

INFS 332

Introduction to Archives Administration

Session 2 – Principles and Characteristics and Archives

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2016/2017

Session Overview

- It has been argued that it is necessary to know where we are coming from in order to understand where we are and to project where we want to go next. This session explains the theories and principles guiding the management of archives throughout the world and trace the development of these theories and principles. The session also identifies some characteristics and uses of archives.

Session Objectives

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

- Identify and explain the principles of archives administration.
- Explain the need for applying these principles.
- Identify some characteristics of archives
- State some uses and users and archives

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic one : Principles of Archives Administration
- Topic two : Types, Natures and Characteristics of Archives
- Topic three : The Archives Building
- Topic four : Uses and Users of Archives

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. IRMT: London.*
http://www.irmt.org/documents/educ_training/public_sector_rec/IRMT_manage_archives.pdf

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Topic One



PRINCIPLES OF ARCHIVES ADMINISTRATION

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**



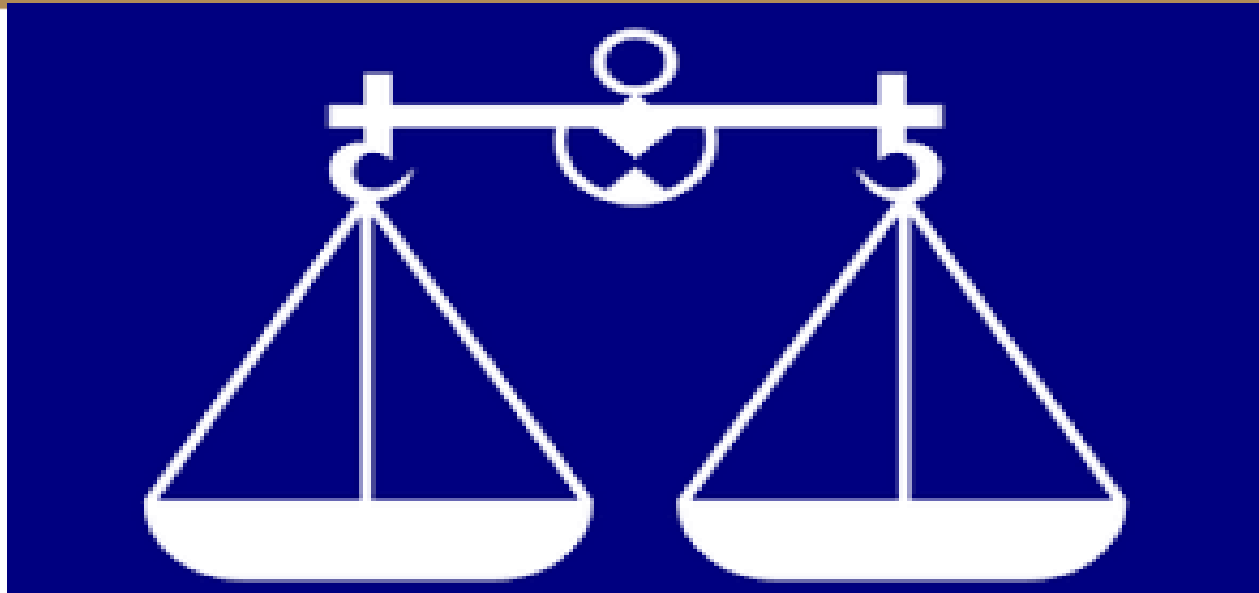
Respect des fonds (Provenance)

- 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.

Topic Two



TYPES, NATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ARCHIVES

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 (formerly known as the National Archives of Ghana).

Public archives everywhere hold official records created by federal, state, national or local government.

Types of Archives

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), University of Ghana (UG) Archives 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.

Characteristics of Archives Cont..

- **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 Cont..

- **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.

Topic Three



THE ARCHIVES BUILDING

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.

Design and Layout Cont..

- There should be non stack areas such as offices and reference rooms 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 should be carried out.

Environmental Conditions Cont..

- **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.

Topic Four



USERS AND USES OF ARCHIVES

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.

Summary

In this session you learned that

- Respect des Fonds (provenance) and original order are the two principles of archival administration.
- Archives are categorised into Public, Business and Special Archives.
- Some layout and environmental conditions of the archival building.
- Some users and uses of archives

Reading List

- *Millar, L. A., (2010) Archives: Principles and Practices. Indiana University: New Schuman Publishers.*
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