

# **INFS 332**

# **Introduction to Archives Administration**

## **Session 9 – Access To Archival Materials**

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# Session Overview

- There are concepts and guidelines that archivists have to follow in making the archival materials in their repositories available to researchers. This session seeks to explain what access is and also discusses some access policies and continues with the identification and discussion of some of the concepts and guidelines in an access policy.

# Session Objectives

After completing this Session, the student should :

- Be able to define access in archives administration
- Be able to outline some of the concepts and guidelines governing access
- Be able to define access policies
- Be able to outline some elements of an access policy
- Be able to explain why materials are loaned out and comment on some loaning procedures

# Session Outline

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

- Topic one : Access, Concept and Guidelines
- Topic two : Access Policies
- Topic three : intellectual Access
- Topic Four : Loans in Archives Administration

# 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.*

Topic One



# ACCESS, CONCEPT AND GUIDELINES

# Definition of Access

- The Society of American Archivists defines access first as **the ability to locate relevant information through the use of catalogues, indexes, finding aids, or other tools.**
- A second definition is “**the permission to locate and retrieve information for use (consultation and reference) within legally established restrictions of privacy, confidentiality, and security clearance** (Pearce-Moses, 2005)

# Concepts and Guidelines cont..

- **Privacy** - This concept of privacy defines the right of living individuals to be left alone, to keep their personal information to themselves and to determine which information they would want to make known to others. A good reputation is not the only thing protected by privacy laws, but personal information that an individual does not want to make public.



# Concepts and Guidelines cont..

## Confidentiality

- In the case of confidentiality, this refers to private communication. Where two people have a private communication, it should be restricted to them alone and anyone who has no authority should not inquire into the content of the communication.
- Another aspect of confidentiality is where it protects private information collected for one purpose being used for another purpose during a person's lifetime.

# Concepts and Guidelines cont..

- **Right to know** – As part of the reforms, the French National Assembly recognized that citizens must have access to government records to protect themselves and to monitor the actions of public officials.

It is accepted that in a democratic society, the citizens have a right to information about the functions or activities of their governments but this right does not give them the right to know private information about each other. Thus, there is a limit to the right to know and this right must be balanced against privacy and confidentiality.

# Concepts and Guidelines cont..

- **Equality of Access** – This is an ethical norm or rule of the archival profession commonly embodied in access policies of many archival institutions.

When discussing professional ethics in the previous topic, we made mention of the fact that archivists must ensure that access to archival materials is made equal to all users without discrimination based on factors such as race or ethnic origin, colour, gender and so on.

Topic Two

# ACCESS POLICIES



# Definition and Importance of Access Policies

*An access policy may be defined as principles or procedures that control the conditions under which individuals have permission and ability to consult a repository's holdings (Pearce-Moses, 2005).*

A well-considered, written access policy that reconciles equality of access, the right of inquiry, and the rights of privacy and confidentiality is a basic requirement for sound archival management.

# Elements of an Access Policy

- **Identifying User Communities**

An access policy should state who is permitted to use materials in the context of the repository's mission, that is, the policy should identify the communities of users the repository serves.

- **Research Resources and Restrictions**

An access policy should include a general statement of the types of records available for research and describe the kinds of information that may be restricted by law or donor agreement.

- **Loan of Materials**

The conditions under which materials will be loaned should also be specified in the access policy.

# Elements of an Access Policy cont..

- **Intellectual Access and Reference Services**

The access policy should spell out in some detail the relationship of finding aids to materials in the repository and the role of reference assistance in locating information.

- **Fees**

The access policy should explain all fees related to the use of materials. Since making materials available for research is a fundamental archival responsibility, charging fees for access to the repository or for using research materials in the repository is discouraged, although fees for services such as photocopying or extended searches are customary.

# Elements of an Access Policy cont..

- **Physical Access and Conditions of Use**

The access policy should specify the physical conditions under which research materials may be used. Rules governing the use of materials must be written, distributed to all users, and equitably enforced.

- **Use of Information**

The use of information taken from the holdings also should be explained in the access policy. Provisions of copyright law that apply to the repository and its holdings must be identified and policies for copying and publishing from the holdings specified.



# Elements of an Access Policy cont..

- **Citation**

Users need guidelines for adequate citations, and the access policy should specify them.

- **Use by Repository Staff**

The access policy should discuss access and use by archival staff. In the course of their work, archivists may discover private or confidential information or have access to restricted materials. Staff must not use or reveal such privileged information. Archivists may not give anyone special access to such information, including themselves, other staff, or researchers.

Topic Three



# PROVIDING INTELLECTUAL ACCESS

# What is Intellectual Access?

- *Intellectual Access is the ability or availability of reference tools also known as finding aids which describe the holdings of an archival institution and provide reference assistance to help users locate needed records and information.*
- Traditionally, providing intellectual access has meant the provision of information about repositories and their holdings.



# What is Intellectual Access? cont..

- Intellectual access is the type which is provided through the arrangement and description of records. It is also achieved through the provision of reference service.
- Intellectual access aids reference staff to provide the needed assistance to users in their search for materials.

# Types of Intellectual Access

- **Information about Repositories**

Every repository, regardless of its size, has a duty to provide information about itself so that users can find the repository (Pugh, 1992). One way of achieving this aim is contributing to directories.

- **Information about Archival Material**

There are two ways in which archivists disseminate information about the archival materials or holdings in their repositories. Intellectually within the institution, information is provided through unpublished finding aids such as inventories, registers (accession registers) card catalogues, indexes and in-house databases. Outside the institution information about holdings is provided through published repository guides, internet and other national reference tools.

# Types of Intellectual Access cont..

- **Information from Holdings**

In some archival institutions, providing information from holdings is an important part of reference service. Archivists supply information from their own knowledge, from finding aids or reference tools and in some cases they conduct research raised frequently by users.

- **Information about Records Creators**

In the process of locating records, an analysis of the functions and structural changes of an organization over time and the arrangement and description of their records enable archivists to compile rich historical information about the creators their functions, activities, events and precedents.

# Types of Intellectual Access cont..

- **Referrals**

Since no particular archival institution can contain materials that will cover every field and satisfy every searcher, it becomes necessary most often for archivists to refer researchers to other institutions, libraries or individual who might be able to assist.

To facilitate referrals, most archivists develop an index of names, phone numbers and addresses of people and institutions to which frequent referrals are made.

Topic Four



# LOANS IN ARCHIVES ADMINISTRATION



# What is Loaning in Archives Administration?

- Loaning in archives administration refers to the process of temporarily transferring materials from one party to another. An archival institution may lend materials from individuals and other organizations for the purposes of exhibition, consultation or reproduction (Pearce-Moses, 2005).
- It is recommended that all requests for loans of materials meet the same standards and follow the same procedures. The three most common requests are for administrative use, research use, and exhibition.

# Loan Policies and Procedures

- **Request for loans** – The institution's loan policy should outline how requests are to be made. Applications for loans should be in writing and submitted in time to ensure adequate time for proper preparation of materials.
- **Loan Agreements** – In loaning archival materials to a borrower, all conditions of the loan are recorded in a loan agreement. A recognized or authorized representative of the borrowing institution signs the agreement, verifying the conditions under which the materials will be used and the date of return of the materials.



# Loan Policies and Procedures cont..

- The loan agreement should also specify the names and other vital particulars of authorized users, the method of carriage or transportation, stipulate whether copying is allowed and exhibition techniques to be used.
- The loan agreement should also define the accepted levels of standards for use of the materials.

# Summary

In this session you learned that :

- An archival institution may lend materials from individuals and other organizations for the purposes of exhibition, consultation or reproduction
- access is the ability to locate relevant information through the use of catalogues, indexes, finding aids, or other tools.
- Privacy, confidentiality, equality of access and right to know are key concepts to consider when accessing materials
- Intellectual access aids reference staff to provide the needed assistance to users in their search for materials.

# 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.*

