
Working Paper: This document is made available for private study and comment in anticipation of possible future publication, at which point the paper in its present form will be removed from this website. You may print one copy for personal use, but do not redistribute without written permission of the author.

Fundamentals of Archival Theory and Practice for Law Librarians

©William J. Maher, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
American Association of Law Libraries
Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 17, 2001

I've been asked to do for you the impossible—deliver a full semester's course on archives in 30 minutes. So perhaps I had better start with a foundational question—What is the difference between archives and manuscripts, and what does this mean for you? The short answer is that archives are the noncurrent records of an organization or institution that have continuing value in providing evidence of the organizations's existence, functions, and operations. Manuscripts are documents, in any format, that are generated by a private individual and are subsequently donated to or acquired by a repository to ensure their retention and public accessibility. The distinction between the two may blur in practice, and most repositories contain both archives and manuscripts, but if you keep the distinctions in mind, you will find that your daily management of these collections will be much easier.¹

A second fundamental question is, what is the purpose of an archives or manuscript repository? The short answer for is very simple—they exist to enable researchers to use historical records. Everything that I will discuss is aimed at this overriding principle—the material is maintained so that it is used.. With these fundamentals in mind, we can turn to the first order of business for any archives—its mission and establishment.

Mission and Establishment

Logically, the first step in establishing an archival program is to define the archives'

¹Despite the insistence on the distinction between archives and manuscripts, the term "archivist" can be used generically to describe the person responsible for either archives or manuscripts.

mission and authority. [OVERHEAD 1] Despite institutional variations, common elements include:

- A. To appraise, collect, organize, describe, make available, and preserve records of historical, legal, fiscal, and/or administrative value to the institution.
- B. To provide adequate facilities for the retention and preservation of such records.
- C. To provide information and records management services that assist the operation of the institution.
- D. To serve research and scholarship by making available and encouraging the use of collections by members of the institution and the community at large.

A key early step in archives administration is to draft and secure institutional approval of the mission statement to authorize the archives' existence and secure necessary authority. Also important is resolving the question of where the archives should be placed in the institutional hierarchy. Even though no single location is best for all purposes, having a clear reporting line to a senior administrator is important as is avoiding becoming focused on the interests of any particular group.

Personnel and Facilities. While no archives can exist without records, a repository cannot be called an archival program until appropriate staff are allocated to its management. [OVERHEAD 2] It would seem reasonable to argue that the minimum is a full-time, permanent staff member with authority to accomplish all actions needed by the archival program. Properly, this person should be a professional archivist with appropriate graduate archival education and experience even if he or she may have to carry other library or institutional responsibilities.

Every archives needs to have space and facilities, most importantly user space that provides good security and control and sufficient storage space with environmental controls. Whenever possible, storage, staff, and public space should be dedicated, not shared, space.

In the interest of the limited amount of time available, we will forgo further discussion of the first two of the seven major domains of archival work--authorization and authentication, and instead focus on core elements of the remaining five--appraisal, arrangement, description, preservation and use

Appraisal

One of the most fundamental elements of archival practice is appraisal-- the process to assess the value of documents and decide which should be kept and which should be destroyed. [OVERHEAD 3] Since documentation is a key part of society's ability to preserve and reconstruct the past, appraisal is what determines which events, people, and facts can be recalled and verified and which will be forgotten or retrieved only in non-verifiable ways.

The core of appraisal is deciding on the value of documents. While appraisal is generally discussed in the context of decisions on what to preserve and what to destroy, it also is a fundamental component of all other areas of archival work. For example, the value of a record series, manuscript collection, file, or individual document should govern the level and type of descriptive tool created, the type of storage environment, and the range of preservation activities needed.

"Appraisal," in its specific sense of deciding whether a set of documents should be retained or destroyed, may seem mysterious. This is not particularly surprising, since the essence of appraisal is a subjective judgment on the value of documents. While appraisal checklists cannot change the fact that it is primarily a decision based on the archivist's knowledge, experience, and instinct, they do help subdivide appraisal into discrete components.

Elements of Appraisal. Appraisal cannot and should not occur within a vacuum. [OVERHEAD 4] Rather, the first step is to examine the context in which the records or manuscripts exist, including the institutional mission of the archives, the nature and history of the parent institution,

and the availability of similar or related documentation. Appraisal begins with the collection of information about the records' attributes. First, those characteristics relating to the record's form such as physical nature (e.g., paper, film, magnetic tape), volume, age, condition, and type (i.e., office or official record, publication, or personal papers).

Once these straightforward questions are answered, there is the more challenging task of identifying the substantive or intrinsic characteristics of records. These relate to content: what kinds of information the records hold, how and why the information was fixed into a physical record, and what uses the record may be able to fulfill beyond its initial purposes. These overlapping characteristics can be called functional, evidential, and informational.

After determining the intrinsic characteristics of the records, the archivist should ask how well the records fulfill each of their purposes. Thus, how well does a set of files accomplish the function for which it was created? Is that function important enough to justify retention of the records concerning its completion? Do the records provide good evidence of what happened and how and why it occurred? How much useful information about specific things and people do the records provide?

Finally, the key decision is to determine the value of the records by assessing each of five kinds of value that records can have: administrative, financial, legal, research, and archival.

Appraisal in Practice. While appraisal is a fundamental technique that must inform all archival activities, it is performed most commonly at three times: while records are still in the hands of their creators; when the records are first received in the repository; and in the course of processing. Ideally, the bulk of appraisal is done through records management because this affords the greatest opportunity to understand the records in the context their creation and use. Appraisal during processing (the series of activities done to prepare records for preservation and use) should be limited in several ways since the decision to retain the overall series has already

been made. During processing, appraisal should focus on the folder level or on overall categories of documents found throughout the series (e.g., "junk mail," duplicates, or non-record copies of publications).

ARRANGEMENT

One of the most distinctive characteristics of archival work concerns arrangement of documents. In its simplest form, archival theory states that documents should be maintained or ordered in a way that reflects exactly how they were held and used by the office or person creating the records in contrast to the conventional library approach of organization by subject. [OVERHEAD 5] This approach is embodied in three closely-related principles -- respect des fonds, provenance, and the "sanctity of the original order" (sometimes called "registratur prinzip")

In the early nineteenth century, following unsuccessful attempts to impose chronological and subject classification on records, French archivists concluded that archives must not mix the records of one office with those of another office. Instead, each deposit, or fonds, of records, should be respected as a separate entity, even if several deposits cover the same or similar subjects. In other words, respect des fonds requires archivists to respect the integrity of the body of records at the time it is deposited in the archives.

In the late nineteenth century, German and Dutch archivists refined and extended this idea with the concept of provenance which directs that each deposit of records be placed within an overall arrangement or classification scheme to reflect its origin and its relation to other deposits from the same administrative body (e.g., records from the Law School alumni office are kept in "proximity" to those from the Law dean). They also emphasized the necessity of not disturbing the internal order of each body of records. This latter principle is so important to archival practice that it is often referred to as the "sanctity of original order."

Each of these principles is most relevant at a different phase of arrangement. *Respect des fonds* is most usefully understood as dictating that a specific body of records must not be mixed with other records from the same or other offices. Provenance applies most to how an overall classification scheme is established to show the relationship of one office and its records to all others within an organization. Finally, "sanctity of the original order" is best seen as guiding the internal arrangement of a given set of files. The cumulative impact of these principles is that archivists do not rearrange the material they receive to create the illusion of greater accessibility or rationality in the records because doing so would violate the integrity and meaning of the records.

Arrangement represents one of the fundamental challenges of archival work because the principles may be straightforward, but their execution is not. First, explaining the relationship of one body of records to all others and to the overarching institution can be quite complex since organizations are living bodies undergoing constant change, and since each organization is a unique mix of mission, resources, people, and environment. Second, the evidence of a file's origins and its internal arrangement is often lost or badly muddled by the time the material arrives in the archives.

There are five key levels of arrangement: depository or institution, record groups, record sub-groups, record series, filing units within series, and documents within filing units.

Provenance-based Classification Systems. The purpose of archival classification is to provide an efficient means of arranging (at least on paper) the records based on their source or origin. In using the term "classification," we distinguish our practice clearly from that of librarians, who arrange books by the subject category or "class" thought to be most central to a book's contents. An archival classification system may attempt to reflect the institution's hierarchy and chain of command, but one must avoid the impulse to illustrate these in precise detail. The goal of

provenance-based classification is simplicity to permit rapid classification and arrangement of filing units. It is not intended as a definitive or comprehensive description and retrieval system. Remember that other descriptive access mechanisms, such as indices, can be used to note the functional connections of related records.

When considering arrangement within record series, the most important principle is respect for the sanctity of the original order—maintain the documents in the same order in which they were generated and used by the creating office or person. This principle is based on both theoretical and practical considerations. First, rearrangement of the documents into any other sequence destroys the evidential characteristics of the file and hinders examination of context. Second, rearrangement to create a supposedly more "usable" order is presumptuous and ultimately is an endless task as new groups of users approach old records with new questions.

Often, it can be difficult to determine the original order of a file, since the order at the time of transfer can reflect the disarrangement of documents as files were moved from active use to inactive filing cabinets, then to boxes in storage closets, and eventually to the archives. In other cases, files from offices or persons without strong clerical staff often reflect unsystematic and nearly unusable arrangement schemes. In these cases, the archivist must make a careful assessment of the file to decide whether to reconstruct the original order or to devise an arrangement scheme that facilitates access.

DESCRIPTION

Description is the archival function that can address the problems left unanswered by other archival practices. [OVERHEAD 6] It is important to recognize the limits within which description must be applied because it can lead to excessively lavish descriptive tools. In fact, because it can absorb so many program resources, the efficient management of description requires the ability to distinguish between the archivist's role and the researcher's

responsibilities. Also important is understanding the differences from library cataloging, which is focused on single or discrete items and creation of very brief descriptions in preordained formats for works that exist in multiple copies.

Description is commonly done in conjunction with arrangement as part of what is called "processing." Logically, description follows arrangement work, but it can be conducted simultaneously to create the finding aids needed to overcome access problems posed by the original order of records and manuscripts. The purpose of description is to provide a structured but flexible language that establishes intellectual and administrative control over archival and manuscript holdings, thereby facilitating research and administrative access. The underlying principle should be that description is an aggregate access and control system, not an exercise in the interpretation of historical documents. Wherever possible, descriptive work should be limited to summary statements of content coupled with appropriate container lists.

Greatest efficiency comes by employing different tools at different levels. The most important descriptive tool will be a catalog arranged by provenance and containing a summary description of each record series and manuscript collection held by the repository. These descriptions are the primary finding aids because they represent a uniform level of description for all archival holdings regardless of the size and complexity of each series/collection.

For example [OVERHEAD 6.1]:

Record Group: Affiliated and Associated Organizations
Sub-group: American Association of Law Libraries Archives

Helen Newman Papers, 1931, 1934-61, 1964-65

Record Series Number: **85/1/202**

Volume: 7 cubic feet

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Description: Papers of Helen Newman, Executive Secretary-Treasurer (1934-45), editor Law Library Journal (1934-42), and President (1949-50), including correspondence

regarding the Association (membership, dues, constitution, bylaws, executive board meetings, elections, appointments to committees and committee reports, placement service, Index to Legal Periodicals, effect of World War II on AALL); Annual Meetings (site selection, hotel and rail reservations, program planning, printing of proceedings, 1950 annual meeting in Seattle); professional issues (exchange of duplicates, cataloging and classification, reference questions, law library standards); Law Library Journal (editing articles, offprints, acquiring back issues, book notices, law book advertising). Correspondents include AALL Presidents A. J. Small, Franklin O. Poole, Frederick C. Hicks, Gilson S. Glasier, S. D. Klapp, S. Moylan, Arthur S. Beardsley, Lewis W. Morse, Sidney B. Hill, Bernita J. Long, Alfred A. Coffey, Jean Ashman, George A. Johnston, Forrest S. Drummond, Lucille M. Elliot, Helen Hargrave, Francis Farmer, Elizabeth Finley, and William B. Stern. Other correspondents include Oscar Orman, G. E. Wire, Will Shafroth, American Library Association, American Bar Association, American Standards Association, Association of American Law Schools, West Publishing Co., and H. W. Wilson Co.

An on-line finding aid (box and folder listing) or related website is available here.

Detailed Finding Aids and Container Lists

Such primary finding aids provide a uniform level of description and suffice for modern record series and manuscript collections smaller than one cubic foot. More detailed finding aids, however, are needed for larger series. The most common is the container list, which provides an inventory of the entire series or collection, generally at the level of box and folder title, along with a very limited amount of background information.

For example [OVERHEAD 6.2]:

85/1/202

Affiliated and Associated Organizations

American Association of Law Libraries

Helen Newman Papers, 1931, 1934-61, 1964-65

Box 1:

A-Z, General, 1942-43

A, General, 1935-41

AALL Meetings, (2 Folders), 1936-37, 1939-40, 1942, 1945

Viola Allen, 1939-42

Acquiring back issues of Law Library Journal, updating a 26,000 volume county law library.

American Bar Association, 1936-37

Box 2:

American Bar Association, 1938-42

American Library Association, (3 Folders), 1935-42

American Standards Association, 1935, 1938

Achieving uniformity in national and international library service (form of citation, abbreviation, and transcription), establishing a committee on standards in the library field, Committee on Documentation of the International Standards Association.

Joseph Andrews, 1940-42

Advertising Manager Law Library Journal.

Oscar Ansell, 1938-40

Convention Manager of the Congress Hotel, Chicago, rooms for the Midwinter meeting of the Executive Committee in Chicago.

B. G. Arkebauer, 1936-41

Subscriptions to, and billing for Law Library Journal.

E. C. Arnold, 1937-42

Dean, Vanderbilt School of Law.

Box 3:

Jean Ashman, 1935-43

Membership issues and drives, annual meetings, Helen S. Moylan's death, committee appointments and reports.

Association of American Law Schools, 1937-41

B, General, 1934-36

B-Bishop, 1937-42

Bi-By, 1937-42

K. Bairstow, 1939

Models for the format of the AALL budget.

Specialized Indices and Finding Aids. In addition to tools that describe each series or collection, many repositories develop specialized finding aids and indices to facilitate access on related subjects. For example, see our guide for Chemistry History Sources [OVERHEAD 6.3-6.4].

Administrative Guidelines for Description. The archivist must exercise good professional judgment in determining which descriptive tools are most appropriate for each record series or manuscript collection, balanced against available resources. These decisions should utilize appraisal criteria to establish the appropriate level of description, its length and detail, and the circumstances in which the level of description can be varied to meet the needs of the documents

and users. Generally, less is better, with most material described in fixed-length summary finding aids followed by folder-title lists for those series larger than one cubic foot.

PRESERVATION

Preservation is one of the broadest goals of archival practice. [OVERHEAD 7] Although often perceived as a narrow function, it is all-encompassing because the underlying purpose of archives is to ensure the future accessibility of documents. Preservation needs to be a central focus of archival activity because of the impermanence of the media on which information is recorded. At the same time, the diversity of information formats and the frequent use of unstable media have made preservation complex requiring knowledge of a few general principles as well as some expertise on a broad range of technical problems and processes.

We should distinguish between “preservation” (practices dealing with the environments surrounding archival materials) and “conservation” (specialized techniques that alter the physical or chemical condition of the items). The archivist’s role is to understand the conditions influencing the longevity of materials and suggest preservation actions to deal with impermanence of materials, and administrative processes for handling preservation problems.

The conditions influencing the longevity of materials are diverse, but can be divided into two basic categories: internal and external. Internal causes arise from the nature of the material on which information is recorded. The longevity of information-storage media, such as paper, sound recordings, or photographic negatives, is heavily dependent their chemical and physical composition, and each presents a range of different problems.

Major threats to the permanence also come from external sources. For instance, light fades inks and photographic images. Heat accelerates the acidification of paper and shrinking of plastic-based materials. Elevated or fluctuating temperatures stress the chemical and physical structure of documents. Considerable damage is caused by excessive moisture, whether

atmospheric or by surface contact. Daily atmospheric moisture serves as a major catalyst for the acidification of paper and is a component in the development of molds and mildew.

Air pollution can cause damage both through particulate and gaseous pollutants, such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. Insects and rodents can cause considerable damage to documents, but they can often be controlled through good housekeeping, regular but careful use of institutional pesticides, close examination of incoming materials, and fumigation where necessary. Significant damage to all media can result from adjacent materials, such as newsprint clippings, paper clips, staples, pressure-sensitive tape, rubber bands, inadequately sealed wood cabinets or shelving, and magnetic fields.

Humans are, perhaps, the greatest external danger to documents. Before documents are transferred to an archives, people expose records to many of the dangers listed above. Active and inactive files may be handled poorly, left exposed to light and heat, crammed into storage cabinets, and housed in damp basements, dirty attics, and overheated closets. Once records are transferred to the archives, the threat from people can be controlled but not eliminated. Archival staff are not always so careful as they should be and sometimes expose documents to excessive light and handling during processing. Once processed, the documents may be damaged by users and may have to be stored in sub-standard space.

Practical Preservation Steps. [OVERHEAD 8] Regardless of how limited resources may be for active preservation work, there are a number of things the archivist can and should do. The most fundamental is to educate the staff. Preservation actions should be preceded by an assessment of the archival value of the documents involved, their physical condition, and the resources available for their care. Most importantly, before embarking on any conservation procedure, remember the two most basic rules: do not do what you do not know how to do, and do not do anything that cannot be undone.

USE

A major focus of attention in all archives should be the facilitation and support of use of the repository's holdings. [OVERHEAD 9] Use can be defined as the retrieval of information from archival and manuscript holdings, finding aids, reference tools, and staff memories, regardless of purpose. Beyond the premise that use should be paramount, the administration of use is less dependent on a body of archival theory than are appraisal, arrangement and description.

Use is central to the mission and purpose of all archives and manuscript repositories. Understanding and being able to explain the use of one's archives is a fundamental responsibility because use provides a tangible indication of the archives' purpose and because understanding use enables one to improve the quality of service to users.

Direct and Indirect Use. Use of archival material is either direct or indirect. Direct use consists of the examination of documents to extract information or develop an interpretation of an event. Before direct use of the archives can occur, however, staff intervention is necessary. The archivist will usually ask a series of questions and provide background information, often from memory and experience, to help users move from their initial inquiry to relevant records and manuscripts. For simple reference questions on popular topics, this interpretative and explanatory work may be all that is necessary to answer users' questions. In other cases, it is only the first step in assisting researchers to exploit the archives' resources.

Indirect use can be defined as the entire range of results of direct use of archives, and is best understood by examples, such as, the administrative staff meeting that hears a colleague's report utilizing archival documents to clarify why a policy was adopted in 1969, the hundreds of people who view an archives exhibit, or a development officer's presentation to a foundation.

The basic facilities needed to support use include a reference room large enough to

comfortably house researchers and the archival and manuscript material they are using. The area should have filtered artificial or natural light, access to a photocopy machine, controls on the handling of sensitive or fragile materials, and whatever equipment is needed to view non-textual archival holdings. An important consideration will be sight lines so staff can monitor use.

While archival reference service parallels that of librarianship, there is far greater need for orientation and interviewing of users before placing them in contact with documents. The key steps in archival reference service are noted on the attached handout even if all steps are not necessary for each user or question. It is important to have working limits on the amount of time staff spend on each inquiry. For example, ten minutes for in-person inquiries, fifteen minutes for telephone inquiries, and twenty minutes for correspondence inquiries. This is often enough to identify the scope of the question, the presence of relevant material, and the need for additional research time. Remember that the act of interpretation and analysis should be left to the users.

The efficient delivery of reference service requires explicit procedures. All archives should have printed user regulations (e.g., <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/userregs.htm>), and users should be requested to read the regulations before documents are provided. User regulations should address: care in handling original documents; copyright regulations; procedures for obtaining copies; and rules for citation of archival materials. Also, each archives should develop a general access policy to define the conditions of use and outline how restrictions should be handled when they are necessary.

Ideally, the vast majority of the archives' holdings should be open and available for use by all researchers who are willing to submit to the archives' general user regulations concerning decorum and proper care for the records and manuscripts. [OVERHEAD 10] Inevitably, however, most archives include at least a few series that require restrictions to protect privacy rights. In all cases, special access provisions should be developed during appraisal,

accessioning, or processing, not when a researcher requests access.

When they cannot be avoided, restrictions in general should be limited to no more than 10 to 25 years after the closing of the file; and there should be procedures to apply for access before the end of the restriction period. Generally unacceptable are restrictions placed on the use of a manuscript collection to provide exclusive access to a researcher designated by the donor. When a restriction is agreed to, there should be a clearly defined restriction period and a means for researchers to apply for access before the end of the restricted period.

Archival staff should not become overly cautious about material that wary administrators may see as sensitive. The archivist's responsibility is to support research and learning, and we need to resist efforts to restrict files merely to obscure the official conduct of administrators. Also, it is important for the archivist to ensure that institutional caution does not lead to overly long restrictions merely to avoid the possibility of controversy. In all cases, anticipated restrictions should not negatively influence appraisal decisions.

The archivist also needs to be aware of legal and ethical issues related to how researchers use the information they derive from the materials they examine. These are concerned primarily with libel and copyright. While conforming to these laws is largely the responsibility of the user; one should note that virtually all types of archival materials fall under copyright protection. Recent revisions, have expanded the copyright act's coverage and modified time limits on copyright protection. In the process, it has created serious impediments to research and archival administration. Under the fair use provisions, virtually all kinds of archival material are eligible for researcher examination. Still, the archives should make use of appropriate copyright notices on photocopying machines, user registration forms, and photocopy order forms.

An especially relevant issue is that physical ownership of manuscripts does not necessarily include ownership of copyright. So, even if the archives has a deed of gift for a

collection, the donor can only grant ownership rights in what she or he authored him or herself.

Assessing Limits on User Service. If one accepts the principle that the preeminent purpose of preservation is use, it becomes clear that the archivist should be a champion of the researcher.

Thus, rather than being an apologist for closing materials, the archivist should be a proponent of responsible use of the repository's holdings. This can lead to an inherent tension between archivists' institutional responsibilities and their role as information providers to a broader community. Unfortunately, there are no specific guidelines for resolving these tensions.

Needless to say, the most appropriate role for the archivist is as an advocate for research use of collections. This brings us back to one of the fundamentals I mentioned at the outset—archives exist to be used. As custodians of truly unique collections, it will be up to you to negotiate and uphold this overriding goal.

APPENDIX A: Handouts from Presentation

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
ARCHIVAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Archives are information retained for its long-term value, or if one is an optimist, permanent value. Archival theory and practice call for the exercise of professional expertise and responsibility to accomplish seven goals:

- M ***(Authorization)*** Institutions, organizations, and individuals establish, administer, and evaluate archives to ensure the retention, preservation, and utilization of archival holdings.
- M ***(Authentication)*** Archivists authenticate documentary information through the analysis of its content and evidence obtained during the process of its accession.
- M ***(Appraisal)*** Archivists appraise or evaluate documents on the basis of anticipated use in relation to the costs of description and retention.
- M ***(Arrangement)*** Archivists arrange information according to source and original order to sustain the integrity the documents had while in active use.
- M ***(Description)*** Archivists describe documents in finding aids, guides, and inventories to facilitate long-term access to their informational contents and ongoing administrative control of the holdings.
- M ***(Preservation)*** Archivists ensure the future availability of documents in a safe environment and on physical media that will remain accessible, renewable, or convertible for the period of expected use.
- M ***(Use)*** Archivists promote and facilitate the use of documents to explain the past, provide guidance in the present, and accountability to the future.

Archival holdings are unique and treated as accumulated aggregates. As such, they are not accessioned and retained as copies of information obtainable elsewhere. Instead, they are appraised and managed according to their potential value and the anticipated costs of processing, protection, and retention.

As the repositories for information systems from all types of persons and human organizations, archives must cope with languages, superseded information recording formats, divergent physical materials, and vast accumulations of data. The three principal categories of archival materials are official files of institutions and organizations, publications issued by such institutions and the personal papers of individuals.

Each of these areas has been impacted by electronic information generated, transmitted, received, and stored on disks, tapes, and other formats. Regardless of the physical form of documents, the archivist must address the issues of authentication, appraisal, arrangement, description, preservation, and use. These responsibilities are closely interrelated. For example, authentication and anticipated use have a direct effect on appraisal. Description and preservation actions affect the future value of the information. Maintaining the authenticity of documents as evidence is dependent on maintenance of their arrangement as well as on their placement in an archives that has been duly authorized.

APPENDIX A: Handouts from Presentation

Introductory Bibliography

American Association of Law Libraries Archives website (under revision):

www.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/ala/sgroup.asp?RG=85 (Look at Sub-Group 85/2)

Bellardo, Lewis and Lynn Lady Bellardo, *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers*, [Archival Fundamentals Series] (Chicago: Society of American Archivists [SAA], 1992)

Finch, Elsie Freeman, ed., *Advocating Archives: An Introduction to Public Relations for Archivists*, (Chicago: SAA and Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994).

Ham, F. Gerald , *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts*, [Archival Fundamentals Series] (Chicago: SAA, 1992)

Jimerson, Randall C. ed., *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice*, (Chicago: SAA, 2000).

Maher, William J. *The Management of College and University Archives*, (Chicago: SAA and Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1992).

Miller, Fredric M., *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*, [Archival Fundamentals Series] (Chicago: SAA, 1990)

O'Toole, James M., *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*, [Archival Fundamentals Series] (Chicago: SAA, 1990).

Pugh, Mary Jo, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts*, [Archival Fundamentals Series] (Chicago: SAA, 1992).

Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn, *Preserving Archives and Manuscripts*, [Archival Fundamentals Series] (Chicago: SAA, 1993)

Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn, Gerald J. Munoff, and Margery S. Long, *Archives & Manuscripts: Administration of Photographic Collections*, (Chicago: SAA, 1984).

Yakel, Elizabeth, *Starting An Archives*, (Chicago: (Chicago: SAA, and Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994).

Web resources:

Archival Code of Ethics: http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.html

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Archives and Preservation Resources (technical guidance and guidelines): <http://www.nara.gov/arch/>

Society of American Archivists: <http://www.archivists.org/>

SAA's Publication Catalog: <http://www.archivists.org/catalog/index.html>

APPENDIX A: Handouts from Presentation

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
ARCHIVAL FUNDAMENTALS FOR LAW LIBRARIANS
ARCHIVAL DEFINITIONS

ARCHIVES are the organized noncurrent records of an institution or organization retained for their continuing value in providing a) evidence of the existence, functions, and operations of the institution or organization that generated them, or b) other information on activities or persons affected by the organization. Derived from the Greek word for "government house," the term "archives" also refers to the agency responsible for selecting, preserving, and making available noncurrent records with long-term value and to the building or part of the building housing them.

DOCUMENTS are instruments for the communication of information, regardless of their physical form or characteristics. They may be in the form of an impression on paper, a magnetic impulse, or a beam of light. The word comes from the Latin for official paper or that which teaches. Essentially, documents provide evidence or support of an action, condition, or entity.

MANUSCRIPTS are documents (in any format) accumulated, collected, and/or generated by a private individual(s) and subsequently donated to or acquired by a repository to ensure their retention and public accessibility. "Manuscripts" include personal papers with organic unity, artificial subject collections of documents acquired from diverse sources, and individual documents acquired and retained by a repository for their potential research use. Manuscripts may be differentiated from archives in that they are informal records, privately acquired and maintained for their subject matter content. Manuscript collections are often described as "personal" or "private" papers. The term "manuscript collection" may also refer to records brought together for a specific purpose by a repository or a collector.

RECORDS are all documents, regardless of form, produced or received by any agency, officer, or employee of an institution or organization in the conduct of its business. Documents include all forms of recorded information, such as: correspondence, computer data, files, financial statements, manuscripts, moving images, publications, photographs, sound recordings, drawings, or other material bearing upon the activities and functions of the institution or organization, its officers, and employees. A document becomes a record when it is placed in an organized filing system for use as evidence or information. It becomes archival when transferred to a repository for preservation and research use.

ARRANGEMENT is the body of principles and practices which archivists follow to group records in such a way as to reflect the manner in which they were held and used by the office or person creating the records. It involves the fundamental principles of *respect des fonds*, provenance, and sanctity of original order. The key units in archival arrangement are: record groups, sub-groups, and record series.

RESPECT DES FONDS The principle of archival arrangement according to which each deposit (*fonds*) should be maintained as a separate entity, even if other *fonds* cover the same or similar subjects. It requires archivists to respect the integrity of the body of records at the time it is deposited in the archives.

PROVENANCE The principle of archival arrangement according to which each deposit of records should be placed within an overall arrangement or classification scheme that reflects its origin and relation to other deposits from the same administrative body.

SANCTITY OF THE ORIGINAL ORDER The principle of archival arrangement according to which the creator's arrangement of files and documents within a deposit should be maintained.

APPENDIX A: Handouts from Presentation

RECORD GROUP A body of organizationally related records, normally large in size and established on the basis of provenance to accommodate the records of major organizational units and functions of an institution.

RECORD SUB-GROUPS Smaller (than record groups) bodies of organizationally related records placed within a record group to correspond to the subordinate administrative units that collectively form the record group.

RECORD SERIES A systematic gathering of documents that have a common arrangement and common relationship to the functions of the office that created them. Record series are the filing units created by offices at all levels in an institutional hierarchy. Each series will be arranged internally according to a system established and modified by its creators. Boundaries between one record series and the next are sometimes razor-sharp and sometimes fuzzy. Typical record series include subject files, project files, chronological correspondence files, client files, applicant files, financial records files, voucher files, and minutes and agenda files.

USE is the retrieval of information from archival and manuscript holdings, finding aids, reference tools, and staff memories. Regardless of purpose, such as administrative action, publication of a book, preparation of a course paper, genealogy, or personal curiosity, any retrieval of information should be seen as use.

DIRECT USE is the examination of documents to extract information or develop an interpretation of an event. Direct use occurs whenever a person seeking information asks questions about or examines archives and manuscript holdings, primarily in the research room. It also occurs when files are returned to originating offices or when photocopied or microfilmed documents are sent to off-site users.

INDIRECT USE is the entire range of results of direct use of archives. Examples of outcomes of research include the administrative staff meeting that hears a colleague's report utilizing documents in the archives to clarify why an institutional policy was changed in 1969; the hundreds of persons who view an archives exhibit on local architecture; or the thousands of individuals who examine the cover of the telephone that reproduces an 1890 photograph of your institution. Indirect users also include the readers of scholarly monographs that are based in part on information extracted from archival documents. of the value and purpose of the archival program.

KEY STEPS IN ARCHIVAL REFERENCE SERVICE ARE:

1. Querying the researcher to draw out the specific nature of the subject as well as secondary aspects of the subject that can serve as leads to documentation sources.
2. Translating the terms and concepts of the inquiry into the terms and concepts of the archives' reference apparatus.
3. Explaining finding aids, archival methodology, and the nature of manuscripts and records documentation.
4. Guiding the researcher to the appropriate finding aids and/or records.
5. Retrieving the records that appear to be relevant to the researcher's inquiry.
6. Informing the researcher of policies and practices for making copies and handling documents to ensure that the records are not damaged or disarranged.
7. Consulting with the researcher during and after the visit to determine how well the records answered the question or led to new questions.

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

Mission and Establishment

- " To appraise, collect, organize, describe, make available, and preserve records of historical, legal, fiscal, and/or administrative value to the institution
- " To provide adequate facilities for the retention and preservation of such records
- " To provide information and records management services that assist the operation of the institution
- " To serve research and scholarship by making available and encouraging the use of collections by members of the institution and the community at large

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

Personnel and Facilities

! Minimum is a full-time, permanent staff member with responsibility and authority to accomplish all actions necessary to meet the goals of the archival program. Properly, there should be a professional archivist with appropriate graduate archival education and experience.

! **Space**

" Collection space with environmental controls

" user service space

" staff space for processing of collections

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

Appraisal

- ! Appraisal—the process by which the archivist assesses the value of documents and decides which should be kept and which should be destroyed.
 - " Appraisal should be applied to the exercise of all other archival actions
 - " Not all documentation should be retained.
 - " Records management is an orderly process to control flow of materials to the archives.

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

! **Elements of Appraisal.** Appraisal cannot and should not occur within a vacuum.

" Examine the context in which the records or manuscripts exist

" Collect information about the records' attributes

Physical form (e.g., paper, film, magnetic tape)

Volume

Age

Condition

Type (i.e., office or official record, publication, or personal papers)

" Substantive or intrinsic characteristics of records

" Content: what kinds of information the records hold, how and why the information was fixed into a physical record (*evidential*)

" Uses the record may be able to fulfill beyond its initial purposes (*informational*)

" How well the records fulfill each of their purposes. (*functional*) Is the function important enough to justify retention of the records concerning its completion? Do the records provide good evidence of what happened and how and why it occurred?

" Five kinds of value:

- administrative

- financial

- legal

- research

- archival

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

ARRANGEMENT

- ! Documents should be maintained or ordered in a way that reflects exactly how they were held and used by the office or person creating the records.
 - " **Respect des fonds:** each deposit, or fonds, of records, should be respected as a separate entity, even if several deposits cover the same or similar subjects.
 - " **Provenance:** each deposit of records should be placed within an overall arrangement or classification scheme to reflect its origin and relation to other deposits from the same administrative body.
 - " **“Sanctity of the original order” (registratur prinzip):** internal order of each body of records should not be disturbed.
 - " **Five levels of arrangement:**
 - depository or institution
 - record groups
 - record sub-groups
 - record series
 - filing units within series, (leaving documents within filing units)

- ! **Classification Systems**
 - " Apply at the record group and sub-group levels
 - " Different from Library classification

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

DESCRIPTION

Archival description is related to, but fundamentally different from library cataloging, classification, and indexing.

- " High risk of becoming a “black hole” for resources
 - " Maintain distinction between role of the archivist and the responsibility of the researcher—avoid narrative and interpretation
 - " Commonly done in conjunction with arrangement as part of what is called "processing "
- !
- Record group and record subgroup: classification guide with administrative histories
 - Record series: summary descriptions in the catalog or primary finding aid
 - Within series: detailed finding aids and container listings
 - Specialized Indices and Finding Aids for subject access across collections

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

PRESERVATION

- " One of the broadest goals of archival practice, an all-encompassing concern
- " Inherently complex because of unstable media
- " Key definitions and differences:
 - “Preservation” (practices dealing with the environments surrounding archival materials)
 - “Conservation” (specialized techniques that alter the physical or chemical condition of the items)
- " Conditions influencing the longevity of materials
 - Internal causes arising from the nature of the material on which information is recorded
 - External:
 - # Light
 - # Heat
 - # Moisture
 - * atmospheric
 - * surface
 - # Dirt/air pollution
 - # Insects and rodents
 - # Adjacent materials
 - # Humans

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

! Practical Preservation Steps

" Educate self and staff.

" Apply appraisal—assess the value of the material and likely use

! Two cardinal rules:

" Never do what you do not know how to do!

" Never do anything that cannot be undone!

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

USE

Use: retrieval of information from archival and manuscript holdings, finding aids, reference tools, and staff memories, regardless of purpose

- " Central to the mission and purpose of all archives and manuscript repositories
- " A tangible indication of the archives' purpose

! Direct Use

- " Examination of documents to extract information or develop an interpretation of an event
- " Requires staff intervention (reference interviews)

! Indirect use

- " Results or dissemination of direct use of archives

! Facilities needed for use:

- " Reference room
- " Access to a photocopy machine
- " Controls on the handling of sensitive or fragile materials
- " Viewing equipment for audiovisual and computer materials

! Limits on reference service:

- " Value of arbitrary time limits
- " Interpretation and analysis should be left to the users.

APPENDIX B: Overheads from Presentation

USE (contd.)

! Restrictions on access:

- " Avoid whenever possible.
- " When they are justified:
 - No more than 10 to 25 years after the creation of the documents except in very special cases
 - Only for a clearly defined restriction period
 - Establish a means for researchers to apply for access before the end of the restricted period.
 - Do not allow access restrictions to negatively influence appraisal decisions.