



Understanding through New Concepts -Archival of Manuscripts

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Abstract

As one would expect, given the title of this paper, its primary purpose is to explain how to preserve archives and manuscripts within archival institutions, while responding to the mandate for access to and use of these records. Creating and use recorded information have their perspectives, too, but archivists develop a way of looking at records that is peculiarly their own, different from that of others. Curators, for example, usually take a practical view of records: records help them accomplish a particular task and are viewed in that light. To their creators, records are a means to a specific end. Before considering the various activities that make up archival practice, therefore, it is necessary to understand the perspective from which those activities flow. Also included is a practical description of how to set up a work space, including considerations relating to layout, environment, light, housekeeping, equipment, tools, and supplies are explained in this article.

Keywords: Environment, Equipment, Tools, Archival, Manuscripts

Introduction:

The archives and records management are essential because they "extend and corroborate human and corporate memory and play a critical role in maintaining awareness of how the present is shaped by the past" The management of records and archives is a distinctive discipline with its own body of knowledge. Archives include documents, materials, items, or information of long-term value that need to be preserved. This volume of the series focuses on an applied practical introduction, presenting the

intricacies and importance of preservation management.

"A term referring to the passive protection of archival material in which no physical or chemical treatment to the item occurs."

Preserving Archives as a guide for archivists, librarians, and museum curators who are confronted with difficult decisions about setting up preservation management policies and procedures. While the chapters are relational, each can be referenced as a separate entity.

Preserving Archives examines the properties and characteristics of archival materials from parchment and the ink used to print documents



to newer electronic formats. Once the reader understands the specific characteristics of archival materials, an appreciation of the complexities and issues involved becomes easier to grasp. An entire chapter is devoted to managing digital information because it differs significantly from traditional preservation. Among the most obvious differences is that digital information may be in a format that does not survive over time or retain its ability to be retrieved or read.

Methods of Record management:

A variety of methods exist to protect records physically and ensure their stability and security. Environmental controls, the use of quality storage containers and good handling practices will help extend the life of archival materials. Some of the preservation measures discussed in this module is easily undertaken; others are more expensive or time consuming. Some require little training, while others should be done only under the supervision or with the assistance of a trained conservator. Naturally, the steps available to protect and preserve records and archives will vary depending on the availability of resources in different institutions.

The essential principles involved with ensuring the physical protection of records and archives need not be overly complex.

In order to protect records and archives, no matter where in the life cycle they are, the record keeper must

Understand how records and archives deteriorate and the environmental and

Physical causes of their deterioration
Know how to develop a well-planned preservation programme

Know how to care for materials in all media, from paper to photographic to Electronic understand the value of reproduction as a preservation tool

Understand the importance of security

Know where to go for more information.

Archival of manuscripts and its perspective:

From an archival perspective, preservation may be viewed as the totality of processes and operations involved in the protection of records and archives against damage or deterioration. Preservation may involve four related activities.

Maintenance:

The daily care of records and archives, particularly in the current and semi-current records environment, when they are housed in offices or records centers; maintenance ensures the general protection of records against environmental hazards or other physical dangers.

Examination: The preliminary procedure taken to determine the original materials and structure of an item and to determine the extent of its deterioration, alteration or loss.

Conservation: The intrusive protection of archival material, by the minimal physical and chemical



treatments necessary to resist further deterioration, which will not adversely affect the integrity of the original.

Restoration:

The repair of an item when aesthetics and reproduction of the original appearance is more important than the preservation of the integrity of the item. Restoration is not generally viewed as an archival activity

Records and Archives: Causes of Deterioration:

To prevent insects fostering in records or archives storage areas, food and drink should be prohibited and the temperature and relative humidity should be controlled. Screens could be placed on windows and exterior doors
 Damaging activities include,
 Rough handling of paper
 Excessive pressure on bindings or folders

Poor photocopying practices

Placing materials on permanent exhibit, perhaps exposing them to extreme conditions

Poor retrieval and filing practices, causing materials to be torn, misfiled or damaged

In appropriate storage of oversized materials

Faulty or inappropriate equipment for transporting materials from place to place

Excessive use of materials

Writing on documents, particularly archival materials

Spilling food or drink on records and archives

List of suggested items that you should try to examine, either by looking at the actual item or by examining an illustration or photographic image of it.

Topic	Suggested Illustrations
Acidity	Image of a standard pH chart.
Testing the pH of paper	Images of process of testing paper using pH pen
acidity in paper	Images of cotton fibers and wood fibers
Temperature and relative humidity	Images of mouldy records or materials affected by high heat and relative humidity
Monitoring temperature and relative humidity	Images of various monitoring equipment, such as thermo hygrograph, whirling hygrometer, thermometers
Light	Images of records, newspapers or other materials damaged by excessive light

Records and archives: methods of control:

There are many different reasons why records and archives deteriorate. Perhaps the most significant factor is the nature of archival materials



themselves: many records and archives are composed of materials that are acidic, which means they are inherently fragile and prone to degradation.

Various general measures to protect archives have been introduced, including

Monitoring and controlling temperature and relative humidity

Limiting light

Filtering air to reduce air pollution and removing pollutants from archives storage areas

Protecting archives from water damage

Inhibiting mould growth

Reducing attractions for insects or rodents

Protecting records from mishandling or abuse.

Monitoring Temperature and Relative Humidity

In an ideal environment, the temperature and relative humidity in the archival institution, records centre, or records office may be monitored regularly, even daily if

Possible (particularly in archival storage areas). The findings should be noted in a log or chart, which should also note the outside weather conditions for the day, so that it is possible to compare the external environment with internal conditions. The chart should record the following:

Day/month/year

Time of day

Temperature

Relative humidity

Outside weather conditions.

In the archival facility, daily temperature readings can help the staff monitor the conditions in which archives are kept. It is also difficult to monitor or stabilize temperature and relative humidity if the building itself is not designed to house records or archives. Ideally, records and archives should not be exposed to any light, as long as they are in an environment with controlled temperature and relative humidity.

Pollutants can promote the deterioration of records and archives. Gases, exhaust, dirt, dust and other pollutants come in the form of particles that float in the air. They are acidic and abrasive, and when they come in contact with materials they can 'eat' through the item causing it to deteriorate.

Storing records and archives away from engines, machinery, exhaust fans or other pollution-generating equipment

Prohibiting smoking, eating or cooking near records or archives.

Dusting and cleaning regularly and thoroughly to keep dust particles at a minimum.

Mould, insects and rodents can all damage records and archives. Their presence can be encouraged by high relative humidity, high temperatures, a complete absence of light and the availability of nutrients.

Prevention is the best means of controlling mould. Whenever possible, records and archives should not be stored in hot, damp, dark environments where the air does not circulate.



To prevent insects fostering in records or archives storage areas, food and drink should be prohibited and the temperature and relative humidity should be controlled. Screens could be placed on windows and exterior doors

Principles of preservation for manuscripts:

When determining what preservation work to undertake, the following core principles must be respected. It is essential not to undertake any treatment that, cannot be reversed if necessary cannot be done properly or according to instructions will not last a sufficiently long time is harmful to people, either during the treatment itself or from the residue left on the materials treated Changes the physical characteristics of the materials treated, such as changing color or shape damages the archival material in any way.

The importance of preservation management:

The best and most cost-effective way to protect records and archives is to ensure the good and orderly physical and administrative management of the entire organization.

All staff should be trained to handle materials, particularly archives, properly. Good preservation practice is required throughout the institution. The selection of good quality equipment in offices or repositories (boxes, trolleys, ladders or steps) will result in a good service,

which not only assists the users but also minimizes the damage done to the records or archives as a result of their being used. Preservation to a good standard is not inexpensive, but it is much less costly than having to send large proportions of the material for repair. Repair of damaged materials should be a last resort, after the potential for microfilming or copying has been considered.

Steps in Preservation Planning

Preservation encompasses many activities, including conducting a preservation survey to assess the present state of care of records and archives transferring and accessioning selected records storing material properly maintaining environmental conditions suitable to the material stored providing accurate and detailed means of access to avoid over handling of archival

Materials:

Handling material carefully • maintaining good housekeeping • deciding whether damaged material should be copied in some way or sent to conservation • maintaining disaster control plans.

Preserving records:

Use appropriate sized storage materials; storage containers should suit the materials being stored, not vice versa. If a box is only half filled with records, the Rest should be filled with tissue or cardboard so that the files stand up straight; do not fold materials or force them into containers.



Separate highly acidic materials from other items in a group either by wrapping in a barrier paper or, if necessary, by removing and storing them separately.

Archival materials should be stored in appropriate containers on archival sound shelving. Storage areas should have aisles wide enough to allow people to pass through without pressing on or damaging shelves or boxes, and aisles should be kept clear at all times, not used for storage, even temporarily.

Shelving used to store archives must be non-combustible and non-deteriorating, preferably made of rust-proof metal such as steel. The shelving should be adjustable to accommodate boxes and bundles in a variety of different sizes and to allow maximum use of the shelf space available. Shelves should not be placed against outside walls.

Archival environmental controls:

The best modern archival facilities are purpose-designed and built, providing a safe physical environment for the materials held within them by using the principle of thermal inertia: that is, the environmental conditions within purpose-built archival institutions are always within acceptable limits because of the insulation designed into the building and the construction materials used. The building's temperature and relative humidity are stable and within acceptable limits. Dust and pollution particles are at a minimum because of good quality filter systems.

Lighting is suitable to the particular needs, whether they be storage, reference or office use.

Postmodernism and Archival Science:

The postmodern mindset affects archives in two ways. We live in a postmodernist era of theoretical discussion, whether we like it or not. Starting in architectural analysis and evolving from post-Sartre French philosophy and literary criticism, postmodernism has grown to influence almost every discipline, from history to literature to psychoanalysis to anthropology, from cartographic analysis to film, photograph, and art studies, to say nothing of influencing feminist and Marxist theory that in turn have changed many disciplines. Archival educator Terry Eastwood has observed that "one must understand the political, economic, social and cultural milieu of any given society to understand its archives, "adding that "the ideas held at any given time about archives are surely but a reflection of wider currents in intellectual history." [6] Following this logic, the dominant intellectual trend of this age is postmodernism, and it will thus necessarily affect archives. Archivists had best begin to speculate how and why, and change their formulations of archival science accordingly.

Changes in Archival Thinking:

Postmodernism is not the only reason for reformulating the main precepts of archival science. Significant



changes in the purpose of archives as institutions and the nature of records are other factors which, combined with postmodern insights, form the basis of the new perception of archives as documents, institutions, and profession in society.

Archivists mainly working in national or institutional archives need to start thinking in terms of the process of governance, not just of governments governing. "Governance" includes being cognizant of the interaction of citizens with the state, the impact of the state on society, and the functions or activities of society itself as much as it does the inward-facing structures of government and its bureaucrats. The archivist in appraisal, and all subsequent actions, should focus on the records of governance, not just government, when dealing with institutional records. This perspective also complements better the work of archivists dealing with personal papers or private "manuscript" archives. This citizen-state interactive relationship, I should note here, would be reflected in other jurisdictions by interaction of members with their church or union, students with a university, customers with a company, and so on -- this broader "governance" perspective is not only for government archivists, but all archivists.

The challenge for archival science in the new century is to preserve recorded evidence of governance, not just of governments governing. And the task also now includes taking

archives to the people, or encouraging them to come to use archives. Archives are not a private playground where professional staff can indulge their interest in history or their personal interaction with historians and other scholars or, equally, their inclinations to be part of the public policy and information infrastructures of their jurisdictions; archives are a sacred public trust of preserving society's memories that must be widely shared. Archivists serve society, not the state, even though they may work for an agency found within the state's bureaucracy.

Conclusion:

Thus Collections can range in size from a single letter or diary to thousands of boxes of institutional records. They can contain drafts of literary works, financial records, meeting minutes, reports, memorabilia, as well as sound recordings, videos, film, databases, and software.

Process rather than product, becoming rather than being, dynamic rather than static, context rather than text, reflecting time and place rather than universal absolutes -- these have become the postmodern watchwords for analyzing and understanding science, society, organizations, and business activity, among others. They should likewise become the watchwords for archival science in the new century, and thus the foundation for a new conceptual



paradigm for the profession in managing and maintaining the Manuscripts.

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