

Culture Keepers: A Brief Look at Archival Practice

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Introduction

PRACTICE and PROCEDURE: The common practice areas of archives

- Code of Ethics
- Archival Mission
- Appraisal / Acquisitions
 - Donors
 - Copyright and Ownership
 - Collection Development Policies
 - Deaccession
- Arrangement and Description
- Access
 - Reading room / User guidelines
 - Fees
- Preservation
- Security and Disaster Planning
- Digital Records

Implementing Archival Practice

- should have the support of administration within your organization (whether that's a library or a government or a culture center)
- should be developed with the input of several people who are involved and have an interest in the organization
- should ultimately be implemented with the full cooperation (and training) of administrators and staff.

Archives: Codes of Ethics

- Protocols for Native American Materials
 - Includes a section on laws and ethical codes
 - <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>
- Code of Ethics for Archivists (Society of American Archivists)
 - Revised in 2005, include guidelines for conduct in many practice areas
 - <http://www2.archivists.org/standards/code-of-ethics-for-archivists>

Mission Statements

- What do Mission Statements DO?
- They give direction to the archives and begin defining the policy for the repository.
- A mission statement is brief, and will usually include:
 - A statement about the goals and activities of the archive, including collection, description, preservation and access.
 - A statement describing users
 - A statement briefly outlining collection scope
 - A statement briefly outlining geographic scope

Advisory Boards

- If a repository works within the context of an advisory committee or an advisory board, this group also needs a mission defining the following:
 - The purpose of the committee
 - The areas of responsibility that the committee will undertake (budgets? Collection development? Approval of accessions? Approval of deaccessions?)
 - The composition of the committee
 - The frequency of meetings
 - The reporting relationship (both in relation to the archivist and in relation to the larger organization structure)

Acquisitions and Collection Development

□ How do we acquire materials?

- Records retention schedules
- Purchase
- Donors

Donors

- The most important aspect of your donor policy is your deed of gift.
- Deeds of gift should be reviewed by legal counsel before they are used.
- The basic elements of a deed of gift include:
 - The name of the donor
 - The relationship of the donor to the creator of the records (son, daughter, grandchild, etc)
 - The name of the recipient (is the donation being made specifically to the archives? Or to the library in general?)
 - Date of the transfer of material
 - Details about the collection (the creator, the extent of the collection, the inclusive dates, and a brief description of the records)
 - Transfer of rights to the property, especially in terms of copyright
 - Details of any restrictions on the use of materials
 - Disposal criteria and authority (if material is not kept during processing, or if the collection is ever deaccessioned, does the donor want right of first refusal?)
 - Signatures of the donor and the recipient.

Collection Development

- Appraisal helps archivists identify materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned
- Archival value can include:
 - Evidential value
 - Informational value
 - Intrinsic value
 - Historical value
 - Artifact value

Collection Development Policies

- Why do we need collection development policies?
 - Our collections may have no internal unity, but will be a "mish-mash" of things – some treasure, some junk.
 - Our resources (time, staff, physical space) may be squandered on collections that probably should not be in our repositories in the first place
 - We may find ourselves competing with other repositories in collecting a single topic, while other equally valid topics are not collected at all.
 - Our collections may not support the mission, holdings, and research needs of our parent library

Collection Development Policies

- Types of programs supported by the collection
- Clientele served
- Resources available to the archives
- External environment
- Internal environment
- A plan for review and updating

Deaccessioning

- Deaccessioning decisions – or re-appraisal decisions -- should consider all of the same types of decisions as you would consider taking a collection INTO the archives.
- Deaccessioning should have a policy – at the very least a section within collection development.
- All deaccessions must be legal
 - the archives must have clear ownership of the materials through a deed of gift
 - there must be no laws governing the retention of the materials.
- When considering deaccession, it's important to consider what you will do with the material that you remove.
 - You might destroy the material
 - You might transfer it to another archives, where the collection is better served
 - You might sell it
- Deaccessioning requires approval of administration or an advisory board.

Arrangement and Description

- ARRANGEMENT is the process of organizing documents in our holdings
 - Principle of Provenance: we do not separate records of the same creator.
 - Principle of Original Order: we preserve, whenever possible, the original order in which the records came to the archive.

Levels of Arrangement

- Record Group / Collection: established according to provenance
- Series: groups of documents maintained together based on common characteristics
- Folder: subdivides a series
- Item: a single document

Description

- Reflects arrangement
- Creates tools that make materials usable to patrons
- Provides administrative and intellectual control
 - Administrative: location, creator, general contents
 - Intellectual: provides detailed information about individual collections

Description: Finding Aids

- Example of a PDF finding aid:
http://library.armstrong.edu/Boyd_Finding_Aid.pdf
- Example of a Word Document:
http://archives.pr.erau.edu/findingaids/Miller/Finding_Aid.doc
- Example of an HTML finding aid:
http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/MSCToMsc450/MsC429/msc_429.html
- Example of an EAD finding aid:
<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/wiarchives.uw-whs-mss00525>

Description: Finding Aid Structure

- Administrative information
- Biographical or Historical Statement
- Scope and Content note
- Container listing
 - Collection
 - Series
 - Folder
 - item

Access and Use: Restrictions

- Restrictions may be imposed by:
 - the donor
 - by laws
 - by condition of the materials
 - by repository-imposed restrictions
- Archives strive for full access, but may make exceptions.

Access Policies: Components

- ☐ Identification of User communities
- ☐ Identification of Resources
- ☐ Identification of Restriction
- ☐ Intellectual Access
- ☐ Reference Services offered
- ☐ Fees
 - ☐ Photocopying
 - ☐ Commercial use of materials
- ☐ Physical Access and Conditions of use
- ☐ Use of information
- ☐ Loan of materials

Reading Room / User Guidelines

- ☐ Reading room guidelines vary based on the needs of the repository
- ☐ Most guidelines include some or all of the following rules:
 - ☐ Collections are not open for browsing
 - ☐ Collection materials to not circulate
 - ☐ Researchers must check all personal belongings including backpacks, briefcases and purses
 - ☐ No food, drink or smoking in the archives
 - ☐ Only note paper, pencils, and laptops are permitted (NO PENS!)
 - ☐ Researchers must sign in
 - ☐ Researchers must complete a call slip for each collection that they use
 - ☐ Archives staff page all materials
 - ☐ Archives staff are always present in the reading room to ensure proper handling
 - ☐ Archivists retain the right to deny patrons the right to photocopy, based on fragility
 - ☐ Archives staff make all photocopies
 - ☐ Researchers return all records to archives staff

Copyright and Ownership

- ☐ Copyright generally belongs to the creator of a work, or to his/her heirs.
- ☐ Ownership of copyright is distinct from ownership of collection materials
- ☐ Copyright may be transferred in writing, or a donor may retain copyright when donating materials to a repository
- ☐ If donors do not own copyright, they cannot transfer it
- ☐ Archivists generally will make copies for users, as long as they are making copies for private use
- ☐ Archivists cannot give permission to publish from holdings unless they own copyright to the materials.
- ☐ Most repositories have a copyright policy that states that the repository does not own copyright to materials, and that it is the responsibility of the user to identify the copyright holder and obtain permission to publish from them
- ☐ Archivists do not conduct research on copyright holders for users, though they may put users in contact with donors or provide other easily gathered information to assist users.

Preservation

- Phased Preservation
 - Understand the nature of the preservation problem
 - Conduct preservation surveys to establish priorities
 - Control the storage environment
 - Plan for disasters
 - Perform holdings maintenance
 - Treat selected materials

Digital Records

- A policy for digital records should be capable of being generalized to the range of departments and problems being addressed, pose clear alternatives with sufficient basis to support judgments, and should be easily implemented, flexible and cost effective.
- A policy might address the following issues:
 - Assigning responsibility
 - Adjusting to cultural change
 - Appraising for enduring value
 - Integrating access
 - Description
 - Storage
 - Preservation
 - Security
 - Cost
