

Unit 2

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Types of Records | 2 |
| Functions of Archives | 2 |
| Organization of Archives | 5 |
| Preservation of Archival Materials | 5 |

Types of Records

One can broadly classify the Archives as

- Public Archives
- Semi-public Archives and
- Private Archives

Public Archives

The Public Archives are otherwise known as Government Archives. The Records produced by the Government are preserved in the place for posterity and the public. In the public record office, the records produced in original by various departments of the Government are preserved according to the Archival value of the records.

Semi-public Records

The Semi-Governmental Organization like, Corporations, Universities, Autonomous Bodies and other Government undertakings produce records in their day-to-day business activities. The place in which, these records are preserved is known as semi Government Archives.

Private Archives

The records produced by the private Organization like Business Firms, Temples, Churches, Mosques are preserved for their own use. These records are known as private records and the place of preservation is called Private Archives. The Parish Register for the entering of Weddings, Christenings and Burials came into existence without any note of the preliminaries as the result of Cromwell's injunctions in 1538.

Functions of Archives

Acquisition Policy

Archives collects non-current records of an organization/institution/research scholar or individual etc. There the types of material collected in the archives. These vary from Governments records, folklore materials, history of people, manuscripts etc., as per the archival requirement. Acquisition is pivotal. Following are the certain acquisition policy defining the types of records that archives seek to add to their holdings.

- a) Policies of institutional archives usually attempt to ensure adequate and complete documentation of the institution, its functions, and its activities. Therefore, the policy identifies priority subjects for acquisition and the types of materials most likely to provide important information about the institution.
- b) Specify the administrative units that are most likely to create essential documentation.
- c) Defining categories of personal and family papers and other non-institutional collections.
- d) Defining acquisitions in relationship to the holdings of other archival material. Many similar institutions are concerned with documentation of similar subjects and serve the needs of the same researchers. Because duplicate documentation is of little value to these scholars and absorbs valuable archival resources.
- e) Institution can cooperatively choose areas of specialization or may agree that records or papers should be placed in institutions already holding relevant related documentation.

Appraisal

The decision by an archive or organization is to take a collection to preserve and process its own archival records. It involves a significant commitment of time, money, and space, because, no one can afford to keep everything and anything. That is why, the incoming material considered must be appraised to determine, firstly, whether the collection as a whole is worth keeping, and second, which items within it are permanently valuable. The preference of decision for preserving collections depends upon the current historical and cultural values, and the intellectual and conceptual frameworks of those conducting the appraisal.

Documentation

An essential bridge between the collectors and the archives is documentation. It is the written document which accompanies with the acquired materials. For a systematic documentation every piece of note has great value as the context is not self-evident. The documentation process includes the identification of items, storage location, retrieval, presentation and circulation for the information of users. For example, in a sound archive, the archivists have very little knowledge of being responsible for the preservation of recordings for the future user without knowing who they will be and what they may need to know.

Therefore, all details of the recording including the answers to the basic questions “why, what, where, when, by whom, for whom” etc., should be documented as an archival holding.

Preservation

Preservation is one of the major process of archiving, the process of preservation takes place after a systematic, well-documented collection has been made with its contents. The goal of preservation is to assure that records in archival custody survive for an indefinite period of time, in some cases are legally necessary. This can be most easily achieved when the goals and basic principles of preservation are understood by all staffs involved with the records. It is a joint responsibility of a number of professional staffs for the preservation of archives, each of whom brings unique knowledge to bear on the complex problem of preserving archival records. Archival materials are diverse, they are composite objects, generally comprising of a variety of papers, inks (from carbon ink to laser printing), animal skins and its products, textiles, photographs and photographic material, audio-visual materials (wax cylinders, shellac and vinyl disc and optical materials: CD and DVD), magnetic materials (tape, hard discs and floppy discs) etc. These materials are composed of diverse materials, most often respond somewhat differently to changing environmental conditions, hence they may vary in their preservation processes. Some of the most serious dangers are insects, dust, heat and humidity, which can be prevented with climate control. The core aspects of preservation are the physical preservation of archival building, air-conditioning system, ventilating and dehumidifier. Preservation apparently makes an attempt to maintain materials in a sound physical and chemical condition.

Using Archives

Archival collection exists to be used, but the understanding of its appropriate use varies from institutions to institution in line with their missions. Usually all archives provide information of their collection in published forms like newsletters, ephemera or brochures etc. Now-a-days in many countries information is provided through the Internet. Therefore, archivists require to guide the user how to care and handle the archival records, especially for paper records which are prone to perishing if handled recklessly. Most often in sound archives, duplicate copies are made, so the original recordings remain safe and intact. Most of the sound archives provide copies of recording to the user for research activity on request.

Organization of Archives

Archives are divided into five main categories according to organization they cater:

- a) **Academic archives:** archives created to preserve these archives are found in colleges, universities or any other academic institution.
- b) **Business archives:** archives located in institutions, which are owned by a private business house. The corporate archives maintain historic documents and items related to the history of their companies. Example: World of Coca-Cola, Levi Strauss & Co, Motorola Heritage Services and Archives.
- c) **Government archives:** these archives include those institutions run on a local and state level as well as those by the central government.
- d) **Non-profit archives:** these archives include archives for non-profit businesses such as hospitals and the repositories with the foundations. Non-profit archives are usually set up with private funds from donors to preserve the papers and history of specific persons or places.
- e) **Special archives:** these archives include tribal archives, folklore archives, archives within museums and archives that exist the papers of private individuals.

Preservation of Archival Materials

Archives are the place where the non-current records (the term records refers to any written and reference material, regardless of format) of an organization, institutions/individual or research scholar that has been selected for preservation because they have continuing value. They are important also from the view point of research. Archival materials are kept because the materials themselves are unique and important as a type of material. The archives 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, social organization, Museums, Hospital etc., wherever it is important to preserve non-current records indefinitely. These records have greatest historical and fullest potential and use to their creators and other researcher in documenting and understanding the past, dealing with the present, and preparing for the future. Following are few preservation policies followed by the archives:

acquisition of material,

determining the material in terms of worth keeping their value against the costs in time, space and money

a proper storage for archival materials

plan for preservation such as documentation, cataloguing, accessioning

climate control, fire protection and security of materials from theft

The overall duty of the archivist (individual who is responsible for managing archival records), librarian (person responsible for managing the library) and curator (keeper or custodian of a museum) is to ensure that all the items/objects of their collections are maintained in an appropriate condition for use. Therefore, it is essential and a must for all three to formulate a policy of their own in respect of preservation of their valuable collections to fulfill the aims and objective their founding organization. They should thus ensure best possible storage for keeping the materials, use of the material, displaying the materials, care and maintenance of the equipments.

Some of the most importance aspects of conservation and preservation are financial resources, accommodation and climate. For these, a good planning is very much necessary to continue the task of preservation in a smooth space. Last but not the least is the concern of the staff and co-ordination of their work, to ensure and promote best use of their respective institutions/organization to the user and ensure its optimum usage.