

## ARCHIVES

Archives is the term used for records having permanent or indefinite value for historical or other purposes. Usually, only between five and ten per cent of an organisation's records will meet this definition. However, the term archives also applies to the institution with responsibility for the care and custody of these valuable records and to the building or other storage place in which such records are housed.

In many jurisdictions, there is no proper archival programme and therefore no mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate and permanent care of records of enduring value in order to make them available for use. In such jurisdictions, an archival programme should be established.

### ESTABLISHING AN ARCHIVE

Establishing an archival programme involves:

- Developing an archives policy defining the Archives' purpose and goals, and the type of material it will acquire. Traditionally, public service organisations provide a legal basis for their archival programmes in the form of archives acts which establish a national archives, give it authority to acquire material in the national interest, set out the mandate of the institution, and legally establish a national archivist as the person responsible for the national archives.
- Begin actively acquiring records of enduring value. The acquisition of archival records is facilitated by appraisal and records retention scheduling.
- Gain intellectual control over the records in the archives in order to provide access to those records. This function is normally referred to as arrangement and description, or sometimes as processing, of archives and results in the production of a number of research tools, or finding aids.
- Gain physical control over archival holdings by ensuring that they are properly secured against theft, damage and environmental or human hazards.
- Begin to make archival holdings available to researchers (e.g. transferring agencies and members of the public).

## ARCHIVAL STORAGE FACILITIES

Archival storage facilities, whether they consist of a separate building, a room in an existing building, a vault, or some other storage space, should meet certain basic minimum requirements to ensure long-term preservation of archival material.

The ideal conditions for archival storage facilities include:

- A fire-resistant environment, including no exposed or faulty wiring, fire detection and suppressant systems, installation of fire doors and walls, and a regular fire inspection programme. In addition, archival repositories should not be located in buildings with a high fire risk, such as older wooden buildings, or next to other facilities with a high fire risk, such as munitions factories or chemical laboratories.
- An area free from threats of flooding or threat of water damage. Archival repositories should be situated away from flood plains or coastal areas. In addition, they should be above the basement or ground level and archival material should be stored on shelves off the floor.
- An area free of insects, rodents, mildew, mould or fungus. Specialists should be consulted regarding site treatment to prevent infestations or the growth of mildew, mould or fungus. Locating the archival repository away from sources of potential water damage and above-ground will also help prevent infestation and mould or fungus growth, as will maintaining a constant temperature and humidity within the repository.
- An area with constant temperature and humidity. Temperature and humidity should be regularly monitored using a thermostat and hygrometer. Air conditioners and dehumidifiers should be used to maintain the environment at acceptable levels.
- An area with as little uncontrolled natural and fluorescent light as possible. Sources of uncontrolled and ultraviolet light can be limited through the use of curtains, shades, light filters, incandescent bulbs or storing material on the north side of a facility.
- an area which is secure, including proper locks and alarmed security systems. Moreover, archival facilities should not be located in areas prone to or likely to experience civil unrest or attack.

In addition, archival repositories should include the following functional areas:

- An archival processing area with adequate space to sort and box materials and which is located in convenient proximity to archival supplies and stationary and away from researchers.
- A secure and environmentally-controlled storage area for archival material large enough for existing material and any new material. Future space requirements can be calculated on an estimated standard growth rate of ten per cent of existing holdings per year. If planning for the construction of a new facility, its storage space should be large enough to accommodate at least 15 years' accumulation of records. It is also important to ensure that storage areas for archival material have adequate floor load capacity. The storage area should be fitted with metal shelving with a depth of between 12 and 15 inches (30–40 cm). If space for shelving is limited, mobile shelving can be used to increase the capacity of the storage area.
- Administrative offices.
- A research area. This area will include desks, tables, chairs, good lighting and sufficient work space for the use of researchers. It should also be located in an area with controlled access that facilitates monitoring of researchers while they work with collections.
- Other space, if needed, such as a conservation lab, a photography lab, an exhibit space, meeting or training rooms, a vault for valuable material, refrigerated storage for colour photographs and films, a room for playing audio-visual material, and a staff lunch room.

#### **ARCHIVAL FUNCTIONS**

Once the archival programme is established, the Archives should perform the following basic archival functions:

- appraisal and accessioning of archival material;
- arrangement and description of archival material;
- preventative conservation;
- provision of reference services.

# CAMPUS ARCHIVES FACILITY - OPTION 1

## Functional Relationships and Flow

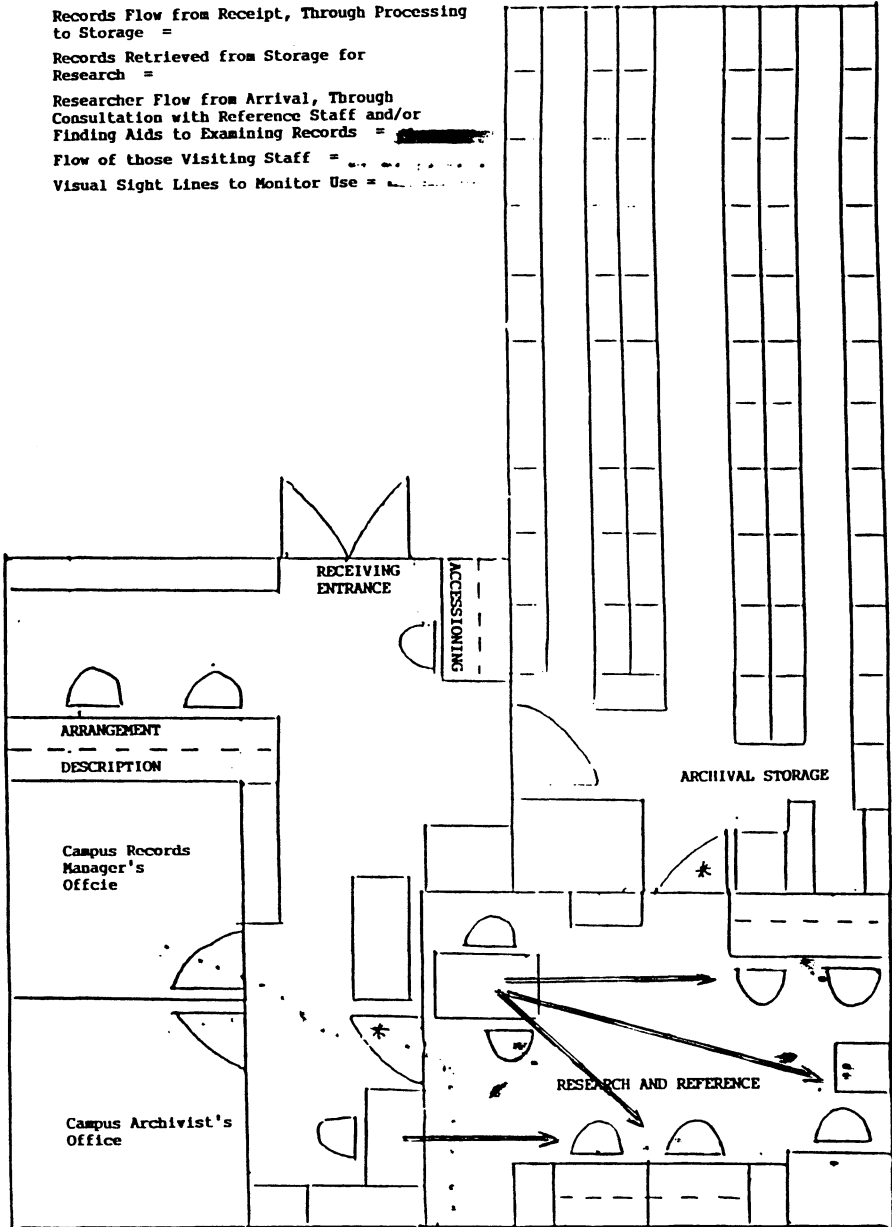
Records Flow from Receipt, Through Processing to Storage =

Records Retrieved from Storage for Research =

Researcher Flow from Arrival, Through Consultation with Reference Staff and/or Finding Aids to Examining Records =

Flow of those Visiting Staff =

Visual Sight Lines to Monitor Use =



APPROX. SCALE: 1/8" = 1'  
3/4" = 5'

\*Normally Researchers are not Allowed Beyond these 2 Doors

In many jurisdictions, the Archives is also the central agency with overall responsibility for a public service-wide records and information management programme. Where archives and records management functions are integrated, the Archives may also be responsible for:

- operating a records centre;
- providing advice and training to public service agencies on records and information management;
- developing records and information management policies, procedures, standards and guidelines for public service agencies;
- co-ordinating and monitoring records appraisal, retention scheduling and disposal.

#### **APPRAISAL AND ACCESSIONING**

Appraisal and accessioning are the mechanisms whereby archives acquire material of enduring value. One of the main objectives of appraisal is to determine what records have secondary, or enduring, value and therefore merit preservation in the Archives. The person with responsibility for the archival programme (i.e. the national archivist) also should be responsible for assessing the secondary values of records and determining which records should be transferred to the Archives. The archivist's role in assessing the value of records may be formalised by establishing this person as a signing authority on records retention schedules.

Records, the final disposition of which is transfer to Archives in whole or in part according to an approved records retention schedule, once received by the archives should be accessioned. Accessioning, as it applies to archives, involves transferring legal and physical control of records. An accession of records encompasses the whole of the records transferred to the Archives from one source at a given time.

As in the case of records centre accessions, each accession which is transferred to the Archives should be assigned a unique accession number. If the final disposition of the records is selective retention, or samples or specimens for Archives, the Archives should make a selection of the records to be preserved and destroy the remainder prior to assigning an accession number to the records. A simple numbering scheme should be used for accessions, such as the year plus a consecutive number. A letter code may be added to the number to differentiate archival accessions from those in the records centre (e.g. A1998-1, A1998-2, A1998-3 etc.).

The number of each incoming accession should be recorded in an accession register to ensure that accession numbers are not duplicated. The accession register usually will contain such information elements as:

- name of transferring agency;
- name of contact person in the transferring agency;
- accession number assigned to the incoming group of records;
- a brief description of the records in the accession;
- the outside dates of the records in the accession;
- the total volume of records in the accession.

In addition, archives normally prepare an accession control record for each accession. The accession control records may be kept on sheets and maintained in files or binders organised by accession number, or can be in automated form.

In order to facilitate future retrieval of records transferred from public service organisations, the Archives should notify the agency and the records centre, if the records have been transferred from there, of which records have been selected for preservation in the Archives, the Archives' accession number for those records and, if applicable, which records have not been selected and therefore destroyed.

The Archives accession number is the Archives' primary means of maintaining control over a given group of records. It therefore should be marked on all temporary storage boxes in the accession, and once the material has been arranged and described, on all the boxes, folders and other material comprising the accession.

#### **ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION**

Arrangement and description of archival material, also called processing, is carried out to facilitate access and retrieval.

Arrangement is the process of physically organising archival records. There are two basic principles which govern the arrangement of archives: (i) Provenance (sometimes also called *Respect des Fonds*); and (ii) Respect for Original Order.

The term 'provenance' refers to the origins of records, that is, the agency or person responsible for their creation. According to the archival principle of provenance,

records created by one person or agency should not be intermixed or filed with records created by another agency or person. The principle is based on the notion that records derive their meaning and integrity as evidence from the unique circumstances and context of their creation. Intermixing records created by different agencies or persons leads to a loss of information about the circumstances and context of records creation which, in turn, limits users' ability to interpret the meaning and rely on the integrity of the records. For this reason, archival records created by different agencies or persons should never be inter-filed by subject. However, several different accessions originating from the same public service agency may be integrated during arrangement of archival records.

Respect for original order entails preserving the original organisation or order in which the records were created and maintained. For example, if the creating agency maintained the records in alphabetical order by file subject, the archivist must respect that order and not rearrange the records according to some other method of organisation. The reason why original order should be respected is that records' meaning and integrity as evidence comes, in part, from the location of individual documents on a file, the relationship between documents in a file, the location of a given file in a filing system and the relationship between files in a filing system. If these relationships are changed, important information needed to understand the full meaning of the records and establish their integrity as evidence may be lost.

During arrangement, basic preventative conservation of archival records is usually carried out. Normally, the records will be placed in acid-free boxes. Old file covers also will be removed and replaced with new acid-free file-folders. In addition, all metal paper clips, staples, pins, strings, tape, rubber bands and other fasteners that cause deterioration will be removed and replaced with archival-quality fasteners, such as inert plastic paper clips.

If the collection is comprised of restricted records, all containers should be stamped 'RESTRICTED' during arrangement. It is a good practice to store restricted collections separately from unrestricted ones to avoid accidental disclosure of confidential information. Particularly sensitive information may be stored in a secure vault. Should a particular file in a collection be restricted, it should be marked restricted, removed from its usual place of storage, and stored with other restricted records. A card may be left in place of the restricted file to indicate its new storage location.

If possible, it is best to fumigate archival records prior to placing them in secure, environmentally-controlled storage areas. Upon arrangement, all collections are normally stored in accession number order. However, oversized documents and other documents with special storage requirements, such as audiotapes, videotapes,

films, photographs, microfilm and electronic records, should be removed and placed in special cabinets or storage areas.

Description of archival records takes place once the records have been arranged, and follows the physical order the records. It starts at the highest level of arrangement, that is, the collection, or in archival terms the '*fonds*' level, and moves to the lowest level of arrangement, for example, the file-folder or item. Traditionally, each level of arrangement is assigned a control number. For example, at the level of the collection, the archivist will assign each accession or group of records originating from the same public agency a common number (e.g. Record Group 1) and within a given collection, all records comprising part of the same series the same number (series 1). These numbers allow the archivist to link the records together intellectually for the purposes of retrieval, despite the fact that they may have been received as many different physical transfers or accessions of records. The description of archival holdings should follow approved international standards, such as the International Standards for Archival Description (ISAD(G)). The process of describing archival material results in the production of a number of aids to locating archival material for research use, such as:

- inventories, which are detailed descriptions of the contents, origins and significance of archival collections;
- catalogues consisting of collection-level descriptions of archival holdings in card or automated form;
- thematic guides which are collection-level descriptions of archival holdings relating to a particular area of interest, such as politics, women, medicine etc.

#### **PREVENTATIVE CONSERVATION**

Conservation, the physical care and maintenance of archival holdings, is essential to ensuring that records of enduring value will last. Conservation entails ensuring that archival collections are stored, processed and handled, particularly by researchers, in a manner that inhibits the natural deterioration process.

The main causes of deterioration of archival materials are:

- temperature, because heat combines with other elements, such as acids in paper, to create chemical reactions that deteriorate records;
- humidity because water attracts mould, mildew and fungi which cause deterioration;

- sunlight and ultraviolet light because excessive amounts of these forms of light accelerate the ageing process;
- insects or rodents because they eat archival material;
- acid, found in polluted air, in the products used to make paper, in certain types of ink and in leather bindings, because it can cause fading, darkening and chemical deterioration;
- fire and water, for obvious reasons; and
- people, because they can accidentally or intentionally damage materials and the acids and oils on hands can cause deterioration.

Steps should be taken to limit all of the above sources of deterioration in an Archives. For example:

- temperature and humidity should be maintained at constant and acceptable levels, which for textual records is between 19–20 degrees Celsius (66–68 degrees Fahrenheit) with a relative humidity of 45 per cent;
- exposure of archival material to sources of sunlight and ultraviolet light should be limited;
- archival material should be stored in acid-free boxes or containers and folders;
- metal paper clips, staples, pins, strings, tape, rubber bands and other fasteners that cause deterioration because they are acidic or rusty should be removed from archival material during processing and replaced with archival-quality fasteners, such as plastic paper clips;
- metal, not wooden, shelving should be used in archival storage areas;
- incoming archival material should be checked to ensure it is not infested and, whenever possible, fumigated before being placed with existing archival collections;
- food and drink should not be taken near archival material;
- archival facilities should be kept clean;
- there should be a regular fumigation programme for archival facilities;

- there should be no smoking permitted in archival facilities;
- flammable liquids, chemicals, paints or solvents should never be stored in an archival facility;
- archival material should be handled as little as possible; and
- there should be regulations for researchers to ensure proper handling of archival material.

#### REFERENCE SERVICES

Archival material is acquired and preserved in an archival repository because of its continuing usefulness; thus, an archival programme must incorporate a reference function into its operations. Reference services entail assisting researchers, whether public service employees or members of the public, who request information from the archives. The following measures will assist with the provision of reference services:

- preparation of adequate archival finding aids, such as catalogues and inventories, to all archival material;
- preparation of standard reference material; for example, if requests are received frequently for information on a particular topic, in order to save time, a special guide to sources on that topic might be prepared for distribution to researchers;
- registration of all researchers because having all researchers who visit the Archives sign a register, complete a researcher registration card or register in some other way will assist the Archives to keep track of visits for statistical purposes, as well as to identify persons who visited on a given day in the event of loss or damage of archival records;
- tracking all requests for information that are received by phone or mail, for example, by using a special form to record each request;
- establishment and distribution of rules governing the use of the Archives; and
- provision of copying services.

**University Archives and  
Records Management  
Programme, Mona**

**Request For Information**

Name of Requester:	Department/Section:
Date of Request:	Date Information Needed by:
Subject of Request/ Action Taken:	

Name of person who completed this request _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Information located	Length of time to complete _____

RM4 22/9/97



# THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES ARCHIVES

ACCESSION CONTROL RECORD ACC. DATE \_\_\_\_\_ ACC. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSFERRED FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS CUSTODY/RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECORDS IF DIFFERENT FROM

TRANSFERRING BODY: \_\_\_\_\_

RECORDS TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE RANGE \_\_\_\_\_ EXTENT \_\_\_\_\_ R.G. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

R.C. ACC. NO. \_\_\_\_\_ DISP. AUTH. NO. \_\_\_\_\_ FINAL DISP. \_\_\_\_\_

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICAL FORMAT: TEXTUAL \_\_\_\_\_ FILES \_\_\_\_\_ BOUND VOLS. \_\_\_\_\_

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS/DRAWINGS \_\_\_\_\_ MAPS \_\_\_\_\_ MICROFILM \_\_\_\_\_

PHOTOS \_\_\_\_\_ B & W \_\_\_\_\_ COLOUR \_\_\_\_\_ PRINTS \_\_\_\_\_ NEGS \_\_\_\_\_ SLIDES \_\_\_\_\_

CINE FILM \_\_\_\_\_ VIDEO \_\_\_\_\_ MACHINE READABLE \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

ARRANGEMENT: NUMERIC \_\_\_\_\_ ALPHA NUMERIC \_\_\_\_\_ DUPLEX NUMERIC \_\_\_\_\_

BLOCK NUMERIC \_\_\_\_\_ ALPHA BY SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_ BY PERSONAL NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SERIES \_\_\_\_\_ SUB SERIES \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

FINDING AIDS: R.C. INVENTORY \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICAL CONDITION/CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION:

MAIN AND ADDED ENTRIES \_\_\_\_\_ ITEMIZED DESCRIPTIVE INVENTORY \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT INDEXING AT: FILE LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_ ITEM LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

PREPARED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE PREPARED \_\_\_\_\_ DATE ACKNOWLEDGED \_\_\_\_\_

*The University of the West Indies  
Archives and Records Management Centre*

***Regulations for Researchers***



**OPENING HOURS:** 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Mondays to Fridays)

*No ink of any kind may be used in the research area; use pencils only.*

*Smoking is prohibited in the Archives.*

*Eating and drinking are prohibited in the Archives' reference area.*

*All archival materials must be handled carefully: use only one folder at a time and keep the papers in their existing order.*

*Do not place books or volumes face down.*

*Do not lean or press on archival materials.*

*Do not trace maps or other records.*

*No material in the archives may be removed from the reference area.*

*Permission to access restricted materials must be obtained in writing from the University Archivist or relevant university authority.*

*Researchers are advised that it is their responsibility to obtain copyright clearance to publish or otherwise reproduce archival material. Where possible, the University Archivist will provide the names and addresses of copyright holders.*

*If publishing material from the Archives please credit the archives as follows: The University of the West Indies' Archives, Record Group No., Accession No., Box No. (if appropriate), Item/Volume No., Title of document/Names of correspondents and Date.*

*Eg. RG 1 MA92.1 Box 5, Item No. 19 The University of the West Indies Regulations for Undergraduates, October, 1952.*