Archival Best Practices and Workflows

Sustainable Heritage Network Workshop

Jennifer R. O'Neal
University of Oregon
University Historian and Archivist

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Overview

- Accessioning
- Arrangement and Description
- Activity and Group Discussions
  - Accessioning
  - Processing Plan

Importance of Core Functions

- Service: Caretaker of the Information
  - Protection
  - Memory and Continuity
  - Administrative Efficiency
- Manages: Performs core archive fundamentals and administration
  - Acquisition and Accessioning
  - Arrangement and Description

Accessioning Collection

- **Accession**: A group of records or archives from the same source, with the same provenance, accepted into an archive repository's holdings at the same time.

- **Accessioning**: The process of formally accepting the material.

- Materials are ascribed a unique, permanent accession number that aims to get material under basic archival control.

Arrangement and Description

- **Arrangement**: the process of organizing materials with respect to their provenance and original order, to protect context, and to achieve physical and intellectual control over materials.

- **Description**: the process of analyzing, organizing, and recording information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and explain the holdings of archives and manuscript repositories.

Arrangement: Foundation Principles

- **<u>Principle of Provenance</u>**: Records should be maintained according to their origin and not intermingled with those of another provenance (ie. created by another agency, group, or individual). All documents from one creator should be kept together to reveal context.

- **<u>Principle of Original Order</u>**: preserve whenever possible the original order in which the records came to the archive repository, thereby reflecting the process which generated them. *However, Archivists should not preserve original chaos*.

- Records have two levels of information users need to understand:
  - CONTENT: actual information in records—subjects and issues addressed
  - CONTEXT: conditions under or during which records were created

Arrangement

- Collective—NOT itemized
  - Gertrude Wolf Papers, 1899-1942
  - Stein Family Papers, 1924-1976
  - Tribal Membership Office Records, 1980-1985
- Hierarchical Structure
  - Collection→Series→Folder→Item

Arrangement: Methods

- By <u>Provenance</u>: who created the records
- By <u>Filing Structure</u>: chronologically, alphabetically, subject
- By <u>Physical Unit Type</u>:
  - Publications
  - audio/visual
  - Scrapbooks
  - maps
  - electronic records

Arrangement: Levels

- <u>Collection/Record Group</u>: Established according to provenance
- <u>Series</u>: Groups of documents maintained together based on form, function, or activities (ie. correspondence, subject files, publications, notes, etc.).
- <u>Folder</u>: Detailed description of sections within each series (ie. correspondence arranged alphabetically or chronologically)
- <u>Item</u>: a single document within a folder (not usually described at this level—only if has intrinsic value)

Processing: Basics

- All steps taken to prepare materials for access and use

- Where to begin: It depends…size, resources, tools, reference demands, institutional needs and circumstances

- Establish **processing guidelines and manual** based on mission, resources, clientele, and priorities—A How To Manual

- Create **processing plans** for each collection after an initial survey of the collection—outlines level of processing, proposed organization, including series titles, and discusses issues relating to how the collection will be processed

Processing: Levels

- Implement methods to reduce backlogs and provide access to materials as quickly as possible
- Various levels of processing: Levels 1 to 5
  - Level 5: very minimal processing (no folder list);
  - Level 1: very high level processing (detailed folder list)

Processing: Getting Started

- Research history of organization or individual
- Survey records (determine if there is an original order, current organization)
- Preservation needs
- Indentify possible series
- Develop a strategy (processing plan)
- Implement the processing plan—process collection!!

Description: Finding Aid Structure

- Administrative information
- Biographical or Historical note
- Scope and Content note
- Container listing
- Hierarchical Structure
  - Collection:
    - Series
      - Folder
        - Item

Physical Order=Context

- Collection:
  - Series
    - Folder
      - Item

- Provides structure for naming conventions:
  - box1_fld1_001

Activity

➢New Collection Accession Form
➢Collection Processing Plan

Thank You

Jennifer R. O'Neal
University Historian and Archivist
University of Oregon

joneal@uoregon.edu