Archives 101

Access

Preservation
What are archives?

The facility, the collections, the agency/organization

Typically materials not found/accessible elsewhere

“Records of enduring value”

May be collections you take in from other orgs/individuals

May be materials your institution generated

Might specialize in specific topics, geographic areas, types of media

Might be public access, public access with restrictions, institutional access, assets used for exhibition/internal purposes only
The twin pillars of archivy

Provenance

• Tracking—and keeping—archival materials together based on who created them and/or collected them.

• Knowing the history of the creation of the documentation and the custody chain thereafter.

Original order

• Retaining or re-establishing the arrangement of the materials so they are maintained as the creator/collector would have had them sorted.
Other elements of the archival mindset

Collection level description as the starting point.

Just because it’s old, doesn’t mean it’s archival. (Archival stuff can be new, too!)

Archival appraisal is about evaluating the value of the materials to your organization and to your users.

You can throw stuff out.

Supervised use of materials. Non-circulating materials.

Copyright applies to non-published materials. Copyright does not have to be registered to be in place. US Copyright code is a pain as applied to archival materials.

Archives aren’t just about/for historians.
Archival descriptive standards

National/international descriptive standards:

- DACS Describing Archives, A Content Standard
- LCSH, LCNA, TGM, METS, MODS, PBCore, Dublin Core, EAD, MARC, PREMIS

Things there aren’t national standards/best practices for:

- file naming conventions
- call numbers
- organization of/how you make accessible descriptive material
Archives and intersections with other disciplines

• Knowledge/information management
• Libraries
• Museums
• Records management
How do you prioritize what you do and how you do it?

In no particular order:

• Your mission
• Your goals
• Your users
• Ethically
• Keep in mind you won’t be around forever: will your successors down the line be able to figure out your stuff?
Contact Me:

Arlene Schmuland
Head, Archives & Special Collections
UAA/APU Consortium Library

abschmuland@alaska.edu 907-786-1849

lam.alaska.gov