Archives: An Overview

Patrick H. Shea

Chief Curator of Archives and Manuscripts

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Today's Program

- **Patrick Shea, Chief Curator of Archives & Manuscripts**
  - What is an Archive? What is Archival?
  - The Archives Profession
  - Archives of Science and Scientists
  - Why Save? What? Where?
  - CHF Archives Appraisals and Acquisitions
- **Andrew Mangravite, Senior Archivist**
  - CHF Archival Holdings – Overview and Highlights
  - Archival Processing – Arrangement, Description, Preservation
  - Access and Reference – Finding Aids, Databases
- **Hillary Kativa, Archivist for Photographic Collections**
  - Photographic Collection Holdings – Overview and Highlights
  - Unique Challenges – Identification, Description, Preservation, Copyright
- **Sarah Newhouse, Digital Collections Archivist**
  - Electronic Records and Digital Collections Overview
- **Archival Staff - Q&A**

...this is not an archive.

Also not an Archive

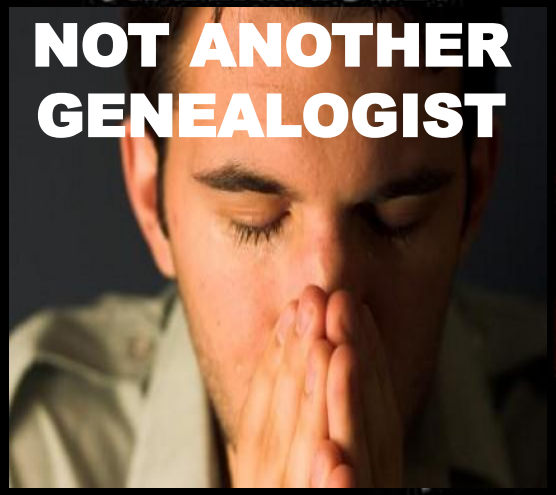
Archivists

what my friends think I do

what my mom thinks I do

what society thinks I do

what my boss thinks I do



what I think I do

what I really do

Archivists

What Do Archivist Do?

- Protect, arrange and describe materials.
- Maintain records and databases.
- Copy records into accessible formats.
- Determine the authenticity and value of historical documents.
- Research the historic significance of archival materials.
- Find new materials and supervise their acquisition and use.
- Help people access archival materials.
- Coordinate tours, lectures, and other educational programs.
- Lift heavy record containers.

What Should Be Saved?

- Architectural records
- Articles of incorporation
- Charters
- Audio recordings
- Budgets
- Bylaws and revisions
- Clippings
- Constitution and revisions
- Correspondence
- Directories
- Financial statements
- Handbooks
- Legal documents
- Memoranda
- Minutes of meetings
- Membership lists
- Film and videotape
- Newsletters
- Organizational charts
- Pamphlets, brochures, fliers
- Photographs
- Planning documents
- Press releases
- Reports
- Rosters
- Scrapbooks
- Speeches
- Subject files
- Tax returns

Quality of the Archival Record

- **Uniqueness**: The information in the records must be more complete and useful than can be found in other existing sources. The records should also not be duplicated in any other repository.
- **Form**: Records that provide concentrated information (e.g., some information about many people, or in-depth information about a few people) are the best candidates for retention.
- **Importance**: Although the value for long-term scholarly and public research is difficult to determine, archivists generally try to document those subjects, people, and events that are considered important by society. Following recent trends in historical scholarship is also necessary to ensure that the most sought after collections are being preserved.
- **Value**: Assesses Informational Value, not monetary value. Primary Value is the reason a record was created in the first place, Secondary Value is how they will be used by researchers or users other then the creator. Intrinsic Value are characteristics such as artistic qualities, uniqueness, or association with a famous individual.

Types of Archival Repositories

- **College and University Archives:** preserve materials relating to a specific academic institution.
- **Corporate Archives:** serve the needs of company staff members and to advance business goals. *Examples: Monsanto, American Cyanamid, Quaker Chemical, Merck, and Shell Oil.*
- **Government Archives:** collect materials relating to local, state, or national government entities. *Examples: The National Archives, Presidential Libraries, the Pennsylvania State Archives.*
- **Historical Societies:** preserve and promote interest in the history of a region, historical period, or subject. *Examples: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the National Railway Historical Society, the Germantown Historical Society.*
- **Religious Archives:** relate to the traditions of a major faith or individual places of worship. *Examples: Presbyterian Historical Society, American Jewish Archives, Vatican Secret Archives.*
- **Special Collections:** institutions that contain materials from individuals, families, and organizations deemed to have significant historical value. Topics collected in special collections vary widely and will often be a department within a library, holding the library's rarest collections. *Examples: Chemical Heritage Foundation, Rockefeller Archive Center*

"We have a habit in writing articles published in scientific journals to make the work as finished as possible, to cover all the tracks, to not worry about the blind alleys or to describe how you had the wrong idea at first…. There isn't any place to publish, in a dignified manner, what you actually did in order to get to do the work."

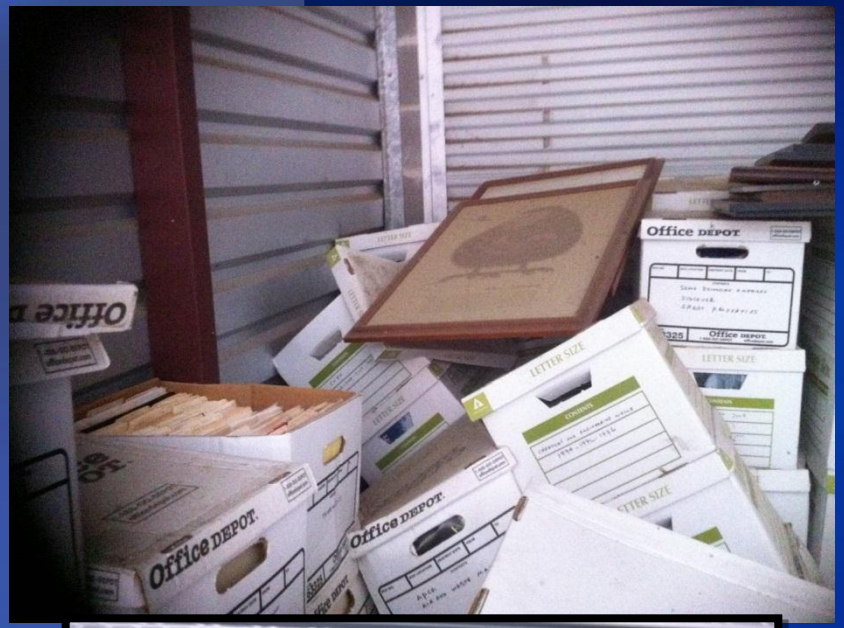
-Richard Feynman

(Nobel Prize Lecture - December 11, 1965)

Archives: What Can You Do?

Who Should Save?
What Should Be Saved?
Where To Save?
When To Save?

The Chemical Heritage Foundation Archives


Office DEPOT
LETTER SIZE

File Stor
Office DEPOT
LETTER SIZE
File Storage Box

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Appraisal & Selection

Appraisal Considerations

- Who created the collection? Why? When?
- What is in the collection? What is the historical context ?
- How large is the collection? How old is it? Is the collection complete or fragmentary?
- What types of media are found in the collection?
- What is the condition of the collection?
- Are there any complications involved in accepting this collection? Can valid title be passed to CHF?
- Will there be restrictions on the use of the collection?
- Does the collection fit with the CHF Mission and Collections Policy?
- What is its relationship to other collections in the Archives?
- Does the Collection match with existing trends in science and technology studies? Does the collection meet the needs of our existing clientele?

Appraisal Considerations (continued)

- Is the material old, scarce, unique? Does it document a significant time period? Does it document a large or short period of time?
- Which office, department, or individual created the record? What is the position of the record creator? What point-of-view or biases might the record creator have?
- Is the material intrinsically valuable? Is it unique or artistic? Does it document a first, or something famous?
- Does the material hold sufficient evidential and informational value to warrant permanent preservation?
- Is it the only/ best source of this information? Is it authentic? Is it disputable?

Acquisition and Accession