

Archival Terms Quick Reference List

During the “Demystifying Archivist Speak” event, Zachary and Billy discussed a handful of useful and commonly used words in archiving. Below are the basic definitions used during that event which can serve as a quick and handy guide.

Be sure to watch the corresponding video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/h7mHFRbJAQ4> for even more explanation and exploration of the terms.

Zachary’s Terms:

1. Accession: the materials physically and officially transferred to a repository.
2. Appraisal: the process of determining whether records and other materials have permanent (archival) value.
3. Arrangement: the process of organizing materials to protect their context and to achieve physical control over the materials.
4. Born Digital: originating in a computer environment.
5. Digitize: to transform analog information into digital form.
6. Cataloging: the process of providing access to materials by creating formal descriptions to represent the materials.
7. Collection Management: the set of activities and policies associated with maintaining archival resources.
8. Collection: a set of archival or manuscript materials.
9. Creator: the individual, group, or organization that is responsible for something's production, accumulation, or formation.
10. Custodial History: the succession of entities that held a certain body of archival materials.

11. Description: the process of creating a set of data representing an archival resource.
12. Disaster Plan: an actively maintained document containing procedures and information needed to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.
13. Ephemera: materials created for a specific, limited purpose, and generally designed to be discarded after use.
14. Facsimile: a reproduction that simulates the appearance of the original as closely as possible.

Billy's Terms:

15. Finding Aid: a description that typically consists of contextual and structural information about an archival resource.
16. Manuscript: a handwritten or unpublished document.
17. Metadata: information about data that promotes discovery, structures data objects, and supports the administration and preservation of records.
18. Pagination: the act of numbering each side of a leaf/page in a manuscript or volume.
19. Records: information or data created or received by an organization in the course of its activities; organizational records.
20. Papers: records created and originally kept by an individual or a family.
21. Preservation: the act of keeping from harm, injury, decay, or destruction, especially through noninvasive treatment.
22. Processing: preparing archival materials for use.
23. Provenance: information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection.

24. Respect des Fonds: the principle maintaining records according to their origin and in the units in which they were originally accumulated
25. Records Management: 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.
26. Red Rot: the process of leather deterioration characterized by orange or reddish powder
27. Retention Schedule: a document that identifies and describes an organization's records, usually at the series level, and provides instructions for the disposition of records throughout their life cycle
28. Vital Statistics: public records required by law that document significant life events, such as births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and public health events.

These definitions predominantly use language from the Society of American Archivists' Dictionary of Archival Terms, available online at <https://dictionary.archivists.org/index.html>



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