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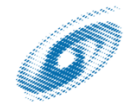
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SI 580 Understanding Records and Archives: Principles and Practices

Week 3 – The Nature of Archives



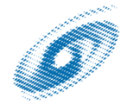
Themes of this week

Themes

- What is a record?
- Reliability and Authenticity
- Uniqueness
- Practical and Symbolic
- Key Archival Concepts

*“The historical record is, in a sense,
the largest database of all.”*

Yates, *Control Through Communication*, p. 275



What is a record?

Themes

What is a record?

Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

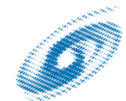
Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

■ SAA Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology

n. ~ 1. A written or printed work of a legal or official nature that may be used as evidence or proof; a document. – 2. Data or information that has been fixed on some medium; that has content, context, and structure; and that is used as an extension of human memory or to demonstrate accountability. – 3. Data or information in a fixed form that is created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity and set aside (preserved) as evidence of that activity for future reference. – 4. An instrument filed for public notice (constructive notice); see recordation. – 5. Audio · A phonograph record. – 6. Computing · A collection of related data elements treated as a unit, such as the fields in a row in a database table.– 7. Description · An entry describing a work in a catalog; a catalog record.

SAA Glossary: http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=54



What is a record?

Themes

What is a record?

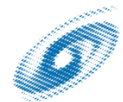
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Perspective on “record” influenced by your general view of the world:
 - Positive vs. post-modern
 - Logic and rules vs. discourse and power
- Records as a form of evidence
 - Subjective, situational, partial
- Records as a form of information
 - Recorded, created (received), maintained in business transaction
- Records **provide** evidence and information



What is a record?

Themes

What is a record?

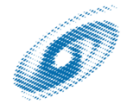
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Angelika Menne-Haritz: “what can be read in the texts [of records] is called information... What can be read between the lines, in signs, symbols, or even in the composition of texts ... is evidence.”
- ICA Committee on Electronic Records, 1997. (Yeo, pp. 325 and 330)
 - Records comprise “content, context, and structure sufficient to provide evidence” of the activities in which they were produced.
 - Provenance, physical and intellectual form, and incorporation in record-keeping system.



What is a record?

Themes

What is a record?

Reliability and authenticity

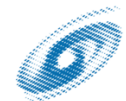
Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts p. 337

p. 136

- Records can be documents or byproducts; activities or probative.
- Yeo: Records are “**persistent representations** of activities...”
- “... or other **occurents**...”
- “... created by participants or observers of those occurents or by their authorized **proxies**...”
- “...or **sets** of such representations representing particular occurents.”



What is a record?

Themes

What is a record?

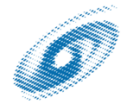
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Prototype: a mental model of typical features or an exemplar
 - Common example and fuzzy examples
 - Intention of the creator is paramount
 - Conscious/separate records versus unconscious and integrated records
- Information products and records = boundary objects



Forms and Record Formats

Themes

What is a record?

Reliability and authenticity

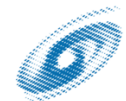
Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

Archival and Records Management Practice

- Public Records Exception to the Hearsay Rule
- Business Records Exception to the Hearsay Rule
 - at or near the time of the event
 - by or from a person with knowledge
 - in the regular course of business
 - as a regular practice of business
 - and a custodian of the records or other qualified witness can demonstrate to the court's satisfaction that these requirements are met
- Best Evidence Rule
- Implications for a Records Management Program
 - written procedures
 - training
 - audits



Reliability

Themes

What is a record?

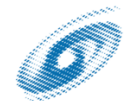
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- “... a record is considered reliable when it can be treated as a fact in itself, that is, as the entity of which it is evidence.” (p. 6)
 - Form (complete) in relation to needs of the socio-juridical system
 - Process of creation (body of rules)
- “... degree of completeness and degree of control of the procedure of creation are the only two factors that determine reliability of records.”



Original versus Copy

Themes

What is a record?

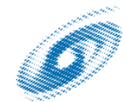
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- By nature original record is more reliable than a copy, because...first complete document with consequence
 - primitiveness
 - completeness
 - effectiveness
- Copies of original records can fully meet criteria for reliability and authenticity



Authenticity

Themes

What is a record?

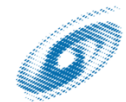
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- “...a record is authentic when it is the document that it claims to be.”
- “Authentic, unreliable records are of no use to present and future users.” (p. 8)
- “...electronic records might be authentic (because of a fairly high attention to security and transmission processes) but they are certainly not reliable.”
- ...we should be more concerned with the creation of reliable records....



Records Management Theory

Themes

What is a record?

Reliability and authenticity

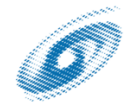
Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

Archival and Records Management Theory

- Dutch Manual (Muller, Feith, and Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, 1898)
 - Original order
 - Provenance
- Hilary Jenkinson (*A Manual of Archive Administration*, 1922, 1937)
 - Physical Defense of Archives
 - Moral Defense of Archives



Idea of Uniqueness in Archives

Themes

What is a record?

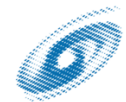
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Records (artifactual)
- Information (duplication/publication)
- Processes (functional view)
- Aggregations (distinct assemblages)



Idea of Uniqueness in Archives

Themes

What is a record?

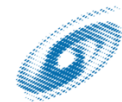
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Intangibility
- Mutability
- Readers and writers
- Connectability



Idea of Uniqueness in Archives

Themes

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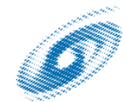
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Does uniqueness have any value today?
- How much of this idea uniqueness is associated with copying?
- How do we document uniqueness?



Symbolic archives

Themes

What is a record?

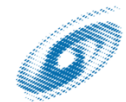
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Records are a mix of practical and symbolic
- Symbolic meaning affects form
- Symbolic record making
- Pomp and circumstance



Symbolic archives

Themes

What is a record?

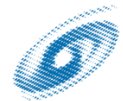
Reliability and authenticity

Uniqueness

Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Reverence for records
 - Domesday Book, 1086
 - Digitized in early 1980s
 - Rescued fifteen years later (CAMILEON)
 - <http://www.atsf.co.uk/dottext/domesday.html> for an overview of the original digitization effort.
 - <http://www.si.umich.edu/CAMILEON/domesday/domesday.html> for information on Camileon project's efforts to rescue the digital version.
 - <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue36/tna/> for *Ariadne* article (2003) on the rescue of the Domesday discs.
- Hostility toward records
 - Orwell's sense of controlling the past



Key concepts discussed

Themes

What is a record?

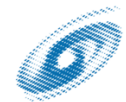
Reliability and authenticity

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Practical and symbolic

Key concepts

- Record
 - http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=54
- Provenance
 - http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=196
- Original order
 - http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=69
- Reliability
 - http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=55
- Authenticity
 - http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=9



Thank you!

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