different. The public sector has rarely kept records of major national buildings according to a set process not only of buildings from the 1950s and 60s, immediately after the Colonial period, but up until the 2000s. The records concerning public architectural projects should be managed as a public asset, and there needs to be efforts toward collecting and organizing architectural records that have failed to be properly managed insofar. In addition, in terms of managing information on public facilities, there needs to be an approach that systematically collects and provides information.

Systematic Construction of Architectural Information

In the past, information and knowledge were distributed through printed matter. However, with the development and popularization of the Internet and mobile devices, large amounts of digital information, which is incomparable in its quantity, are being distributed. Likewise, architectural information is being converted into digital files, and architectural information produced in the digital format is increasing. Because digital information can be distributed easily and quickly, and be used in multiple ways, most architectural archives achieve great efforts to provide such information through establishing a digital search and browsing system.
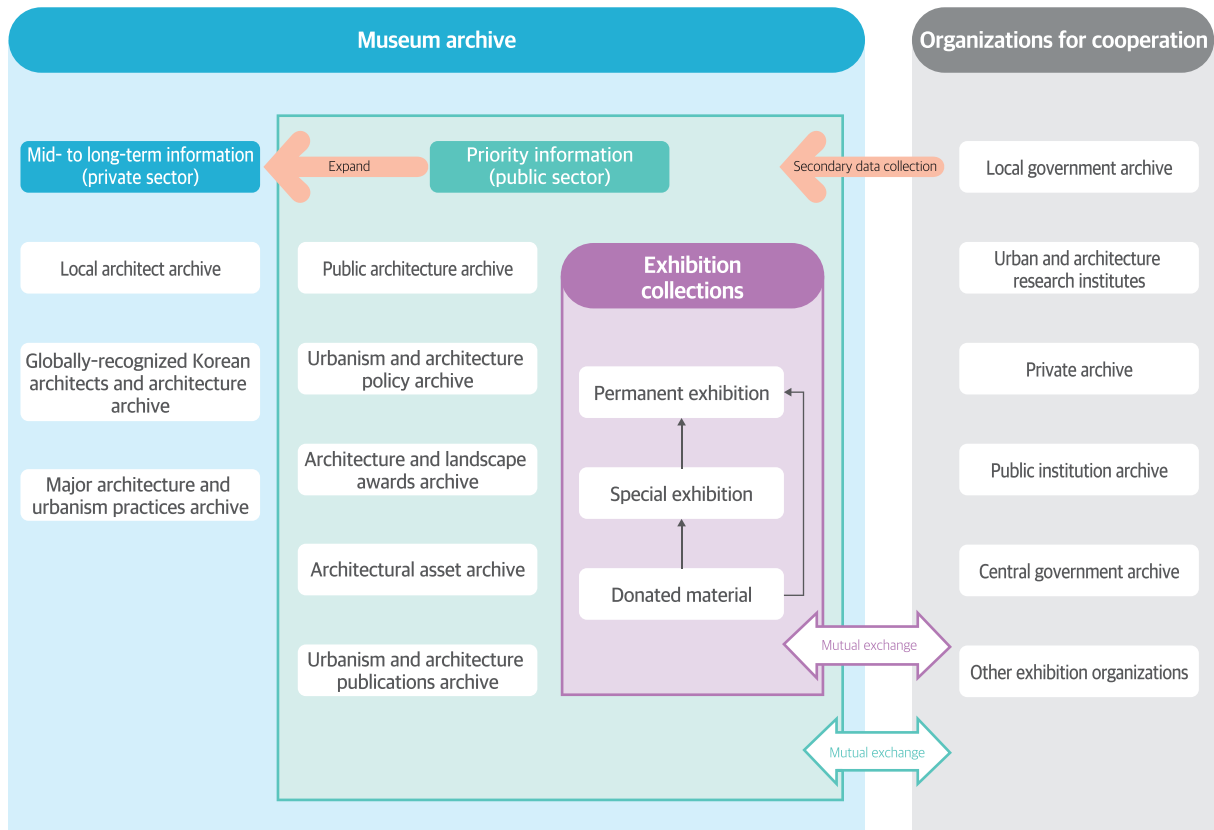
Since most archive information is managed and disclosed according to regulations set by holding institutions, there are almost no copyright problems or information errors. The construction of large-scale data management that was not possible in the past, and the provision of search and browsing services that has become possible through technical solutions by improving the speed and capacity of systems, has resulted in the attempts to integrate information held by various institutions. Against this background, a verifiable architectural information management system has become necessary. While general search engines can provide extensive information similar to the level of specialized institutions, the reason for the need for portals like Europeana is because of its reliable archive system that encompasses the European Portal for Archives, the European Library, OPENUP!, and LOCLOUD. The European Library, which provides information to Europeana, does not hold physical resources. Information can be collected in many stages, and data from lower-level organizations can be comprehensively managed to ensure a validated management system.

Various architectural records in Korea are stored in museums, libraries, art galleries, and archives in digital format. As in the case of the integrated information system of Korean history, as well as the widely used Europeana and the World Digital Library, if scattered information can be comprehensively searched through a few keywords, it would be incomparably effective than using individual archives and may also create synergies beyond the use of individual information. Moreover, since information can be searched without visiting multiple institutions, the amount of searched data would be extensive, and new information may be obtained by identifying new keywords relevant to the original search. Access to richer information would widen the scope of thinking and offer new avenues to explore. Such an explosive increase in information can greatly contribute to research, education, and creating new content.

An Integrated System of Architectural Archives of the Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture

The Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture aims to first collect information on central and local governments' urban and architecture policies, public architecture and major architectural and landscape award-winning projects, and urbanism and architecture-related exhibitions and publications. Various policy information of public projects such as new administrative city construction will be given priority, and more time and effort will be required in collating data onwards. If private institutions such as the Mokchon Architecture Archive donate or entrust archive management or the National Archives of Korea and the National Museum of Korea transfer their archives, an integrated system could be built in a short period. However, institutions need to be consulted and persuaded over a long time period, and policy and financial support must follow accordingly. Hence, difficulties in collecting sufficient amount of data are expected in building the archive of the state-pursued Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture.

If securing actual archive contents by the Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture is difficult, it is necessary to devise a new function for its archive. As the Museum's vision states of its central role in creating networks and a digital platform among related organizations, it should rightly function as the platform and hub of the domestic architectural archive. The scattered urbanism and architecture-related information needs to be accumulated, and the institution should serve as a professional information provider in the field and a platform that integrates such information. It is impossible for the state to physically consolidate all architectural archives. Rather, individuals or institutions need to be encouraged to build diverse architectural archives, and these archives need to be integrated and provided as verified information. If the Museum acts as the information hub and platform for relevant information and archives, it may be able to function to a similar extent of Europeana concerning Korean architecture.

[Figure] The Basic Concept of the Korean Museum of Urbanism and Architecture Archive
Source : 김상호 외(2016), 도시건축박물관 콘텐츠 개발 및 전시기획 연구. 국가건축정책위원회. p.61