Basic Archival Principles and Collection Administration

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The Discussion

- Brief history and description/definition of main archival principles
- Key concepts in archives and records administration
- Archival administration as preservation
- Key resources and places to go for help
- Setting up the discussion on Digital Records preservation: Group Activity, Part 1
1774: Federal Government begins accumulating official papers and records after the first meeting of the Continental Congress

1810: Congressional committee finds public records “in a state of great disorder and exposure; and in a situation neither safe nor honorable to the nation.”

1878-1879: President Rutherford B. Hayes calls for the establishment of a national archive.

1899: The Public Archives Commission is established by the American Historical Association.

1900-1917: The Commission studies several state archives and Congress authorizes plans and specifications based on European archive buildings.

1926: $6.9 million appropriated for a national archives building.

1934: President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs National Archives Act.

1943-1949: President Harry S. Truman issues an executive order requiring records management programs in federal agencies and the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) is founded.

1956: NARS adds Office of Records Management to specifically address the management of paperwork.

1970: NARS receives sole responsibility for determination of the disposition of Federal records.

1980: Paper Work Reduction Act

1984: NARS becomes the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
Archival Theory

- **Fonds** - The entire body of records of an organization, family, or individual that have been created and accumulated as the result of an organic process reflecting the functions of the creator.

- **Provenance** - The origin or source of something; Information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection.

- **Record Group** - A record group is a hierarchical division that is sometimes equivalent to provenance, representing all the records of an agency and its subordinate divisions.

- **Original Order** - The organization and sequence of records established by the creator of the records.
Archival Theory

Archival Value

- **Intrinsic** - The usefulness or significance of an item derived from its physical or associational qualities, inherent in its original form and generally independent of its content, that are integral to its material nature and would be lost in reproduction.

- **Primary** - The value of records derived from the original use that caused them to be created. Primary values include administrative, fiscal, legal, and operational value.

- **Secondary** - The usefulness or significance of records based on purposes other than that for which they were originally created.
  - Information – What does the record say?
  - Evidential – What does it document?
Archival Practice

- Manuscripts vs. Records vs. Archives – The semantic jumble

- Collections
  - Collecting Mission
  - Collection Development
  - Documentation Strategy

- Administering Repositories
Archival Practice

- Appraisal and Selection
- Processing and Conservation
- Arrangement and Description (DACS)
- Cataloging and Metadata (EAD and MARC 21)
- Preservation
What’s the upshot?

- Archival Administration is Preservation
- Physical Care = Continued Use
- Use as the ultimate goal, inseparable from preservation
- Archives and heritage collections being exploited as assets
- Sustainability is linked to balancing access and care over the long term
Key Resources (Alphabet Soup)

- National Organizations (LOC, NARA, SAA, ICA, NHPRC, NAGARA, IMLS, AIC, etc.)
- Regional and Local Groups (RAP, MARAC, AASLH, NEDCC, CCAHA, HRAB’s, etc.)
- Wider Network (NEH, NSF, USGS, NPS, Private/Non-Profit Foundations, etc.)
Select Key Resources (The Infinite Web)


- Conservation Online: [http://cool.conservation-us.org/](http://cool.conservation-us.org/)
For the last few minutes make a list of your personal archives: all of the recorded information about you that you own, use, and interact with at any given time (daily, monthly, or more or less frequently than this) up to this point in your life. This could include personal items kept in your home or office, work-related materials stored on your computer or at a remote data center, legal or financial information - but not limited to these. Try to think of the extent of your personal documentary record that has been created and accumulated as a result of your activities, social interactions, and responsibilities.
Brainstorm for the next several minutes and write down what you come with. Be as descriptive and comprehensive as you want and make distinctions between physical vs. digital formats, public vs. private information, creative work vs. work-work, etc. Hang on to the list and feel free to add to it between now and tomorrow’s session as you think of more. Keep the list with your package of resources as it will form the basis for part two of the group activity. In the meantime, think about your relationship to your own personal paper trail (physical or digital): What control do you have over it? What does it say about you?