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SI 580 Understanding Records and Archives: Principles and Practices

Week 8 - Core Archival and Records Management Functions: Part Two
Key Concepts

- Physical control
- Intellectual control
- Administrative control
Accessioning

- Accessioning -- the process of gaining physical, administrative, and minimal intellectual control over records
- Involves physical and legal transfer of custody of records
Physical transfer

- usually based on an initial inventory of records; prepared as a records management activity or for appraisal

- requires careful supervision to retain the original order and as check for completeness of records transferred

- initial descriptive information establishes basic administrative control and rudimentary access
Legal transfer

- Transfer of ownership
- Transfer of authority and responsibility
  - access
  - privacy & confidentiality
  - security
Transfer instruments

- Institutional / Government archives
  - disposition schedules
  - transfer agreement
- Collecting archives
  - donor agreements
  - deeds of gift
Transfer of legal and physical custody are often synonymous…

…but there are exceptions:

• records placed on deposit

• non-custodial arrangements
Administrative issues

- authority to process (weed, reorganize, reformat)
- preservation needs v. capabilities
- access restrictions
- reproduction rights
- access to unprocessed materials
Physical control

- managing the physical integrity of records
- maintaining the original order of records
- identifying materials needing immediate treatment
Intellectual control

- compiling information about the materials from donors or creating agency
- compiling an initial inventory of the materials
Arrangement

- intellectual and physical process of putting archives & records into order in accordance with accepted archival principles, particularly...provenance and original order. (Ellis)

- work from general to specific

- distinguish between physical arrangement and intellectual arrangement (arranging boxes v. manipulating information about records)
Physical control

- organization of fonds, collections, record groups into series
- establishing order (arrangement) within series
- re-housing material
- weeding, elimination, separation of duplicates & non-archival material
- separation of special formats
Intellectual control

- Physical inventory of collections
  - series level
  - box and folder level
  - item level (uncommon)
Levels of Arrangement

- Holmes (1964)
  1. Repository
  2. Record Group/Manuscript Collection (& Sub-Groups, etc.)
  3. Series (& Sub-Series, etc.)
  4. File Unit
  5. Item

- Miller (1990)
  1. Repository
  2. Provenance
  3. Filing Structure
  4. Filing Unit
Arrangement and archival administration

- why is arrangement necessary?
  - establish original order
  - establish coherent order when original order has been lost
  - improve access
  - identify and deal with preservation problems
Description - definition

- Process of capturing, collating, analyzing, controlling, exchanging, and providing access to information about:
  - origin, context, and provenance of different sets of records
  - filing structure
  - form and content
  - relationships with other records
  - ways in which they can be found and used (Miller 1990)
Description - overview

- **Process:**
  - analysis, identification, organization

- **Purpose:**
  - control, access, retrieval

- **Products:**
  - finding aids
Levels of description

- Repository
- Fonds / Records Group / Collection
- Series
- Filing Unit
- Item
Descriptive Tools
(aka finding aids)

- **Internal Tools**
  - Accessioning Documentation
  - Creator-Supplied Finding Aids
  - Inventories
  - Series-Record Creator Linking Systems
  - Indexes and Catalogs

- **External Tools**
  - Guides
  - Summary Collective Descriptions
  - Specialized Descriptions
  - Websites
Descriptive elements

- title
- administrative / personal / family history
- scope and content note
- series descriptions
- administrative information
Series descriptions

- title
- inclusive dates
- quantity
- scope and content note
- physical characteristics
- arrangement
- inventory at box or folder level for each series
- related series
Administrative information

- name and location of repository
- control number
- access conditions
- processing notes
- other administrative notes
Descriptive standards

- Machine Readable Cataloging - MARC format for catalog records
- Encoded Archival Description - EAD for finding aids
- Describing Archives: A Content Standard - DACS
- Various data value standards
Standards for catalog records

- MARC:AMC - standard for structuring descriptive elements for archival materials and providing additional access points
- APPM (archives, personal papers, and manuscripts) - rules governing the content of fields in MARC format.
  - Superceded by -->
- DACS (Describing Archives: A Content Standard)

Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)

- “Used to create any type and/or level of description of archival and manuscript material, including catalog records and full finding aids.”
- “These systems can be of any type, ranging from simple paper-based files to complex digital information management systems. The output products of these systems—archival descriptions of all kinds and formats, printed on paper or encoded in EAD or MARC…”

Three parts:
- 1. Describing archival materials
- 2. Describing Creators
- 3. Forms of Names

- Defines 25 elements for creating descriptive systems: both single and multilevel.
Encoded Archival Description (EAD)

- convention for structuring archival finding aids and using SGML/XML to distinguish different structural parts of the finding aids to enhance search and retrieval

- purpose:
  - online delivery of finding aids
  - cross-collection searching of finding aids
  - cross-repository searching

See EAD Sources on CTools
Thank you!

Paul Conway
Associate Professor
School of Information
University of Michigan
www.si.umich.edu