

INFS 332

Introduction to Archives Administration

Session 6 – Accessioning And Processing Of Archival Materials.

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Session Overview

- When records become archives, they assume a new identity and so the arrangement and storage may be different from that of the records offices and centres. The processing of records at this stage of their life is what is known as accessioning. This session explains how materials from record centers and other external sources are accessioned and processed in archival institutions. The session also looks at some of the tools used in accessioning materials namely accessions form and the accessions register.

Session Objectives

After completing this Session, the student should:

- Be able to explain what is meant by accessioning of archival materials.
- Be able to identify some conditions of deposit of archives
- Be able to examine the processing of archival materials from internal sources
- Be able to examine the processing of archival materials from external sources
- Be able to identify and design an accessioning form and register.

Session Outline

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

- Topic one : Accessioning of Archival Materials
- Topic two : Conditions of Deposit of Archives
- Topic three : Processing of Archival Materials
- Topic four : Accessions form and Register

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 31 - 40

Topic One



ACCESSIONING OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Accessioning of Archival Materials

- **Accessioning** - This term is defined as **the practice of transferring the physical and legal control over a consignment of records to an archival repository.** Thus, accessioning brings records that are judged to be valuable unto the physical and legal custody of the archival institution (Shellenberg, 1975).
- **Accrual** - This refers to an accession or consignment of records which is added to record series already held by or in the custody of an archival institution. Another word used in place of accrual is accretion.

The Accessioning System

- Records transferred from offices, records offices and records centres to the archival repository are referred to as internal sources and the whole process of transfers from one stage to the other is carried out according to the archival legislation, regulation, policy or directive.
- In addition, records are acquired from external sources which comprise the use of various methods such as purchase, donation, gift, bequest, loan or deposit, copying, restitution or replevin.

The Accessioning System cont..

- Records accessioned to an archival institution become its property and the archival institution assumes responsibility for the records. The records must be cared for and made available to researchers according to the policies and regulations of the archival institution.

Topic Two

CONDITIONS OF DEPOSIT OF ARCHIVES

Conditions of Deposit of Archives

- Archivists should avoid accepting indefinite loans. What this means is that materials which are given as loans and not as donations, gifts or bequests to the archival institutions for research use should not be accepted on permanent basis.
- An archival institution should accept archives of public interest for care and preservation and for the benefit of research either as a gift, on deposit or loan.
- Archival institutions are required as part of their responsibilities to materials acquired unto the repositories to carry out repairs on archives as and when practicable.

Conditions of Deposit of Archives

cont..

- Special conditions may be agreed between the institution and the depositor or owner of the materials at the time of the deposit or loan. Such conditions may include provisions for the restriction of access to all or part of the materials deposited.
- It is the duty of the archival institution to take measures such as sorting, arranging, listing (where necessary) boxing and stacking of archival materials in storage areas as may be convenient or suitable.
- It is the responsibility of the archival institution to protect the interests of owners and depositors of materials.

Topic Three



PROCESSING OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Processing of Materials from Public Institutions

- If the records have not being appraised then they must be appraised and those determined to have archival value selected
- If the records have been appraised then the staff should consult the disposal schedule to select those that have enduring value and determined to be transferred to the archival repository
- The next activity after, appraisal and selection is cleaning and tidying. No dirty material should be sent to the archival repository so cleaning is very important

Processing of Materials from Public Institutions cont..

- After the cleaning, all ferrous or iron pins, clips, tapes, treasury tags (green tags) and so on are removed.
- The next stage after the removal of ferrous pins is the insertion of dummies to replace materials that have been selected for transfer but are missing at the time of transfer or have been lawfully retained by the transferring institution.
- The fifth step is to label items or records with the necessary identifying information. Labelling involves making marks on the folders so that the records can easily be identified

Processing of Materials from Public Institutions cont..

- After labelling, the records are put in boxes.
- After boxing, the next activity is to list the items in the boxes.
- The final action at this point is to fill in the relevant parts of the accessions form. Every accession or consignment that is transferred from the records centre or public institution must be accompanied by **an accession form** which contains information of the material being transferred.



Receiving Materials from External Sources

Two main phases are involved when accessioning materials from external sources.

- The first is to identify the nature and location of the materials. This may involve initial planning, followed by some research and a programme of surveys. This phase concludes with visits to the site and the negotiation of conditions for transfer of materials.
- The second phase involves preparing the materials for transfer, arranging and describing the materials.

Other activities are cleaning the materials and carrying out physical preparation, boxing or packing

Topic Four



ACCESSIONS FORM AND REGISTER

Accessions form and Register

The Accessions Form

Every proposal to transfer records from a records office or a records centre should be entered on an accessions form. Accessions forms are normally filled in by the records management staff at the records offices of public institutions, in cases where the materials are being transferred directly from these records offices.

Accessions form and Register cont..

- When materials are transferred to the archival repository, the accessions form should be signed by an authorized representative of the archival institution. By signing the accessions form, the archival institution assumes responsibility for the custody, preservation and use of the materials.

Accession form and Register cont..

The Accessions Register

- The accession register is a formal document that records the archival repository's acceptance of responsibility for the archives it documents and the transfer of custody of the archives in the archival institution.
- The register is intended to be used as an internal control document or tool of the archival institution. It is important to label the accession register and to keep it secure as a vital record of the archival institution.

The Accessions Register

Archives Accession Register						
Accession Number	Date Received	Details of Records Received	Source or Depositor	Archival References	Remarks	Initials of Person Receiving and Date

•Figure : Archives Accession Register

Summary

In this session you learned that

- Accessioning is a practice of transferring the physical and legal control over a consignment of records to an archival repository.
- There are certain conditions of depositing archival materials
- Archives needs to be processed to aid retrieval.
- The register is intended to be used as an internal control document or tool of the 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. IRMT: London.*
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