

UNIT 1

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Definition Meaning and Scope

Meaning:

Archives house non-current records/documents (all formats such as paper, sound recordings etc.) of an institution/organization/research scholar or even individual for preservation. The material preserved in the archives have a continuing value for future references. The materials collected for the archives are unique in nature. Archives are an outcome of a process and they are a body of functionally and organizationally related material that has grown originally out of some activity. Archives are maintained by the national governments, universities, cultural institutions, museums, hospitals etc., wherever it is important to preserve non-current records indefinitely. These records have greatest historical and great potential use to their creators and other researchers in documenting and understanding the past, dealing with the present, and preparing for the future.

Definition of Archives

According to the 1979 French definition of archives, records become archival as soon as they are created or received. American federal records become archival as soon as they are formally offered by a federal agency and the National Archives signs a document accepting legal responsibilities for them. Although archives are records, but not all records are archives. The records are selected for an archive because they have permanent value, either as evidence of transactions, or because of the information they contain about people, places, and things. The decision of selecting records for archives is taken by the archivists.

The term “archive” has been derived from the Greek word “ archeion”. Etymologically, “archeion” has its origin in the word “arch” which refers to the magisterial residence, then the public office where Government records are kept. Historical manuscripts, isolated letters of ancient rulers, copper plates, stone inscriptions, besides a host of other artifacts, are popularly known as archives. Archives are a greater or a lesser faction of records of an organization, institution or individual which are preserved for their enduring value whether they are current or non-current.

Archivist: A person who is responsible for managing the records of archives is known as an archivist. They maintain the archives of the parent entity, be it a government organization, institution, primarily for their administrative usefulness to their creator or successors. In some archives, the archivists serve as records managers, assisting the creators of records in archiving budget and efficiency in the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, therefore

reducing their quantity and increasing their quality of records. Archivists have an important role by preserving and making records available in the society, especially for those who are involve in various research oriented activities, disseminating information and new idea.

History of Archives Keeping

The record keeping practices, developed by the Sumerians, Hititis and Egyptians were inherited and improved by the Greeks and particularly Romans. With the collapse of Roman authority, the Catholic Church kept these practices alive. The technique of keeping archives was adopted and perfected in the National States Archives that developed in Western Europe. The advantage of concentrating the archives of individual officers in a centralised repository were first recognised by the Spanish in 1543 (examples: General Archives of Simancas, Spain and Archives of the Dynasty, Stale, and Court in Vienna, Austria, 1749). During the course of French Revolution, France created a National System of Public Archival Administration directed by the Central Service Agency. France established its National Archives (Archives Nationales) in Paris in 1789. Following the example of France, many European countries began to establish Archives. Accordingly, Netherlands in 1802, Great Britain in 1838, Italy in 1875 and Soviet Union (Russia) in 1918, Though the United States of America (USA) established its National Archives in 1934, it emerged as an important centre for importing and implementing new archival system by applying Science and Technology in Archives. The archives in African countries owe much to colonial rulers of the European countries like England and France.

The Asian Countries were not silent of the art of writing and archival institution. Many countries in Asia established their archives. For example: China in 1534, India in 1891, Sri Lanka in 1902, Pakistan in 1948, Iraq in 1963, Singapore in 1967, Iran in 1970 and Japan in 1971.

History of Archives in India

In India, the Portuguese claim the credit of first establishing the Archives. Tombo do Estado da India was started after the name of the principal Archives Office at Lisbon in Portugal namely Torre do Tombo de Lisba. King D. Filippe II appointed Diogo do Couto as the first Record Keeper in India. He was succeeded by many Record Keepers like Domingos de Castilho, Gasper Aires, Joao Vasco Casco, Gasper Souza de Lacerda, Alvaro Pinto Coutinho, Domingos de Barros, Bartolomeu Galvao, Antonio Bacarro, Francisco Moniz de Carvalho,

Antonio de Matos Sociro Jao de Moniz Antonio Alvares and Inacio Sebastiao de Silva till 1840. Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara who came to Goa as the Secretary of Governor General in 1855 thought of printing the documents on a large scale in the form of Arquivo Portuguez Oriental series. In 1930, the Governor General Joao Carlos Craveiro lopes gave a fresh lease of life to the deteriorating precious record holdings. The name of the archives was changed to Arquivo Geral e Historico da India Portuguesa with the initial collection of about 1500 volumes only of the Secretariat of the Government in 1937, it was renamed as Cartorio do Governor Geral do Estado da India. It was developed into a separate Directorate of Historical Archives in 1953 and was named as Arquivo Historico do Estado da India which continued till liberation of Goa after which it was known as Historical Archives of Goa.

Later the British established the Imperial Record Department at Calcutta in 1891. It was started as a result of the efforts of the Government of India to find an adequate and permanent solution to the problem of storage and preservation of their ever-increasing bulk of records. In 1889, the Government placed G.W. Forrest, on special duty to examine the records of the Foreign Department. He alerted Government to the necessity of establishing a record office and recommended that all the records relating to the administration of the East India Company should be placed in one Central Records Office. Then the question of establishing a Central Records Office was discussed in the Governor General in Council which also recognized the need for a record office. Accordingly, on 11th March 1891, the Government of India employed G.W. Forrest as officer-in-charge of the records of the Government of India for examining old records in each of the department. Eminent British personalities were in-charge of the Record Department. They are: George William Forrest 1891 - 1899. Samuel Charles Hilt 1899 - 1902, Charles - Robert Wilson 1902 - 1904, Norman Leslie Hallward 1904 - 1905, Edward Denison Ross 1906 - 1914. Alwyn Fober Schotfield 1914 - 1919 and Richard Henry Balkar 1919-1920.

The formation of the First Royal Commission of Public Records in 1910 by the British Government in England, was a milestone in history of Record Management in England as well as in India. The British issued a number of instructions to the Indian Archives pertaining to methods of preservation and publication of records. The transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911 was an important event in the annals of the National Archives. As the collective memory and administrative tool of the Government, the records had to follow the transfer. Accordingly the Government constructed the present building in 1926 and transferred the records. This also paved the way for the formation of the Indian Historical Records Commission in 1919.

For the first time in 1920, an Indian was appointed as the Keeper of the Records. The following are the Indian Keeper of the records appointed by the British Rulers, They are: Jamini Mohan Mitra, 1920, 1922; Abul Fiaz Muhammed Abdul Ali 1922 – 1938; Dr. Surendranath Sen then onwards.

The Indian Historical Records Commission was urging both National and State Archives to encourage research by permitting bona fide research scholars to refer archival records and which was conceded to in 1939.

With the declaration of Independence for India on 15th August 1947, resulted in the renaming of Imperial Record Department as the National Archives of India. Since 1947, changed policy and plan of the National Archives were effected in all the administrative matters of the archives, the functions of the archives like collection, preservation, training and publication of the records received new sponsorship at the hands of the Indian Government. In 1953, the Committee of Archivists of India was constituted. The archival legislation has been enacted in India entitled Public Record Act, 1993. This legislation offers the National and State archives an active role in record management, records appraisal, record transfer and preservation