THE USE OF STANDARDIZED PRACTICES FOR ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

All professions need a certain level of standardization and ethnics. This paper attempts to highlight some basic forms of standard to he adhered to at any level of Archival management. Archives being a form of management, the collection preservation, description and accessibility of the records by 'he Archivist, creating agents and users are very crucial. The methods may not be totally the same for all creating agencies but could be seriously similar. Standardization has therefore become a must even in the Archives profession w h e t h e r from the government, higher learning corporate organization individual/personal collection.

INTRODUCTION

It is a known fact that standardization is essential for even the crudest profession. Technical co-operation "Can only be successful if all parties involved attribute the same meaning to the same words. When using terminology in, for instance, finding aids, users are made to realize the specific meaning of technical terms. There is a purpose for keeping archives by creating agencies e.g:

1. by the government officers;
2. by individual' or corporate citizens:
3. by researchcenl

There are people responsible for the physical and intellectual control of records; these people have different responsibilities and communicate, in most cases without seeing each other or speaking to each other, even without knowing each other. They communicate in most cases in writing, be it legislation, instructions, catalogues, lists, letter or printed publications. The making of finding aids, sample list etc, become inevitable in standardization of archival practices.

FINDING AID

Finding aid is the equivalence of card catalogue in librarianship. It carries the full description of the material as arranged in the archives.

It could be listings by volume numbers, by authors or by topics. It could be kept on-line or manually in book form or cabinet format.

As long as records management at the administrative level is weak or failing, archivists will have to go on carrying the burden of cleaning up the mess. They will have to go on doing the sorting for transfer to either archives or for the destruction. In both cases they will have to make sample (class) list in order to be able to prove what has been retained and what has been disposed of.

(a) Items for destruction or disposal should be should be sorted under the keen supervision of a qualified archivist who ascertains that the document to be destroyed or disposed of does not survive destruction. This is done before any listing could be carried out.

b) Disposal should be arranged in such a way that none of the documents to be disposed of, survives destruction.

(c) Though more effective ways of making sample lists could be thought of, there is no need to produce these, as the preparation of sample lists is part of the training of new archival staff.

(d) In order to give more information to users, additional findings aids has to be prepared. These additional findings aids may not be as adequate as they should be.

(e) In some cases, files should be rearranged in a more appropriate way, as many files themselves contain no order.

(f) It should be considered that the actual use of class systems should be improved. Inventories of all records should be created by one archives creating-agency or officer.

Examples of from Wisconsin historical society findings aid and Texco State Archives and manuscripts are shown below:

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY FINDINGS AIDS

1. **Title: Brown County (Wis.). Registration of Deeds: Vital Statistics Records, 1820 - 1936**

   Creator: Brown County (Wis.). Register of Deeds

   Abstract: Marriage, birth and death certificates for Brown country filed from 1820 to 1936. Series 50, Series 51, and Series 52 contain the originals filed prior to 1908, which are indexed in file volumes in Series 47, Series 48, and Series 49.

2. **Title: Wisconsin. Circuit Court (Fond du Lac County): Naturalization Records, 1844-1974**

   Creator: Wisconsin. Circuit Court (Fond du Lac County).

   Abstract: Records of naturalization proceedings in the Circuit Court of Fond du Lac County, 1844 - 1974, and in the Municipal Court of Ripon, 1856 - 1906. Records include indexes to Declarations of Intention, Petitions and Orders Admitting to Citizenship (1844 1974); declarations of Intention (1844-1973); Petitions (1844 - 1974); Certificates of Naturalization (1884-1903); Orders Admitting to Citizenship (1844-1852); Orders Granting and Denying Citizenship (1929 - 1974; and Repatriations (1940-1965).

Findings aids listed above will also assist researchers in locating records of interest.

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCHERS

A standard Finding List should be able to guide the researchers on how the list is to be operated Such guide will reduce the archivist intervention in the use of the list by researchers The following guides relate to Texas State Archive:

"Visitors to the Texas State Archives are asked to read the guidelines for researchers. Every researcher is responsible for assisting in the preservation of the documents deposited in the Texas State Archives. Our rules are intended to protect and preserve these materials to ensure that the information they contain is available for subsequent visitors.

Records of the legislative and executive branches of state government and local government records held by the State Archives are subject to the provisions of Chapter 552 of the ***Texas Government Code****, also known as the* ***Public Information Act****. The Act makes records open for research with certain exceptions".*

Archives.

(ii) NATIONAL GUIDE

This is making a guide to the historic records of an organization to be unified. Such a guide will fit into the framework of existing Plan for a worldwide guide on the sources of history of member states.

The standards for Nigerian guide is being developed the National Library of Nigeria Experts have been engaged to draw up guides for the country. A national guide stipulates standards which have been accepted internationally It prescribes descriptive levels and practice for documents For any national guide to accepted internationally there must be

series of national workshops, seminars, consultations or round table meetings to discuss items to be included in the guide.

A national guide also stipulates standardization of descriptive levels and practices. A national guide could also serve as pilot-project for the introduction of word-processing in the archival profession. Any investment in such a guide would be useless unless the guide is updated properly and regularly.

(iii) ACCESS

Access regulations, which are rules governing use of materials should meet the needs of the country.

The guide should possibly cover archives and manuscripts kept by all public archives, at the federal, state and local level; archives of other public bodies, such as city archives and other local government archives railways companies, trading societies and so on; by libraries, museum and university; in private ownership, or churches, mosques and other religious bodies, and also by trade, industry and commerce. A guide of this kind is supposed to be the tradition in the profession and the use of more or less standardized practice at all levels.

Standardization of archival practice also has to do with the adherence to two basic principles, namely the principles of **provenance** and **original order**

Provenance refers to the context in which records have been created, received, maintained and used in the conduct of business. The principles of original order require us to maintain records on the order in which they were kept when in active use. These two principles make the archival profession so interesting and so complicated.

1. *PROVENANCE (RESPECT DES FOUNDS)*

Provenance refers to the context in which records have been created, received, maintained and used in the conduct of business. Archives of every creating entity have to be maintained separately from those of others. They have to be maintained separately thereby respecting the natural body of documents left by

the creating agent. This principle keeps records on the basis of their organizational origins.

2. ORIGINAL ORDER

The principles of original order require us to maintain records on the order in which they were kept when in active use. This presupposes that Archives should be retained in their original organizational pattern or structure and in their original filling arrangement.

LEVELS OF ORGANIZED RECORDS

1. Archive/record group
2. Sub-group
3. Series
4. Folder
5. Item by No. Or Alphabet

These groups of records are named "archive groups" or "record groups" They are the largest physical units established in archival institutions. They generally comprise the records accumulated by an entity that has separate or distinct functional responsibilities. An "archival sub-group" comprises the record - cumulated by a division of the larger organizational unit.

Within a "sub-group", records are maintained in "series". Series may consist of folders or items. Items can be loose or bound documents, or any other form of documents. However, archival groups may well have more than one folder. The same applies to subgroups. The reason for this is simple. Administration may change, or may continue the record series, or may decide to split them into two or more series or groups. With 'original order', archives should be retained in their original organizational pattern or structure and in their original filling arrangement in order to preserve all relationships with individual series, thereby enhancing their evidential value. Evidential value refers to the value of records for providing

authentic and adequate proof of agency's organization and function. In many instances it is impossible to establish what the original order was or to reconstruct it when there is distortion, misplacement or defacement. In that case it is up to the archivist to jealously guide the original order.

CONCLUSION

In summary, every professional archivist should aspire to operate under a level of standardization. This will help to maintain order but deplete inconsistencies in the system. It will ease collection, retention, description, presentation and retrieval. If standards are not applied the records may not only be mismanaged discrepancies will abound in the record which can result in a very serious professional hazards in locating records even when those records have already been collected. It is therefore no gainsaying that maintaining a standard in all forms of archives is a must for the Archivist.

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