

INFS 332

Introduction to Archives Administration

Session 5 – Acquisition Of Archival Materials

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Session Overview

Just like libraries archival institutions need to make materials available in order to satisfy users' requests. However, how and where would these archival institutions obtain such material to make it available for users? Session 5 explains why archival materials are acquired, the methods used in acquiring the materials, policies and strategies needed in the acquisition process.

Session Objectives

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

- Define what is meant by acquisition
- Identify the importance of acquisition
- Identify the sources and methods of acquisition
- Develop an acquisition policy

Session Outline

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

- Topic one : Definition and importance of acquisition
- Topic two : Sources of acquisition
- Topic three : Methods used in Acquiring Materials
- Topic four : Acquisition policies

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
pages 27-30

Topic One



DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE OF ACQUISITION

Definition of Acquisition

- In the Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology of the Society of American Archivists, acquisition is defined as **materials received by a repository as a unit**. Thus, acquisition in archives administration refers to the process of acquiring records or archives from any source by transfer, donation, or purchase and so on.
- Another word used synonymously with acquisition as a body of records is **accession**.

Importance of Acquisition

- Users of archival materials may find that certain materials needed for their researches may not be available. Archivists therefore, rely on feedback from users to know where there are such gaps in their collections and go out to look for such materials
- In a situation where important archival materials cannot be used due to deterioration it will be the responsibility of the archivist or archival institutions to look for substitutes to enable users have access to such materials.





Topic Two

SOURCES OF ACQUISITION

Sources of Acquiring Materials

- There are two main sources of acquiring archival materials into archival repositories.
- The two are **internal** and **external sources**.
- In each of the source, there are methods used in acquiring archival materials from each source

Internal Source

- Many archival legislations, regulations and directives have provisions which require public institutions to periodically transfer records of archival value to the archival repositories (institutions). Such transfers are normally carried out as a result of appraisal decisions.
- They are internal sources because the materials originate from records offices of the public institutions.
- **Appraisal is the determination of the archival value of records to the creators and also for other future users.**

External Source

- External sources because these materials do not originate from records offices and archival repositories. There are various ways in which materials can be acquired from external sources.
- Acquisition of materials from external sources are also most often guided by legislation, regulation or company directives. **See Section 21 subsection 1 of the PRAAD Act**

Methods of Acquisition

Topic Three

METHODS USED IN ACQUIRING MATERIALS

Methods used in Acquiring Materials

- There are methods used in acquiring archival materials from each of the sources mentioned earlier on.
- With the internal source, there is only one method of acquiring archival materials namely **Statutory (Legal) Deposits**
- The external methods of acquiring materials include **donations, purchase, loan or deposits, photocopying and microcopying and replevin or restitution.**

Methods used in Acquiring Materials cont..

- **Statutory (Legal) Deposits**

It is this second group of records which many archival regulations require their creators or records centres to transfer to archival repositories.

When non-current records are transferred from record offices and records centres to the archival repository for permanent preservation, it is seen by the repository as an acquisition.

This process or method is usually referred to as statutory or legal deposit and most often applies to public institutions and their records.

See Section 13 & Section 14 (a) of the PRAAD Act of 1997

External Sources methods

- **Donations, gifts and bequests** - Many archival repositories receive many acquisitions through donations from local citizens, private institutions or other groups and associations. Archival institutions can actively solicit donations by informing the communities, where they operate about their existence and their areas of interests.
- Through education, exhibitions and publications, potential donors are usually identified and meetings held with them. During the meetings it is advisable to explain the permanent transfer of ownership so that the donor understands the finality of the gift.



External Sources methods cont..

- It is advisable to always complete a “deed of gift” form for all donations. This form when duly completed transfers ownership of records from the donor to the archival institution.

External Sources methods cont..

Loan or Deposits

- There are two main ways through materials can be undertaken. The first is as a temporary loan for a specific purpose such as to copy or to use in an exhibition.
- In the second instance, materials could be copied for indefinite loan. This form of loaning occurs normally between one archival institution and another or with other institutions such as museums, libraries, academic institutions and so on and is used for research purposes.

External Sources methods cont..

- **Purchase of Archival Materials**

One aggressive method used in acquiring archival materials is through purchase. Archivists resort to purchasing archival materials as a means to fill gaps in their collections or holdings. It is possible that after exhibitions, advertisements in newspapers, on radio and television, people who have some needed materials may offer to sell them to the archival institution.

External Sources methods cont..

- **Photocopying and Microcopying**

The first three methods of purchase, loan and donation deal with materials that could be available physically within a certain range not too far from the archival institution. There are however, some materials that may be under restriction and not easily available or accessible. In this case what the head of the archival institution can do will be to contact the owner, if an individual or the head of an institution so that copies of the materials could be made and authenticated or certified and given to the institution requesting for the material.

External Sources methods cont..

- **Restitution or Replevin**

Restitution or replevin is another method through which archival materials can be acquired. Restitution means giving back something that belongs to another which has come into your possession. As a result of war especially, a nation or a community's archival materials could fall into the hands of the victorious state.

However, as time passes and during peace times a convention has developed whereby materials captured by one state during war are returned through negotiation to the one that lost them.

Topic Four

ACQUISITION POLICIES



Acquisition Policies in Archival Institutions

- **Definition of Acquisition Policy**

An acquisition policy according to the Canadian Council of Archives (1990) is the instrument which provides the archival institution with the direction for making appraisal and acquisition decisions and allocating resources. It is the backbone around which the archival institution can acquire comprehensive materials in a planned, co-ordinated and systematic manner. It defines what archival records the archival institution is permitted to acquire or required to preserve and becomes the foundation for the development of more detailed acquisition plans and strategies.

The Acquisition Process

Before an acquisition programme, the following should be done

- The archival institution should assess its holdings to identify its strengths and weaknesses.
- It is also important for the archival institution to obtain an overview of the holdings or collections of other archival institutions, libraries, museums and so on in the area where the archival institution is sited.
- Availability of resources to carry out a successful acquisition programme should be a priority.

Publicity of Acquisitions

- Acquisitions should be carefully documented for both present activity and for future generation of archivists in assessing the development of the collections. When the information on the records acquired are well kept, it tells its own history and anytime one wants to know what materials are in stock and how and when they were acquired, reference to the documentation on acquisitions will help and make the exercise successful.

Developing an Acquisition Policy

- Acquisition policies are developed to meet the needs and levels of operation of individual archival institutions.
- An acquisition policy must reflect the archival institution's legal authority and should also outline the general role and mission of the institution. What this means is that the policy must take authority or power from the law establishing the archival institution.
- Availability of resources for the care and processing of records must be considered while developing the policy.

Developing an Acquisition Policy

cont..

- The acquisition policy must establish or indicate the official who has authority to decide which records should be retained by the archival institution.
- Another important element of the acquisition policy that needs to be outlined is the responsibility of staff in the acquisition process.
- For the policy to be accepted, it should receive approval according to the institution's normal procedures. In some instances the approval of the head of the institution may be sufficient to give the policy the required authority to put it in action.

Summary

In this session you learned that

- acquisition in archives administration refers to the process of acquiring records or archives from any source by transfer, donation, or purchase and so on.
- With the internal source, there is only one method of acquiring archival material namely **Statutory (Legal) Deposits**
- The external methods of acquiring materials include **donations, purchase, loan or deposits, photocopying and microcopying and replevin or restitution.**
- An acquisition policy is the backbone around which the archival institution can acquire comprehensive materials in a planned, co-ordinated and systematic manner.

Reading List

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