SI 580 Understanding Records and Archives: Principles and Practices

Week 8 - Core Archival and Records Management Functions:

Part Two
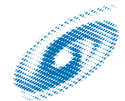
Key Concepts

- Physical control

- Intellectual control

- Administrative control
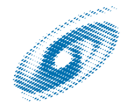
Accessioning

- Accessioning -- the process of gaining physical, administrative, and minimal intellectual control over records

- Involves <u>physical</u> and <u>legal</u> transfer of custody of records
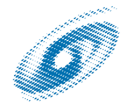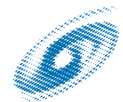
Physical transfer

- 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
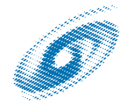
Transfer of legal and physical custody are often synonymous…

…but there are exceptions:

- records placed on deposit

- non-custodial arrangements
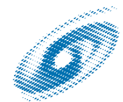
Administrative issues

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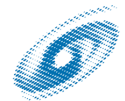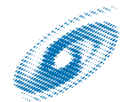
Physical control

- 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

- <u>intellectual and physical process</u> 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
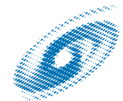
■ **Miller (1990)**

1. Repository
2. Provenance

3. Filing Structure
4. Filing Unit
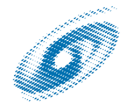
Arrangement and archival administration

- 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)
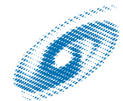
Description - overview

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

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

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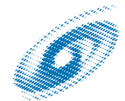
Levels of description

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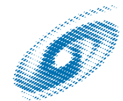
Descriptive Tools (aka finding aids)

- **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
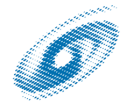
Descriptive elements

- title

- administrative / personal / family history

- scope and content note

- series descriptions

- administrative information
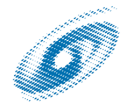
Series descriptions

- 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
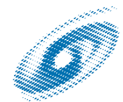
Descriptive standards

- 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

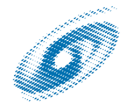- **MARC:AMC** - standard for structuring descriptive elements for archival materials and providing additional access points
- **APPM** (archives, personal papers, and manuscripts) - rules governing the content of fields in MARC format.
    - Superceded by -->
- **DACS** (Describing Archives: A Content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

DACS: http://www.archivists.org/catalog/pubDetail.asp?objectID=1279

Workshop: http://www.archivists.org/prof-education/workshop-detail.asp?id=2023

SCHOOL OF INFORMATION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
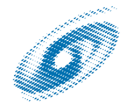
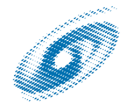# Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)

- "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
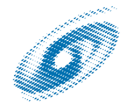
Thank you!

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