

<b>Course Name</b>	<b>: Business archives and records Management</b>
<b>Course Code</b>	<b>: APBBS 603</b>
<b>Course Level</b>	<b>: Level 6</b>
<b>Credit Units</b>	<b>: 4 CU</b>
<b>Contact Hours</b>	<b>: 60 Hrs</b>

### **Course description**

Archives and Records Management has become one of the most exciting careers in today's digital world. Long Island University's Palmer School of Library and Information Science offers an online advanced certificate that will prepare you to preserve, manage and provide access to both temporary and permanent records of corporations, libraries, universities and non-profit organizations. The course also explores the development of the Internet and its current potential impact on social, economic, political and cultural structures.

### **Course Objectives/ Learning out comes**

- This course will provide an introduction to building and maintaining collections and services related to visual media, primarily moving image, sound and ephemera. Discussion will survey key components
- Explores the principles of archival description as expressed in *Describing Archives*
- Examines the characteristics, criteria, and appraisal of book materials.
- The course examines the evolution of several technologies, such as writing, the printing press, film, digitization, and their social and cultural context.
- Explores the applicability of appraisal theory to records on media other than print.

### **Course Content**

#### **Records Management Fundamentals**

- Introduction to the systematic management of business records.
- inventorying records,
- preparation of retention schedules,
- space management for inactive records,
- micrographics, protection of vital records,
- File organization concepts.

#### **Archives and Manuscripts**

- Identification, preservation, and use of archival materials.
- Emphasis on the organization and administration of archival collections and departments of archives in various types of institutions.

#### **Film and Media Collections**

- The history of film and media in library collections,
- collection development, access, equipment,
- copyright, emerging technologies

- management of non-print formats.

### **Introduction to Preservation**

- An introduction to the principles and practices of library and archives preservation.
- Current preservation methods, national, regional, and local preservation efforts,
- the history of preservation,
- disaster planning and recovery

### **Principles and Practices in Archival Description:**

- *Standard.* Implementation of those principles through Encoded Archival Description (EAD)
- MARC structures will form the largest portion of the semester.
- authority and subject analysis work.
- related standards,
- the history and development of archival description,
- the uses of description, and description for special formats.

### **Digital Preservation**

- An introduction to the theoretical and practical aspects of the preservation of digital records.
- practical considerations in implementing a digital preservation program.

### **Rare Books and Special Collections Librarianship**

- Historical background, principles, and practice of rare book librarianship.
- The organization, administration,
- collection building, maintenance,
- preservation,
- exhibition,
- publication,
- special problems,
- use of rare books in all settings.

### **Appraisal of Archives and Manuscripts**

- classic archival appraisal theory and recent refinements,
- documentation strategies.
- Relates appraisal to the mission, goals, and objectives of an archival institution.

### **Electronic Records**

- In-depth examination of electronic records management implications and applications.
- document imaging systems,
- document management systems,
- inventorying and retention of electronic records,
- preservation of electronic records,
- protection of vital electronic records.

## Metadata: Description and Access

- Application of standards and rules to the construction of tools for information retrieval,
- primarily web resources and catalogs in library and information environments.
- Overview of concepts of knowledge organization and of meta-data applications.
- Special problems in the organization of resources (archival and library materials in various forms, internet resources).
- metadata formats, descriptive detail for different forms of material;
- choice and form of entry for names and uniform titles; provision of authority control for names and titles.

**Mode of delivery :** The course consists of lectures, discussion and hands-on exercises, culminating in an EAD and DACS-based analysis of existing finding aids.

### Assessment

- **Coursework** 40%
- **Exams** 60%
- **Total Mark** 100%

## Fundamentals of information and records management

### What are records?

Records are documents in every format created and received by individuals or organisations in the course of conduct of affairs and accumulated as evidence of these activities.

Definitions of records have been constantly challenged in recent years by the emergence of new records formats and media. Change is principally the result of technological advance. Traditional records formats such as letters, minutes, memoranda and reports are being matched and outstripped in volume by spreadsheets, databases, e-mails and facsimiles. In some ways, what technology has done is to re-define traditional records formats. Really, e-mail is very similar to a letter. It is the fact that it is transmitted electronically that differentiates e-mail from letters. Now, definitions of records tend to be as non-prescriptive and all-inclusive as possible, cognisant of the fact that it is impossible to be future-proof. The FOI Act defines records as including:

- any memorandum, book, map, plan, drawing, diagram, pictorial or graphic work or other document, any photograph, film or recording (whether of sound or images or both), and form in which data (within the meaning of the Data Protection Act, 1988) are held, any other form (including machine-readable form) or thing in which information is held or stored manually, mechanically or electronically and anything that is

part or a copy, in any form, of any of the foregoing or is a combination or two or more of the foregoing.'

Most outputs of work are records. Technology has spawned a new generation of records formats and media and all of those who administer records should recognise that each is as significant as the next. Thus, aural records media such as voicemail and Dictaphone tapes, and visual records such as scanned images and photographs, merit the same level of protection traditionally afforded to written records. The FOI Act permits access to many classes of University records. Staff members should be aware that where they exist, records in diverse formats are accessible. Thus, a Dictaphone tape containing instructions for a letter is as accessible as the resulting letter.

### **What is information and records management?**

Information and records management may be defined as the application of systematic policies and procedures governing the creation, distribution, maintenance, management, use and ultimate retention or disposal of records to achieve effective, economical, accountable, transparent and efficient administration.

In short, the ultimate objective of an information and records management system is to manage, in the widest sense of the word, all aspects of the administration of records.

### **An information and records management requirement**

Information and records management is a discrete professional area. As a concept its modern roots lie in the United States of America of the 1940s where there was an explosion of records as a result of the administration of affairs relative to the Second World War, and the welfare state that emerged in the aftermath of the war. Archivists and records managers began to introduce strategies to control the administration of records. The applicability of information and records management has continued, and the requirement for rational and documented systems has grown more acute as records proliferation goes on unabated. Furthermore, it is essential that measures are in place to govern the administration of electronic records. Electronic records are those which require a machine to be accessed, for example, video, cassette tape or computer database. These are more problematic than traditional records media as this is the first generation to rely *heavily* on them. Best practice is continuing to evolve as records managers and archivists in different countries attempt to arrive at formulae for their best protection. This process is complicated by the fact that records managers and archivists are contending with constantly moving goalposts due to technological advance.

There is a poor tradition of information and records management in Ireland, perhaps predicated on the fact that there was no indigenous or comprehensive central government in the country until well into the twentieth century. Government is, after all, the primary and most influential organisation in any country. Information and records management has really only come to the fore

in this country since the introduction of the FOI Act and the challenges it poses for organisations relative to records

More indirect and less hastily responded to motivations for the introduction of information and records management systems are the other benefits they can confer. However, these benefits should not be undermined as the implementation of good information and records management systems can exponentially enhance the transaction of business. Information and records management should never be relegated as an administrative function. Rather it is a major business process and organisational scheme that supports other major business objectives.

Moreover, the current political climate is one that demands transparency and accountability from public bodies.

- **Accountability** - refers to the ability to justify actions.
- **Transparency** - implies that business activities should be transacted in a manner that is open to scrutiny.

Principally, records should exist for all major business activities, and where relevant, they should be disposed of in a timely manner. Adherence to information and records management policies, guidelines, procedures and standards should help to ensure that organisations comply with the expectations placed on it. Such expectations include legislative, regulatory and audit requirements, and community expectations. It is essential that staff members recognise the significance of this aspect of information and records management. It is important to be above reproach in business dealings. The prudent management of records should provide proof of equitable business activity.

Society demands accountability and transparency and this requirement is sharpened by the possibility of investigation into the activities of the University, and other public bodies. Under the FOI Act and the Irish Universities Act, subject to the fulfilment of certain terms, relevant officials may enter the premises of the University, interview staff members and seize records. The results of such investigations may enter the public domain.

### **What are the benefits of records management?**

Information and records management systems support and guide all aspects of the administration of records. Such control of records confers several benefits:

- **Efficiency** -
  - records are better organised and located, and retrieved more quickly, thus facilitating ease of reference, eradicating staff frustration and increasing productivity.
  - policies govern all aspects of the management of records, thus negating the necessity of staff members having to make difficult decisions.

- **Consistency** - the existence of documented policies means that staff members execute actions relative to records in a consistent manner.
- **Good-decision making** - because staff members have ready access to all necessary records, they are able to make decisions with reference to precedent, context and eventualities.
- **Economy** -
  - Information and records management systems are formulated with reference to using all resources (people, money, space, equipment and supplies etc.) as economically as possible.
  - policies ensure the creation and retention of records where they are necessary to document and support business activities. This ensures both that records are not created needlessly and continue to survive where they are necessary. The latter element means that the organisation does not have to pay for the re-creation of records.
- **Legal protection** -
  - where stringent control is exercised over records, the University protects its own interests and those of stakeholders, whether they are students, employees, the wider community or individuals and organisations associated with the University.
  - careful policies facilitate compliance with applicable legislation and regulations.
  - unnecessary retention of records is obliterated. This is beneficial as considerable resources must be devoted to administering records requested under the FOI Act. Furthermore, prolonged retention of records may be legally damaging.
- **Enhanced image** - improved efficiency and management enhances the image of the organisation for all stakeholders, not least employees whose work proceeds in a more orderly manner.
- **Ensures preservation of important records** -
  - archives are those records which are demonstrated to possess continuing value. While not of everyday use for operational purposes, archives contribute significantly to the construction of collective memory and cultural heritage. Information and records management policies are cognisant of the long-term needs of archives, most significantly from the perspectives of accessibility and preservation.
  - vital records are those which are necessary for the legal and financial protection of the University and its stakeholders. Disaster planning and recovery planning puts in place measures to safeguard the well-being of such records.

- **Continuity -**

- good records facilitate continuity on occasions when staff members leave the employment of the organisation. In the absence of records, staff members take their knowledge with them when they leave.
- moreover, memories fade with time. The rationale behind records creation and retention is that staff members are not forced to try to remember the specifics of long past business transactions.

Information and records management is often vaguely associated with filing. It is recognised that it represents an unglamorous and time-consuming activity. Because of this, many organisations are guilty of delaying the implementation of tactics to control records. Moreover, there is an air of the invisible to records: for the most part, problems are evident only to those staff members who work closely with them, and the depth and seriousness of shortcomings is often concealed, even from management level staff members who may participate in the management of records in a limited way.

However, organisations only achieve seamless standards of work when there are comprehensive information and records management systems in place. Information and records management systems are often considered luxury items to be installed only when more urgent work has been completed. To delay implementation until other work has been completed would be to never put information and records management systems in place.

### **Objectives of information and records management**

The University is a public organisation and receives a substantial proportion of its funding from public monies. Given this, fulfilment of the principles of accountability and transparency is particularly important.

It is evident that records provide key evidence of the activities and functions of organisations. In order that the achievement of accountability and transparency is feasible, information and records management, and more specifically, record-keeping, should satisfy the following criteria:

- **Comprehensive** - document the complete range of the functions, activities and transactions carried out by the organisation.
- **Complete** - present adequate information about all business activities.
- **Compliant** - adhere to record-keeping requirements based on the regulatory and legislative environment in which the organisation operates, and comply with internal policies on record-keeping.
- **Accurate** - reflect in an accurate manner those business activities that are documented.
- **Authentic** - enable the provision of proof that they are what they purport to be.

- **Inviolable** - securely maintained to prevent unauthorised or accidental access, alteration, damage or removal.

### **Characteristics of records**

Records have specific characteristics that set them apart from other types of information (published or non-record). Records must be:

- **Organic** - records are a natural output of business. For the most part, records are created as a matter of course. For example, an incoming letter or e-mail usually engenders a response. A discrepancy is business that is transacted verbally during meetings or telephone calls. Strategies must be put in place to ensure the creation of records in this area.
- **Fixed** - records are presented in a static format. The act of recording 'sets' the information on a medium, for example, a letter is written on paper or instructions for a letter are captured on a Dictaphone tape. This indicates that records must not be altered after creation.
- **Contextual** - records are created and received with reference to business activities. Therefore, there must be a direct and identifiable link between records and business. Moreover, related papers should be kept together, for instance, in files.
- **Official** - records are created and received to support business activities and have an official status. The converse is records that are personal and have no connection with work-related matters.
- **Unique** - any group of records, with its interrelationships, and related as it is to specific business processes, is unique. This indicates that it is unlikely that two business transactions will result in the production of the same interconnected records.

### **Components of records**

The interaction of three components is necessary to comprise a record. If any of these components is missing, it is not a *record* that is present, but mere *information*. These components are:

- **Content** - this refers to the body of the record, that is, the information or text it contains.
- **Structure** - this refers to the layout and appearance of the record. This may be visible, for example, the standardised layout of a formal letter on a piece of paper. In the case of electronic records, the structure may be 'virtual,' that is, dispersed on a computer hard drive and only formed into an identifiable record when a file is opened.
- **Context** - records derive their meaning from their relationships with each other and business transactions. Thus, to understand a given issue users should have access to all other relevant records. This is the



primary rationale for keeping files, that is, placing related records in physical proximity to each other.

For instance, if a business letter was to be considered a record it should:

- Contain information or subject matter that allows it to be set apart and distinguished from other documents and,
- Have the appearance associated with a letter format, for example, date of creation, sender name and address, recipient name and address, salutation, subject line, signature etc and,
- It should be directly connected to a business activity.

### **The concept of evidence**

Evidence is defined as information that tends to prove a fact. The concept of evidence is significant and closely related to context. Moreover, in terms of information and records management, evidence is not limited to the legal sense of the term.

To return to the idea that evidence tends to prove a fact: this suggests that to fulfil an evidential requirement, records must prove that a business transaction occurred, as well as when, how, where and why it occurred, and who was involved.

The overwhelming consequence of this is that records must be created and managed in a manner that achieves these criteria. The product of this requirement is record-keeping systems. Record-keeping is the activity of making and maintaining records and reliable evidence of business transactions.

### **Records capture**

Records capture refers to the process of ensuring that records are created, captured and registered in a record-keeping system.

In the first instance, organisations must strive to create records that document all business activities in an adequate manner. They may then be captured in a record-keeping system. As enumerated above this is essential for fulfilment of the principles of accountability and transparency. Incomplete records capture is problematic as it may be construed that the organisation is striving to cover up illegitimate business activity. Notwithstanding this, various factors have militated against the achievement of complete records capture:

- Because of a desire to increase productivity and diminish bureaucracy, some employees may not take the time to create and capture complete and accurate records in a record-keeping system. The rationale behind retaining records is that individuals should not have to rely on their memories and that decisions can be taken with reference to all pertinent information. For these reasons, employees should seek to retain records that merit capture in a record-keeping system.

- Some business transactions do not, in themselves, result in the creation of records. If there is to be evidence of such transactions, deliberate strategies for their creation must be invoked. An important instance of this is verbal exchange of information. Therefore, meetings must be minuted, and records kept of major business transactions completed during telephone and conference calls. (Incidentally, records stored on voicemail systems and Dictaphone tapes are usually subsumed into and superseded by other records). It is the express responsibility of individual staff members involved in the transaction of business to create records. It is always evident where incomplete records capture occurs. Obvious manifestations on paper files are references in documents to earlier records which are not present, or allusions to meetings of which there is no record.

### **What records must be captured?**

The observations made above necessitate comment on what records should be created and captured in a record-keeping system. Especial attention is drawn to records creation where business activities do not naturally result in the creation of records. Records should be created and captured in a record-keeping system where they:

- Constitute formal communications between staff members of an office or the wider University, and external organisations or individuals.
- Relate to changes in policy.
- Constitute precedent.
- Contain recommendations or advice in relation to a significant business activity.
- Support programmes or business functions transacted by an office.
- Authorise actions.

A file classification scheme outlines the major business functions and subject areas in which an office generates and administers records. Staff members should ensure that records are created to document these areas, and enter the record-keeping system. Moreover, the advice tendered in Part 11 of this manual, Records Disposition, should be consulted. It details which records need not be captured in a record-keeping system. For example, personal records or those which are only of ephemeral or facilitative importance need not be captured.

Specific strategies have been drawn up for the creation and capture of records that result from verbal transaction of business. These measures should be carefully implemented.

## **What is the records life-cycle?**

The records life-cycle is a model describing the various stages through which records pass during their existence. A parallel would be the stages of youth, middle age and old age that compose the human condition. Similarly, the records life-cycle comprises three stages, during which time records are defined according to their use by administration:

- **Active** - period when records are of immediate administrative, legal and fiscal value. They are used on a frequent basis and to permit easy access are located in office accommodation. Usually, records are active for a period no longer than two years after creation.
- **Semi-active** - time at which records have ongoing value but are not referred to on an everyday basis. Financial records, for example, may have to be retained for a set period for audit requirements. For the sake of economy, and to create space for more significant records, semi-active records are often stored in a records centre or other intermediate storage.
- **Inactive** - by this time, records are of no further use. They may be destroyed or should they have continuing value be retained as archives on a permanent basis. The archival phase is distinct from the life-cycle model.

In general, discrete units of the University are responsible for their records during the active and semi-active phases of the life-cycle. Responsibility for archives is vested in the University Archives.

## **Centralized control of records**

At present, many organisations are in the process of introducing information and records management systems. Charting the history of information and records management is worthwhile in order to understand how this development has come about. In the past, administration tended to the use of registries. Commonly, a registry denoted the administrative unit of an organisation responsible for matters relative to the creation, dissemination, control, maintenance and disposition of records, that is, many of the functions associated with information and records management today. The registry system was extremely effective. Success was based on consistency of action, pragmatic, documented and careful procedures, and that one well-defined group of employees was accountable and responsible for records.

At present, information and records management systems are being implemented in order to introduce control over records at a level higher than the individual employee. Current thinking has it that in terms of large organisations, such as universities, the most appropriate manner in which to administer records is local or dispersed management. This implies that information and records management systems should be operational at the level of office or department, with colleagues working together under the aegis of a centralised system. At a higher level, policy should outline general precepts

and principles to be uniformly adhered to across the organisation. Thus, while specific information and records management systems are tailored to meet the requirements of discrete units, all is informed and underpinned by common policy. In the context of the University, with the introduction of a University Records Management Policy, this approach is beginning to emerge and it is expected that it will continue to evolve.

It is contended here that the centralising tendencies of a registry system, working hand in hand with technology, can be adapted to a modern work environment and be an extremely efficient way to manage records. It is suggested that responsibility for most tasks and activities associated with the management of records be vested in a core group of employees who will support others in their interaction with records. The formation of an information and records management community in this manner fosters the creation of a consistent office-level approach to records, and a support system for staff. The creation of a support system for staff member is an urgent requirement. It is recognised that many may be unfamiliar with what information and records management entails.

## **What are archives?**

Archives are collections of documents or 'records' which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or other research. Records are created by the activities of organisations and people; they serve an active purpose whilst in current use and some of them are later selected and preserved as part of an archival collection.

Archive collections are usually unique, which is why it is so important to take proper care of them. They need to be carefully stored and managed to protect and preserve them for current and future use.

Sometimes these collections are kept in specialist collecting institutions, which are also called 'archives'. Examples of these include national and local archives and record offices. Archives are also kept by other institutions, including museums and libraries. Sometimes archival collections are kept in other locations such as religious organisations, universities, schools, businesses, charities, arts organisations and community groups that often hold their own institutional records.

## **Why are archives important?**

Archives have value to nations and regions, organisations, communities, and individual people. They provide evidence of activities which occurred in the past, they tell stories, document people and identity and are valuable sources of information for research. They are our recorded memory and form an important part of our community, cultural, official and unofficial history.

## **Major risks**

Risk cannot be avoided completely and even if you are well-prepared, events happen which can damage buildings and the archives stored in them. However, much can be done to manage these risks.

The first thing to do is think of the things that can go wrong; then look at what steps you can take to prevent things going wrong; then plan what to do if despite your efforts things do go wrong and there is an incident of some sort. The major risks are fire, flood, theft and unauthorised access. Guidance on these is given at below. An important tool to safeguard archival collections is a disaster management plan and guidance on this is given at below.

## **Fire prevention**

Fire prevention is the first line of defence in preventing destruction or irreversible damage to archives. Areas where archives are stored should be solidly built and must avoid the risk of fire. Storerooms should be assessed for risks from fire and suitable counter measures put in place. This includes fire-resistant doors, walls, ceilings, floors and windows. All of this is supported by the fire-prevention measures needed for any place of work or public building.

### **What you can do**

- Never use open fires, stoves, gas, radiant electric or paraffin heaters in an archive building.
- The storage area should have fire-resistant doors, walls, ceilings, floors and windows.
- Most offices have twenty-minute fire resistant doors. Archives need more protection than this. The ideal would be four-hour fire resistant doors.
- Electric wiring circuits should be routed through metal conduits (tracking which holds the wires clear of other materials.)
- Master switches for electrical circuits should be outside the storage area.
- Smoke detectors should be fitted inside and outside the storage area.
- Smoke detectors should link to the building's main alarm system and where possible, the Fire Service.

## **Flood**

Water will cause major damage to archives. Flooding can be caused by water coming into the building from outside or by water leaking from tanks or pipe work inside the building.

### **What you can do**

- If the building is in an area known to be at risk of flooding, archives should be stored on the first floor or above. Ideally, they should be relocated to another building less at risk.
- Shelving should be raised off the ground to avoid damage from minor flooding or leaks.
- Roofing, guttering and drains for rainwater should be in good condition and regularly checked and maintained to prevent water entering the building.
- Water tanks and pipe work inside the building should be in good condition and regularly checked and maintained to prevent leaks.
- Pipe work should not run through storage areas. This includes all plumbing and central heating water pipes.
- Storage areas should not be directly below water tanks, boilers or pipe work.

Basement storage should be avoided. Where used, it needs special attention to prevent flooding. If possible, it should not be near to storm drains or sewage pipes.

### **Theft or unauthorised access**

Protecting archives from theft, deliberate damage or disorder ensures that they remain complete, intact and usable. Storage rooms, areas and cupboards must be lockable. Only the people responsible for caring for the archives should access these areas.

Archives and current records need to be protected from unauthorised access. This means that people who should not have access to the records and the information they contain should be prevented from gaining access. Secure storage applies to all types of records: paper and parchment; digital records; video and sound recordings and any copies made of them. Protecting archives and records in this way is sometimes called ‘information security’.

### **What you can do**

- Storage must be lockable and kept locked when not in use.
- Access to the storage area must be controlled and monitored.
- If storage areas have to be shared, archives should be clearly separated and only handled by people responsible for their care.
- No item should be moved or removed without the permission of those people responsible for their care.
- If an item is moved or removed, a note must be left with details of where it is and who has it.
- A register of withdrawals and returns should be kept.
- A separate area for viewing and using the archives should be set aside if possible.
- All areas should be monitored when in use.

### **Disaster planning**

The impact of risks can be reduced by disaster management planning, for example arrangements for salvaging the archive if a major incident such as a flood, a fire or a break-in happens. Taking action as soon as possible is essential to reduce damage caused by such incidents. If items have been stolen, prompt action may help recover them.

## **What can you do**

Detailed guidance on disaster planning and management is available which will help you to consider likely outcomes and to develop your own contingency preparations:

- Contact the Sales Monitoring team at The National Archives to provide details of stolen archives.

## **Taking control**

### **Provenance and original order**

Archivists apply the 2 principles of 'provenance' and original order' when managing their collections. These principles should be the foundations for all the activities you carry out on your archives. You need to understand how and where your archives were created and how they are ordered before you take steps to improve how they are kept and cared for.

### **Provenance**

Provenance means the history of ownership related to a group of records or an individual item in a collection. For archives, this means the creators and any subsequent owners of the records and how the records relate to each other. Preserving information on these relationships is essential as they provide evidence of how and who created and used the records before they became part of the archives. Provenance provides essential contextual information for understanding the content and history of an archival collection.

### **Original order**

Archives are kept in the order in which they were originally created or used.<sup>4</sup> It is essential to understand this when working with archives so that this original order is preserved. This original order allows custodians to protect the authenticity of the records and provides essential information as to how they were created, kept and used. Sometimes this original order has been lost through poor handling or 're-sorting'

Unlike books, archival records are not understood on their own as individual items. Their meaning comes from their relationships with other records and the people or organisations that created and used them. When archives are listed or 'catalogued', as described at 1.2 below, the aim is to describe and preserve these relationships.

### **Listing and cataloguing**

Detailed cataloguing is a worthwhile though time consuming process. Many established archives have backlogs of material waiting to be catalogued, so you are not alone if you do too. If you do not have time or resources to catalogue everything in detail now, you should set time aside to make a quick box, file, volume or item list if you do not already have one.

- This gives you an overview of the contents of the collection.



- It allows you to make a quick assessment of any major issues with the condition of the material or any special storage needed because of its format (e.g. photographs, textiles, audio-visual or digital material).
- It allows you to identify material that might be particularly significant for research and it enables you to spot any material that might need special access restrictions.
- When material is listed, it allows you to take physical and intellectual control of it – it is like stock control in a shop.
- And when you provide access, it safeguards material, as you know what you have and what you are making available to researchers.

### **Improving storage**

Archives need to be stored in conditions which are cool, dry and seasonally stable, with minimum exposure to natural or artificial light and protection from pests, pollution and access by unauthorised people. Making a quick assessment based on the *'how to'* guidance below will allow you to identify any immediate needs or risks and to plan how to tackle them.

The archive storage area should be maintained and used only as a store. This will help to maintain security, environmental stability and light levels.

Any archive store should allow for expansion space for additions to the collection. It also needs extra space to allow for repackaging, which can mean that the collections take up more space than they did before.

### **Storage-rooms**

- Look at your storage area – is it clean, dry and secure? It should be.
- Always clean without chemicals or water, using a vacuum cleaner where possible.
- Vacuum cleaners should have good filters to avoid spreading more dust around your storage area. 'HEPA' filters are even better as they catch a larger amount of very small particles, leaving the area cleaner.
- Are the doors (and windows) lockable and secure? They must be to prevent uncontrolled access, damage, disorder or theft.

Are the doors (and windows) lockable and secure? They must be to prevent uncontrolled access, damage, disorder or theft.

- Are repairs to the storage area needed? Check the ceilings, corners, walls – are they clean and sound; is there evidence of damp, cracks, damage or deterioration?
- When repairs are being made, store the archives in another secure place. Chemicals in paint and

other decorating materials can affect archival materials as they release gases. Avoid oil based paints. Take care to minimise dust and debris while rooms are refurbished.

- The archive store should include a strong, load bearing floor to take the weight of the archival collections, the packaging and shelving.

## **Supporting safe access**

### **2.5.1 Personal and confidential information**

Not all archives are suitable for immediate access. If they contain personal information about living people or information that is confidential for some other reason, you may need to restrict access to them. If in doubt, it is better not to make the restricted or confidential material available to others until you have had a chance to consider it further and consult the relevant people and legislation. Guidance is available online on handling personal information covered by the Data Protection Act;

### **Providing access**

Handling and access is a major risk to the safety of documents. Always supervise people who view your archives, even in a private collection, and provide guidance on basic document handling. You should also restrict the types of items researchers can take into your reading room or library area if you have one. Anyone who uses your archives must handle them carefully.

Examples of 'reading room rules' can be found online which may help you. The National Archives' welcome leaflet has a simple list of what can and cannot be taken into reading room areas:

### **Safe Access - Handling**

- Don't take risks
- Handle archives as little as possible
- Ensure hands are clean and dry
- Examine archives for signs of damage before making them available
- Use only pencil for taking notes
- Never use adhesive stickers to mark pages (or 'Post it' type sticky notes)
- Use soft, flexible weights to hold pages in place
- Never moisten or lick fingers to turn pages
- Be careful when moving heavy items, always use a trolley
- Never carry heavy, awkward or large items on your own. This protects you and the documents.
- Support documents at all times – large items need a large table. Bound volumes (bound together like books) need supports such as foam wedges or

pillows so that they don't open too far and damage the spine and pages Padded strip weights can help prevent keep plans or volumes with over-tight bindings from curling upwards while being displayed or consulted.<sup>5</sup>

- Have a clean, flat work space away from hazards ready before bringing out the archival material.
- Photocopying and scanning can cause damage to documents through exposure to strong light and closing the lid to flatten the document. If you must copy in this way, copy once only and keep the photocopy or digital scan to make other copies from. Document feeder trays on photocopiers and scanners can damage original documents and should not be used.

Always supervise anyone who is viewing the archives

- Have a designated area where archives are produced for viewing
- The area should be clean, tidy and well presented
- The area should be easy to supervise whilst not hindering researchers
- Researchers should not be allowed into the storage areas
- Keep records of researchers and the archives they have viewed.

## **Storage conditions and preservation**

we identified some of the main risks to archives and how to deal with them. Poor storage conditions can also put archives at risk. Archives need to be stored in conditions which are cool, dry and stable, with minimum exposure to natural or artificial light. They also need to be packaged adequately and handled carefully. Providing good storage conditions slows down deterioration over time and helps to prevent damage from dirt, mould or pests.

Poor environmental conditions, inadequate packaging and handling arrangements will encourage deterioration of the archive over a prolonged period of time.

Making a quick assessment based on the boxes below will help you to identify any needs or risks and to plan how to tackle them.

### **Storage environment**

□ High temperatures and high relative humidity speed up chemical changes in from the materials stored in your archive. This speeds up degradation. 'Relative humidity' is the amount of moisture in the air at particular temperatures; measuring it tells us how moist the air is in a particular room or area.

□ Changes in temperature and relative humidity can also increase degradation of the materials stored in your archive. The greater the frequency and rate of change, the greater the speed of degradation.

A stable environment where the temperature and humidity does not change much is best. An attic space can reach extremes of temperature and relative humidity and the conditions change frequently. Attics cannot be easily monitored or accessed, so should not be used for storage.

□ When relative humidity is above 65%, mould can germinate and spread through collections causing extensive damage.

□ Paper and parchment should not be stored below 40% relative humidity for long periods of time as it can become dry and brittle. This increases the risk of damage through mis-handling.

□ Photographs and film benefit from storage at a lower relative humidity of 30-35%.

□ Always avoid natural light from outside in your storage area. All windows, rooflights and other glazing should be adequately covered. Ideally an archive store contains little or no glazing.

□ Keep lights on for a minimum amount of time, and only when staff are inside your storage area.

## **Protecting archives**

- You can protect archives against deterioration over time by using archival packaging which provides an additional level of protection against changes in environmental conditions and a first line of defence against fire, water, light, dust, and pests.
- Other adaptations to bring your storage closer to PD 5454 include: improvements to ventilation; improvements to air circulation; pest monitoring; screening windows to avoid ultra violet light; and structural improvements to buffer changes in temperature and relative humidity.
- Simple equipment can be installed to monitor insect (and rodent) pests, temperature and relative humidity. These are available from a range of specialist suppliers, as listed at 2.4.5. 7
- Intruder alarms can be installed to provide a deterrent to break-ins. These are most effective when remotely monitored. These systems can include remote smoke, heat, carbon monoxide and flood detection which allow a prompt response when incidents happen.
- Filtered air removes large particles of dust and pollution in the air, preventing them from causing damage to the archives. This requires mechanical systems and costs of installation, running and maintenance, that need to be considered
- If you look after an archive collection and storage area in an organisation, you can discuss preservation and prevention, along with any conservation and repair needs with your management team. The aim is to secure more funding and help to look after your archive now and for the long-term future.

### **Records Management and Archives**

The first purpose of managing records is to meet the business or operational needs of an organisation or person, allowing it to function effectively. While the records are meeting these needs they are in ‘active use.’ When they are no longer needed in active use, they are reviewed to decide which should be selected to become part of an archive collection. This cultural and historical research value is their second purpose.

Records that are not selected for permanent preservation should be destroyed when no longer needed. Remember that if they contain sensitive or confidential material they must be destroyed securely – they should never be disposed of with general waste or recycling. Never destroy or dispose of older historical records, or any records which you are not sure whether to keep. Record keeping decisions need to be carefully managed, documented, and signed off by a senior person in your organisation or group.

It will be useful to do a survey of your organisation or group to find any historical records that are kept in other places such as offices or other storage areas. You can review these for significance. Any records selected for the archive can be moved to your central storage area.

This is also a chance to survey the records being created now and how they are structured. If they are well managed now, it will be easier to review and select them for your archive in the future.

### **Cataloguing and arrangement**

Records selected for preservation as archives should not be re-arranged just because they are being kept for a different purpose. Their original structure and arrangement should be respected as far as possible, in accordance with the principles of provenance and original order mentioned in section 2. For example, the minutes of a committee are likely to have been kept together and should continue to be kept together and catalogued as one series of records, arranged by date. Sometimes archival records have become mixed up over time and may have lost their original order. As you work through them, you may be able to recover some of this order and make more sense of their structure.

Cataloguing gives you an opportunity to document and check the contents of collections, identify any records which are particularly interesting and also any which should not be open for research for the reasons explained at paragraph 2.5.1. For archives open for research, describing what you have and even publishing catalogues online will enable potential researchers to complete their initial investigations before they visit you. Importantly, it also allows researchers to discover what you *don't* hold in your collections, avoiding unnecessary enquiries.

Document Management Systems which are designed for the general sharing of administrative and business records are not usually a suitable product for cataloguing archive material. Specialist cataloguing software is available, some of which can be downloaded free of charge.

### **Cataloguing archives**

Archives catalogues use a hierarchical structure with details of the collection at the top level, then series piece, and documents. Information in cataloguing is organised into units of information such as 'Name of creator' and 'Dates of creation'. The technical term for these categories is 'field'.

You can adopt the General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD (G) for cataloguing in a hierarchical structure. The essential fields are:

- Reference code
- Title
- Name of Creator
- Dates of Creation
- Extent of Unit of Description (quantity) and
- Level of Description (where you are in the hierarchy).

### **Funding and Sustainability**

An archive needs a consistent and reliable commitment of resources and the first step to secure this is a specific archive budget for conservation materials, equipment and other archive expenses. Without these resources, the collection is unlikely to reach its full potential, to continue to grow and be effectively preserved. They are more likely to be provided if you can show that the archive can contribute to your corporate identity and support your organisation's activities.

### **Benefits from managing your archives**

There are a number of benefits that flow from managing your archives. Firstly, they provide evidence of your various activities and your wider accountability to Society in relation to a wide area of responsibilities. Examples include demonstrating compliance with child protection regulations and the requirements of the Charity Commissioners. Archives also help to market and promote your organisation's history, activities and brand identity to potential supporters, users and customers. For this reason your archive ideally should reflect the true complexity and diversity of your organisation's activities. The archive can also be used to support your contemporary activities, provide a source of images for the corporate website and educate colleagues and the wider community on the history and identity of your organisation.

### **Policies and Standards**

Policies and standards are produced to support the long-term sustainability of archives, wherever they are kept. Together, they provide the principles and practice to shape how work is done to best effect, making the best use of the available resources. Policies can be internal or external. Internal policies are intended to support your mission or your collecting remit. External policies are intended to support the wider archive sector. Standards for archives are usually external and cover all aspects of managing archives; they are a means to measure best practice and to deliver policy aims.

### **Collection Development**

The National Archives is supporting a framework of collection strategies to ensure that records of events and of the lives and activities of individuals and communities, and of public, private and charitable organisations are:

- being kept
- preserved efficiently and effectively
- made easily available and widely accessible

The strategies support collection development for archives which have meaning and impact for their context and user communities.

### **Digitisation**

Digitisation is the creation of digital copies of records that originated in traditional physical formats such as paper, parchment, photographs, film and, sound and video. Many archives are beginning to digitise their collections to protect originals from regular handling; to provide wider access to collections, or in response to technical change.

One aspect to be aware of is intellectual property. Before digitising material in your collections you need to ensure that you own the copyright and other rights in the records. If the copyright belongs to someone else, you may need to arrange copyright clearance with the rights owners.

### **Digital Archives and Preservation**

Many types of records and information are now created or 'born' digitally; including emails, word processed documents, spreadsheets, photographs, video and websites. Digital records need to be actively managed in storage, so that they remain accessible and usable into the future. Storage alone is not a solution to digital preservation and a regime of regular preservation actions is needed to ensure they remain viable over time.

Digital archives systems are used to store and manage digital records and information. They may be complex server-based systems for large quantities of information, or regimes of managing preservation of data on media such as CDs, DVDs and external hard-drives.

Digital Preservation for an archive collection is a complex area of work which requires at least some level of technical knowledge, and ideally access to more advanced expertise.

It is important to note that uploading digital or digitised assets to the internet alone does not preserve them; though it is a powerful means of providing access. The Museums, Library and Archives Council have produced some useful guidance, 'Advice for community archives on web archives' which includes a 7-point checklist of aspects to help preserve digital assets over time.

### **Decisions on long term custody**

If long term preservation of your archives is not practical for you, you might consider depositing them with an established archive service to secure their long term safe keeping. There are benefits to this route as an established archive service is best placed to store, preserve and provide access to archival collections for the long term.

Deposit with an established service may be particularly appropriate for material which needs specialist care, such as moving image and sound recordings, textiles, and photographs.



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