

PROCESSING ARCHIVES 101

CONVENING GREAT LAKE
CULTURE KEEPERS
REGIONAL INSTITUTE

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Overview

- Accessioning
- Arrangement and Description
- Activity and Discussion
 - Accessioning
 - Processing Plan
 - Project Management Strategies
 - Process Collection
 - Finding Aid/Guide/Inventory

What is Processing??

- Activities including:
 - Accessioning
 - Arranging
 - Describing
 - Preserving
- Provides Access
 - Finding Aid/Guide/Inventory
 - Collection Level Record
 - Catalog Record

Importance of Core Functions

- Service: Caretaker of the Information
 - Protection
 - Memory and Continuity
 - Administrative Efficiency
- Manages: Performs core archive fundamentals and administration
 - Acquisition and Accessioning
 - Arrangement and Description

Definitions

Types of archives:

- **Records**=Organizations: Official records produced by an organization(ie. University records, tribal council records, federal government records). Kept to meet needs of creating organization.
- **Personal Papers/Manuscripts**=Individual or group: Historical, cultural, and personal papers from individuals (ie. individual tribal members, artists, etc.). Accumulated to foster study of the subject about which the repository collects.

Types of Archive Repositories

- Administrative Archive: For and within the entity that it serves. (ie. NARA, University Archives, etc.)
- Collecting Archive: Actively collection and gathers individual records and preserves them for the purposes of research.

Foundation for Developing and Implementing Archival Practice

- Legal Authority and Continuing Support (Financial Support and Space)
- Internal Support (Tribal Council, Library, Museum, Cultural Center)
- Developed with input from interested and involved parties (Cultural Committee)
- Solid Mission: Preserve history and culture to serve the needs of the tribal community → Community Support

Collections Management Policy: Purpose and Advantages

- Expands Mission Statement
- Support mission of the parent organization and community
- Create institutional roadmap and continuity
- Defines institutional purpose for staff and public
- Reduces competition among repositories
- Keeps out stuff you don't want to collect
- Establishes/Defines collecting areas (geographic, subjects, etc.)
- Intended Users—who are you serving??
- Strengthen Funding Possibilities
- Allocate Resources
- Establishes Deaccessing Procedures

Collections Management Policy: Key Elements

- Collecting Scope
- Intended Users
- Type of materials to collect (subjects, regions, dates)
- Intended Users
- Restrictions
- Preservation
- Access
- Ethical and Legal Responsibilities
- Types of Programs Supported

Collections Management Policy

- Remember:
 - Be consistent, but allow for flexibility
 - Be sufficiently general to allow for long-term use
 - Codify and write it down—make internally and externally available

Collections Management Policy: Steps for Drafting

- Conduct a collection analysis
- Involve staff for maximum success
- Analyze constituents—both current and potential
- Analyze other institutional holdings—who else is collecting in your subject area
- Policy review and approval by Tribal Council
- Publish Policy
- Establish plan for implementation
- Plans for review and updating

Appraisal: *Records Don't Save themselves!*

- Assists in identifying materials that have sufficient value for official accession
- What to keep, what to discard
- 1st and 2nd life of Records
- Identify material for continual value—
not monetary

Appraisal: cont'd

- Archival Value can include:
 - Evidential value: Evidence of the functioning of the creator
 - Informational value: Everything not having to do with the evidential records, more informational in character.
 - Intrinsic value
 - Historical value
 - Artifact value
- Consider types of Users
 - Tribal community members
 - Scholars
 - Authors
 - Grad Students
 - High School Students
 - Artists

Appraisal: Why?

- Lack of resources to accept and provide proper care for everything
- Select collection that are consistent with the collecting policy
- Many records or papers lack archival value
- Save what you can—move forward!

Appraisal: When?

- Time of the offer of the records/papers
- Beginning of the accession/donation
- After transfer

Appraisal: How?

- Examine the value of the records/papers/collection
- Primary Value: 1st life, value of the creator
- Secondary Value: 2nd life, value to archive and researchers
 - Evidential: creator, organization, function, policies, actions, policy holder vs. policy maker
 - Informational: incidental, importance, uniqueness, researcher value, institutional precedents, usability
 - Intrinsic: link to important event, uniqueness, artistic merit, monetary value, photographs

Deeds of Gift

- Most important aspect of donor policy
- Legal Binding Document
- Must be reviewed and approved by tribal legal counsel
- Basic elements should include:
 - Name of donor
 - Relationship of donor to the creator of the records (son, daughter, grandchild, etc.)
 - The name of the recipient (ie. is the donation being made specifically to the archives or to the tribe in general?)
 - Type of donation: gift, deposit, loan, purchase
 - Date of transfer of material
 - Details about the collection (creator, extent, inclusive dates, brief description of the records)
 - Transfer of rights, especially regarding copyright
 - Restrictions on the use of materials
 - Disposal criteria and authority (after processing and weeding, does author want right of first refusal on materials?)
 - Signature of donor and the recipient

Accessioning Collection

- **Accession:** A group of records or archives from the same source, with the same provenance, accepted into an archive repository's holdings.
- **Accessioning:** The process of formally accepting the material.
- Materials are ascribed a unique, permanent accession number that aims to get material under basic archival control.

Processing Collections

- **Arrangement**: the process of organizing materials with respect to their provenance and original order, to protect context, and to achieve physical and intellectual control over materials.
- **Description**: the process of analyzing, organizing, and recording information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and explain the holdings of archives and manuscript repositories.

Processing: Basics

- All steps taken to prepare materials for access and use
- Where to begin: It depends...size, resources, tools, reference demands, institutional needs and circumstances
- Establish **processing guidelines and manual** based on mission, resources, clientele, and priorities—A How To Manual
- Create **processing plans** for each collection after an initial survey of the collection—outlines level of processing, proposed organization, including series titles, and discusses issues relating to how the collection will be processed

Processing: Levels

- Methods to efficiently process collections, reduce backlogs, and provide access to materials as quickly as possible
- Various levels of processing:
 - Level 5 (Basic): very minimal processing (no folder list);
 - Level 1 (High): very high level processing (detailed folder list)
 - Detailed examples on handout

Processing: Getting Started

- Research history of organization or individual
- Survey records (determine if there is an original order, current organization)
- Preservation needs
- Identify possible series
- Develop a strategy (processing plan)
- Implement the processing plan—process collection!!

Arrangement: Foundation Principles

- **Principle of Provenance**: Records should be maintained according to their origin and not intermingled with those of another provenance (ie. created by another agency, group, or individual). All documents from one creator should be kept together to reveal context.
- **Principle of Original Order**: preserve whenever possible the original order in which the records came to the archive repository, thereby reflecting the process which generated them. * ***However, Archivists should not preserve original chaos.***
- Records have two levels of information users need to understand:
 - CONTENT: actual information in records—subjects and issues addressed
 - CONTEXT: conditions under or during which records were created

Arrangement

- Collective—NOT itemized
 - Gertrude Wolf Papers, 1899-1942
 - Stein Family Papers, 1924-1976
 - Tribal Membership Office Records, 1980-1985
- Hierarchical Structure
 - Collection → Series → Folder → Item

Arrangement: Methods

- By Provenance: who created the records
- By Filing Structure: chronologically, alphabetically, subject
- By Physical Unit Type:
 - Publications
 - audio/visual
 - Scrapbooks
 - maps
 - electronic records

Arrangement: Levels

- Collection/Record Group: Established according to provenance
 - Series: Groups of documents maintained together based on form, function, or activities (ie. correspondence, subject files, publications, notes, etc.).
 - Folder: Detailed description of sections within each series (ie. correspondence arranged alphabetically or chronologically)
 - Item: a single document within a folder (not usually described at this level—only if has intrinsic value)

Description: Types

- Finding Aids or Guides to Collections
- Subject Guides
- Administrative Tools (accession lists, location registers)
- National or Regional Guides to Collections
- Indexes

Description: Finding Aids

- Detailed description of the collection
- Reflects provenance and arrangement of the collection
- Provides administrative and intellectual control
 - Administrative: Repository and Management Information (ie. donor, processing, restrictions)
 - Intellectual: provides detailed information about individual collection, including: creator, biographical/historical note, scope and content note, and arrangement.
 - Contents: container list

Description: Finding Aid Structure

- Administrative information
- Biographical or Historical note
- Scope and Content note
- Container listing
- Hierarchical Structure
 - Collection:
 - Series
 - Folder
 - Item

Scope Note: A Broad Overview of the Collection

- Summary description of collection and/or series
- Type/Format of records
- Inclusive and bulk dates
- Function/Activity which generated the records
- Creators/Relationships (other than provenance)
 - Authors
 - Photographers
 - Illustrators
- Subjects
 - Personal/Corporate Names
 - Topics
 - Regions/Locations
- Significant gaps
- Any other information user should know

Physical Order=Context

- Collection:
 - Series
 - Folder
 - Item
- Provides structure for naming conventions:
 - box1_fld1_001

Access and Use: Restrictions

- Archivists strive for full access, but may make exceptions
- Restriction may be imposed by:
 - Donor
 - Applicable Laws
 - Condition of the materials
 - Subject of the materials (ie. traditional knowledge, sacred or sensitive material)
 - Repository-imposed restrictions

Access and Research Policies: Components

- User communities
- Resources
- Restrictions
- Intellectual Access
- Reference Services offered
- Fees (photocopying and commercial use of materials)
- Physical Access and Conditions of Use
- Use of Information
- Loan of Materials
- Some repositories may require “Researcher Application” ahead of time

Activity

- New Collection Accession Form
- Collection Processing Plan
- Process Collection
- Develop Finding Aid/Guide/Inventory

Thank You

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