There’s an Archives in My Library!
Archives Basics for Library Professionals

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Libraries vs. Archives

Libraries

- A collection of resources in a variety of formats that is (1) organized by information professionals or other experts who (2) provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access & (3) offer targeted services and programs (4) with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) & the goal of stimulating individual learning & advancing society as a whole (from The Librarian’s Book of Lists, quoted at https://libguides.ala.org/library-definition)

Archives

- Materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs & preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions & responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, & collective control (from the Society of American Archivists’ Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology: https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/archives)
# Archives vs. Special Collections

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<tr>
<th>Archives</th>
<th>Special Collections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- May include manuscripts (historical or literary records of one person or a family) or records from organizations/government/businesses</td>
<td>- Materials separated due to rarity, value, form, subject, age, condition</td>
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<td>- Usually materials that have not been published &amp; are impossible to replace</td>
<td>- Usually materials that have been published, though difficult or impossible to obtain now, or bound manuscripts</td>
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<td>- Require additional security &amp; preservation controls</td>
<td>- May have a topical focus, typically one not found many other places</td>
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# Archives vs. Records Management

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<td>- Materials... preserved because of the enduring value in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions &amp; responsibilities of their creator</td>
<td>- The systematic &amp; administrative control of records throughout their life cycle to ensure efficiency &amp; economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, &amp; disposition</td>
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<td>(Glossary)</td>
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<td>- Materials not in active use</td>
<td>- Esp. re. records in active use, before depositing in archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Records with enduring value that are kept permanently (more or less)</td>
<td>- Many records do not have enduring value &amp; are not kept permanently</td>
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Basic Terminology

Archivists’ Work

- Appraisal & selection
  - Assessing which materials have enduring value
  - Selecting those materials for the archives
- Arrangement & description
  - Organizing the materials within a collection
  - Describing the collection & how it’s organized
- Preservation
  - Preventive measures to keep materials usable
- Access and reference
  - May include digitization, exhibitions, other outreach programs
Provenance

- Information regarding the origins, custody, & ownership of an item or collection
- Fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection
- Principle of provenance dictates that records of different origins be kept separate to preserve their context (no mixing records of different origins)
- May lead to excessive focus on record creator’s importance/hierarchy & to neglect/erasure of people with less power
  - Prime target for decolonizing archives work

Original Order

- Maintaining the order in which records/materials were created & kept
- Fundamental principle of archives
- Often indeterminate upon arrival at archives
Finding Aid

- A tool that facilitates discovery of information within a collection of records
- A description of records that gives the repository physical & intellectual control over the materials & that assists users to gain access to & understand the materials
Collection & Series

- Collection
  - A group of materials with some unifying characteristic (ideally, provenance)
  - Usually composed of some number of series

- Series
  - A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system & that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity

MPLP (More Product, Less Process)

- Recent (early 2000s~) movement towards minimal processing (arrangement & description of collections) in favor of getting records available for use more quickly
- Means to address “hidden collections” & reduce focus on “important” collections
Reading/Research Room

- A secure space or area designed for patrons to work with a repository’s holdings
- Usually also has finding aids & reference materials for patron use

Preservation & Conservation

- Preservation: preventive measures to keep materials in good condition; esp. control of temp/humidity/light/pests, security
- Conservation: restoring materials to good (or at least better) condition, repairing damage, creating new bindings, etc.
So... How does this all work?

How Do Archives Work?

- Transfers from internal constituents &/or donations from external constituents
- Materials are highly protected
- Collections are almost always processed prior to patron use
- Collections are usually processed to the collection or series level – not to the individual item level
- Materials have to be requested in order to use them
- Archives staff members watch patrons closely while materials are in use
What to Expect When Visiting an Archives

- May need to notify the archives ahead of time
- Receive some training on using archival materials
- Sign a researcher agreement
- Put almost all your stuff in a locker
- Have your remaining things inspected prior to taking them to the reading room
- Fill out a request form for the materials you want to use
- Choose or be assigned to a table

Using Archival Materials

- Materials must stay in their current order – even if that order doesn’t seem to make sense to the patron
- Use one box at a time, & one folder from that box
- Use an OUT marker to show where the folder that was removed came from
- Keep materials flat on the table and handle each page separately
- Don’t make any changes to the materials – don’t unfold bent corners, don’t remove paperclips, don’t write on materials, etc.
Using Archival Materials, cont.

- Most archives let patrons take photos of materials for their own reference, but make sure this is allowed before photographing anything
- Put the folder currently in use back in the box, removing the OUT marker, before selecting another folder & inserting the OUT marker
- Patrons can usually take notes on computers or using pencil (not pen) & paper
- Patrons should contact the archives with requests for professional reproductions &/or publication use

Similarities & Convergences

- Focus on access & user services
- Increasing electronic access to materials
  - Digitized & born-digital materials
  - Library catalogs/discovery, websites
  - Joint library-archives digital collections
- Collaborating with instructors & supporting teaching
- Supporting scholarly activity
- Ethical concerns – e.g., copyright, diversity/representation, privacy & right to be forgotten, accessibility
How can librarians & archivists better understand & support each others’ work?

Resources

- Archives @ PAMA. How do archivists describe collections? (Or, how to read a finding aid.) Archives @ PAMA. https://peelarchivesblog.com/2016/02/29/how-do-archivists-describe-collections-or-how-to-read-a-finding-aid/
- ARMA (Formerly the Association of Records Managers and Administrators): https://www.arma.org/
- Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies: https://elis Scholar.library.yale.edu/jcas/
- Preservation & conservation info
  - Northeast Document Conservation Center: https://www.nedcc.org/
- Society of American Archivists: https://www2.archivists.org/
- Twin Cities Archives Round Table: https://tcartmn.org/
  - $10 annual membership, free annual symposium
- U of M Archives & Special Collections: https://www.lib.umn.edu/special
Citations

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- Slide 7, Provenance: Definitions from the Glossary; acid-free document boxes photo from the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington (https://www.jhsgw.org/blog/on-the-road-moving-the-archives)
- Slide 8, Original Order: Definitions from the Glossary; photos from Koreshan Unity Collection at State Library & Archives of Florida (https://www.floridamemory.com/blog/tag/archival-processing/)
- Slide 9, Finding Aid: Definitions from the Glossary; photo by author (Monica Howell, NWHSU Library & Archives)

Citations

- Slide 12, MPLP: Definitions my own; images from https://archivistapprenticeship.wordpress.com/2017/10/18/minimal-processing-maximal-learning/
- Slide 13, Reading/Research Room: Definitions from the Glossary; “Reading Room in the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections in Mills Memorial Library at McMaster University.” Ron Scheffler for McMaster University Library [CC BY-SA 2.0]. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_room_in_The_William_Ready_Division_of_Archives_and_Research_Collections_in_Mills_Memorial.Library_at_McMaster_University.jpg
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- Slide 18 & 19, Using Archival Materials: Sidebar remixed from photo by author (Monica Howell, NWHSU)
- Slide 20, Similarities & Convergences: Text drawn from Archives in Libraries (See full reference on Resources slide); sidebar remixed from photo by author (Monica Howell, NWHSU)
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