

INFS 332

Introduction to archives administration

Evolution and Development of Archives Administration

Lecturer: Dr. Musah Adams,
Department of Information Studies
Contact Information: madams@ug.edu.gh



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Overview

Records with historical values, kept at the non-current stage of the records life cycle are known as archives. Archival materials need to be managed effectively to enable individuals and institutions conduct research and to assist in litigation and accountability purposes. Session one provides the historical development of archives administration and how the profession has evolved overtime.

Objectives

After completing this Session, the student should be able to:

- define the term archive.
- become familiar with the historical development of archives.
- identify some modern archival institutions and the types of archives.

Outline

The key topics to be covered are as follows:

- Topic one : Summary of the Records Life Cycle
- Topic two : Early Archival Institutions
- Topic three : Modern Archival Institutions of Some Nations
- Topic four : Modern Archival Institutions - PRAAD

Reading List

- *Millar, L. A., (2010) Archives: Principles and Practices. Indiana University: New Schuman Publishers.*
- *Roper, M. and Millar, L. (1999). Managing Archives. International Records Management Trust. RMT: London.*

Topic One

SUMMARY OF THE RECORDS LIFE CYCLE

Definition of Records

- A record may be defined as information recorded on a medium as a result of an organization (public or private) or individual's activities, which is maintained and used in pursuing its legal and other obligations.
- Thus, a record serves as evidence of a transaction whether by an organization or an individual.

Definition of Archives

- Archives are records which are usually, but not necessarily non-current records which have enduring value and are selected for permanent preservation.
- This definition means that archives normally fall within the third phase of the life cycle and are deemed to be non-current.

What is an archive?

- When records are appraised, there may be some which may have no further use for the creators but may be deemed to have value for other people (historians, academics) and other purposes (evidence, research).
- For this reason, such records are selected and transferred to an archival institution, to be preserved permanently for future use. Those records which are transferred to the archival institution for permanent preservation are called **archives**.

The Term Archive

The term **archives** can be used in three different ways and it is important that we understand these meanings before proceeding further.

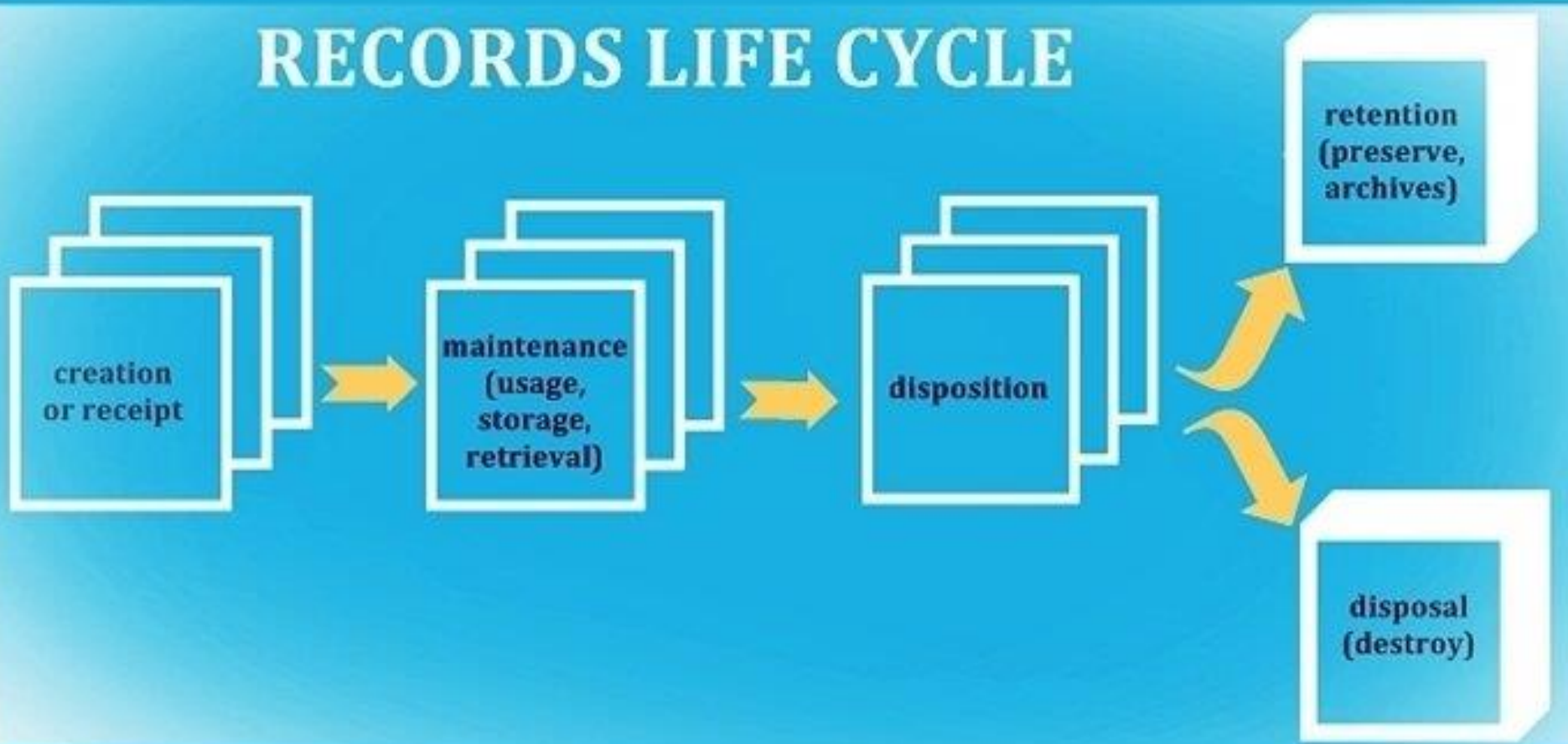
- In the first place, **archives** can refer to the materials, that is, the records.
- Secondly, **archives** may be used to describe the building in which the materials or records are stored. Within the building or archives, are storage areas where the archival materials are stored and these storage areas are called repositories (repository).

The Term Archive

- Finally, the third use of the term **archives** is in reference to the institution that manages the archival materials.
- An archival institution is an agency or institution responsible for selecting, acquiring, preserving, and making available archives for use by those who need them.

Summary of the Records Life Cycle

RECORDS LIFE CYCLE



Topic Two

EARLY ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS

Early Archival Institutions

- In ancient times, the medium on which information was captured or recorded were materials durable enough to be preserved for long periods. Laws and decrees of kings were written on stones, baked clay tablets, wood and wax, leather parchments, papyrus and later paper.

Early Archival Institutions

- These early archives were stored in special buildings for safety during wars and other disasters such as floods and fire. With the passage of time, however, certain institutions became important for the keeping of archives especially churches.
- Monasteries and temples became important storage areas for archives. The early collections (archives) were always restricted to records related to financial and legal matters. The earliest known system of keeping records in order was the registry system.

Early Archival Institutions

- In ancient Rome magistrates kept private notes on matters that came before them each day. These notes soon developed into daily court journals in which entries were made in chronological order (according to dates), for all inward (incoming) and outward (outgoing) documents.
- Later various government departments kept registers similar to the court journals. The Roman practice of keeping registers of outward documents strongly influenced the practice of the churches which bridged the gap between ancient and modern worlds during the middle ages.

Early Archival Institutions

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, a significant re-organization of documents took place. These developments were as follows

- The residents (palaces) of kings had become fixed
- The scope of their administrations had expanded
- The communities had developed some level of primitive archival institutions
- Paper had come into use as a medium for writing, thus there was an accumulation of greater masses of archival materials which needed proper care and preservation.

Topic Three

MODERN ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS

Modern Archival Institutions

There were no formal institutions which managed the documents created until 1789 during the French Revolution. The modern concept of a state or national archival institution in charge of all of a nation's archives began in French in 1789.

- **National Archives - France**

During the upheavals, the French parliament established an archival office. This parliamentary archival office was changed by a decree of 7th September 1790 into the National Archives of France. It therefore became the new archival institution in the world to keep the records of the New France.

National Archives – United Kingdom

- In 1838, a central archival institution was established in the United Kingdom. This was the Public Record Office (PRO). The reasons for the establishment of the British PRO, was different from that of the French. It was not the preservation of evidence of newly won privileges but for both practical and cultural reasons.
- The practical reason was in relation to the poor conditions under which public records were kept while the cultural impetus came from the historians.

National Archives – United Kingdom

- In April 2003 the PRO merged with the Historical Manuscripts Commission and the Office of Public Sector Information to become the National Archives. The National Archives of Scotland and the Public Record Office at Northern Ireland were independent and continue to remain separate institutions.

National Archives of the United States

- As early as 1810, a congressional Committee found the public records in a state of great disorder and exposure which the committee concluded was not honourable to the nation. Fires in 1814, 1833 and 1877 and at other times destroyed valuable records.
- A presidential commission was set up in 1877 to investigate conditions under which the public records were kept. It was not until the early 1930s that historians and other interested parties concerned with the preservation of the national's records realized their hopes. In 1934, the National Archives was established.

Topic Three

MODERN ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS - PRAAD

Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) - Ghana

- The establishment of the first national archival institution began in 1946 and was regulated by the Public Archives Ordinance of 1955. This established the National Archives of Ghana (NAG).
- With the passage of time, regional branches were established. However, expansion in government machinery and business rendered the National Archives ineffective and the need for a new legislation that would ensure a holistic approach to the management of public records and archives became necessary.

Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) - Ghana

- This resulted in the passage of a new law in 1997, the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) Act of 1997. Thus, the **NAG** was replaced with the **PRAAD** which had expanded functions in the management of public records and archive in Ghana.

Summary

In this session you learned that

- a record serves as evidence of a transaction whether by an organization or an individual.
- archives normally fall within the third phase of the life cycle and are deemed to be non-current.
- Some early archival institutions developed into today's modern archival institution.

Reading List

- *Millar, L. A., (2010) Archives: Principles and Practices. Indiana University: New Schuman Publishers.*
- *Roper, M. and Millar, L. (1999). Managing Archives. International Records Management Trust. RMT: London.*



Development of the Principles or Theories



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Principles or Theories of Archives

- After the French revolution, as part of the re-organization of their archives, two main principles or theories were developed by the French National Archives to guide the arrangement of archives.
- These were the principles of
 - (a) **respect des fonds** (provenance)
 - (b) **original order**

Principle of respect des fonds (Provenance)

- The principle was developed to replace the preservation of records by organic units or fonds instead of subject groups.
- This fundamental grouping requires that records be organized and maintained according to their origin or source of transaction.
- Records originating from one office or individual form a distinct body of material and should be kept separate. It must not be added or intermingled with records from other body or source. Records from the same origin came to be known as **fonds** and hence the principle, **respect des fonds**

Principle of Original Order

- The principle of provenance was further expanded in the 19th Century into the Principle of Original Order. According to the principle of original order, the records of every agency should be maintained in the archival institution in the order or arrangement given them by the registry or records office of the agency that created the records.
- What this means, is that, since the records were arranged for ease of access whilst with the creating institution, whenever they are transferred to the archival institution for preservation, their original arrangement should be maintained by the archival institution.

Archival Buildings and Institutions



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Design and Layout

- It is recommended that archival buildings or archives should have an attractive exterior and a pleasant interior.
- There should be availability and economic utilization of space
- It is necessary to make provision for adequate light, warmth and fresh air.
- There should be a stack area (repository) for permanent preservation or storage of documents.
- There should be a non stack areas such as offices and reference room for staff and users.
- Services such as a reprographic laboratory should be catered for in the design.
- Another important facility that should be considered is a canteen or eating area.
- Security of the records, staff and the institution as a whole should also be considered at the design stage.

Environmental Conditions

- **Site Selection:** It is important that a careful study of the site is carried out to ensure that it is capable of providing strong foundations, good drainage works which will prevent flooding and accumulation of water. For a national archival institution, a site centrally located in relation to the institutions whose records it will keep is advisable.
- **Climatic Conditions:** A careful study of variations in temperatures, the number and frequency of rainy days, the atmospheric and humidity variations and the sunny periods of the year.
- **Ventilation:** The designing of the structure should take into consideration the direction of the windows in tropical areas in order to control temperature and humidity.
- **Lighting:** There is the need to ensure good natural sunlight. Artificial lights should be switched on only when necessary.

Types, Nature and Characteristics of Archives



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Types of Archives

Public Archives

The public archives are the various national archival institutions. In the United Kingdom, the public archive is now known as the National Archives (formerly called the Public Records Office – PRO), while in the USA it is known as the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). In Ghana, the public archives is called the Public Records and Archives Administration department (formally known as the National Archives of Ghana). Public archives everywhere hold official records created by federal, state, national or local government.

Business Archives

Some private corporate institutions have established business archives. Non-governmental records preserve the history of corporations, companies, and similar enterprises. These are bodies which create and own their records.

Types of Archives. Cont..

•Special Archives

As a result of the deficiency in the promotions of the public archival institution or due to the limitations in the laws establishing the public archives, certain institutions which are public or semi-public have established their own archives. In Ghana, for instance, the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), the Volta River Authority (VRA) and GCB have established special archives for the management of their records to enhance their business transactions and also serve as corporate memory.

Nature of Archives

- For a document to qualify or reckoned to be called archives, it should have been created or received and accumulated to accomplish or perform a purpose.
- The records must have values for purposes other than those for which they were created or accumulated.
- The records must have evidential or informational and research values

Characteristics of Archives

- **Relationship** - when we say that archives have relationship with the creating institution, what it means is that the archives of a particular institution or individual are accumulated as a direct result of its functions or activities and are intended to reflect the policies, functions and transactions of that institution. This makes it easier to link archives in archival institutions with the institutions that created them.
- **Organic** - Each document created and put on a file is related to or is as a result of some preceding document or documents. Thus, the first record on a file is explained by the next that is placed on the file. In order to retain their quality of reflecting accurately what has happened earlier on and why they happened and also how they happened, the original order of arrangement of records is maintained or restored.

Characteristics of Archives

- **Official** - 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.
- **Uniqueness** – There should be one and only one original archival material.
- **Impartial** - archives are the by-products of business activities. They are impartial because they are produced and preserved by people whose purpose is not concerned with its future use for researchers. They are impersonal, unselfconscious and an actual part of the administration which produced them.
- **Authentic** - Archives are characterized by an unbroken custody. By their origin, archives are free of the suspicion of prejudice with regard to their interest.

Users and Uses of Archives



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Users of Archives

- There are two types of users of archival materials. These are **vocational users and non-vocational users**. Vocational users are users who use the archives to perform their functions.
- Some of the significant vocational users are the staff of the creating institutions (including archivists of these institutions), professional users, academic scholars, students, and teachers.
- In the case of non-vocational users, genealogists and historians are the two main types of users.

Uses of Archives

- **Staff of the Parent Institution** use archives to understand the institution's history and the sources of its current policy. Archives are used to ensure continuity, build on experience, and identify solutions for current problems.
- **Professional Users (lawyers, legislators, engineers etc.)** use records to aid them in performing their functions
- **Scholars** use archival material to transmit and transfer historical information from archival sources to individuals.
- **Teachers** use archival materials to illustrate what they teach.
- **Students** use archives to aid them in performing their research.

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