

An Introduction to Archives

James Gregory Bradsher

When I was about to leave graduate school to become an archivist, my friends asked me what it was I was going to be doing. My response was somewhat vague. Having looked at a dictionary, I was able to respond that as an archivist I was going to be a “keeper of archives”. This, of course, prompted the question, what are archives? My response, also dictionary-based, was that “archives are public records or documents preserved as evidence of facts; as, national or family archives”. These explanations elicited the response that archival work sounded dull, uncreative, of limited intellectual scope, and dirty—dealing with old and dusty files, not something important or relevant; certainly not something that a “scholar” would want to do.

Such misconceptions about archivists and their archives are not new. In 1935, shortly after the National Archives of the United States was established, in Washington, D.C., newspaper columnist attempting to define “archivist” for his readers came up with the concept that an archivist was a “dead file clerk”. By printing these words without any punctuation it was not clear as to who was dead, the file clerk or the files. In a book about words and expressions first published in 1975, the author observed that the “euphemism” archivist actually means museum or library clerk.¹ As will be seen in this chapter and throughout the book, archives are not dead files and archivists are not museum, library, or file clerks.

This introductory chapter explains what archives are and where they are maintained, and discusses the general principles governing their management. Additionally, by way of introducing the various functions and activities of archivists addressed by the authors, this chapter outlines the knowledge and skills that archivists must possess and exercise in order to manage effectively

their archives and institutions. Finally, it contains a discussion of the education, training, and professional development of archivists.

Records, personal papers, and historical manuscripts

What are archives? Before answering that question, it is necessary to understand the nature of records, personal papers, and historical manuscripts, all of which are documentary sources acquired by various types archival institutions. Records are generally defined as recorded information (regardless of form or medium), created, received and maintained by an agency, institution, organization or individual in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of business. Most records are of a prosaic nature, being fundamentally the record of business or administrative transactions, created to facilitate public and private business. They are used to justify official actions; to record proceedings; to explain and record policy decisions; and to establish and maintain rights under the law for citizens, corporations, and governments.²

Recorded information accumulated in the course of official governmental activity constitutes public records. If records are accumulated by non-governmental institutions or organizations, they are private records. Records are generally created and maintained as "series", that is, as groups of records maintained as a unit because they are filed in accordance with a particular filing system and relate to a particular function or subject, result from the same activity, or have a particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of the circumstances of their creation or use. Records include a wide variety of documentary forms and classes, such as correspondence, reports, maps, photographs, sound recordings, and motion pictures, and they are recorded on a variety of media, such as paper, microforms, audio and video disks, videotape, and reels of computer tape. Records are referred to as current, semi-current, or non-current, indicating their value to users for the conduct of current business. Records also are viewed as having a "life cycle". That is, they are born or adopted (created or received), live actively (used), retire (become semi-current), and, when they become non-current, die (are destroyed) or are "reborn" (become archives).

Information recorded or received by private individuals and employees of a governmental entity or private organization or institution, and not created or received during the course of conducting official business, is generally contained in what are termed personal papers.³ While archives grow out of some regular functional activity, personal papers are accumulated by individuals or families in the conduct of their personal, professional, and private concerns. The line between organizational records and personal papers is sometimes difficult to define. The distinction is especially important when legal problems of what is and what is not a record are considered. While personal papers belong to and are subject to the disposition of an individual, records are generally subject to laws and regulations or corporate policies and procedures that authorize

their disposition at a specified time and in a specific manner.

In addition to personal papers, which accumulate naturally and thus have an organic character, there are historical manuscripts, which are collected artificially, frequently without regard to source.⁴ Both types were once termed historical manuscripts (to distinguish them from literary manuscripts) or historical records. The term historical manuscripts is now generally used to designate artificial or miscellaneous collections. These collections are generally regarded as unorganized groups or individual documents of a private nature, ordinarily created as the product of spontaneous expression of thought or feeling, such as personal letters or diaries. They are collected by an individual or private repository from a variety of sources, because of their special historical significance or literary value, or their importance to research.

Archives

Institutional records and personal papers maintained by an archival repository are frequently termed archives. Such holdings are often mistakenly viewed as a collection of historical records or manuscripts. But archives are not simply unorganized groups of historical documents. They are a body of functionally and/or organizationally related material that has grown organically out of some activity. They are basically the business (legal, administrative, policy, fiscal) records of an individual or public or private entity, that are preserved because of their value, either as evidence of transactions, and/or because of the information they contain about people, places, and things.

Just as no single definition of "history" has ever been accepted by all historians at any period of time, no one definition of archives will satisfy all archivists or serve all archival institutions. It may be said, however, that archives are the *official or organized records of governments, public and private institutions and organizations, groups of people and individuals, whatever their date, form and material appearance, which are no longer needed to conduct current business, but are preserved, either as evidence of origins, structures, functions, and activities or because of the value of the information they contain, whether or not they have been transferred to an archival institution.* Information in archives is of fundamental and continuing value for administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential, or informational (historical) purposes. The French archival law of 1979 states that certain records are preserved as archives "in the interest of the public, as well as for the needs of administration and *proof of rights of individual persons or corporate bodies, either public or private, and for the historical documentation of research*".⁵

According to the 1979 French definition of archives, records become archival as soon as they are created or received. American federal records are considered archival when they are formally offered by a federal agency and the National Archives signs a document accepting legal responsibility for them. Yet, when records are first appraised as having enduring value or when they cease to be in

current use and are set aside for preservation, they begin to take on the character of archives.

So, while archives are records, not all records are archives. Archives are the small core of records with enduring value; no more than five percent of the volume of all public records. It is this enduring value that distinguishes archives proper from records in general. All records have some value to somebody. However, generally only those of sufficient value, as determined by archivists, are retained as archives, and then only as long as their value is of an enduring nature. Archives are thus retained or preserved indefinitely, but not necessarily permanently; the information contained in them is subject to re-evaluation to determine if they warrant continued retention.

Etymologically, the word archives comes from the Greek "archeion" and the Latin "archivum", both meaning a government office and the papers kept therein. First applied only to bodies of official governmental documents, the term was subsequently used to designate the accumulated files of an institution or a family. From the Latin, the French developed the word "l'archive" and later the collective "les archives". The word "archives", although long in usage on the European continent, was, for the most part, not adopted by the English-speaking countries until the nineteenth century. The words "records" or "historical records" were preferred because the term "records" was used in early English law to indicate something deliberately preserved, and often deliberately created, for future legal or administrative use.

Early in the nineteenth century, in the midst of the Romantic movement, the term "archives" was adopted by many English-speaking scholars to refer to old records. In its American sense the plural was carried over from the French "les archives", to mean not only the body of such records but also the place where they were kept, and the institution or agency responsible for administering them. The last half of the century saw increased use of the term, primarily as a result of historians having trained in German universities where it was well-established. Before the 1930s the term "archives" was usually applied to public records of archival value while the terms "personal papers", "historical records", or "historical manuscripts" were used for non-public records of archival value. Thereafter, the term "archives" generally included non-public records and often personal papers of individuals and families, if they were organically created, consciously preserved, and organized in some logical arrangement, thereby having the characteristics of archival materials.

Archival institutions

Archival materials are found throughout the world in hundreds of thousands of publicly- and privately-funded and operated archival institutions. These institutions, whose function is the preservation and administration of archives, are known either as "archives" or as "manuscript repositories" depending on the type of material they contain and how it is acquired. "Manuscripts

repositories" are responsible mainly for personal papers and artificial miscellaneous collections (historical manuscripts) acquired by purchase or donation primarily for cultural and educational purposes. "Archives" are responsible for the archival records of the organization or institution of which they are a part. Most archives hold some personal papers and many manuscript repositories also serve as the archives of their own or some other institution. In common usage the terms "archives", "archival institutions", or "archival repositories", are generally used to denote entities maintaining archives and manuscript collections.

Most national governments and many other official bodies maintain archives. Institutions of higher learning have archives, as do business, religious, labor, ethnic, patriotic, charitable, political, educational, fraternal, and social organizations. Archives, personal papers, and historical manuscripts are also found in large quantities in libraries and historical societies. Archives are maintained in hospitals, museums, and wherever it is important to retain indefinitely those non-current records of the greatest historical value and of the greatest potential use to their creators and other researchers in documenting and understanding the past, dealing with the present, and preparing for the future.

Archival repositories range from large, relatively well-funded institutions providing a full range of archival services to more limited operations, often run by a single archivist or volunteer. The average archival institution in the United States contains about two thousand cubic feet of archives and is staffed by four employees. By way of contrast, America's National Archives contains more than 1.5 million cubic feet of archives that are administered by nearly six hundred employees. Substantial variations exist, not only in the size, nature, and scope of archival holdings, but also in their internal structure and their location within the organizational structure of their parent institution. Often archives are part of a library system, and the institution to which they belong contains the words "library and archives" in its title. Some archives are part of a historical agency, such as a Bureau or Department of History and Archives. Often the term "library" is used to designate a primarily archival institution, such as the Bentley Historical Library or the John F. Kennedy Library. And the term "record" is often used in the title of an archival repository, such as the British Public Record Office.

Archivists

The individuals who are responsible for managing public or private archival materials are generally termed "archivists". They maintain the archives of the parent entity, be it a government, organization, or institution, primarily for their administrative usefulness to the creators or their successors. Because of their connection with the creating entities, some archivists have responsibilities for records before they become archives. In this role they serve as records managers, assisting the creators of records in achieving economy and efficiency

in the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records; thereby reducing their quantity and increasing their quality. Following archival principles and their institution's policies and procedures, archivists identify records for retention and disposal; accession records that have archival value; and arrange, describe, preserve, promote the use of, and make available their archives or the information contained in them.

"Manuscript custodians" administer personal papers and artificial collections. Although they identify and acquire valuable documentation, maintain and administer their collections in much the same manner as archivists, and are generally bound by the same professional standards and ethics, there are important distinctions between the two professions. Archivists in the public sector are generally restricted legally in what they can do to and with their archives. Curators of manuscript collections are restricted in their methodology only by such private contracts as may have been agreed upon between their institution and the previous owners of the materials. In common usage, most manuscript custodians are today termed either archivists or librarians, depending on the nature of their institution and its holdings.

Archival characteristics and principles

Archival materials, whether public or private, were created in the normal conduct of business, by a particular entity, and maintained in a definite arrangement usually related to the actions that resulted in their accumulation. The most basic characteristics of archives and all archival principles derive from these facts.

The first characteristic of archives is the relationship they have to a creating entity, whether it is an organization, governmental agency, or individual. The archives of a particular entity are accumulated as a direct result of its functional activities, and are intended to reflect the policies, functions, and transactions of that entity alone. From this fact is derived the first major principle of "respect des fonds" or "provenance", that is, maintaining the archives of one entity separate from those of others, thereby respecting the natural body of documentation left by the creating entity and reflecting its work.

Based on this principle, records are grouped on the basis of their organizational origins. For archival management purposes, these groups of records are variously termed "archive groups" or "record groups".⁶ They are the largest physical units established in archival institutions and generally comprise the records accumulated by an entity that has separate or distinct functional responsibilities, and for that reason, can be dealt with separately. An "archival subgroup" comprises the records accumulated by subdivision of the larger organizational unit. Within a subgroup, records are maintained in "series", which are archival units established on the basis of their functional origins.

A second characteristic of archives is their organic character. As a transaction progresses, records relating to it grow naturally. Each document in a file is

related to, or is a consequence of, some preceding document or documents, and the former is explained and elaborated by the latter. Taken out of sequence, or arranged in a manner different from that in which they were created, archives tell an incomplete or inaccurate story. To retain their quality of reflecting accurately what has gone before, why and how, the original order of records is maintained or restored. This sanctity of the original order is a very important and basic archival principle.

A third characteristic is the official character of archives. Archives are the by-product of the transactions of an organization or institution with individuals or corporate entities, often having legal effects. From this characteristic flows the archival principle that archives must remain in the custody of their creator or its legitimate successor in order to ensure that no tampering has taken place by unauthorized individuals. This assures that archives will be acceptable in a court of law as valid evidence of a transaction.

Another characteristic of archives is their uniqueness. Unlike books, which are mass-produced for cultural and educational purposes, archives are essentially single file units created or accumulated in connection with a specific business or administrative transaction. If a copy of a book is destroyed, another copy almost always exists somewhere. If, on the other hand, archival file units are destroyed, other copies of the documents in them might exist, but it is unlikely they would be maintained in the same sequence or context.

Maintaining archives according to these basic principles provides evidence about the nature of their creator; preserves the values arising from their organic character; provides evidence as to how and why they were created and used; protects their integrity; and allows for them to be arranged, described, and administered efficiently and effectively. Archivists during the last century learned the hard lesson that to rearrange their archives according to subject, rather than retaining their original arrangement, was impossible because of the size of their holdings as well as the complexity and diversity of the information which they contained.

The difference between archives and other reference materials is that the latter do not have the characteristics just discussed. Books in a library or items in a historical manuscript repository are "collections" of isolated pieces that have been put in some sort of logical order. Archives, on the other hand, are "accumulations" and their arrangement is determined as they grow, not afterwards. Other reference materials do not have the official character or relationship with a creating agency that is essential to archives, nor are they unique, at least in the sense archives are. Books are created for general use; archives, in the course of one specific transaction.

Differences and similarities between archives and libraries

Reviewing the differences between archives and libraries illustrates the essential nature of archives and archives administration. Although libraries often

maintain archival materials and manuscript collections, their primary function is to house and make available collections of books and other printed materials. Archives, on the other hand, often contain books and other printed matter (generally reference materials), but their primary function is to maintain accumulations of the records or papers of organic entities and individuals, including printed archival materials, such as manuals produced by an agency, organization, or institution. Archives and libraries both exist in order to help preserve valuable information. They share the common objective of making their holdings available as effectively and economically as possible. But they are essentially quite different, not only in the physical and substantive attributes of their holdings, but also in the way these holdings are created, acquired, maintained, and administered.

Archivists are concerned with records, papers, and manuscripts; mostly unique, non-printed material. Librarians are concerned with multiple copies of books and publications. The quality that distinguishes an archives from a library is the uniqueness of its holdings. Although libraries may sometimes contain unique items, for example, rare books, for the most part they contain collections of printed works produced for general use, whereas archives contain accumulations of unique documents, created in the course of specific transactions.

This quality of uniqueness reflects a fundamental difference between archives and libraries. The difference lies in the fact that archival materials are normally created as a result of some regular functional activity of a government agency or other entity. Their significance depends on their organic relation to this body and to other archival materials in the same files, series, or record group. Any cultural values they may have are incidental to their creation. Library materials, on the other hand, are produced primarily for cultural or educational purposes. They usually consist of discrete items, whose significance is independent of their relationship to other items.

Archival institutions are established to preserve the archival materials produced by the body or bodies they serve; they are receiving institutions. Libraries on the other hand, are collecting bodies, deriving their materials not from particular entities, but from anywhere or anyone.

Archival appraisal, deciding what material should be retained, is usually carried out in relation to organization or function rather than subject. It is accomplished by assessing the value of particular series of records (aggregates, not items) in relation to the entire documentation of an organization or institution. While archivists appraise aggregates, librarians select or collect discrete items, on the basis of either their subject matter or the collecting interests of their library.

Other differences between archival and library principles and methodologies exist. Librarians, in organizing discrete units, use one of the proven, pre-determined, and logical schemes of classification for the arrangement and subject control of their materials. Archivists, in organizing collective organic units,

maintain them in their original arrangement, thereby providing evidence of what has gone before. Libraries describe or catalog discrete items while archivists describe aggregates of items, such as record groups or series. Archives provide information on series of records, while libraries do it for individual items.

Despite their differences, librarians and archivists have much in common. They share some common preservation problems, some common views on professional training and development, and a common desire to facilitate the use of their holdings. Developments in information technology mean that, increasingly, they find themselves handling documents in the same physical formats as books, on the one hand, and paper-based records, on the other, are replaced by electronic and optical media. Nevertheless, the ways in which such materials are treated and used in libraries and archives will continue to differ, regardless of their physical form.

The importance of archives and archivists

Regardless of what definition one chooses or where archival materials are kept, archives are important, not only for studying the past but also for the impact which a knowledge of the past has on the present and the future. The preservation and improvement of governments, other institutions and organizations, societies, and even civilization itself depends to some degree on the preservation and efficient utilization of archives.

Nearly everyone benefits from archives, even those who never use them directly. They are the institutional memory of corporate entities which, just like individuals, cannot function without a memory. Archives permit continuity and consistency in administration. In a democracy, they document government responsibility and accountability to the people. They provide citizens with a sense of national identity and are of great value to them in establishing and protecting individual and property rights and privileges. They provide documentation for corporations. They educate, entertain, and enrich our lives by providing appealing and tangible manifestations of our history, as well as useful information. In short, they provide the basis for understanding where we have been, they help orient us to our present, and they provide guidance for our progress into the future.

Because archives are important, archivists, who preserve and manage archival materials, have an important role in society. By preserving and making available the archives in their care, archivists provide an important service to the entities that created them; to citizens establishing their rights and privileges; and to those who evolve new ideas, extend the boundaries of knowledge, or disseminate information and ideas.

Often archivists are viewed as preoccupied with the past. In fact, they are equally concerned with the present and the future. In some respects, particularly in deciding what records are to be preserved, they are professionally

concerned with a more distant future than that of any profession except possibly theology and astronomy. They have an important function in society, acting as the trustees and custodians of the past and present for the benefit of the future.

Much to do—much to learn

Preserving the evidence of the activities of individuals and public and private entities so that others may know and understand them is the ultimate goal of archivists. To achieve this goal, archivists have two objectives. Their most fundamental objective is to establish and maintain control, both physical and intellectual, over the records transferred to them. In doing this archivists have a responsibility to preserve the physical and intellectual integrity of their archives, keeping them in order such that they can be produced when required. The archivist's secondary objective is to make their archives, or the information in them, available to researchers in a proper and effective manner. This second objective is impossible if the first is not accomplished, and the first objective is meaningless without the second.

Everything archivists do should be concentrated on this dual objective. If they do not accomplish their objectives in an effective and timely manner, their archives will not afford the legal protection they should guarantee, the pleasure they can provide, or the information and potential knowledge which are available in them. Archivists thus have an immense and important responsibility to society.

To fulfill their responsibility of saving the past for the future, and of serving the present, archivists must possess certain attitudes and knowledge and employ a wide range of skills. They must continually improve these skills, and be aware of all aspects of their profession as well as of related fields that bear on their work. In some large and complex archival institutions there is a growing need for specialization. Despite this, all archivists should have a working knowledge of all aspects of their profession, including technical specialties, not only to develop their own competence, but also to facilitate dealing with experts in other areas, when they need to call upon them. Each chapter in this book addresses a different aspect of archival administration. To provide an integrated overview of these aspects, the remaining pages of this chapter are devoted to explaining (in the same order as the succeeding chapters) what archivists must know and do in order to fulfill their function.

Archivists have an obligation to know what their profession is all about. They must believe in what they are doing. If they cannot justify their existence to themselves, they cannot justify it to others. If archivists are to be respected by other professions and by the public they serve, they must understand and be convinced of the importance of their mission and be able to convince others. Therefore, they must take the time to reflect on the importance of what they are

doing, to remind themselves that their roots go back five thousand years, and to remember that archives serve myriad purposes.

Most archivists cannot afford to concentrate only on their archives, letting present (and future) records take care of themselves. Someday, some current records will become archives. Many, if not most, of the problems of the archivist of the future will have their origin in what is done to and with the records that are being created today. If archivists are content to accept and deal only with those records that survive administrative handling and neglect, they will unquestionably find, in the future, that their archives are greatly impaired in intellectual and physical quality. Because of the volume and complexity of the records now being created, and the risk of losing completely information stored in electronic data bases, archivists must be aware of all aspects of the life cycle of records and knowledgeable about records management techniques. They must assume a records management role to ensure that full and adequate documentation is created and maintained until such time as it is accessioned by an archival institution. They also must play a role in ensuring that records are managed effectively to facilitate their disposition and to ease the archivist's future tasks of arrangement, description, preservation, and reference service.

Because the first objective of archivists is to establish and maintain control over records of enduring value, identifying and selecting such records is the first step in the archival process. Making appraisal judgments (deciding what records can be destroyed without legal repercussions or serious historical or administrative loss) is perhaps the most difficult and important archival task. In deciding what records are to be retained, archivists determine what sources will be available in the future. Thus, they need to know how to appraise records so as to be able to identify those that are truly archival. In meeting this challenge, archivists must know what their institution wants and needs to preserve, and help to formulate clear, coherent, and comprehensive retention programs to achieve this.

Archivists must know how to arrange and describe their archives at all levels—namely, those of the repository, record group, subgroup, series, filing unit, and individual item—so that the physical and intellectual integrity of the archives can be maintained and protected, and so that they can be easily used. Because most archives begin their life cycle as records, archivists need to know something of the organization, mission, functions, policies, procedures, and activities of the entity that created them, and how and why they were created, filed, and used. This knowledge is critically important if archives are to take on more meaning in the context in which they are created and used.

Many archival institutions contain personal papers. These share certain characteristics with more formal archives and many of the same principles of management apply. However, since strict archival methods are not always applicable to the arrangement and description of personal papers, it is as important for curators of personal papers to know something of archival methods as

it is for archivists to appreciate the character of the personal papers in their charge.

Often, when people envision archives, they picture individual documents, folders of documents in an archival container, or bound volumes. But archives take many shapes and forms, including maps, charts, photographs, motion-picture films, video and audio tapes, and reels of computer tape. These media require special storage, care, and handling, both before and after they become archives. Thus, archivists must be aware of the preservation, storage, and access requirements of such media. They must also possess special skills if they are to appraise, accession, arrange, describe, and administer these materials effectively.

Various technologies are changing the way information is created, recorded, stored, accessed, and disseminated. Increasingly, documentation is originally produced on, or is being transferred to, new media, such as computer tape and optical and video disk. This affects archival procedures for processing and accessing the information, requiring archivists to learn skills that were not dreamed of a generation ago. Increasingly, archivists are being required to become acquainted with the uses, advantages, and limitations of the computer and other electronic techniques as tools in the management of archives and archival information.

Archives also take the form of oral histories (tape-recorded interviews) that are used to supplement the written word, or to fill gaps in source materials. Although the oral tradition has been used to advantage by historians since Herodotus and Thucydides in the fifth century B.C., it was not until the 1940s that "oral history" became a systematic archival form. For an oral history program to be successful, archivists must be aware of its benefits and shortcomings, and the financial and legal considerations, and be able to develop sound collection strategies and processing techniques.

Whatever the media, archives must be physically preserved if they are to serve any purpose. The vast amount of paper records and the newer recording and storage media present archivists with enormous preservation challenges and costs. Archivists must have the knowledge, skills, and resources to establish and maintain satisfactory environmental controls and proper storage conditions; to educate other archivists and the general public in preservation fundamentals and handling procedures; to preserve materials by conservation treatment where their retention in the original format is important; to repair damaged or deteriorated documents; and to preserve the information contained in deteriorated materials by reprographic means.

Archives have many enemies. Thus, archivists need to be aware of potential threats and dangers, and understand how to protect their archives from them. Archives must be protected from humans, who would steal them because of their intrinsic or monetary value, and from fire, flood, and other disasters. Archivists must appreciate the importance of archival security and safety, and know how to protect archives from human and non-human foes.

Because archives serve no purpose until they are used, archivists must provide a variety of reference services to facilitate the use of their holdings. Providing these services is no easy task, particularly now, when there is an increasing demand for information contained in archives. The difficulties are due to the growing volume of records and their complexity, and to the lack of resources to adequately arrange and describe them. Nevertheless, archivists must know their holdings and their relationship to the interests of researchers as well as the laws and regulations governing access. They must be diplomatic when dealing with the public, exercising good judgment, common sense, and tact.

Frequently in their careers, archivists will be faced with situations that will test their integrity. These usually arise in connection with collecting policies; with their relations with researchers and other archivists and institutions; and with their own use of their archives for personal research and publication. To deal intelligently and honorably with these situations, archivists must understand the ethics of their profession and deport themselves with a scrupulous regard for what is considered right by the various archival codes of conduct, such as the Society of American Archivists' 1980 Code.

Greater use and appreciation of archives by the public not only contributes to its general education, but usually ensures increased public support for archival endeavors. Thus, archivists must be able to impart to society the importance of the past, the significance and value of archives, and the need for archival institutions to be supported. They must be able to publicize the availability of their archives, to encourage their use, and to interpret archival work to the public and to parent organizations. To accomplish these tasks, archivists must participate in education, exhibition, publication, and other outreach programs, and take advantage of every opportunity to broaden the use of their holdings and enlist support for their programs.

All archivists, especially those in management positions, need to understand and apply the principles of sound management to their work, to provide for the smooth and efficient administration of the archival establishment. They must know how to set goals and establish priorities; how to use both human and non-human resources wisely and efficiently; how to recruit, motivate, train and supervise their staff; and how to develop resources and build support for their programs, both within the parent organization and among society at large. Archival managers, if they desire to have an efficient, effective, and productive institution and staff, need to manage (that is, control) events; to plan for the future; to evaluate their policies, procedures and practices, and measure their performance; and to provide an invigorating, challenging, and creative atmosphere.

Archival education, training, and professional development

What constitutes the best background education for archivists is a matter of debate. Because librarians and archivists share a common concern with the collection, storage, and preservation of information in a wide variety of

formats and also share the common goal of providing information through similar services, some have concluded that archivists should have a substantial background in library and information science. They maintain that modern technology makes it difficult to distinguish between published and unpublished documents. This, they maintain, blurs older distinctions between archives and libraries.

Because many archival tasks require judgment based upon a wide knowledge of history, and experience in historical methods, many archivists believe that a substantial knowledge of history and training in historical research should be the main prerequisite to becoming an archivist. Such a background, it is maintained, instills in archivists an appreciation of the value of archives as basic resources for research, and teaches them the research methodologies that are often used in appraising records in the light of their relation to history, in describing them in their historical context, and in providing a reference service based upon them so that their historical significance can intelligently serve researchers.

Those of the historian-trained school often argue that the methodological training given by librarians, which focuses attention on individual items, might lead to a mistaken application of the principles of librarianship to archival materials, or might lead archivists, trained by librarians, to be so engrossed with method as to lose sight of the scholarly aspects of archival work. Those of the librarian-trained school believe that archivists trained in history may not give adequate attention to the technological and methodological changes taking place in the information sciences, which can assist in gaining access to the information contained in archival materials.

Much can be said for both historical and library training. Perhaps a history background, supplemented by formal training in archives administration and librarianship, would produce the best prepared candidate for an archival career. But whatever the background education, it simply provides a foundation for becoming an archivist. Archivists, to be worthy of the name, need a firm understanding of the theories, principles, and practices of archives administration. Such understanding comes from informal and formal training; from participation in professional activities; from reading archives, records, and information management literature; and through learning from related disciplines.

Many archival tasks in appraisal, arrangement, description, and reference require a minimum of theoretical study and a maximum of practical consideration and exercise. On-the-job training is how most archivists learn their craft. But archivists should not rely only on such training. Before entering their job or soon thereafter, and certainly periodically, they should receive formal training in order to acquire a good working knowledge of the basic theoretical concepts and principles underlying the methodology of archives administration. Formal training will provide an appreciation of the archivist's role and functions, and reinforce the correct order of priorities among their duties.

The professional development of archivists should not end with formal and informal training. Rather, such training should be the foundation for professional development where archival skills and knowledge are strengthened by other experience. This professional development is acquired from a variety of sources. Archivists should join and participate in local, regional, national, and international archival organizations. Attending professional meetings and conferences is both an excellent means to become more knowledgeable about a particular subject and an opportunity to learn about new and different opinions and ideas. Archival and records management literature, if read regularly, provides the same opportunity. Keeping abreast of the literature and taking part in professional activities, while meeting daily commitments, is difficult. But such mental stimulation is needed, if archivists are to remain enthusiastic about their profession.

Taking the time to learn from other professions, particularly in the fields of economics, geography, sociology, and political science, not only allows archivists to become more knowledgeable about things that will help them in their work, but also allows them to better appreciate the aims, methods, and needs of related professions. Informed archivists are in a better position to call on specialists in other fields to help in appraisal and similar activities. In exchange, other professions come to know of archival roles and responsibilities, as well as the existence of archival sources that may be of interest to them.

If their second objective is to serve the needs of researchers, then archivists will be more successful if they are familiar with the problems faced by researchers. Possessing historical skills and some reputation for scholarship allows archivists to deal with researchers, including historians, not only as archivists, but also as fellow researchers, thereby reducing the credibility gap that can develop between scholars and archivists. This is particularly true with respect to appraisal, where archival judgments are frequently questioned by historians and others who, if left to their own devices, would prefer to retain almost every record ever created.

Just as contacts with academic disciplines are important, so too are those with the library and information sciences. Archivists can learn from the librarians's information retrieval systems, and from library network development and public outreach programs. By learning from and cooperating with librarians on the management and control of documentation, not only will archivists benefit, but their perspective may indeed enhance library practices as well. Archivists and librarians must work together if they are both to serve scholarship.

Conclusion

Today, just as five thousand years ago when archivists administered clay tablets, their effectiveness depends on their ability to identify, acquire, organize,

preserve, and administer records and information of enduring value. This is no easy task, for a variety of reasons, including the bulk and complexity of contemporary records and information.

To meet their ultimate goal of preserving and making available archives and the information they contain, archivists must first remember and understand their ultimate goal and keep in clear perspective the functions and purposes of their institutions. By keeping their eyes on their goal and objectives, they focus their energy on their mission and what needs to be done. Archivists must possess the knowledge and skills to manage their archives and repositories, develop strategies to cope with both the opportunities and problems created by the information revolution, and adapt to changes in the way information is created, stored, accessed, and used. Survival and continued service in the decades ahead will require commitment, efficiency, and imagination by archivists, and require them to make the most of their opportunities, industry, curiosity, common sense, and intelligence. Anything less will mean depriving themselves, their archives, and the public they serve.

Having read this introductory chapter, readers should be aware of the complexities involved in archives administration, and the knowledge and skills which archivists must possess in order to fulfil their ultimate goal of preserving archives and making them available. Readers also should be aware by now that archives are *not* dead files and that archivists are *not* dead file clerks. Furthermore, they should be able to answer the question of if anyone, including a "scholar", would want to be an archivist with a resounding affirmative.

Novice archivists or readers about to undertake an archival career should consider this chapter, as well as this book, as only part of the process of an archival education. Archivists, in order to fulfil their ultimate goal in an effective and efficient manner, must improve their knowledge and skills continually. The professional development of an archivist never ends; neither do the work and rewards.

Notes and references

1. Harry Shaw. *Dictionary of problème words and expressions*. New York, Washington Square Press, 1985. p. xxxv.
2. The communication process has traditionally relied upon the use of the "document", from the Latin "docere", to teach or show. A document is an instrument (piece of paper, book, map, etc.) for the communication of information, usually intended for immediate use for a contemporary purpose. Documents, in larger or smaller aggregates, make up "files", "records", "papers", "manuscripts", and "archives". The term "record", derived from the Latin "recordari" (to be mindful of, or to remember), is almost synonymous with "document", but has in addition the connotation of deliberate creation and deliberate preservation.
3. As a result of the United States Presidential Records Act of 1980, there is yet another term to cope with, "personal records". This term is used in describing strictly personal or political papers of the President of the United States.
4. "Manuscript" comes from the Latin "manu-scriptus", that which is written by

hand. The term has been used to distinguish writing by hand from printed matter. The term is now used to include typed manuscript (typescript) but not machine-duplicated (processed) material.

5. Cited in Michel Duchein. Archives in France: the new legislation of 1979. *Archivaria*, vol. 11, Winter 1980-81. p. 128.
6. It is interesting to note that in England, where the archival institution is called a record office, the record units are termed "archives groups", while in the United States, where the archival institution is called an archives, the record units are termed "record groups".

Introduction to archives - Free download as (.odp), PDF File (.pdf), Text File (.txt) or read online for free. Brief introduction to debian archives, releases and ports.Â Brief introduction to debian archives, releases and ports. Copyright: Attribution Non-Commercial (BY-NC). Download as ODP, PDF, TXT or read online from Scribd. Most archives hold some personal papers or records of other organizations. Even the National Archives of the United States is responsible for a small group of donated personal papers and nongovernment records. Similarly, many manuscript repositories serve as the archives of their own institutions. In recognition of this, the term "archives" gradually has acquired broader meaning for some archivists and is used by them in reference to any archival institution.Â A building in which an archival institution is located also is often referred to as an "archives." "Archives" is a collective noun.Return to text. 8. The Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art and the Dada Archive of the University of Iowa are both examples of this phenomenon.Return to text.