Guizhou, a historically economically underdeveloped province which surprised the entire country when it appeared as the first province in China that embarked on the big data journey is now the undoubted leader in pushing forward the development and usage of big data technologies. It now possesses big data technology related facilities, large scale government online data platforms, nationally financed labs, and even the first Big Data Trading Center.

The study reported in a 2018 SAA poster found that in the effort of achieving precision in poverty reduction, both the methods of big data technology and paper-based records creation were employed — these paper records were called “precision poverty reduction (current) archives”.

Note: The Chinese concepts of archives and records do not have ready English equivalents; Chinese records < English records and Chinese archives > English archives; and the implication is that current records are professionally managed only after they become current archives – not from the moment of creation (SAA Poster 2015 Relationships between Key Concepts relating to Records: An Analysis based on Relevant Laws and Regulations of China and the U.S.).

The province intends to deploy BD technologies to all aspects of its operation, and government in the cloud, transportation, precision in poverty reduction, virtual diagnoses etc. are the most attention-grabbing examples;

Current records are nowhere to be found in this landscape; in places where they are supposed to be in, there are big data or data instead; the term (current) archives is found in use in some specific scenarios, e.g., poverty alleviation archives and electronic health archives, which, however, do not display any relationships with current records;

The provincial archival institution has not been involved in any of the BD endeavors of the province; at the time of interview, one archival project was been prepared to be submitted to the province’s Big Data Management Bureau for approval – one that focused on uploading historical materials to the cloud of the government for hosting and accessing – nothing relating to current records generation or management.

Conclusion: It is the conclusion of the DI(R)M project that with digital technologies being deployed pervasively, the ignorance of current digital records by records creating institutions is becoming increasingly intensified. Archives may still exist in the future but for current records management, we are not that sure.