

ARCHIVES TERMINOLOGY – SELECT TERMS

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Italics indicates a term defined elsewhere in this list

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ALPHABETICAL LIST OF TERMS

AABC – acronym for Archives Association of British Columbia

ACA - acronym for Association of Canadian Archivists

ANA - acronym for Archives Network of Alberta

ANLA – acronym for Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives

ASA - acronym for Archives Society of Alberta

ACCESS – The process of providing archival material for use through reference services, *finding aids* and *retrieval*. (*1)

ACCESS POINT - A name, term, etc. by which a descriptive record may be searched and identified (8)

ACCESSION – a. (v.) to accession or accessioning - The act and procedures involved in a transfer of legal title and the taking of *records* into the physical *custody* of an archives. (*2)

b. (n.) The process by which a *fonds*, *collection* or *item* enters the holdings of an archives. (*1)

c. (n.) *Fonds*, *collection* or *item* acquired at one time from single source. (1)

ACCRUAL – An *acquisition* of archival material belonging to a *fonds* or *collection* already in the *custody* of a repository. (1)

ACQUISITION – a. The process or activity by which an *item*, *fonds* or *collection* enter the *custody* of an archives. (*1)

b. An addition to the holdings of an archives by transfer, deposit, purchase, gift or bequest. (*1)

ACTIVE RECORDS – also Semi-active *records* - See *Record*

ADMINISTRATIVE VALUE -- The usefulness or significance of *records* to support ancillary operations and the routine management of an organization. Traditionally, archivists have seen administrative value as transient. For administrative *records* to be considered archival, they must also possess other values. (9)

ANALOG – See *Electronic record*

APPRAISAL – The process of determining the archival *value* and disposition of *records* based on their former administrative, legal and fiscal use; their *evidential* and *informational value*; their arrangement; and their relationship to other *records*. Also known as “selective retention.” (*2)
Not to be confused with *Monetary value*.

ARCHIVAL PROCESS - The set of activities carried out by an archives to provide access to archival *fonds* and *records*. Activities are: *acquisition appraisal, accessioning, arrangement, description, preservation management* and *access*. The term processing generally pertains to *appraisal, arrangement, description* and *preventive conservation*. (11)

ARCHIVAL VALUE – A value which justifies the preservation of archival materials. (*1)

ARCHIVE/S – a. (n.) The non-current *records* of a person(s), organization or *corporate body* preserved because of their enduring *value*; also referred to as “archival holdings”. (2)

b. (n.) The building, or part thereof, where archival *records* are housed; also referred to as “archival repository”. (*2)

c. (n.) The agency or program responsible for acquiring, caring for and providing *access* to archival *records*. (*1)

d. (n.) Archives profession - person practicing this profession is known as an archivist.

e. (v.tr.) To place or store in an archive (5)

f. In computing - (n) A store of (usually large amounts of) data kept in machine-readable form (*5)

(v.tr) Transfer data to a store of less frequently used files (5)

ARCHIVES CANADA – Online database of archival descriptions drawn from provincial and territorial networks such as *ANA*. Previously known as the Canadian Archival Information Network (*CAIN*). (11)

ARCHIVIST - a. An individual responsible for appraising, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to *records* of →

enduring *value*, according to the *principles* of *provenance*, *original order*, and collective control to protect the materials' authenticity and context. (9)
b. An individual responsible for the management and oversight of an archival repository or of *records* of enduring *value*. (9)

ARRANGEMENT – The organization of archival materials according to accepted archival principles and practices.
Intellectual arrangement involves the organization of a *fonds* or *collection* according to the archival principles.
Physical arrangement involves activities such as sorting, numbering, foldering, labeling, boxing and shelving. (*1)

ARTIFACT - Man-made, physical object. Even though documents and other two-dimensional materials are artifacts because of their physical nature, 'artifact' is often used to distinguish three-dimensional materials from two-dimensional materials. Many fonds or collections contain artifacts among other more traditional visual and textual material, such as a campaign button filed with the flyer documenting an individual's political career. (*9)

ARTIFACTUAL VALUE - The usefulness or significance of an object based on its physical or aesthetic characteristics, rather than its intellectual *content*. (9)

AUDIOVISUAL RECORDS - Works that consist of a series of related images that are intrinsically intended to be shown by the use of machines or devices, together with accompanying sounds, if any. (*9)

AUTHORITY LIST - Relative index showing key words by which subjects are classified. (2)

BCA – acronym for Bureau of Canadian Archivists/le Bureau canadiens des archivists. The Bureau is a joint agency of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) and the Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ).

BEQUEST – A gift made through a will (11)

CAIN - acronym for Canadian Archival Information Network (now *Archives Canada*) (11)

CCA - acronym for Council of Canadian Archives

CALENDAR - A *finding aid* that is a chronological listing of *documents* in a collection [*fonds*] which may be comprehensive or selective, and which may include details about the writer, recipient, date, place, *content*, type of document, etc. (*9) →

Typical of finding aids produced until the mid-twentieth century, but rarely produced today. (11)

CARTOGRAPHIC RECORD - A *record* containing information depicting, in graphic or photogrammetric form, a portion of the linear surface of the earth or of a celestial body (such as maps, charts, plans and related materials including globes, atlases, topographic and hydrographic charts, cartograms and relief models, and aerial *photographs*). (8)

CASE FILE - A file of *documents* generated by the Archives during the *acquisition* and *processing* of a *fonds* or *collection*. (11)

COLLECTION – a. An artificial accumulation of documents of any *provenance*, brought together on the basis of some common characteristic (eg. subject, theme, or media), that may be described as a unit under a common title. The person or body that accumulated a collection is the collector. (*1)
b. Commonly used in singularly or plural form to refer to the total holdings of a repository. (2)
c. Previously used to refer to what is now correctly known in Canada as a *fonds* (11)

CONSERVATION – See *Preservation*

CONSERVATION TREATMENT - The component of *preservation* that deals with the physical or chemical treatment of damaged archival materials, to improve their condition or to prevent further deterioration. (1)
Conservation treatment is carried out by a *conservator*. (*1)

CONSERVATOR - A professional trained in the theories and practices of conservation. (*1)

CONTENT - The intellectual substance of a document, including text, data, symbols, numerals, images, and sound. Along with context and structure, content is one of the three fundamental aspects of a record. (9)

COPYRIGHT – Legal rights of the author of a *document* and his/her heirs or assignee to publish or reproduce the *document* or to authorize publication or reproduction of it. (*1)

CORPORATE BODY - Group of persons regarded collectively especially as having a corporate function. (5)

CREATOR – The individual, family, or *corporate body* that creates and uses, or receives and uses, archival materials. (*1)

CULTURAL PROPERTY - Objects, collections, specimens, structures or sites identified as having artistic, historic, scientific, religious, or social significance. (10)

CUSTODY – The guardianship of archival *records* which preferably includes both physical possession (protective responsibility) and legal title (legal responsibility). (*2)

DPP - acronym for Disaster Preparedness Planning

DEACIDIFICATION - *Preservation* technique intended to increase the longevity of paper documents by raising the pH value (acidity level) to at least 7.0 (neutral), and often including the deposit of an alkaline buffer. (9)

DEPOSIT – v. To transfer *records* or other materials to a repository without transfer of title. Same as loan. (9)

n. – Materials placed in a repository by such action. (9)

See also *Loan*

DESCRIPTION – a. The recording of information in a standardized form about the structure, function and *content* of archival materials. The Canadian standard for *description* is the *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)* developed by the *Bureau of Canadian Archivists (BCA)*. (*1)
b. The intellectual representation of the fonds and its physical characteristics. (11)

DIGITAL – see *Electronic record*

DOCUMENT – n. Recorded information. See also *Record*. (8)

v. To record into a document. (5)

DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE - The totality of all *records* preserved. Phrase can be applied to a nation, community or organization. (11)

DONATION - Material for which legal title is transferred from one party to another without compensation. Same as gift. (9)

ELECTRONIC RECORD - Data or information that has been captured and fixed for storage and manipulation in an automated system and that requires the use of the system to render it intelligible by a person. Known previously as a machine-readable record. Electronic *records* most often refers to *records* created in electronic format (born digital), but is some times used to describe scans of *records* in other formats (reborn digital or born analog). (9) →

Digital: representing information through a sequence of discrete units, especially binary code. Analog: continuously varying in correlation to a physical process (9)

Digital photographs capture and record images that are printed using a non-photographic print process. (9)

ENCAPSULATION - The process of placing a document between sheets of plastic (usually polyester) sealed at the edges, thereby providing significant support and protection. Does not protect against continued chemical deterioration of the document and may accelerate deterioration. (9)

Not to be confused with lamination, an inappropriate process for archival preservation that irreversibly fuses layers of materials together. (11)

EPHEMERA - Materials, usually printed *documents*, created for a specific, limited purpose, and generally designed to be discarded after use. Examples include advertisements, tickets, brochures, and receipts. Individuals often collect ephemera as mementos or souvenirs. Personal collections of ephemera are often kept in scrapbooks. (*9)

EPHEMERAL VALUE - Useful or significant for a limited period of time. (9)

ETHICS – Moral principles; rules of conduct. (5)

A Code of Ethics for Canadian archivists was developed by the Association of Canadian Archivists (1999) (11)

EVIDENTIAL VALUE – The value of the *records* of a particular individual, family, organization or *corporate body* necessary to provide an authentic and adequate documentation of its organization and functioning. (*2)

EXTENT – (In archival *description*;) The number and specific material designation of the physical units of the material being described. (*1)

FOIPP – acronym for Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (Alberta)

FILE – a. An organized unit of *documents*, often within a *series*, relating to the same activity, transaction or subject. A file differs from a *folder*. One file may be stored in several *folders*. (*1)
b. A *level of description*. (1)

FINDING AIDS – Descriptive tools containing information that provides a context for *records*, explains their *arrangement*, and facilitates their *retrieval*. Examples of basic findings aids are *guides*, *inventories* and *indexes* in printed or electronic form. Finding aids may be national, regional or local. (*1)

FISCAL VALUE - The usefulness or significance of *records* containing financial information that is necessary to conduct current or future business or that serves as evidence of financial transactions. (9)

FOLDER - An archival storage enclosure, generally made of paper, covering a set of documents (11)

FONDS – The whole of *records*, regardless of form or medium, created and/or accumulated and used by a particular individual, family, organization or *corporate body* in the course of that *creator's* activities and kept for future reference. (*1)

FUMIGATION - The process of exposing *records* to a gas or vapor which destroys insects, mould, mildew, fungus or other harmful forms of life. (3)
Fumigation presents significant health risk for humans. (11)

GIFT - See *Donation*

GUIDE – A broad description of the holdings at one or more *archives*, typically at the *fonds* level. Types of guides include subject, thematic, repository and inter-repository. (*9)

HIERARCHY - A system in which classes are ranked one above the other. (*5)

HYGROMETER - An instrument which measures relative humidity. (3)

INACTIVE RECORDS – See *Record*

INDEX - An ordered *list* of headings that points to relevant information in materials that are organized in a different order. Generally, an index provides no explanation about the information it points to beyond its location. (*9)

INFORMATIONAL VALUE – The value of a *record* that provides unique and permanent information for purposes of research. (2)

INTRINSIC VALUE - The usefulness or significance of an *item* derived from its physical or associational qualities, inherent in its original form and generally independent of its *content*, that are integral to its material nature and would be lost in reproduction. Intrinsic value is independent of informational or evidential value. A record may have great intrinsic value without significant informational or evidential value; *records* with significant informational or evidential value may have little intrinsic value. (*9)

INVENTORY – A listing of materials with descriptive details usually arranged systematically. Inventories may take a number of formats such as electronic, sheet, book, card or microform. Sometimes referred to as a catalogue. (*1)

ITEM - A thing that can be distinguished from a group and that is complete in itself. Generally considered to be the smallest archival unit. An item may consist of several physically discrete pieces (eg. pages of a letter or photograph prints in an album), but is treated as an item because of its *content*. (*9)

LEGAL VALUE - The usefulness or significance of *records* to document and protect the rights and interests of an individual or organization, to provide for defense in litigation, to demonstrate compliance with laws and regulations, or to meet other legal needs. (9)

LEVEL OF DESCRIPTION – Level, in the *arrangement*, of the unit being described: *fonds, sous-fonds, series, sub-series, file, record* or item. (*1)

LIFE CYCLE - The series of developmental stages of *records*, from creation to disposition. (*5)

LIST – A written series of discrete items. A list may be ordered or random. The items in a list may be of any nature and the list may contain different types of items. (9)

LOAN - The temporary transfer of materials from one party to another. (9)
See also *Deposit*

LOCATION REGISTER – An internal *finding aid* that *records* the storage location of archival materials. As a security measure, many archives do not include the storage location in finding aids used by the general public. Also known as a location index or location list. (*9)

MAIN ENTRY – The heading used as the principal access point. The main entry is usually the name of the individual chiefly responsible for the intellectual or artistic content of a work, a corporate entity, or the title of the work. (*9)
The main entry of a *fonds* is the *provenance* of the fonds. (11)

MANUSCRIPT – a. A book, *document*, etc. written by hand (5)
b. An author's text (as for submission for publication) (*5)
c. In an archival institution, manuscript can also refer to an unpublished *record*. (11)

MONETARY APPRAISAL – The monetary evaluation of *records*; to determine the financial *value* of potential *acquisitions* based on current fair market value. (*1,*2)

MULTIMEDIA RECORD - *Record* that combines two or more media types, which, for reasons of intellectual continuity, must be conceived of as a unit. (8) (eg. slide-tape program, scrapbook)

MULTIPLE MEDIA FONDS – A *fonds* containing more than one broad class of material. (*8)

ORAL HISTORY - a. An interview that *records* an individual's personal recollections of the past and historical events. (9)
b. The audio or video recordings, transcripts and other materials that capture and are associated with such an interview. (9)

ORIGINAL ORDER – The *principle* that an archivist retains the arrangement within a *fonds* as established by its *creator*. (1)

PIPA – acronym for Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (Canada)

PAPERS - *Records*, including *manuscripts*, typescripts, and clippings, primarily created on sheets of paper. “Papers” was previously used (and is sometimes still casually used) to refer to what is now correctly known in Canada as a *fonds*. (11)

PERSONAL INFORMATION - Information about an identifiable individual but [that] does not include the name, title or business address or telephone number of an employee of an organization. (6)

PHOTOGRAPH – a. A still picture formed on a light-sensitive surface using an optical system and fixed by a photochemical process (9)
b. An image rendered using a camera (9)
Digital photographs capture and record images that are printed using a non-photographic print process. (9)

POLICY – A basic guide to action that describes the boundaries within which activities are to take place. (2)

PRESERVATION – The professional discipline of protecting materials by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage to minimize the loss of information and to extend the life of *cultural property*. (9)

PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT - Archival program involving a systematic, planned approach to the stabilization and long term survival of the physical form and/or the information of archival *records*. (*7)

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION – Measures to prevent damage and deterioration of archival materials through proper storage, careful handling, environmental standards/regulation, reformatting, security, emergency planning and ongoing assessment. (*1)

PRIMARY VALUE - Value of the *record* to the *record creator*. Examples of primary values are *administrative value*, *legal value* or *fiscal value*. (11)

PRINCIPLE – A fundamental truth or law as the basis of reasoning or action (5)

PROCESSING – See *Archival process*

PROVENANCE – The individual, family or *corporate body* that created, accumulated and/or maintained and used *records* prior to their transfer to an archives. The *principle of provenance* states that *records* of the same *provenance* should not be inter-filed with those of any other *provenance*. (1)

RAD – acronym for *Rules for Archival Description*. RAD is the Canadian standard for archival description. RAD2 is the second edition (2005) of the Rules for Archival Description. (11)

RECORD – Recorded information regardless of medium or characteristics. Frequently used interchangeably with *document*. Types of *records* include *textual record*, *visual record*, *cartographic record*, *audiovisual record*, *sound recording* and *electronic record* (*2)

Active records - Continue to be used with sufficient frequency to justify keeping them in the office of creation; current *records*

Semi-active records - Seldom used in day-to-day operations and appropriate for off-site storage

Inactive records - No longer used in the day-to-day course of business, but which may be preserved and occasionally used for legal, historical, or operational purposes (9)

Archives are concerned with inactive *records* only

RECORD GROUP – a. *Fonds*. Record group is the term used by American archivists. (11)

b. A group of *records* that share the same *provenance* and are of a convenient size for administration. A hierarchical division that is sometimes equivalent to *provenance*, representing all the *records* of an agency and its subordinate divisions. However, the *records* of a large agency →

may be broken into several record groups, treating the *records* of different divisions as separate collections [*fonds*] rather than as a *series*. (*9)

RECORDS CENTRE - A facility used for low-cost storage of *inactive records* and *semi-active records* before those *records* are destroyed or transferred to an *archives*. (*9)

RECORDS MANAGEMENT - The act of controlling the creation, use, and disposition of *records* created by an office or agency. Records management helps to improve economy and efficiency in the office, ensure the regular *transfer* of valuable *records* to a *records centre*, and control the regular disposal of *records* no longer worth keeping. (3)
The systematic and administrative control of *records* throughout their *life cycle* to ensure efficiency and economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, and disposition. (9)

RECORDS SCHEDULE - Schedule that guides the *transfer* of *inactive records* to the *Archives*. (11)

RESPECT DES FONDS – The *principle* that the *records* of a person, family or *corporate body* must be kept together in their *original order*, if it exists, and not be combined with the *records* of another individual or *corporate body*. (*1)

RETRIEVAL - a. Process of locating and withdrawing archival materials from storage. (1)
b. Action of recovering information on a given matter from stored data. (1)

RULES FOR ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION – Standardized rules for the description of archival materials in Canada. Commonly known as *RAD*. (11)

SECONDARY VALUE - Value of the record to others than the creator. Examples are *evidential value*, *informational value* and *intrinsic value*. (11)

SELECTIVE RETENTION - see *Appraisal*

SEPARATION SHEET - A form identifying archival material that has been removed from a larger body of *records* for various reasons, including storage, conservation or disposition. (3)

SERIES – Filing units or *records* within a *fonds* which are arranged in accordance with a filing system or maintained as a unit because they relate to a particular subject or function, result from the same activity, have particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt or use. (*2)

SOUND RECORDING – A record medium capable of capturing and reproducing an audible signal. A generic term used to encompass a wide range of formats, including phonograph *records*, magnetic tape, compact discs and computer files, but not multimedia recordings that include sound, such as the soundtrack on a motion picture. (*9)

SOUS-FONDS – The *records* of a sub-unit of the *creator* of the *fonds*. (*1)

SUB-SERIES – *Records* within a *series* that are readily identifiable as a subordinate or dependent entity because of filing, physical form or *content*. (1)

TEXTUAL RECORD - Written documents, either handwritten or typed, on a paper base. (3)

TOTAL ARCHIVES - A strategy to *document* the historical development and all segments of a community by acquiring both official administrative *records* as well as related personal *papers* and corporate *records*. Total archives was developed in Canada. It emphasizes collecting a wide range of materials. (*9)

TRANSFER - Administrative and physical movement of *records* from one place or agency to another, usually from the creating body to the *archives*. (3)

VALUE – The worth, usefulness or importance of a thing (5)
See: *Archival value, Evidential value, Fiscal value, Informational value, Monetary value, Primary Value, Secondary value*

VISUAL RECORD - Material composed of images rather than words. Examples are photographs, films and paintings. (3)

SOURCES

Definitions have been taken from or adapted from (indicated by *) the following:

1. *The ANLA Resource binder for Small Archives* (1998)
2. *The Life of a Document* / Carol Couture & Jean-Yves Rousseau (1987)
3. *A Manual for Small Archives* (ABCA) (1988)
4. *Keeping Archives* / Judith Ellis ed. (1993)
5. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (1998)
6. *Bill C-6: Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* / Government of Canada, Royal Assent: 13 April 2000, Statutes of Canada 2000, c.5
7. *Preservation Management Cost Shared Cooperative Assistance Guide to Applicants* / Canadian Council of Archives (2000/2001)
8. *Rules for Archival Description* / Bureau of Canadian Archivists.
9. *SAA Glossary of Archival Terminology* / Society of American Archivists, website: <www.archivists.org/glossary/index.asp> (2006)
10. <http://aic.stanford.edu/geninfo/defin.html>
11. Michael Gourlie and/or Margery Hadley

Principles

Original order
Provenance
Respect des fonds

Values

Administrative value
Archival value
Artifactual value
Ephemeral value
Evidential value
Fiscal value
Informational value
Intrinsic value
Legal value
Monetary value
Primary value
Secondary value

Archival process

Acquisition
Appraisal
Accession / accessioning
Arrangement
Description
Preventive conservation
Access

Hierarchy

Fonds
Collection
Sous-fonds
Series
Sub-series
File
Item

Types of records

Audiovisual record
Cartographic record
Electronic record
Multimedia record
Sound recording
Textual record
Visual record

Finding aids

Calendar
Guide
Index
Inventory
List
Location register

INDEX TO TERMS BY CATEGORY (page 2 of 2)

Other terms

Access point
Accession
Accrual
Active records
Analog
Archives
Archives Canada
Archival processing
Archivist
Artifact
Authority list
Bequest
Case file
Conservation
Conservation treatment
Conservator
Content
Copyright
Corporate body
Cultural property
Creator
Custody
Digital
Deacidification
Deposit
Document
Documentary heritage
Donation
Encapsulation
Ephemera
Ethics
Extent
Finding aids
Folder
Fumigation
Gift
Hierarchy
Hygrometer
Inactive records
Level of description
Life cycle
Loan
Main entry
Manuscript
Monetary appraisal
Multiple media fonds
Oral history
Papers
Personal information
Photograph
Policy
Preservation
Preservation management
Principle
Processing
Record
Record group
Records centre
Records management
Records schedule
Retrieval
Rules for archival description
Selective retention
Separation sheet
Sound recording
Total archives
Transfer
Value

Acronyms

AABC
ACA
ANA
ANLA
ASA
BCA
CAIN
CCA
DPP
FOIPP
PIPA
RAD / RAD