



## **Archival Guide for Districts**

**Note:** This Guide has been adapted from the RTO/ERO Archival Guide based on work done at the RTO/ERO Office by an archivist hired on contract to formalize procedures for archival materials housed by Districts. It is acknowledged that not all sections will apply to all Districts.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the District Archival Guide is to provide direction and assistance to Districts in developing their own local archival procedures for the proper and structured maintenance of their own archival materials. In doing so, Districts will:

- Provide context surrounding the collection as a whole through a description of its scope and content, organization, custodial history, and media;
- Outline the archival principles that guide the organization, searching and maintenance of the collection, and basic user guidelines;
- Provide key considerations for preservation, including storage recommendations;
- Outline digitization guidelines;
- Outline steps for depositing material in the archive; and
- Identify future archival projects.

### **Collection Description**

- Provide the start and end dates for the collection
- Outline the physical extent of the collection, i.e. the number of boxes of textual materials (minutes, newsletters, documents), photographs, artifacts (promotional/marketing materials, etc.)
- List the languages in which materials are printed

### **Organization:**

List the categories, or series, that summarize logical or practical divisions of the various records and materials that reflect the various aspects of your District.

### **Custodial History and Record Retention:**

List where your District's materials and records were held/stored previously and where they will be stored moving forward. Indicate in what manner they will be preserved and by whom.

## **Collections Management and Access**

Managing the collections in a consistent manner is key to ensure that the District's records are preserved for future use. In order to access and maintain physical and intellectual control over the material it is important to outline the key principles that guide how they are organized and described.

### **Archival vs. non-archival records**

The organization and appraisal of RTO/ERO's records is based on core archival principles around what constitutes an archival record and how this information is arranged. Generally, most archival records are considered to be those that are organically produced through the activities of a particular organization or individual.

In the case of RTO/ERO's records, they are principally those created by the organization itself (there are some exceptions where material is held from affiliated organizations). When future deposits are made to the archive it is important to distinguish who is the creator.

### **Physical vs. intellectual arrangement**

Archives are organized in two ways:

Physical arrangement refers to how the files are arranged within a box, filing cabinet, etc. When possible, archivists maintain the original order that the documents were placed in as this can shed light on how the records were used and helps preserve the relationship between records.

Intellectual arrangement is the organization that is imposed on the records through their description. The categories that are assigned to each file intellectually organize the files within natural groupings that help a user find a particular record.

### **Numbering system and location**

Both the textual and photographic files should be numbered sequentially through the entire archive so that each file has a unique number. Maintaining this numbering system is key as it ensures that the corresponding description is permanently linked with a particular file. While this may seem like common sense, it is important to reiterate as this numbering system ensures that the files are kept in their respective locations and that descriptions refer to the right record. This is especially important when working with the photographic material, as there is often multiple images or negatives contained in one folder and these can be very difficult to identify if they are misplaced.

### **General guidelines for staff, volunteers, and users**

- No food or drink when handling the records, either textual or photographic records.
- For photographic records, gloves must be worn if touching either prints or negatives outside of their archival sleeves.
- It is critical that the order of the archival records remains intact. Please do not change the order of the files within a container, or items within a file, and please make sure documents are returned to their correct folder.
- Materials should not be taken offsite.
- No marks of any kind are to be made on any of the material. Please use pencils to take notes.
- Please avoid placing notepads on top of materials or leaning directly on archival records. Do not use "post-it" or other self-sticking notes, staples or paper clips on archival records.
- If photocopying, materials should not be sent through the automatic feeder and instead only placed on the flatbed scanner to avoid inadvertent damage.
- Avoid any direct sunlight on records for extended periods of time.

### **Storage**

The physical preservation of archival material is dependent on the handling and storage of records. The user guidelines (above) outline the basic handling procedures for the textual and photographic records. All material should be stored in proper archival quality sleeves and folders, which help limit acidification.

One of the primary preservation considerations is how to create a favourable environment for the material. This ideally would be an area where the temperature is able to be controlled and where there is little risk of water damage. Most generally, a cooler and drier environment is the most beneficial to the collections. Recommendations for storing mixed media collections are the following:

- Material should be stored off the floor, away from direct sunlight, or sources of water (avoid basements and attics).
- Temperatures should be kept between 18 and 20 °C with relative humidity at 40% (+/-10%).
- Dehumidifiers are a low cost option in creating and maintaining a relatively stable humidity level (ensure that the unit is positioned so that a leak or overflow will not endanger the collection).
- Avoid large fluctuations in either temperature or relative humidity levels.
- Designate a District Executive member to monitor the environment.
- List records currently held in the fire-proof safe.

The preservation of records relies not only on the physical storage and handling of material, but its active oversight and management. Similar to digital records, the greatest risk to the integrity of the archive is misplaced records. For this reason, there should be a District Executive member/volunteer who is responsible for oversight of the collection and who makes sure that records are returned to the archive.

The following steps should be taken when depositing material in the archive:

- Use an archival file folder to store material (new file folders are held with archival material, more can be ordered through Carr McLean).
- Name the file folder starting with type of material (i.e. minutes, senate package), followed by the title of the document, event, or general topic of the file's contents, and the span of dates that the file includes; for example: **Minutes, Provincial Executive, August 21, 2016.**
- Add a file number to the file folder.

### **Digitization**

Digitizing textual and photograph material amplifies the accessibility of what is held in an archive and in some cases also helps preserve the original material from handling and loss. While mass digitization has its benefits, it can also require extensive resources and must be planned and handled with a level of consistency in order maximize its effectiveness. These are some primary considerations when digitizing material:

#### **Selection of material**

If planning a mass digitization initiative, material should be selected with pre-defined criteria (based on organizational need). An initial selection has been flagged in the photograph inventory based on the historical and aesthetic value of the images. For textual material, it is recommended that digitization begin with the organization's earliest newsletters.

#### **File organization and naming**

Once scanning has begun, it is important that a consistent naming convention be adopted and files are stored in a single folder so as not to duplicate efforts in the future. In order to both link photographs and documents to their digital copies and keep a consistent naming convention, it is recommended that the numbers listed in the inventory be used to identify the corresponding digital file. There is also a column within the inventories to identify and track material that has been digitized.

#### **Master and access images**

When digitizing archival content two types of images are created: the master or preservation image and a lower resolution image that can be easily sent and copied. It is important to start with the higher resolution master image (saved in TIFF) and from this image, save a smaller access image (in JPEG).

TIFF files are considered to be a lossless file format, meaning that it is ideal format for longer-term use.

**Identifying individuals in photographs**

For those images where individuals are not easily identified, a “crowd-sourcing” method (sharing with as many members as possible) to identify particular individuals could be used. To later verify the names proposed, refer back to issues of newsletters, depending on the type of involvement of the individual, or do a simple Google search to see if an image is available that can be used to confirm the identity of an individual. Disclaimers (in the publication notes or credits) are often used when displaying archival images. These indicate that individuals have been identified retrospectively and to please contact the organization should a reader/ viewer have additional information or see the need for a correction.

As is often the case when looking back at historical material, it can be difficult to produce names for every individual within an image. In this case, create captions that generalize the content of an image and identify those who are known. An example would be: *Group portrait of members during Fall Senate meeting, including Marshall McLuhan and Margaret Atwood.* Or, *Snapshot of Marshall McLuhan with an unidentified individual.*

**Technical specifications for master images (minimum)**

Document type	File format	Resolution	Bit depth	Colour
Paper documents	TIFF, PDF	200 ppi (at 8.5x11)	8	RGB (Adobe 1998)
Photographic prints	TIFF	300 ppi (at 8x10)	8	RGB (Adobe 1998) * should always be in colour regardless of whether original is in b&w or colour
Photographic negatives	TIFF	300ppi (at 8x10)	8	RGB (Adobe 1998)
Book imaging	TIFF	300 ppi (at 8x10)	8	RGB (Adobe 1998)