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AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation in television audiovisual archives: a theoretical framework integrating human oversight

Jorge Caldera-Serrano

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Abstract

Introduction. The article addresses the challenge of examining the possible future archival significance of televised audiovisual documents in television archives. It introduces Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation to support archival decision-making in contexts of audiovisual overproduction and future-oriented archival judgment, responding to resource, storage, and preservation constraints.

Method. The study develops a theoretical and conceptual model integrating AI into archival appraisal processes. It draws on a critical review of specialised literature in archival science, heritage preservation, and computational cultural analysis, with particular attention to content features, contextual information, and production metadata. This is a critical conceptual literature review rather than an empirical validation.

Analysis. The analysis identifies patterns relevant to prospective archival appraisal and examines how predictive analytics can be aligned with established archival principles. It also examines the epistemological and ethical implications of algorithm-supported appraisal, including questions of bias, legitimacy, and responsibility.

Conclusions. The article proposes a conceptual framework combining AI-assisted predictive appraisal with well-founded archival criteria. It positions predictive analytics as a complementary tool for optimising curation, prioritising resources, and supporting more strategic and sustainable archive management. Its contribution is conceptual rather than demonstrative and remains dependent on human oversight, archival interpretation, and documented accountability.

Introduction

Audiovisual preservation in the television domain constitutes an increasing challenge in the digital society. The massive production of content, combined with technological obsolescence and storage limitations, demands increasingly rigorous selection criteria. Within this context, it becomes necessary to rethink traditional archival methodologies and to explore new approaches to archival appraisal (Taurino & Aitaki, 2025b). Preservation prioritisation can be more clearly informed by archival appraisal criteria and future-oriented archival judgment.

Television archives accumulate materials that cannot be preserved in their entirety (Gimenez Rayo, 2007; Taurino & Aitaki, 2025b). Resource management requires prioritising which documents may become relevant for future collective memory. This decision is not neutral: It involves cultural, historical, and social value judgments that remain conditioned by the subjectivities of the present. Determining which audiovisual pieces may acquire historical significance thus becomes an act of prospective appraisal with profound implications (Gimenez Rayo, 2007; Taurino & Aitaki, 2025b).

Archival science has developed solid criteria for archival appraisal, and these have long combined retrospective and prospective judgments, even if the anticipatory dimension has not always been made explicit in operational terms. Documents are preserved or discarded based on their immediate utility or their proven significance over time. However, in a scenario of audiovisual overproduction, it is insufficient to limit decision-making to the recognition of already consolidated values. Analytical tools are needed that help archivists examine possible future significance now of creation or management without reducing appraisal to a purely technical exercise (Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba, 2024).

For the purposes of this article, acquisition, appraisal, selection, and preservation prioritisation are treated as related but distinct archival functions. The proposal does not reduce appraisal to acquisition, nor does it claim that technical preservation constraints determine archival value. Rather, it examines how appraisal-informed preservation prioritisation may help archival professionals decide which television materials require earlier, deeper, or more resource-intensive preservation actions under conditions of audiovisual overproduction and technological vulnerability.

AI offers a broad framework of possibilities for such an approach. Machine learning systems can detect patterns in large datasets, identify cultural trends, and recognise contextual elements that humans can hardly process in a comprehensive way (Wu et al., 2023). Applying these capacities to audiovisual preservation opens the possibility of designing decision-support systems capable of identifying signals of potential archival significance before such significance becomes historically consolidated (Colavizza et al., 2022). Yet these capacities should be understood as analytical support for archival appraisal rather than as autonomous mechanisms for assigning value.

In the television field, this opportunity becomes even more evident. Television, as a mass medium, reflects both historical events and the cultural and social transformations of each era. Documents that appear trivial today may later become essential testimonies of collective experience. The challenge lies in discerning, in the present, which of them may prove significant in future interpretive contexts. Incorporating AI into this process does not eliminate the human dimension of decision-making, but it can provide analytical support that complements archival expertise (Jaillant & Rees, 2023; Taurino, 2025a).

This article proposes a theoretical framework for AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation. The concept is defined as the application of AI models to the anticipatory appraisal of televised audiovisual documents. The proposal builds upon the convergence of heritage preservation studies, machine learning, and computational cultural analysis. By articulating these

perspectives, it presents a conceptual model that combines traditional archival criteria with emerging technological tools.

The article also addresses the epistemological and ethical implications of supporting value-related archival judgments prospectively. The use of algorithms to inform decisions about preservation priorities introduces dilemmas regarding neutrality, bias, and transparency. Reflecting on these dimensions is essential to avoid the risk that AI reproduces cultural inequities or obscures minority narratives.

The originality of this proposal lies not in claiming that archives have never anticipated possible future values, but in articulating a more explicit conceptual framework for how AI may support future-oriented appraisal and preservation prioritisation in television audiovisual archives. This approach does not seek to replace human judgment, but rather to enrich it with new analytical methods. In this sense, the article seeks to contribute to archival discussions on appraisal, accountability, and human oversight under conditions of archival abundance.

Objectives and methodology

The main objective of this work is to propose a theoretical framework for AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation that explores how AI can be used to support future-oriented assessment of the potential relevance of televised audiovisual documents. Rather than testing a formal hypothesis, the article is guided by the problem of how archival, contextual, and technical-risk considerations may be articulated in a future-oriented appraisal framework for television documents. In this sense, the study seeks to clarify the conceptual conditions under which such a framework might be discussed and later examined in applied settings.

The objects of study are television documents understood as records of high informational, cultural, and social density. These materials not only fulfil functions of communication and entertainment but also serve as historical testimonies of a time and a society. Television has documented conflicts, political transformations, cultural expressions, and technological changes, generating a heterogeneous heritage whose preservation is essential. The difficulty lies in identifying, within this massive stream of production, which documents may acquire archival or historical significance in future interpretive contexts, without yet having the perspective of time.

The specific objectives of this study are oriented toward three dimensions. First, to analyse the theoretical foundations of archival appraisal in audiovisual archives, with an emphasis on television. Second, to explore the potential of AI as a decision-support tool for predictive appraisal. Third, to propose a conceptual model of AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation that integrates these elements into an innovative archival framework. Achieving these objectives will enable progress toward a conceptualisation of archival appraisal that does not depend exclusively on retrospective criteria.

From a methodological perspective, the study adopts a qualitative, theoretical, analytical, and exploratory approach based on a critical review of specialised literature. The review is conceived as a critical conceptual literature review rather than as a systematic review or an empirical validation design. The research draws on academic sources indexed in reference databases such as Web of Science and Scopus, along with recent contributions available through Google Scholar. Sources considered include works from audiovisual archiving, digital preservation studies, AI applied to media, and epistemological approaches to cultural memory. This strategy allows the construction of an interdisciplinary framework that articulates archival tradition with emerging technological innovations.

The bibliographic search was conducted using terms in both Spanish and English, given the international nature of the field. Among the descriptors employed were: “*inteligencia artificial*” AND “*archivos audiovisuales*” AND “*preservación*”; “*television archives*” AND “*AI-based prediction*” OR “*documentary appraisal*”; “*digital preservation*” AND “*cultural heritage*” AND “*machine learning*”; as well as combinations integrating “*archival valuation*,” “*predictive models*,” or “*prospective curation*.” The aim of this strategy was to gather both technical and humanistic perspectives that enrich the analysis from different academic traditions.

Selection of the corpus was guided by thematic relevance, conceptual usefulness, disciplinary representativeness, and the need to connect archival appraisal literature with television archives, AI applications, and debates on bias, plurality, and human oversight. The review was not intended to be exhaustive in a systematic sense; rather, it prioritised representative contributions in four intersecting areas: archival appraisal theory, television audiovisual archives, AI applications in archival and heritage contexts, and debates on accountability, bias, and human oversight.

The analysis of the literature goes beyond descriptive synthesis, functioning instead as an exercise in problematisation. Points of convergence and divergence between traditional archival science and AI approaches are examined in order to delineate a novel conceptual space. From this review, hypothetical scenarios of application are outlined, in which AI systems identify patterns in television content, context, and production metadata. These scenarios serve as analytical exercises to visualise how AI-assisted predictive appraisal could operate in practice and what ethical and epistemological risks might emerge from its implementation.

The methodology also emphasises that this study does not include empirical fieldwork or technical algorithm development but rather focuses on the theoretical construction of a conceptual model. The prospective character of the approach requires a speculative analysis grounded in existing literature rather than immediate empirical evidence. Nonetheless, the study acknowledges the necessity for future applications of AI-assisted predictive appraisal to integrate human validation. The archivist's professional judgment remains irreplaceable for ensuring cultural relevance, interpretative plurality, and the mitigation of algorithmic biases.

The adopted methodology seeks to generate a robust framework that combines critical literature review, conceptual analysis, and hypothetical application scenarios. The dialogue between disciplines such as archival science, data science, and cultural studies is indispensable for assessing the potential and the limits of AI-assisted predictive appraisal. In this way, the methodological proposal not only delineates an emerging field but also provides tools to think critically about how and why AI may reconfigure the criteria for the preservation of televised audiovisual heritage in the future.

State of the art

Archival appraisal has become a central concern of modern archival theory, particularly in twentieth-century debates on selection, evidential and informational value, documentation strategy, and macroappraisal. Earlier custodial approaches, exemplified by Jenkinson (1922), foregrounded authenticity, custody, administrative responsibility, and the evidential integrity of records rather than the archivist's active selection on behalf of future researchers. Later contributions by Schellenberg (1956), Samuels (1986), Booms et al. (1987), and Cook (2005, 2011) more directly address appraisal as a situated judgment about value, evidence, representativeness, and future use.

Classical and contemporary literature on appraisal has emphasised that archival systems cannot preserve all records without some form of selection, although the theoretical basis for that selection differs across archival traditions. In Schellenbergian and post-Schellenbergian

approaches, overabundance of information, combined with limitations of space, resources, and technology, necessitates appraisal frameworks that ensure the sustainability of archival systems (Cook, 2005; Schellenberg, 1956). More recent debates on documentation strategy and macroappraisal reinforce the idea that selection is inseparable from representational choices, social context, and the construction of future memory (Cook, 2005, 2011; Samuels, 1986).

This perspective is especially relevant here because it shows that future-oriented judgment is not foreign to modern appraisal theory, while also requiring caution against any objective or deterministic conception of value. Booms et al. (1987) are particularly useful in this respect because they connect appraisal to socially situated judgments about documentary heritage and warn against treating value as universal, ahistorical, or fixed. What contemporary AI brings is not the invention of anticipation, but the possibility of making some inferential processes more explicit, scalable, documented, and reviewable in environments of archival abundance.

This line of argument also connects the proposal with documentation strategy and macroappraisal. Like those approaches, AI-assisted predictive appraisal assumes that selection is socially situated and that representational gaps must be addressed explicitly rather than left to accumulative logics. At the same time, the framework does not replace provenance with thematic pertinence; instead, it seeks to articulate provenance-based archival control with contextual and thematic indicators that may help archivists examine future-oriented appraisal judgments under conditions of archival abundance.

Television introduces unique specificities into this debate. Audiovisual production for television is characterised by its massive scale, its diversity of genres, and its strong dependence on technology. Television archives face the challenge of selecting, from an immense flow of materials, which should be preserved in the long-term (Kramp, 2019). News broadcasts, entertainment programs, debates, documentaries, and live events coexist in the same environment, creating a complexity greater than that of many other archival repositories.

Studies on television archives have also highlighted the impact of technological obsolescence (Taurino & Aitaki, 2025b). Magnetic and analogue formats employed for decades present risks of physical deterioration and inaccessibility due to the lack of playback devices. Digitisation has extended the life of these documents but has exponentially multiplied the volume of materials to be managed (Nachreiner, 2009). The paradox is clear: The easier it becomes to produce and store, the more difficult it becomes to select and preserve.

In this context, archival appraisal and preservation prioritisation in television archives must combine archival, cultural, and political criteria with technical risk, urgency, and feasibility factors. Decisions about which programs to preserve are not determined solely by their aesthetic quality or informational relevance but also by factors such as the representativeness of social voices, their capacity to testify to historical events, their potential to become cultural memory, and their vulnerability to loss or inaccessibility (Stockinger, 2025). Selection is never neutral and, as several authors have underlined, always reflects a situated perspective on what should be remembered. This is also where justice, plurality, and minority representation become archival concerns rather than merely external ethical add-ons (Caswell et al., 2017; Cline, 2021; Harris, 2002; Punzalan & Caswell, 2016; Schwartz & Cook, 2002;).

Digital preservation has attempted to address these challenges through strategies of migration, normalisation, and metadata management. The emphasis has been placed on ensuring long-term accessibility and technical stability, especially in environments marked by format obsolescence and infrastructure dependency. These approaches are indispensable, but they do not by themselves resolve the question of archival value. In other words, technical constraints may shape preservation urgency and feasibility without determining value in the archival sense.

Some international projects have experimented with automated prioritisation systems. These initiatives generally rely on algorithms that detect duplication, define levels of technical quality, or highlight the rarity of certain records. While useful, such tools do not address the cultural and social dimensions of archival relevance. Audiovisual preservation is not exhausted by maintaining technical copies but also involves recognising which documents embody narratives, memories, and sensibilities that may later be interpreted as significant for future generations (Pendergrass et al., 2019).

The emergence of AI is reconfiguring this debate by introducing capacities for large-scale analysis and automated learning. Machine learning models can process audiovisual corpora, identify thematic recurrences, recognise entities, and detect contextual or formal patterns that might be relevant to archival decision-making. Yet these capacities should be understood as analytical supports for appraisal, not as autonomous mechanisms for assigning value. Their usefulness depends on how they are embedded within archival criteria, human interpretation, and accountable workflows.

Applications of AI in audiovisual archives have advanced along several fronts. Developments include automatic cataloguing of images and sounds, facial recognition, and text analysis in subtitles and scripts. Experiments have also been conducted with semantic classification systems that facilitate indexing and retrieval. These experiences demonstrate that AI can optimise technical processes in archival management, although they have rarely been framed from a predictive perspective (Wu et al., 2023).

An emerging area is computational cultural analysis, which explores how algorithms can detect narrative and aesthetic trends within large audiovisual corpora. This approach has been employed in social media studies and digital media analysis but has not yet been systematically applied to television archives. The potential extrapolation of its methodologies suggests fertile ground for predictive preservation, as it enables the identification of cultural significance patterns that could become markers of cultural heritage significance in the future (Roy et al., 2024).

Critical literature on AI nonetheless warns of epistemological and ethical risks. Dependence on algorithms trained on large-scale datasets may reproduce cultural and social biases (Chen, 2025). The invisibilisation of minorities, overrepresentation of dominant discourses, and normalisation of hegemonic narratives are well-documented risks. Applied to audiovisual preservation, such biases could consolidate a partialised memory that reinforces cultural inequalities (Breemen & Breemen, 2025).

Another relevant debate concerns algorithmic transparency and interpretability. Deep learning systems often function as *black boxes*, with decisions that are neither easily comprehensible nor auditable (Doshi-Velez & Kim, 2021). This stands in tension with archival principles, which demand traceability, accountability, and clear justification of appraisal decisions (Franks, 2023). For predictive preservation to be viable, it must incorporate mechanisms that allow professionals to understand and supervise algorithmic recommendations.

Ethical studies on AI applied to heritage also emphasise the importance of human validation. No automated system can replace the culturally situated perspective of the archivist. The risk of full delegation to algorithms is that preservation decisions may devolve into purely technical operations, devoid of attention to social and historical contexts. For this reason, predictive preservation models should be conceived as analytical supports, not substitutes for professional appraisal. Recent work on InterPARES Trust AI, Records in Contexts, and paradata-based accountability further underlines the importance of documenting both the records and the processual conditions under which AI-assisted inferences are produced (Cameron et al., 2023; Feliciati, 2023; Feliciati & Duranti, 2025; International Council on Archives, 2023).

Within archival science, concepts such as *predictive appraisal* or *digital curation* have been proposed to address the need to incorporate future-oriented criteria into archival management. However, these notions have not yet been systematically articulated in relation to AI. The present article therefore adopts predictive appraisal as its primary archival frame and treats predictive preservation as a preservation-oriented formulation within that wider discussion. The idea of *predictive archival science* has only begun to appear tentatively in some studies, but it lacks robust conceptual development and specific applications to the television domain.

At this juncture, a preservation-oriented reformulation of predictive appraisal becomes pertinent. The term seeks to synthesise the convergence of the archival tradition of appraisal, the specific challenges of audiovisual television preservation, and the potential of AI. By articulating these three axes, the proposal offers a conceptual framework capable of addressing the gaps identified in the literature.

The state of the art thus reveals a set of unresolved tensions. Television archival practice requires more refined selection and prioritisation criteria than those currently in place. Digital preservation has solved technical problems but not epistemological ones. AI provides powerful tools, yet it introduces risks of bias and opacity. What is lacking is a model that integrates these dimensions into a coherent theory of predictive appraisal, oriented toward preserving materials that may acquire significance in future interpretive contexts.

Consequently, the literature review highlights both the richness and the limitations of current approaches. Solid traditions of archival appraisal exist, but they have not always been translated into explicit frameworks for AI-assisted future-oriented appraisal in television archives. Digital preservation techniques have been developed, but with limited attention to cultural anticipation. AI has been applied to archives, but without a systematic focus on potential future relevance. The resulting line of inquiry is therefore not a break with archival tradition, but a conceptual attempt to connect appraisal theory, audiovisual preservation, and computational analysis under conditions of human oversight and archival accountability.

Proposed conceptual framework for AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation

The analysis undertaken makes it possible to outline a set of conceptual and technical strategies for discussing AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation in television audiovisual archives. Rather than presenting empirically demonstrated results, this section organises an initial conceptual proposal for how such an approach might be structured in practice. The proposal is structured around three fundamental axes, content, context, and metadata, which, when integrated, constitute an analytical framework for examining possible trajectories of future historical relevance. The proposed appraisal dimensions and their relationship to AI-assisted signal, evidentiary limitations, and human validation are summarised in table 1.

Appraisal dimension	AI-assisted signal	Evidence and limitation	Human validation
Contextual relevance	Links with events, institutions, dates, places, and social debates	Evidence: metadata and external chronologies. Limitation: correlation is not significance.	Assess documentary meaning.
Evidential and informational value	Persons, organisations, topics, testimonies, and unique information	Evidence: transcripts, entity extraction, provenance data. Limitation: extraction errors or omissions.	Verify accuracy and relevance.
Singularity or rarity	Low duplication, unusual genre, scarce representation, endangered format	Evidence: collection comparison and format reports. Limitation: rarity alone is not value.	Decide whether rarity supports priority.
Representation and diversity	Presence, absence, or concentration of groups, languages, territories, or viewpoints	Evidence: content analysis and metadata review. Limitation: AI may reproduce dominant categories.	Assess representativeness and sensitivity.
Technical risk and urgency	Obsolete formats, degraded carriers, missing playback environment, migration risk	Evidence: technical metadata and preservation assessment. Limitation: technical risk is not archival value.	Weigh urgency with appraisal criteria.
Traceability and metadata quality	Completeness of provenance, rights, context, process metadata, and paradata	Evidence: metadata audit and standards mapping. Limitation: rich metadata may reflect institutional bias.	Validate provenance and description.
Reception and reinterpretation	Audience data, press reception, reuse, citation, later reinterpretation	Evidence: audience records, press archives, reuse documentation. Limitation: popularity is not archival value.	Distinguish reception from significance.

Table 1. Appraisal dimensions, AI-assisted signals, evidentiary basis and limitations and human validation.

Axis 1. Content: Semantic and narrative analysis

The first axis corresponds to the content of audiovisual documents. Predictive preservation requires systems capable of processing not only the textual or audiovisual surface but also the narrative and aesthetic dimensions of television productions. To this end, the proposed strategy combines natural language processing technologies, multimodal analysis, and the recognition of narrative patterns. In a future-oriented archival framework, these techniques should be understood as aids to appraisal rather than as self-sufficient determinants of value.

A key technique is the application of language models trained on large audiovisual and journalistic corpora, capable of detecting emerging themes, recurring discourses, and narrative structures that may acquire future significance. These models, such as Transformer-based architectures (Vani, Mellace & Antonucci, 2020), allow the identification of fragments that reflect dominant social discourses, political tensions, or cultural expressions representative of a particular era (Radford et al., 2021).

Predictive preservation of content must also incorporate the analysis of image and sound. Computer vision algorithms can classify settings, identify public figures, and recognise symbolic objects associated with a historical context. Similarly, audio analysis techniques enable the detection of intonations, silences, and musical elements that are part of television language and that may contribute to the construction of collective memory (Horáková et al., 2024; Radford et al., 2021).

A complementary strategy is the application of narrative analysis models that identify dramatic structures, plot twists, or modes of representation (Vani, Mellace & Antonucci, 2020). In this way, productions that might appear trivial in the present but possess a narrative complexity can be anticipated as candidates to become future cultural references.

Operationally, these techniques could be integrated into systems capable of generating indicative priority signals for content. Such signals should not be treated as definitive scores of values, but as provisional aids to preservation decision-making in contexts of audiovisual overproduction.

Axis 2. Context: Networks of significance and social value

The second axis focuses on the context in which documents are produced and circulated. Potential future historical relevance depends not only on internal content but also on the social, political, and cultural conditions of their creation. In this regard, predictive preservation benefits from contextual analysis techniques that enable the examination of a document's archival or cultural heritage significance based on its insertion within broader frameworks (Jaillant & Caputo, 2022).

A key strategy is the analysis of semantic and social networks linked to the documents. Through data mining, it is possible to identify connections between programs, producers, broadcasters, and audiences, generating maps of influence that indicate the potential cultural impact of a document. These analyses can, for example, reveal that a local broadcast tied to a minority community may have potentially high future significance compared to its immediate reach (Colavizza et al., 2022; Jaillant & Caputo, 2022).

Context also includes relationships with historical events. Temporal correlation algorithms can detect coincidences between television broadcasts and political, social, or cultural events, highlighting those documents whose preservation may offer irreplaceable testimony in the future.

Another relevant aspect is the analysis of reception at the time of production. Opinion mining and audience analysis techniques capture how documents were received in their contemporary moment, which may indicate how they will be reinterpreted in the future. This does not mean confusing popularity with cultural heritage significance but rather integrating reception metrics that may guide the identification of culturally significant materials (Jaillant & Aske, 2024; Xu, Xu, & Ma, 2024).

Strategically, contextual analysis may be translated into models that help examine the social, political, and cultural relevance of each television document. Such models are not intended to replace historiographical interpretation, but to generate an analytical foundation that can inform preservation decisions in the present.

Axis 3. Metadata: Traceability and automated enrichment

The third axis concerns metadata, understood as the structured set of descriptions that accompany audiovisual documents and constitute the foundation of any preservation strategy. Within a framework of AI-assisted predictive appraisal, metadata serve as the anchor between the document and analytical systems, since the quality, scope, and coherence of these descriptions condition the possibility of establishing patterns, contextual relations, and reviewable inferences about potential future significance.

The first strategy involves standardising the metadata schemas used in television archives. Currently, the diversity of systems and formats limits interoperability and hinders the creation of consistent corpora for training predictive models. It is therefore advisable to apply common frameworks, such as PBCore, EBUCore, or extended Dublin Core, adapted to the television domain, incorporating both technical information and cultural and social dimensions. This standardisation should not be interpreted as rigidity, but as a modular and expandable design that allows for the progressive inclusion of new categories (Rei et al., 2023).

Automated enrichment through AI constitutes the second strategic line. Information extraction algorithms, facial recognition, and semantic analysis can generate additional metadata directly from documents, substantially expanding the available descriptive base (Bazán-Gil, 2023). For example, a news broadcast whose original record only indicates the date, channel, and topic could be enriched with data such as: 'Appearance of public figure X,' 'location: Plaza Mayor, Madrid,' 'emotional tone: alarm,' or 'incidental archival music.' When integrated into predictive models, this type of description increases the quality of future-oriented appraisal support.

A key aspect is defining which metadata categories should be prioritised in this model, some of which are already present in audiovisual information databases within television media. As an initial proposal rather than a closed list, the following categories may be considered particularly relevant:

Technical Metadata

Name: Format and resolution

Scope: Production and medium characteristics

Example: Archive in Betacam SP format, digitised to 1080p, stereo audio 48kHz

Production Metadata

Name: Creative team and broadcast date

Scope: Identification of directors, producers, presenters, broadcast date, and channel

Example: Director: Ana López; Producer: RTVE; Date: 12/03/1992

Contextual Metadata

Name: Associated event

Scope: Relationship of the document to relevant social, political, or cultural events

Example: Television coverage of the signing of the Maastricht Treaty

Content Metadata

Name: Main and secondary topics

Scope: Thematic classification based on automated semantic analysis

Example: Topic: general elections; Subtopic: citizen participation; Keywords: democracy, ballot box

Personal Identification Metadata

Name: Recognised entities and figures

Scope: Persons and organisations identifiable in the recording

Example: Interviewee: Felipe González; Organisation: PSOE

Emotional and Aesthetic Metadata

Name: Narrative tone and atmosphere

Scope: Emotional or aesthetic dimension of the document, inferred through multimodal analysis

Example: Tone: solemn; Dominant emotion: hope; Aesthetic: testimonial documentary

Reception Metadata

Name: Impact and audience

Scope: Data on initial audience, reviews, or social interactions

Example: Audience: 5.3 million; Press review: positive; Viewer letters archive: 123 messages

Dynamic Metadata

Name: Interpretive evolution

Scope: Changes in the cultural or social appraisal of the document over time

Example: Reinterpreted in 2020 as a reference in democratic memory studies

The incorporation of these metadata categories has not only technical but also epistemological value. The way a document is described influences how it will be searched, preserved, and understood in the future. Therefore, predictive preservation requires that schema design considers cultural diversity, ethical sensitivity, and adaptability to new interpretive frameworks. This also makes it relevant to consider contextual standards such as Records in Contexts and processual documentation such as paradata, since both help document not only the record itself but also the conditions under which AI-assisted recommendations are produced.

Finally, metadata should be conceived as living entities, subject to periodic updating and professional oversight. AI can automate information extraction and detect patterns invisible to the human eye, but professionals must validate, correct, and enrich the descriptions. Only through this interaction between technology, human judgment, and processual documentation can metadata feed reviewable models while supporting a pluralistic and human-centred audiovisual memory. Algorithmic traceability should also include the documentation, and, where technically and legally possible, the preservation, of model versions, training corpora or their descriptions, configuration parameters, weighting rules, paradata, logs of recommendations, human overrides, and subsequent recalibrations. Without such documentation, AI-assisted appraisal would be difficult to audit, reproduce, contest, or reinterpret.

Based on the three axes analysed, a set of illustrative activities can be proposed to configure the predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation strategy:

a) Corpus selection and data normalisation

The first essential activity involves delimiting which audiovisual corpus will undergo the predictive preservation process (Foka & Griffin, 2024). This entails identifying representative television collections, ensuring the inclusion of both highly visible productions, such as national news broadcasts, international sports events, and less widely circulated recordings with potential significance like local broadcasts, cultural programs, or productions representing social minorities. The strategy aims for thematic and geographic diversity within the corpus to enhance the models' capacity to detect relevant patterns.

A critical step in this phase is the digitisation and standardisation of materials (Schüller, 2019). Many television archives still preserve analogue tapes or obsolete formats, whose conversion to digital media constitutes a prerequisite for computational analysis. Additionally, it is necessary to apply standardised metadata schemas, such as EBUCore or PBCore, to enable interoperability among institutions and facilitate the integration of data into machine learning models (Anderson, 2020). For example, two broadcasts from different channels but covering the same historical date should be easily linked through common descriptors.

b) Training predictive models

Once the corpus is established, the next step is training AI models capable of supporting future-oriented assessment of relevance. These models must be multimodal, integrating textual, visual, and auditory analyses, as television documents are constructed through the convergence of multiple expressive codes. For instance, a language model may detect emerging political

discourses, while a computer vision model identifies recurring visual symbols that gain iconic significance over time (Li et al., 2024).

The strategy requires defining sufficiently large and representative training corpora, encompassing different decades, television genres, and cultural contexts. This ensures that the algorithm learns to recognise not only major historical milestones but also documents that may initially appear marginal yet later acquire cultural heritage significance. Applicable techniques include deep neural networks, transformer-based semantic analysis, and clustering systems that group documents by narrative or contextual affinities (Alqahtani et al., 2021). The aim of training is not to generate an *absolute truth*, but to produce probabilistic signals that guide archival decision-making.

c) Assignment of relevance scores

The third component involves designing mechanisms that translate computational analysis into indicators useful for preservation. These indicators may take the form of numerical scores (e.g., 0-100) or qualitative categories (high, medium, low relevance), according to the logic of each archive. Their purpose is not to assign a definitive value or to predict archival significance objectively, but to provide a provisional prioritisation tool in contexts of limited resources. Such indicators should therefore remain open to contextual reinterpretation and professional review.

Scores can be based on the convergence of multiple variables. For example, a documentary may receive a high-priority signal if it covers a key political event (content), was produced in a context of social mobilisation (context) and includes metadata documenting broad circulation (metadata). Conversely, an entertainment broadcast may initially have low relevance, but its narrative or contextual analysis could justify further professional review over time. This mechanism facilitates the creation of dynamic maps of archival significance, adaptable to historical reinterpretations (Rei et al., 2023).

d) Human validation

Predictive preservation requires the active participation of archival professionals and specialists to supervise and validate results. AI can detect complex patterns and unexpected correlations, but it lacks the capacity to contextualise decisions culturally and ethically. Human validation ensures that recommendations do not result in automatic exclusions that impoverish collective memory. This participation should begin before final validation, extending to criteria design, metadata decisions, and the review of training assumptions.

A practical strategy is to establish interdisciplinary committees comprising archivists, historians, communication experts, and representatives of cultural communities. These teams not only verify the relevance of recommendations but also introduce criteria of plurality and social sensitivity. For example, a local broadcast about indigenous traditions may not achieve a high algorithmic score, but archivists may decide to preserve it due to its testimonial value. This dialogue between machine and human constitutes a central methodological principle, reinforcing the legitimacy of the process.

e) Periodic review

Predictive preservation cannot be conceived as a closed operation. Audiovisual documents change in relevance as historical contexts evolve, so scores and models require periodic review. This review can be conducted in defined cycles (e.g., every five years), linking updates to cultural milestones, technological advances, or academic discoveries.

From a conceptual perspective, such review may include updates to the corpora and, where appropriate, recalibration or retraining of models. New television productions should be continuously integrated, and the interpretation of old documents should be revised whenever changing social sensitivities alter their significance.

f) Strategic curation

The ensemble of analyses and validations may culminate in strategic curation. This process involves making deliberate decisions about which documents to preserve as a priority, how to organise collections, and what diversity criteria to apply in their composition. Curation should not be limited to preserving algorithmically prioritised materials but must also integrate principles of collective memory, cultural identity, and social justice.

In practice, this may involve creating anticipatory thematic collections, such as *Social Testimonies of the 1990s* or *Television Narratives of Health Crises*, combining high-scoring materials with documents selected by experts. Strategic curation also requires resource planning, prioritising digitisation and preservation of the most fragile or threatened materials. The goal is to ensure that television audiovisual memory is not the outcome of cold calculation, but of archival practice enriched through the interaction of technology and human judgment.

The role of human oversight in AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation cannot be approached as purely algorithmic processes. While AI may detect complex patterns and generate priority signals, interpretation and validation of these outputs require active human intervention. Human oversight is not ancillary but constitutive of the model, ensuring that archival decisions remain aligned with professional, ethical, cultural, and social principles.

Firstly, professionals must critically supervise not only the results generated by predictive models but also the conditions under which those results are produced. This supervision involves analyzing assigned scores, variables, metadata choices, training assumptions, and interpretive consequences. A television record with a low algorithmic score may be considered relevant if it reflects marginalised voices or underrepresented testimonies in audiovisual memory. Human intervention therefore introduces a corrective perspective against system biases or gaps.

Secondly, human validation requires explicit and consensual criteria, which can be classified at three levels: Archival criteria, including technical aspects of preservation, quality of digitisation, and completeness of metadata. Cultural and social criteria, including the professional examination of diversity, representativeness, and the ability of a document to reflect collective experiences. AI may assist by identifying patterns, absences, concentrations, or anomalies, but it cannot itself determine the cultural or social value of these dimensions. Ethical criteria, related to the protection of image rights, respect for interpretative plurality, and avoidance of discriminatory biases. Human teams should be interdisciplinary, integrating archivists, archival professionals, historians, communication specialists, and, whenever possible, representatives of communities connected to the documents. This plural composition broadens analytical perspectives and prevents preservation decisions from being made from a singular or overly institutionalised view. It also helps prevent AI-assisted selection from reproducing only dominant institutional or cultural perspectives.

In operational terms, specialists can rely on peer review panels and other hybrid forms of validation, including periodic review sessions of scores, comparative reports on documents with high AI-expert discrepancies, and case-by-case evaluations in contexts of historical or cultural sensitivity.

A fundamental aspect is the mode of validation. It should not be understood as passive acceptance of recommendations but as an iterative process of cross-checking. Specialists validate, correct, and, at times, reject algorithmic results, recording decisions in traceable systems that allow future auditing. In this way, validation ensures not only quality but also transparency, accountability, and the possibility of later review.

Conditions necessary for effective human validation include access to clear visualisation tools, specialised training in AI methodologies applied to documentation, and institutional protocols that recognise the value of professional judgment. Without these conditions, human intervention risks being a mere formality with no real impact on decision-making.

The main risks of the proposal can be stated more precisely at this point: Content analysis may privilege dominant discourses, contextual correlation may overstate significance, and metadata automation may flatten cultural nuance. For that reason, these risks are treated here as conditions of application to be addressed through documented validation, periodic review, and professional accountability.

Discussion

From the perspective of archival appraisal theory, the proposal is closer to documentation strategy and macroappraisal than to a merely thematic reordering of collections: It retains provenance as an archival principle while using contextual and thematic indicators only as aids to appraisal and preservation prioritisation.

The proposal for AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation in television audiovisual archives should be understood as a conceptual extension of archival appraisal rather than as a radical break with it. While modern appraisal theory has included forms of prospective reasoning about future use and significance, the incorporation of algorithms capable of assisting anticipatory judgment introduces new analytical possibilities together with new epistemological and ethical risks. Examining which content may acquire significance in future contexts can optimise resources and support the conservation of high-potential materials, but it may also constrain the interpretative breadth inherent to collective memory by privileging patterns detectable by AI over emergent phenomena or unexpected cultural ruptures.

From a theoretical perspective, the notion of archival value is neither universal nor fixed. Audiovisual documents acquire meaning within specific social, historical, and cultural contexts, and their appraisal depends on the interaction between the agents who produce, consume, and preserve them. A predictive model based solely on algorithmic analysis could inadvertently fix criteria that favour certain narratives, reproducing historical or cultural biases present in the training data. This underscores the necessity for AI-assisted predictive appraisal to integrate human supervision mechanisms that ensure interpretative plurality and prevent systematic exclusions.

In this regard, human judgment remains indispensable. AI can assist in identifying patterns relevant to appraisal, but it cannot replace critical reflection on the pertinence, ethics, or context of documents. The complementarity between technology and human judgment thus becomes a methodological principle: Automation enhances analytical capacity, while the archivist retains authority over the final definition of relevance and interpretation of results.

Another central point of discussion is the tension between anticipation and openness to the unexpected. Predictive preservation cannot, and should not, eliminate the possibility of conserving documents that may not seem relevant at present but could acquire significance in future contexts due to social, cultural, or political changes. Algorithmic planning must coexist with inclusive and flexible preservation strategies that respect the uncertainty inherent in cultural evolution.

Furthermore, cultural and community dimensions are relevant without displacing professional responsibility. Possible future archival values cannot be defined solely from a technological or institutional perspective; in certain cases, especially those involving underrepresented communities or culturally sensitive records, it may be necessary to incorporate forms of consultation or plural validation. Final responsibility, however, remains with archival institutions and professionals, who must document the criteria, evidence, and decisions applied.

Finally, this analysis highlights clear research horizons: Exploring the integration of predictive archival practices with digital humanities, evaluating real-world application scenarios, and designing mechanisms for the periodic review of automated decisions. Open questions arise regarding the fate of discarded documents and how to ensure that future preservation reflects a plurality of memories, avoiding algorithmic homogenisation of audiovisual history. Future work should also address paradata, auditability, documentation of model versions, decision logs, human overrides, and hybrid workflows in specific archival settings.

Conclusions

The article suggests that AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation in television audiovisual archives constitute a promising conceptual approach for thinking about complex collections characterised by high informational, narrative, cultural, and technical density. The study argues that audiovisual documents do not merely transmit objective information; they also construct social meanings and may acquire archival significance across changing historical contexts. In this sense, AI can support decision-making regarding conservation, access, and curation, if it remains subordinated to professional judgment and documented human oversight.

The theoretical analysis situates predictive preservation within an interdisciplinary framework where audiovisual archiving, archival appraisal, digital preservation, and computational analysis converge. This integration allows AI to be understood not as an autonomous evaluator of archival value, but as a decision-support instrument capable of identifying patterns, absences, correlations, and priority signals that require professional interpretation.

From a methodological perspective, the critical review of the specialised literature indicates that, although advanced technical developments exist in audiovisual content analysis and automatic tagging, there is still a scarcity of studies that explicitly integrate the ethical, cultural, and epistemological dimensions of future-oriented appraisal and preservation prioritisation. This gap highlights the need to propose hybrid models in which automation and human supervision coexist, ensuring inclusive and pluralistic criteria of archival value. The consideration of hypothetical scenarios and reflection on the risks of algorithmic bias provide a conceptual framework to anticipate future challenges and guide more responsible preservation practices.

The discussion of ethical and cultural implications emphasises the necessity of maintaining the possibility of preserving documents that may not currently be deemed relevant but could acquire significance due to social change, historical reinterpretation, or emerging research interests. The model therefore rejects any definitive or objective prediction of value and instead frames AI outputs as provisional, situated, reviewable, and accountable signals.

In practical terms, the study proposes that AI integration in television audiovisual archives should focus on enhancing accessibility, strategic curation, metadata enrichment, risk awareness, and retrieval of audiovisual records without compromising historical integrity or interpretative richness. The analysis points toward a more proactive archival model capable of supporting preservation planning and identifying materials that deserve professional review, without delegating authority over collective memory to technology.

AI-assisted predictive appraisal and preservation prioritisation emerge as promising tools for audiovisual archive management, provided they are implemented under ethical, critical, and methodologically sound criteria. The combination of algorithmic analysis, archival criteria, processual documentation, and human judgment offers a pathway to enrich description, access, and curation of television documents, contributing to a more inclusive and plural representation of audiovisual memory. Future research should test the proposed framework in controlled archival settings, develop auditable workflows, and examine how predictive models can be integrated with professional standards, community-sensitive appraisal, and long-term preservation strategies.

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About the author

Jorge Caldera-Serrano is an Associate Professor in the Department of Information and Documentation at the University of Extremadura, Spain. He holds a PhD in Information Science. His research interests include audiovisual documentation, television archives, artificial intelligence applied to information and documentation, metadata, and digital preservation. He can be contacted at jcalser@unex.es.

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