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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.
  - Superseded 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!

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