

# **The No-Nonsense Guide to Archives and Recordkeeping**

Margaret Crockett



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**Margaret Crockett**



# Introduction

This book is written for all those working in archives and records management, especially those without formal training, but also people managing archives and records management staff and those working closely with archives and records management, such as IT professionals, librarians and museum curators. It is intended as a practical how-to-do-it guide to managing archives and records and covers all aspects of recordkeeping and archives management following the records' journey through the lifecycle. Because of this, the chapters are not of equal length, but divide into the four main work areas: current records; records management; archives management; and archives preservation. The book deals with records and archives in all formats and unless specifically mentioned as paper or digital, the guidance is format-neutral. Reference to 'corporate' records is not intended in the narrow private enterprise sense, but rather the more general 'body corporate'. Similarly when 'business' is mentioned, it is in the sense of the wider work and goals of any organization.

# CHAPTER 1

## Concepts and context

### **Archives and records: concepts and terminology**

For those of us concerned with managing records and archives it is of paramount importance that we can articulate and advocate exactly what it is that we are looking after. Before discussing how to manage them, let's agree working definitions for the material itself.

### ***Records***

First of all, let's look at the term 'record'. Records and archives are inextricably linked, which is why this book covers both records and archives management as one holistic discipline. We need to understand what records are in order to define archives. Records consist of recorded information which provides evidence of decisions, planning processes, financial transactions, agreements – in fact pretty much any human activity. Records can be in any medium or format.

Records usually arise as a by-product of business or social activity: for example the invoice for consulting services is part of the process of letting the client know how much they have to pay on the fulfilment of a contractual (written or verbal) agreement. It is rare for records to be deliberately created for their own sake, although there are exceptions. For example, medieval chronicles, personal diaries or letters can be written with the intent of recording the author's or the author's sponsor's viewpoint.

**Record:** recorded information in any media or format, providing reliable evidence of human activity.

Records also need to have certain characteristics or features in order to be 'good' records that we can trust and depend on. It is important to know the creator of the record. If the record does not stand alone, it is important to have the links to the other records that together form the comprehensive record. These links and the author provide the context of the record, which in turn allows us to be confident about its authenticity. We also like to be sure that the record has not been tampered with. These characteristics depend upon a

variety of things, including:

- the custody of the record(s) over time
- inherent indications in the physical record, such as inconsistencies in script, the physical carrier or the way it is set out
- discrepancies in the audit trail or metadata of digital records.

Figure 1.1 gives some tips on how to assess the authenticity of records.

There is no way to realistically enforce rules on creating records to ensure that they are trustworthy; however, some things to look out for which help to indicate the reliability of records include:

- evidence of the author – we recognize the handwriting perhaps, or know what organization it has come from because of the headed paper or domain name or because it is bound in with or filed with other records in the series, clearly indicating the creator
- the record is complete and final
- with legal records, they are signed, sealed or have a format we recognize and are written by or drawn up by solicitors
- there is a date and/or a serial number to show the record's context.

**Figure 1.1** *How can we trust that records are authentic?*

**Record series:** a group of records that support a specific work responsibility, for example a volume of board minutes or set of social worker's case files, each pertaining to a different instance of the same activity.

In fact, sometimes recorded information may not be a record at all. For instance, an old family photograph without any information about who is portrayed is not a record of anything. However, the school trophy cup engraved with winners of the annual 100-metre sprint does provide evidence of successive victors over time. Good questions to ask are: 'What is this a record of?', 'Is it the original?' and 'Is it evidence of the organization's work?'

With the advent of computers and recorded information in digital format, archives and records management professionals have had to reconsider many of the principles that guided their work for decades. It can be difficult to establish the authenticity of digital records because the author is not always clearly identified. Drafts and versions may not be clearly numbered, so that we might not be sure we have the definitive record. Digital records are easily copied and copies are indistinguishable from the 'original', and so we question which instance is the master. Before computers the fact that records could not be changed was considered to be an essential quality of a reliable record. But we need to change digital records in order to preserve them, not to mention the fact that opening them on different machines in different

systems (in the case of e-mail, for example) can change the file format. These are all challenges that have yet to be definitively met and solved. The processes for creating, handling, transmitting and preserving digital records to ensure their authenticity and render them reliable over time are still evolving. However, it is already clear that we need to ensure that certain characteristics are embedded in digital records at the point of creation and need to be considered even before a new computer system is designed, specified or procured, to ensure they have the necessary functionality to create and maintain reliable records.

### **Archives**

'Archives' is a word that means different things to different people, depending on their professional and personal background (see Figure 1.2). It is important that those of us who look after archives and manage records are clear about what they are and how they are distinct from old books, data or information.



**Figure 1.2** Popular conceptions of archives

Often people assume that archives have to be old or that they are no longer useful for current work or everyday life. They will often consider that they are about a subject. They might say they are historical, interesting, important and/or authoritative. Organizations sometimes have an e-mail archiving feature whereby the e-mail gets regularly moved to a different storage area. We often hear people say they are going to do their 'archiving', which means moving older files to storage which is not so accessible.

Whatever ideas you have come up with about archives, they will all be valid and probably most will chime in some way with the concepts that archives professionals keep in mind when taking in, processing and making archives accessible, such as these:

- Archives are records which document the history of organizations, individuals and families.
- They are the primary source, the first hand, contemporary account of what happened.
- They are not just a random collection, but are usually created and received by organizations, individuals or families in the course of business, activities and living.
- All the records in an archive will have been created by the same organization, family or individual, they have the same origin and context.
- Archives are unique (unlike museum objects or books) – there is only one record of an event or decision (even if it consists of different accounts from different sources).
- Archives may be old but archival value does not depend upon age, rather upon the informational and evidential value of the content.
- Archives are selected from the body of records to provide a lasting resource for the history of the family, person or organization that created the archive; they are information-rich and generally provide all the evidence required for the creator's story.
- Not all records are archives: we can't keep every record; some records do not add anything significant to the story; we keep the records which together give the most complete picture of the creator's history.

Archives are therefore the raw material of history; they provide the first-hand account and evidence of the story of the individual(s) or organization. They are selected because they document the key activity without unnecessary detail. It can also be helpful to see records and archives as arising organically from the activity of the creating entity.

**Archive:** records of one organization, family or individual, selected for permanent preservation because they provide key evidence of the entity's history.

So when people talk about 'doing the archiving' or 'keeping things in the archive', generally there has been no assessment of the historical significance of the records; they have just been moved because the space they occupy is needed for something else (usually for more current records). Published information is not archival because it is not unique and is generally not a primary source providing first-hand evidence. However, publications (including things like annual reports, catalogues of products, anniversary souvenirs) from the creator of the archives are archival, because they are a record of information that the organization felt it important to circulate widely.

**Provenance:** the archive's creator, be it an individual, family or organization – essentially tells us where the archive came from.

Within an archive, the sub-creators are important, too. The records produced by the accounts department or Great-Uncle William need to be identified and kept separate from those of the marketing department or Granny Mills. Knowing about the relationships between the records and the different parts of the organization, family or the individual's life allows us to identify the separate record groups and understand how they relate to each other. Similarly, the various groups taken together provide more complete evidence and information about the creating entity than any single record, or group, could do in isolation. We should note that users may not be interested in the records in context but respecting the origins and context of the records ensures that their authenticity and reliability are maintained. Archivists also refer to the entirety of records from one provenance as 'fonds', from the French, meaning 'root' or 'origin'. This word allows us to distinguish a single archive from the archive repository and its collective holdings.

Remember, records from a variety of different organizations that have been brought together by an individual or organization in pursuit of research interests, or to satisfy collecting interests, do not form an archive in the strict sense that the records come from the same creator. We should never mix archives of different creators, for example, in a subject-based structure, because we would lose both evidential value and context. However, sometimes an archive is formed because a collector has gathered archival material, perhaps with research notes and copies of published works and/or records, and organized it into his or her own filing system. This would then be regarded as the archive of that collector. Unfortunately, the principle of not mixing archives of different creators is confused by the fact that we also call the building where the archives are kept an archive (let's call it the archive repository) and the repository might house multiple archives with different provenances.

**Original order:** the organization of archival records as they were when last used by the creating entity.

A final point to make about archives is that the links between records within the archives are important. These links, and the way the individual records were organized and related to each other when created and used by the creating entity, need to be maintained and documented, because they form part of the authenticity and credibility of the archive. They also usually reflect activities and functions. We should not, and indeed do not need to, devise or make up a suitable organization for the archives. Rather, we seek to identify the original order in which the archives were organized when the records were current.

**The difference between records and archives:** although all archives are records, not all records are archives. Records are the greater group of primary source material from which archives are selected.

## **Record media and formats**

We have to manage all records and archives, regardless of their media or format. Let's identify and define the common record media and formats.

### ***Media***

**Medium:** the physical carrier of the record.

It is important to note that the record medium does not have a bearing on whether it is a record or not. For example, a record can be a roll of parchment, a bound volume or a set of web pages.

Thinking about records in context, the archives of a person or organization may include paper records, computer records and/or audiovisual materials such as film or photographs. Even record series themselves may contain records in different formats; for example, a correspondence series may start off as letters written on paper and then become e-mail held on computer.

Archives can be found on the following kinds of media:

- paper
- parchment
- wood (e.g., tally sticks)
- stone (e.g., gravestones)
- photographic prints
- photographic slides
- glass plate negatives
- silent/audio film
- magnetic film
- compact, hard or floppy disks.

This list is not comprehensive and we can reasonably expect it to be ever-growing! You may also be wondering about records that are 'in the cloud', which will probably be on servers managed by the cloud computing service provider, depending on the communication or storage solution used. Servers are, of course, hard drives.

**Format**

**Format:** 1. (Physical) construction of a record. 2. (Intellectual) characteristics of a record. 3. (Digital) layout of data according to program type.

If the medium is the physical carrier, then the format is the way the information or data is arranged within or on the carrier. It may be the physical construction of the record, for example a bound volume or a ring binder. It may be the intellectual characteristics of the record, for example diaries or registers, where content usually follows a set pattern. With digital records it will refer to the organization of the data itself such that the program will be able to recognize, read and display it – we are all familiar with formats such as Microsoft Word, Open Office and rich text format. Table 1.1 gives examples of different formats for various types of media.

<b>Medium</b>	<b>Examples of formats</b>
Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bound volume</li> <li>• file with treasury tag</li> <li>• ring binder</li> <li>• bundle of folded documents</li> <li>• deeds</li> <li>• diaries</li> </ul>
Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tally sticks</li> </ul>
Parchment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• roll</li> <li>• chronicles</li> <li>• deeds</li> <li>• laws</li> </ul>
Stone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gravestones</li> <li>• memorial stones</li> </ul>
Photographic prints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• black-and-white</li> <li>• colour</li> <li>• 3" x 5"</li> <li>• contact prints</li> </ul>
Photographic transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plastic slide</li> </ul>
Glass plate negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collodion wet plate negative</li> <li>• gelatin dry plate</li> </ul>
Movie film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35 mm film</li> <li>• 3D film</li> </ul>
Magnetic film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 mm</li> <li>• super 8</li> </ul>
Compact disk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Office programmes (MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.)</li> <li>• e-mail browsers</li> <li>• internet browsers</li> <li>• databases</li> </ul>
Hard disk drive	
Floppy disk	



## **Types of archive repository**

There are many different kinds of archive repositories and this section is intended to introduce you to the main kinds of archive institutions found in the UK, but also with reference to what there is in other countries. UK archive repositories – or rather their contents – reflect the age and diversity of culture, communities and individuals that have lived in the British Isles since the Middle Ages. These archives include the records of national and local government, the established and non-conformist churches, universities and guilds or professional associations, schools, hospitals, museums, charities, landed estates, businesses, social clubs and societies, not forgetting individuals and families. In fact any kind of organization or activity that results in records or documentation can probably be found in an archive somewhere.

To give a more concrete idea of the extent of archives in the UK, *British Archives: a guide to archive resources in the UK*, by Janet Foster and Julia Sheppard (Palgrave, 4th edition, 2001) contains 1231 entries giving details of places holding records which, in some way, are made available to the public. The ARCHON Directory<sup>1</sup> hosted by The National Archives contains more up-to-date but less detailed information on British archives. In June 2015 it contained over 2500 entries. The aim of this introductory chapter is to give an overview of the breadth and depth of records and archives and their role in society.

## **National archives**

Most countries have a national archive institution which takes in and looks after the records of central government. However, their mandates and resources vary greatly. The French national archives, or *Les Archives Nationales*, established in September 1790, was the earliest national archives institution of this type. A law dating from 1794 sets out three principles, which still guide French national archival management:

- 1 The national archives are managed from the centre.
- 2 There is free public access.
- 3 There should be a national network of archives (realized as an archives service in every French *département*).

In the UK the Public Record Office (PRO) was established in 1838 to ‘keep safely the public records’, but the remit for provision of access to the public was less clear and there was no mandate to control a network of local government archives in the way the Archives Nationales does in France. Since 1838 the nature and role of the Public Record Office has evolved, with the authority of a series of Public Records Acts, to include the provision of free public access (both in the sense that the holdings are generally open and there

is no charge to view records on site). In 2003 the PRO changed its name to The National Archives (TNA).

Some national archives (such as Canada, Ethiopia and Iraq) have been merged with the national library, to form a joint agency for archives and bibliographic material.

### *Holdings*

National archives hold the records of central government; however, the exact composition of the holdings of a national archives will depend on its legislative or regulatory mandate and the history of the country and nation, in accordance with its collecting policy.

In countries where there is a long history of centralized government, holdings will include the records of departments which no longer exist because of reorganization. Holdings might also include the records of former companies that were nationalized: a UK example is the records of the Great Northern Railway Company, which became part of British Rail. Similarly, national archives might hold records of government entities that have been privatized, another UK example being the records of the British Railways Board, now British Railways (known as British Rail).

Where the government has its roots in a monarchical government, the national archives would also include the records of the royal family, particularly those records relating to the management of its possessions and estates, including the country or countries the monarchs ruled.

Depending on the mandate of the national archives, its holdings might include the records of individuals or organizations of national significance. Some national archives hold ecclesiastical, court and school records. With the advent of digital records, national archives may also hold large datasets emerging from government surveys or even academic research.

### *Services*

The responsibilities of and services offered by national archives will vary according to legislative and cultural context, but all national archives will be taking in records, cataloguing them and storing them in the best possible physical environment to ensure future preservation and access. Most national archives will provide on-site access to the archive material by the public and also probably a range of research services at a distance, for example a copying service and answering enquiries about the holdings.

Some national archives have a remit to supervise or manage a network of local government or decentralized government archives around the country – this can even extend to the archives of all public bodies, such as universities and schools.

National archives are also usually concerned about records management practices within the departments and other public bodies whose records they receive. Again, depending on their mandate, they will offer guidance or issue instructions for records management to ensure that the quality and organization of the archives is good at the point of transfer to the national archives.

Sometimes the national archives will be responsible for related government functions which are not strictly speaking archival. This might include keeping registers of private records and archives of national significance of which it does not have custody, acting as ombudsman for access to information legislation or running the government's publishing operation.

### *Mission*

Again, the national archives' mission will vary according to the legal and cultural context of the country but the aims of the national archives might include:

- protecting and safeguarding government archives for use by future generations
- providing access facilities and information to support the use of the records
- ensuring accountability and transparency through the provision of records management policy and guidance
- ensuring that the documentary evidence in the archives represents the 'story' of the nation.

Apart from taking in and looking after the records of UK government as explained above, TNA also takes responsibility for assisting government departments in managing their current records. Their explicit powers in this respect are limited but they offer guidance and, as the records become less current and closer to the 20-year deadline when they must be deposited in TNA, TNA staff become more proactive in setting out requirements for record selection and the provision of record inventories.

TNA incorporates the Office of Public Sector Information, which is responsible for policy, standards, and supporting the re-use of public sector information in accordance with UK law and EU Directives. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, responsible for publishing UK Acts of Parliament and other official information, is also part of TNA.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission forms part of TNA. It carries out a function established by Royal Warrant to gather information on privately held archives and to provide advice to owners. However, unlike many

national archive institutions, TNA generally does not take in private archives of national importance.

TNA traditionally had a small inspectorial role with respect to other archive repositories in the UK which was limited to those archives wishing to hold public records of local interest (for example court records). However, this inspection role has evolved such that TNA is now part of a partnership, the Archive Service Accreditation Committee, which has introduced an accreditation scheme setting a standard for the management of archives and offering 'a badge of external recognition and endorsement of [the] service'.<sup>2</sup> This is in accordance with The National Archives' increased and more explicit leadership role in the archives sector in the UK.

A final point to make about the UK national archive situation is that Northern Ireland and Scotland have their own national archives (the National Records of Scotland and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland respectively) for records of the devolved governments' administration as well as records of the UK government departments pertaining exclusively or mostly to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

### **State archives**

We find state archives in federal states, such as the USA, Australia and Germany (where they are called *Staatsarchiv*). As you might expect, these archival authorities have remits and holdings similar to those of national archives with respect to the records and archives of their governmental responsibilities and jurisdictions. Sometimes the archives authority is also the records management adviser and authority, sometimes it has jurisdiction over local government and advises and/or takes in records of cities and other local territorial archives such as counties. State archives can also be joined with the state library service.

### **Local government archives**

Most UK county, city and borough councils maintain their historical archives, even though the legislative basis for this, the 1972 Local Government Act, is fairly weak. It has quite a lot to say about depositories for community and parish documents and allowing electors to inspect local authority proceedings and accounts, but the concept of an archive to keep historical records does not shine through the difficult legal wording. Local government archive repositories usually take in the records of the authority and its predecessors, including those whose functions are defunct, such as the poor law administration. Local government archives also usually collect the records of local individuals and businesses.

Some UK county and city archives have collections that date back to the Middle Ages and/or include records that are of great significance for the nation's history, such as those documenting the businesses that helped create the industrial revolution, the movements that affected human and civil rights such as the abolition of slavery, and the families and individuals that served in government and the military.

Like national archive repositories, the work of local government archives includes the physical protection of the archive material, the development of catalogues and other finding aids and the provision of access services. Many offer a service to schools and other learning institutions, employing education officers to manage on-site and web-based educational activities and information. Staff in local government archives might also mount exhibitions and produce or commission publications based on the records they hold. Many also encourage and support friends groups, which provide volunteers to work on the collections and/or raise awareness of the archives, as well as funds for projects and other sanctioned purposes. Records management services may be part of the archives service, closely linked to it or totally separate.

In some areas the archives of several neighbouring authorities, or former authorities, have been combined into a joint service. An example of this is the Dorset History Centre and the Joint Archives Service, where the archives service for Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset has been based in the Dorset History Centre in Dorchester since 1991. It is funded and governed jointly by the three authorities.

In other countries the situation is similar, with local archives at different levels depending on the governance structure in place in each particular country. They provide records and archives management services to the parent authority.

### ***Business archives***

Business archives are the records of private sector organizations engaged in trade and commerce. However, over time the public/private status of these organizations can change, for example the British railway companies which were nationalized and subsequently privatized, or a company which sets up a trust for philanthropic purposes. All businesses create archival records but not all identify and preserve them as a distinct corporate goal. Some businesses have consciously made the decision to identify and preserve their archival records in-house. Business archives may also be deposited in local, state or national archives, particularly if the company is no longer in business, and some university archives have considerable collections of business records.

There are many notable examples of business or company archives of established and respected commercial organizations. These include archives of the banking, pharmaceutical, retail and oil industries, brewing, publishers, architects, television companies, to name a few. The remit of company archives varies greatly according to the motivation in supporting an archive or to the company's remit. Some companies find their archive has promotional and commercial value, for example the Selfridges archive, which evolved as an archive of the records of the business' promotional and advertising activities. It is used by staff to inspire and support current work from window-dressing to campaigns and in-store exhibitions. It is also used by select researchers from other organizations such as the production company for the *Mr Selfridge* television series. Other companies keep more comprehensive archives as the corporate memory or through pride in a long-standing historical presence.

Company archives may allow external researchers to use their holdings, limit use to internal staff only, or may even carry out research for internal users. Business archives can be kept in storage owned and managed by the company itself or may be contracted out to commercial storage. Older company archives may be deposited in public archives and more recent material held in-house while needed to support current business or remaining commercially sensitive. Business archives may also have a remit for records management.

### **Schools**

In the UK, state-run schools do not usually consciously manage their archives, although certain records must be created and maintained to meet legislation and regulation. Private and independent schools are increasingly investing resources to manage their archives and in the UK and Australia, for example, school archivists form active special-interest groups within the wider profession.

School archives frequently have a slightly wider collecting remit than other archives because they act as a repository for objects such as school uniforms and prizes, as well as books. Apart from the school's institutional records, there are often many small gifts and deposits from ex-pupils and teachers, which can make the archivist's principle of respecting and documenting the separate creators especially time-consuming. However, school archives can provide an invaluable source of materials and inspiration for staff and pupils alike, as well as information and images to support fund-raising and PR for the school.

***Family and individuals' archives***

People create and keep records of themselves as private individuals, even if some of their activities, such as writing poetry or novels, or renting out property, could be categorized as business activity (and it can be hard to separate the records of the two). The personal, professional and business activities of individuals generate records and papers, which, if the individual is important or famous enough, may be retained in archives. One example is the archives of Winston Churchill. The records generated whilst he was a British government minister will be part of one or other of the public record series in the UK Parliamentary Archives or The National Archives, but his personal papers are held by the Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College, Cambridge. Other individuals whose records have been judged to be of archival value are represented in collecting archives such as the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library, which holds private papers of politicians, diplomats, journalists, and 'others active in public life'. Some individuals' archives have been deposited in publicly funded repositories according to their collecting policies.

Similarly, families also generate records, although most families have a limited amount, confined usually to the nuclear family or just the couple. However, there are families that possess a business or property, which widens the scope of their records beyond the personal family records to include the records of commerce, ownership, land management and anything else that documents rights, obligations discharged, decisions made or work done. An example of a family archive would be that of the Duke of Northumberland, whose title and property have their roots in the 11th century. The castle at Alnwick has a records tower and the Duke employs an archivist to manage estate, family and business records stretching back 800 years. Access to the records of landed estates is at the discretion of the owner, as is any investment of resources (including the employment of professionals).

Many family archives have been deposited in public archive repositories and will be subject to the access policy. Wherever they are held, these records document aspects of history and society that are not reflected in public records and it is important that they are properly maintained.

It is also worth noting that family archives can be repositories that collect records relating to the family, rather than being custodians of the comprehensive archive generated by the family itself over time. An example of this would be the Brontë Parsonage Museum Library, in Haworth, West Yorkshire, which holds the Brontë Society archives with holdings created by and about the Brontë family. Another example, Keats House in London, collects manuscripts and records relating to Keats and his contemporary poets.

### ***Non-profit and non-governmental sector***

Many charities and voluntary action organizations maintain in-house archives of their activities, although these tend to be the ones with larger budgets. Smaller charities may have been able to deposit their records with public archives, but those with a broad geographic coverage often find it difficult to find a repository with a corresponding remit.

Archives of faith traditions, such as the established and non-conformist churches, often have extensive archives, managing them in a manner similar to businesses in line with their specific missions. For example, the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre Archive holds the archives of the mosque and centre dating back to the early 20th century and the Papal Archives at the Vatican Secret Archives in Rome date back more than a thousand years.

The records of international organizations are very important for studying and understanding international co-operation. Many international organizations have records and archives divisions that are increasingly open to access in person and also online. Examples of these include the World Bank, the Council of Europe and the African Union.

### ***Collecting archives***

Organizations which actively acquire and manage archives from different provenances in order to build up primary source material on a subject are known as 'collecting' archives and they may or may not also keep the records of their own organization. Here are some examples:

- The UK National Fairground Archive (attached to the University of Sheffield) is a 'unique collection of material covering all aspects of the culture and history of travelling fairs and entertainment from the 1800s to the present day'.
- Newport Historical Society in Rhode Island was founded in 1854 to 'collect and preserve books, manuscripts, and objects pertaining to Newport's history'.
- The Wellcome Library Archives and Manuscripts holds what the website declares to be 'the most important collection of manuscripts and archives on the history of medicine in Britain'.
- The Open Society Archives in Budapest, Hungary, collects the records of the history of the Cold War, the transition to open societies in Central and Eastern Europe and human rights issues and movements.

In practice the delineation between a collecting archive and an institutional archive (one that primarily supports the management of the organization's



own records) is not clear-cut. As we know, an archive repository such as a local government archive often holds multiple archives with different provenances. University archives also often actively seek archives of different provenances which support its research goals. Also many libraries, public as well as private, collect archives. A good example of this is local authority libraries in the UK, which often have a local studies section holding archives relating to the geographical area of the authority.

There are also archives which specialize in taking care of archives in special media, such as digital or audiovisual material. Here are two examples:

- The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia is the statutory authority established to develop and preserve 'a national collection of recorded historic and contemporary sound, moving image and artefact works'.
- The UK Data Archive at the University of Essex collects datasets relating to studies and research in the humanities and social science fields.

This kind of collecting archive often provides an invaluable service to archives which have a statutory or geographical remit to take in records but which may not have the resources to deal with the special requirements of the media. Thus, in the UK, regional sound and film archives are used by local government archives as repositories for their audiovisual records in return for access copies for their reading rooms.

### **The archives and records scene**

Given that the earliest forms of writing have been found to date back to the 27th century BC, and there are references to keeping archives in the Bible, it is safe to assume that archives management is one of the oldest professions. Whilst records management would appear to have only been around since the 20th century, many of the components which make it up will have been practised – more or less effectively – for as long as records have been kept. It is a field of activity and expertise which covers a fascinating and diverse range of archival and recordkeeping traditions and practices, around which an infrastructure of international, national, regional and local educational and resource networks have grown up, including:

- the International Council on Archives and its regional branches
- multinational awareness-raising and action consortia working for access to information and information governance
- regional groups focusing on archives requiring particular technical expertise (e.g., audiovisual archives)

- national associations for those working with, owning or using archives
- national professional associations for archivists and records managers
- educational institutions providing education and training for archivists and records managers
- national and international institutions/groups which focus on technical expertise, for example archival preservation or digital records management.

This section provides an introduction to this invaluable, constantly adapting network of resources and lobbying bodies.

### ***The International Council on Archives***

The International Council on Archives (ICA) 'is dedicated to the effective management of records and the preservation, care and use of the world's archival heritage through its representation of records and archive professionals across the globe'.<sup>3</sup> It was formed at the UNESCO headquarters on 9 June 1948 (now celebrated as International Archives Day) as an international NGO. It has an ongoing range of products and services to support archivists and records managers around the world in finding solutions to common challenges.

ICA has published several codes and principles which set out the basis of international best practice for archives and records management. These include:

- **The ICA Code of Ethics** ([www.ica.org/?lid=5555&bid=225](http://www.ica.org/?lid=5555&bid=225)), which aims to 'establish high standards of conduct for the archival profession'. It was formally adopted in September 1996.
- **The Universal Declaration on Archives** ([www.ica.org/?lid=13343&bid=1101](http://www.ica.org/?lid=13343&bid=1101)), initiated by ICA and adopted by UNESCO in 2011, states that the role of the archives is as custodian of cultural heritage and declares that good records management is essential for democracy.
- **The Principles of Access to Archives**,<sup>4</sup> adopted in 2012, assert the moral and legal right of citizens to access archives.

ICA has 13 regional branches, which enable its members to take a more regional approach to professional co-operation and advocacy whilst supporting the overall aims of ICA. Work in the regions has resulted in products which have been applicable worldwide, for example the *PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit* ([www.ica.org/?lid=4521&bid=139](http://www.ica.org/?lid=4521&bid=139)), developed by ICA's Pacific Region.

There are also 12 professional sections, focusing on areas of expertise or concern such as business archives or archival education and training. The sections also work on projects and develop products which can be used around the world, for example the Section for University Archives' *Who's Who in Archives Globally* site ([www.library.illinois.edu/ica-suv/BioSite.php](http://www.library.illinois.edu/ica-suv/BioSite.php)).

The ICA expert groups are smaller, more agile groups of professionals who work on specific, topical areas of archives and records management as part of ICA's professional programme. The professional programme itself is developed and managed by the Programme Commission (PCOM). All sections, branches and expert groups report to and are represented on PCOM.

A final ICA body which should be mentioned is the International Fund for Archival Development (FIDA).<sup>5</sup> FIDA has a limited fund to give 'support to archive institutions and archivists with the greatest development needs'. An example of FIDA's work is delivery of workshops on the Good Governance Toolkit in French-speaking Africa.

ICA holds an annual conference for its members except in the years of Olympic Games, when an international congress is held which is open to everyone. The ICA website is full of information, contacts and resources, although access to some of it is restricted to members.

### **UNESCO Memory of the World Programme**

**Documentary heritage:** 'items which are: moveable . . . ; made up of signs/codes, sounds and/or images; preservable (the carriers are non-living); reproducible and migratable; the product of a deliberate documenting process'.

UNESCO

UNESCO established the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme<sup>6</sup> in 1992 to address threats to the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage around the world. This was in recognition of the ongoing threats such as deterioration of condition due to age, use and the physical environment (however carefully controlled) but also of the impact of war, civil unrest and natural disaster. The MoW vision is that documentary heritage belongs to all, should be preserved and should be accessible to everyone. Its mission is to facilitate preservation, assist universal access and to increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of documentary heritage. The MoW Programme:

- selects items for and maintains the Memory of the World Register
- identifies, fosters partnerships for and manages projects relating to the Programme, for example in the area of using contemporary technology to reproduce (and therefore protect) documentary heritage

- produces guidance and other technical documentation
- oversees the award of the Jikji Prize, which recognizes contribution to the 'preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage as a common heritage of humanity'
- publicizes the work of the Programme with a view to raising awareness of the value of documentary heritage.

There is an International Advisory Committee, which has overall responsibility for planning and implementing the MoW Programme. The Director-General of UNESCO convenes biennial meetings of the 12 members, who serve in a personal capacity and are selected because of their work 'in the field of safeguarding documentary heritage'. There are two sub-committees, the Technical and the Marketing Sub-Committees. There are also national and regional MoW Committees.

The International Memory of the World Register was established in 1995 and accessions are approved by the International Advisory Committee. The *Memory of the World Guidelines* (available on the MoW webpages<sup>7</sup>) explain that rather than a competitive process, each item proposed is assessed against a set of criteria and a country can only nominate two items for each annual call. The criteria provide a useful overview of the characteristics of archives. There are also regional and national Memory of the World registers, established in recognition of the fact that a single international register is too unwieldy to manage and to acknowledge that documentary heritage may be of regional or national significance. These registers are managed by the regional and national MoW Committees.

The Memory of the World Programme offers a range of opportunities to those institutions successful in gaining a place on one of the registers. It gives international recognition to the value of the archives, publicly marks the archive for preservation priorities, ensures that access (either directly or via surrogate) is given and enhances resource leverage. In addition, the MoW Programme website has a number of useful reports and guidelines.

### **Open Government Partnership**

The Open Government Partnership is a multilateral initiative that aims to 'secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance'. Launched in 2011 with eight founding members, it now has 66 countries. It has a steering committee made up of governments and civil society organizations. Members have to endorse the Open Government Declaration, which elaborates on the goals cited above, and are obliged to deliver a country action plan for open government which is developed with public consultation

and must provide independent reporting on their progress going forward. They also have to make concrete commitments which reflect the four core open government principles of transparency, citizen participation, accountability and technology and innovation.

### ***DLM Forum***

The DLM Forum was created in 1994 as a joint initiative by the European Commission and EU member states' national archives. The acronym came from the French 'Données Lisible par Machine' (Machine Readable Data) and at the time DLM's work focused on the challenges of managing electronic records. Since then it has developed into the DLM Foundation, a 'subscription-based community' not only of European national archives but also other public and private bodies interested in archive, records, document and information lifecycle management within and beyond Europe. Its remit has widened to encompass information governance and the acronym now stands for Document Lifecycle Management.

The DLM Forum holds member meetings in the spring and autumn which have a conference format. Once every three years a three-day forum replaces one of these meetings. The meetings are usually hosted by the country holding the EU presidency. MoReq2010®, DLM's flagship product, is a European specification for computerized record systems. DLM certifies systems as complying with the specification via accredited test centres. The DLM website ([www.dlmforum.eu](http://www.dlmforum.eu)) is a useful source of standards and guidance on records and information management.

### ***The International Association of Francophone Archives***

L'Association Internationale des Archives Francophones ([www.aiaf.org/accueil](http://www.aiaf.org/accueil)) or AIAF is an international pressure group for Francophone archives. Its members are both individuals and institutions carrying out or concerned with managing archives and records. One of its major projects is the Francophone archives portal (PIAF), which offers e-learning, training, bibliographic and professional resources. AIAF was formed in 1989 in Madrid at one of the International Council on Archives annual Round Table (CITRA) meetings. Its mission is to promote and develop co-operation between those working with Francophone archives.

### ***Professional associations, centres of expertise and pressure groups***

The landscape in which archives and records management operates is constantly changing, depending on government policy, public opinion,

funding streams and its position in the wider information management and governance arena. Some countries have independent over-arching 'archive councils' or quasi-public bodies that have responsibility for developing, promoting and funding archive standards and initiatives, possibly together with the other heritage fields such as museums and libraries. Universities or governments may develop expertise in areas such as conservation and preservation of traditional archive formats, digital recordkeeping or disaster prevention and recovery which is accessible to the rest of the archives and records management sector. For those working with archives and records it is important to become familiar with the landscape, regardless of what country they are working in, so as to keep abreast of current developments, practice and standards, to access specialist expertise when needed and to forge alliances and partnerships in managing the holdings. It is impossible to paint this landscape in one seminal, time-defying portrait but this section offers a broad-brush sketch of the types of organizations there are, with some concrete examples.

### *Professional associations*

Technically a professional association is an organization comprising of professionals in the field with a mission and goals that focus on advancing the profession and supporting the professional members. To this end professional associations typically carry out a range of services and activities including, for example:

- requirement of a qualification or qualifications recognized by the profession as being necessary to conduct professional work
- a code of conduct or ethics
- a continuing professional development framework and/or a registration or certification scheme to continuously assess professionals against a competency framework
- award of fellowship status to recognize exceptional service to the profession
- advocacy of the profession and of professional issues to policy-makers
- awareness-raising about the profession and archives and records management with the wider population
- development of professional tools, standards and guidance
- publication of newsletters and professional journals
- organization of conferences (and governance meetings)
- facilitation of special interest groups.

However, this is a very purist definition of a professional association and

many professional associations admit institutions as well as individual professionals and allow suppliers and consultants full membership and voting rights.

**The Archives and Records Association** (ARA, [www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk)) describes itself as 'the lead professional body for archivists, archive conservators and records managers in the United Kingdom and Ireland'. It was formed out of the 2010 merger of the National Council on Archives, the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government and the Society of Archivists. It offers a mature example of a professional body with an entry qualification accreditation process, a registration scheme for new professionals, a code of ethics, a competency framework and pilot CPD (continuing professional development) scheme, established special interest groups and regional structures, a well established, peer-reviewed journal, annual conferences and an advocacy programme which includes parliamentary lobbying and an annual archive awareness campaign.

**The Information and Records Management Society** ([www.irms.org.uk](http://www.irms.org.uk)) began in 1983 as the Records Management Society. Membership is open to 'all those concerned with records and information, regardless of their professional or organizational status or qualifications . . . organizations wishing to develop records or information systems and those that provide services in these fields'. Its mission focuses on providing leadership to champion and promote records and information management and support professional development. It has regional branches, a bi-monthly *Bulletin*, and has a partnership arrangement with a publisher to produce the *Records Management Journal*. There is also an accreditation scheme to recognize members' professional competencies through peer assessment.

Other Anglophone national professional associations that should be noted are the **Society of American Archivists** (founded in 1936), the **Australian Society of Archivists** and the **Association of Canadian Archivists** (both established in 1975). **ARMA International** (established in 1953) is the predominantly American professional association for records managers, although the 'international' in its title reflects a membership from over 30 other countries. All of these are run along the same lines as the UK professional associations, with similar services and advocacy work. Canada also has the **Association des archivistes du Québec** (founded in 1967). It is a professional organization for French-Canadians, working to support the archives and records management profession and to advocate its cause and work with government and other stakeholders. Other Canadian provinces and territories also have their own professional associations.

### *Centres of expertise*

Many countries have centres of expertise that offer services (possibly at a price) to archives and advice to archivists and records managers. For many years the British Library in the UK funded the **Preservation Advisory Centre**, which offered subsidized training courses in all areas of conservation and archival preservation, as well as publishing a very comprehensive set of guidance on its web pages. Sadly it was forced to close in 2014 due to budget cuts at the British Library. The New Zealand National Library has set up a similar body in its own **National Preservation Office**.

### *Pressure groups*

Although archives and records management professionals are often very active in action groups in the field, there is a set of stakeholders which cannot be described as professional associations. In the UK at least, some of these have existed for many years.

**The British Records Association** ([www.britishrecordsassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishrecordsassociation.org.uk)) was founded in 1932 and promotes ‘the interests of archives and archives users at the national level’; thus its members include not only professional archivists but also librarians and others responsible for managing archives, as well as owners of records and researchers. To this end it provides advice on the care of archives, organizes an annual conference and produces a range of publications, including a journal, *Archives*. The Association’s Records Preservation Section advises owners and custodians of archives as to the best place to deposit them and can also help to physically transfer the material.

**The Business Archives Council**, established in 1934, describes its goals as ‘the preservation of business records of historical importance, supplying advice and information on business archives and records, encouraging interest in and study of business history and archives and to provide a forum for the custodians and users of business archives’ ([www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk](http://www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk)). The Council produces a number of surveys of records of major UK industries, such as banking and brewing, and also publishes a journal, *Business Archives*, every six months. It organizes conferences, seminars and symposiums and training days and workshops. Its members are a combination of archive owners, professional archivists and records managers and researchers.

**Archives for London** ‘brings together everyone interested in archives in or about London – users, practitioners and enthusiasts’ ([www.archivesforlondon.org](http://www.archivesforlondon.org)). It is an example of a geographically based archives pressure or supporters’ group. It offers a series of seminars and visits, as well as an annual conference, and works with other organizations on initiatives and programmes that fall within its remit.



Some countries have pressure groups working for archives and records management at the national level. For example, the **Canadian Council of Archives** ([www.cdncouncilarchives.ca](http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca)) is an independent body made up of representatives from the Canadian provinces and territories, as well as the National Archives, the Association of Canadian Archivists and the Association des archivistes du Québec. It manages various funds to support archives and records management projects.

### ***Records management and archival education and training***

The people who look after archives and manage records come from many different educational and cultural backgrounds. Depending on at what level they are working and whether the physical characteristics of the records require specialized expertise, they will have more or less technical, practical and intellectual skills and experience. This book obviously aims at giving beginners and newcomers to archives and records management a good basic introduction, but it cannot cover all of the professional competencies which the discipline encompasses. This section aims to provide an overview of the field and some of the possible routes to further training, knowledge and continuing professional development.

#### *What do we need to know?*

In order to manage records and archives we need to have knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- **palaeography:** the skill of being able to read historical handwriting
- **languages:** archaic languages such as Latin or Middle High German, other languages in which the records are written, for example in dual-language countries such as Canada (French and English) or Wales (Welsh and English)
- **computer skills:** these are invaluable in managing records and archives to support the creation and use of finding aids, access, preservation management and control through the lifecycle; more advanced technical skills are required to manage electronic records
- **preservation management:** the physical protection of records and archives in all media and formats, including disaster prevention and recovery, security, handling and use policy and guidelines, environmental and storage standards and cleaning and conservation considerations
- **appraisal:** deciding which records to keep permanently in the archive and when to destroy non-archival records

- **collecting policy:** high-level decisions about what archives to take in
- **acquisition and accessioning:** deposit agreements between record owners and archival custodians; clear documentation on the point of receipt
- **archival processing, arrangement and description:** documenting records and archives in order to manage them and make them accessible to others
- **access provision:** use of archives by researchers, outreach activities to raise awareness about the holdings
- **recordkeeping systems:** understanding how recordkeeping systems work, the relationship between activities and records; creating and maintaining paper and digital filing systems; organizing and managing records effectively; setting destruction deadlines
- **advocacy and marketing:** justification and awareness-raising to ensure archives and records management is resourced, adopted and embedded and archives are funded, protected and used.

Another way of looking at the knowledge and skills needed to manage archives and records is through the development of a competency standard. The Archives and Records Association has recently published a Competency Framework ([www.archives.org.uk/careers/cpd.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/careers/cpd.html)), which classifies the 36 competencies considered necessary for managing records and archives into ten functions within three areas, as follows:

### 1 Organizational

- (a) governance and planning
- (b) monitoring and evaluation
- (c) personal development

### 2 Process

- (a) processing/managing current or semi-current records in all media and formats
- (b) processing/managing archival records in all media and formats
- (c) preserving records and archives in all media and formats
- (d) conserving archives

### 3 User/stakeholder

- (a) understanding users and stakeholders
- (b) delivering a service to users
- (c) engaging users.

### *Career paths*

A sound education at the point of entry into the profession; competency-based training for continuing professional development and involvement in research-

based enquiry and knowledge creation all have roles in developing and sustaining well-rounded professionals, to the greater benefit of the profession as a whole.

Karen Anderson, *Education and Training for Records Professionals*, June 2006

There are a number of ways to gain the skills and knowledge to work in the archives and records workforce and/or to become a recognized qualified professional. Looking at the teaching, medical and legal professions, which are more numerous and better-established than ours, the elements in qualifying as a professional include the following:

- theory (education, study)
- practical application (training, practicals)
- probation (the newly educated/trained phase)
- keeping up with new developments, techniques and practice
- membership of an advocacy body for the profession
- voluntary or compulsory 'policing' by a regulating body to an agreed or accepted standard.

All of these elements should be in place for recognized qualified professionals, but many of them are accessible and desirable for anyone working with records and archives.

### *Training*

**Training:** the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enables learners to carry out their work; tends to focus on job skills and awareness-raising.

Training in looking after archives and records management takes a variety of forms and can be delivered by a range of providers (for example the professional associations described above). It is usually of a practical nature and has a small, focused learning remit aiming to teach participants specific competencies to be able to operate effectively in one operational area. An example might be training in disaster prevention and recovery. Training might also be a more general introduction or overview, such as the Basic Archive Skills Training Day offered by the Archive-Skills Consultancy.<sup>8</sup> Training is useful for both qualified and recognized professionals and para-professionals. Providers of archives and records management training include the professional associations, universities and consultants.

*Tertiary education*

**Education:** following systematic instruction or intellectual and moral training designed to give a broad and/or deep understanding of the topics covered. Usually associated with children and young people.

In the UK, as in many other parts of the world, it is possible to study archives and records management in universities. This tends to be at postgraduate level and students gain a postgraduate diploma or, increasingly, a master's degree in archives and/or records management. In other parts of the world, it might be an undergraduate degree, but the model is to have a range of universities offering students a choice of not only where to study but also of the content of the study. In the UK the Archives and Records Association (ARA) has an accreditation framework for the university courses and students are well advised to study on one of the accredited programmes. This also happens in Australia, where the Australian Society of Archivists<sup>9</sup> accredits courses.

Another model for tertiary education is that of a dedicated archives school. In France many archivists are educated at the *École Nationale des Chartes*,<sup>10</sup> founded in 1821, part of the Sorbonne, offering a three-year master's degree. As a public institution under a ministerial charter from the Department of Higher Education and Research it is very prestigious and on acceptance its students are enrolled into the French civil service for ten years. In Germany there is the *Archivschule in Marburg* (<http://archivschule.de>), founded in 1949. It is a Hessen state institution operating as a technical university awarding students from the German civil service a bachelor's or master's degree, depending on their grade.

In the UK it is very hard to be recognized as a professional archivist without an academic qualification from one of the ARA-accredited university courses, particularly if you started your career in recent decades.

*Professional recognition*

Another way of attaining professional status is by a rigorous accreditation or certification process. The UK Information and Records Management Society has an accreditation scheme which offers 'professional recognition to any individual member working in the fields of records management, . . . any other allied profession' by providing evidence of their competence and experience. Successful candidates are entitled to the post-nominal AMIRMS (Accredited Member of the Information and Records Management Society).

In the USA, the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA, see [www.certifiedarchivists.org](http://www.certifiedarchivists.org)), originally set up by the Society of American Archivists but now an independent body, describes itself as the 'certifying organization

of professional archivists'. Certification involves providing evidence of appropriate tertiary education (not necessarily in archives and records management) and experience (which is longer if candidates' education has not been in the field) as well as sitting a three-hour exam consisting of 100 multiple-choice questions.

Similarly, the Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM, see [www.icrm.org](http://www.icrm.org)), 'an international certifying organization of and for professional records and information managers' runs a scheme for professional recognition of its members. The ICRM was originally an ARMA International body which is now fully independent. Applicants for ICRM certification must have a bachelor's degree or a substantial amount of relevant experience and demonstrate a range of work experience falling into four or more specified categories. Suitably qualified applicants must then pass a six-part examination. Both of these examples require re-certification at regular intervals and thus operate as continuing professional development (CPD) schemes as well.

### *Continuing professional development*

CPD is a regime of training, research and contribution to the individual's own professional arena which aims to update, expand and enhance skills, knowledge and expertise. The goals are to ensure currency of knowledge and skills and competency, to be able to perform more difficult roles, sometimes to move into a new role or job altogether and to give confidence in the profession as a whole.

CPD can be pursued as part of an organized scheme. One example is the CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) revalidation scheme<sup>11</sup> for its Chartered Members. Another example is Records and Information Professionals Australasia (RIMPA) which has a compulsory CPD scheme for all its members, because the organization believes 'it is vital that Professional Members remain current in the dynamic field of records management. This goes beyond initial qualification and implies a system of Continuing Professional Development'.<sup>12</sup> The scheme involves members providing evidence of CPD over a three-year cycle. On successful completion of CPD requirements, members receive a professional membership certificate which is valid for three years.

In practice most people in the archives and records management workforce are pursuing CPD, even if it is not part of a recognized scheme. Professional development opportunities include training courses, active membership of the professional organizations, reading the professional literature and doing something new in the workplace for the first time.

## **Working with records and archives**

We live in the information age. Modern technology allows us to create and have access to a wealth of information, including records and archives, in many different media and formats with very little hindrance. This could be digitally via the internet and mobile technology or in person via libraries, archives and even directly in the offices of creators under information rights legislation such as Freedom of Information or Data Protection. Technology also allows the information to be duplicated and manipulated such that the sheer quantity of information (and therefore records and archives) has become a real challenge to manage not only on an organizational level but also for individuals and communities or society as a whole.

This book is concerned with how we manage records effectively to ensure they are fit for purpose, are available when needed, can be relied upon in everyday business and are kept only as long as required to support business, work or the process, unless they are of archival value. It is also concerned with how we manage and protect those records that have been selected for the archives so as to ensure that they remain accessible to employees, business managers and owners, the public and generations of unknown users to come.

It goes without saying that if we decide to keep records permanently as archives because of their value in providing key evidence of the history of the creating body, we need to look after them very carefully. Moreover, it is likely that archives will have many different people looking after them over time because we anticipate them outlasting the lifespan of a single human being. Good archival management is documented and transparent to allow different custodians to care for the archives in a consistent way over time.

## **Challenges and issues**

The information age holds many challenges and issues for those of us who care about looking after and/or using records and archives. Table 1.2 shows the kinds of questions that concern creators, users and managers of records and archives – and which this book aims to address.

There are many aspects to recordkeeping and archives management and the main concerns are outlined here. They will be covered in more detail later in the book.

### *Space*

We need to ensure that there is physical room and/or server/offline storage for current and non-current records and archives. We also need to know that it is appropriate, secure space and it is efficient and cost-effective.

**Table 1.2** *Challenges and issues in managing archives and records*

	<b>Creator</b>	<b>Manager</b>	<b>User</b>
<b>Records</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what to create?</li> <li>• how to create, what to include?</li> <li>• what format or medium?</li> <li>• how to keep, file, classify?</li> <li>• who to share with?</li> <li>• enough space?</li> <li>• enough budget?</li> <li>• reliable records?</li> <li>• how long to keep records?</li> <li>• is it legal to keep records?</li> <li>• is it legal to destroy records?</li> <li>• can information be found?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enough space?</li> <li>• enough budget?</li> <li>• reliable records?</li> <li>• how long to keep records?</li> <li>• is it legal to keep records?</li> <li>• is it legal to destroy records?</li> <li>• whether to scan records?</li> <li>• can information be found?</li> <li>• sensitive records?</li> <li>• access to records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what records are there?</li> <li>• where are records?</li> <li>• what format or medium?</li> <li>• who created records?</li> <li>• reliable records?</li> <li>• usable, accessible records?</li> <li>• OK to copy?</li> </ul>
<b>Archives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• which are archives?</li> <li>• need to keep archives?</li> <li>• how to keep archives?</li> <li>• need to share archives?</li> <li>• how to share archives?</li> <li>• how valuable are the archives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need to keep archives?</li> <li>• where to keep archives?</li> <li>• catalogues, indexes, finding aids</li> <li>• allow access to archives?</li> <li>• access rights management</li> <li>• advertising archives</li> <li>• protecting archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what archives are there?</li> <li>• where are archives?</li> <li>• what format or medium?</li> <li>• who created archives?</li> <li>• reliable archives?</li> <li>• usable, accessible archives?</li> <li>• OK to copy?</li> </ul>

*Creation*

It is very important that records are created as necessary and appropriate to support human activity (be it commercial, social or private) and that they document what is needed for the activity to happen or continue to happen, as well as provide reliable evidence of what occurred. It is also important that records and archives are created well. First of all, we need to know where the information came from and its reliability and secondly, the medium and format need to be appropriate for the use the record will be put to, as well as robust enough to survive for as long as needed. Records – and archives – must have a few pieces of crucial descriptive information, including things such as the creator and the date. This kind of information is called metadata and it may be contained within the record, or associated with it via a finding aid such as an index or a computer system or program.

*Access*

Current records are usually primarily of interest to a select group or groups

of people, regardless of whether the records are archival or not. Organizations and record creators and users save or file records in systems where they can be accessed by everyone who needs to see them – or for access to be controlled and limited as necessary. Archives, particularly the archives of public bodies, are usually freely available to anyone. It is advisable to manage access carefully, both to ensure the safety of the archives and to gain a body of knowledge about use trends and levels. Private archives are not necessarily open to everyone to consult. Finding aids, such as indexes or file lists and metadata, can be used to facilitate and control access to records and archives, regardless of their age or status. Another aspect of access is promotion of the archive holdings to attract new audiences into the reading room and to use any online services.

### *Content management*

We have already mentioned the role of metadata and finding aids in facilitating access to records and archives. In general, it is more efficient if users know what sort of information is in the records or archives before they begin looking at them. It also protects the archives against unnecessary wear and tear caused by the need to check whether the records are of interest or not. One way of facilitating the process is through accurate and meaningful file or document/folder titles. The other way is through metadata and finding aids such as classification schemes and indexes. A good, well thought out and maintained, recordkeeping system will be easy to use. Creators will know where to file or save records and users will be able to retrieve records accurately and easily. Archives which come from good recordkeeping systems may well have original finding aids but if there are no contemporary finding aids, we need to create some in order to make the content accessible.

### *Legal situation*

There are many legal issues associated with archives and records. We need to think about ownership and physical custody, as well as intellectual property rights. By law, certain types of records must be created and kept, whilst some records must be kept securely and/or destroyed if certain conditions are not met. Whilst those of us managing records and looking after archives cannot be expected to provide legal advice, we need to be aware of the relevant legal obligations.

### *Maintenance*

Records and archives need ongoing management. Recordkeeping systems



such as physical file stores and digital drives can become disorganized and unreliable if they are not consistently added to according to the method of organization. The same is true for archives, but for archives there is also a higher risk of physical deterioration. With digital records, the speed of technological advance is such that we need to ensure that even very recently created records can continue to be accessed and read over time.

### ***Records management***

**Records management:** a comprehensive regime which controls records through their lifecycle, including: deciding what records to create; organizing them so that they support business needs and authorized retrieval; evaluating and imposing retention requirements; documented destruction or designation as archives.

Records management is concerned with having effective control over records to ensure that they are created to provide reliable evidence as needed, can be exploited as an information resource, are kept in accordance with any applicable legislation and are destroyed when no longer needed – unless deemed archival. It is a discipline which is applied in a real-life environment, working with individuals and groups whose priorities are not necessarily having a tidy filing system. It requires a certain knowledge and experience as well as a particular set of skills but it is not an arcane or esoteric science. It's a very practical function.

Records management can be broken down into a set of activities, all of which are needed to achieve that control over the records. The main building blocks are outlined below.

### ***Needs analysis***

A needs analysis can be used to justify records management where there is no existing formal provision. It involves a study of the functions, records and recordkeeping habits and culture of the organization with a view to identifying areas of risk and inefficiency and to put into place measures for improvement.

### ***Records survey***

The records survey is a systematic information-gathering process which focuses on what record users and creators do, what records they create and use to support their work and how they organize and keep them. The survey provides the basis for developing the records management system.

### *Appraisal*

Records need to be appraised to establish access rights, sharing requirements and how long they should be retained. This process leads to the development of the tools, such as lists of retention periods, together with the procedures necessary to establish and inform consistent and appropriate record access and security management across the organization.

### *Current recordkeeping systems*

Records really need to be captured and controlled from the moment they are created. The way we do this is in good physical filing systems or well organized computer systems. There is no inherent right way or wrong way to organize records – the system will depend on the nature of the work or activity being recorded and supported as well as the abilities and habits of the creator(s) or culture of the organization. The important thing is to be consistent, keep up with the filing and to document the system so that anyone can easily use it.

### *Non-current recordkeeping systems*

Non-current records are the records that are no longer needed to support the work. On the other hand, they may need to be retained for legal reasons, or for infrequent access to answer queries or review the history of activity. Non-current records are closed: that is to say, they are no longer added to because the case, project or work cycle is over. The trick is to make sure that non-current records are identified and listed in finding aids that ensure that any given record can be easily retrieved if required.

### *Storage*

Records management involves selecting and managing appropriate record storage, be it physical, onsite, off-site or even outsourced, or digital in the form of servers, drives, tape libraries or residing in the cloud. Whilst non-current records that are ultimately due for destruction do not require the very high standard physical environment that archival records need, they still need an environment that is secure from unauthorized access and ensures that they are accessible and readable for as long as they are needed. Different media require different storage environments.

### *Disposal*

Disposal can mean destruction or removal to archives. Records which are not

of archival value should be destroyed when they no longer serve a useful operational purpose and do not need to be kept for legal or contractual reasons. This must be done in such a way that they cannot be accessed again and there are no copies left. This process must also be clearly documented with authorization and destruction details. If this final process is not well managed and documented, it undermines the whole recordkeeping effort. Obviously if records are archival, they will be processed and documented according to archives management procedures.

### *Vital records and emergency planning*

Records management plays a crucial role in emergency planning, because it allows the identification of those records vital to business continuity and the development of a strategy to protect them. It also feeds into disaster prevention planning and strategies for dealing quickly and effectively with the adverse results of any disaster threatening the safety and longevity of archival, business-critical and other vital records.

### *Awareness-raising*

One of the most important aspects of records management is persuading stakeholders of the need to manage records. We need to be able to justify records management throughout the organization.

### *Ongoing review*

Organizations are continually changing and developing, and the records which support business functions and activities will evolve at the same rate. Therefore records management systems need to be regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, cover all organizational records and make the best use of recordkeeping solutions.

### ***Looking after archives***

Managing archives effectively, to ensure that they are both accessible and protected against the wear and tear of use and the natural deterioration due to age that impacts all matter, requires a range of skills and expertise which can be categorized into a number of functional areas.

### *Preservation management*

This function is perhaps the most important aspect of managing archives,

since we aim to keep them forever, so we need to take measures to ensure their survival. It involves preventing deterioration or disintegration, providing an environment that protects the records physically and ensures their longevity, disaster prevention and recovery, use policy and guidelines, good handling practices, conservation considerations and a holistic collections care strategy.

### *Appraisal*

Deciding which records to keep permanently in the archive is a fundamental aspect of their management, since it involves judgement about the value of the records and an appreciation of legal, business, cultural and societal considerations, combined with a knowledge of archival appraisal principles. We select those few of all the creator's records that represent and provide evidence of the 'story'.

### *Collecting policy*

We need to decide what kind of archives we want to keep in order to match the organization's and archive repository's aims to resources. This involves describing the scope of the archives holdings, both currently and as it is envisioned in the future.

### *Acquisition*

We need to ensure that we have clear acquisition agreements when we take in new archives so that ownership and/or custody is legal and we know how the records may be used. The agreement must include physical and intellectual property rights.

### *Accessioning*

This is about initial documentation or registration of archives, which acts as a basic control or accession record giving details of creator, quantity, content and location, the basic contextual and authentication information needed for coherent, robust and global collection management.

### *Archival processing, arrangement and description*

This is a large and often challenging competency area which involves gathering information about records and archives in order to manage them and make them accessible to others. It is a slow, painstaking task which results

in a range of finding aids and control documentation. It requires research and analysis of the records to understand their interrelationships and the way the creator produced and used them in order to derive information about the content and context of the records. The resulting archival finding aids should act as maps for researchers and users so that they can locate records of interest to them.

### *Access provision*

We keep archives so that people can consult and use them. Providing access involves helping people use the archives, providing the environment and supplementary resources for users, complying with legal and societal obligations and protecting the archives when being used. It is also about more active outreach activities to raise awareness about holdings, to ensure that they are known about and used as much as possible. It requires good finding aids or recordkeeping systems, an understanding of the content of the individual components of the holdings and of the ways people might wish to consult and use the material, as well as having a vision of the ways in which the records might be used. Moreover, it involves an understanding of intellectual property rights and conditions as well as the more subtle issues around privacy and confidentiality.

### *Advocacy*

This is a crucial part of archives management. It involves ensuring that we have the resources to look after the archives, gaining and retaining support to maintain the archives and mobilizing politicians, managers and citizens as champions of the archives.

## **Record creators and archive users**

There can be a symbiotic dependency between creators and records managers, as well as between archivists and researchers, but the two can also seem to have conflicting goals. It is useful to consider where the creators of the records are coming from and what archives users expect, because it helps us to manage records and archives more effectively.

### ***Record creators***

We have already considered the concerns of record creators, identifying issues such as what records to create, how and where to keep them for how long and finding them when needed. Most creators have a very pragmatic

approach to recordkeeping and do the minimum necessary to file them, their main concern being the ability to retrieve them. Because they create the records, and because they use the recordkeeping system regularly – if they haven't created it as well – the knowledge of how to use the system and retrieve records often exists only in their heads. When the system is shared with so many people that a group discipline is needed, or when the only person who knows how it works is inaccessible, the risk of not documenting the system becomes apparent.

Understanding the reasons why records are created and organized helps us to develop more effective recordkeeping systems which are also easier to use.

There are a number of factors or questions to consider in trying to understand the organization's record creation and management habits. The organization, what it does and its culture influence its recordkeeping profoundly. Understanding whether the organization is governmental, international, non-governmental, business or charity is relatively easy but understanding the individual corporate culture of an organization is more challenging. Once we understand the organization, its mission, priorities and way of working, we can see cause and effect on records creation and management – and begin to make positive changes as needed. Table 1.3 gives some basic questions and possible answers to help understand how and why organizations create and manage records the way they do.

### **Archive users**

Archive users cannot be easily characterized and their research interests are myriad. However, we don't need a detailed understanding of the various sub-groups because, whilst we want to help them use the archives, we also want the archives to be an independent testimony to the history of the organization or individual. We also want our custody and care to be as objective and neutral as possible to ensure that the integrity and independence remain for generation upon generation of users, whose research interests and methods we cannot possibly guess.

Archive users are generally not interested in the whole archive or all the holdings in a repository. They are interested in subjects, names or places, not interested in how the various parts of the archive relate to each other or the fact that all the items in an archive have the same provenance. They often don't understand why some of the records they imagine should have been either created or kept do not actually exist.

In order to provide access, we generally develop two layers of finding aids. One is a map or schema of how the records are related to each other, usually based on organizational functions or the separate activities of the family or

**Table 1.3** *How organizations create and manage records*

	<b>Government</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Private Individual/family</b>
Which records are created?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>legislation</li> <li>policy</li> <li>agreements and frameworks with citizens, industry, foreign countries</li> <li>routine correspondence, receipts, forms, licences</li> <li>council and committee minutes</li> <li>regulations, inspection and revenue-raising records</li> <li>health and education records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>governing board records</li> <li>production, operational or service records</li> <li>administrative support records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key 'life' records (birth, naturalization, marriage, death, passport, National Health Service card)</li> <li>records of qualifications and achievements</li> <li>personal correspondence, diaries</li> <li>home administration records</li> <li>work and/or social life records</li> </ul>
Who is creating records?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>employees</li> <li>citizens</li> <li>contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff</li> <li>customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individuals and family</li> <li>friends</li> <li>employers and authorities</li> </ul>
How are they being organized?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>computers and paper filing cabinets</li> <li>Electronic Records Management System (ERMS)</li> <li>in old registry systems</li> <li>all doing own thing</li> <li>following standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on computer may have ERMS</li> <li>in paper systems</li> <li>systemized</li> <li>disorganized</li> <li>following standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on computer</li> <li>in paper systems</li> <li>systemized</li> <li>disorganized</li> </ul>
Who are the records shared with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>security classified</li> <li>colleagues in department or within authority</li> <li>colleagues across government</li> <li>public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>colleagues</li> <li>customers</li> <li>contractors</li> <li>associated businesses</li> <li>commercially sensitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family</li> <li>friends</li> <li>organizations to/which they belong/interact</li> <li>authorities</li> </ul>
What recordkeeping resources are there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually one or two posts</li> <li>some IT support</li> <li>may have ERMS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>records manager with team</li> <li>ad hoc consultant support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>time of individuals</li> </ul>
How long are the records kept?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>according to retention schedule based on various laws and guidance</li> <li>archive facilities and expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>according to retention schedule based on various laws and guidance</li> <li>financial records according to regulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ad hoc solution to keep volume manageable</li> </ul>
What are the legal issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom of Information law</li> <li>environmental regulations</li> <li>public records Acts</li> <li>health and safety law</li> <li>financial Acts and regulation</li> <li>data protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>health and safety law</li> <li>financial Acts and regulation</li> <li>sector-specific legislation</li> <li>data protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proof not breaking law and meeting legal obligations</li> <li>proof of rights</li> </ul>

individual. This helps us to preserve the evidence and knowledge of how the records arose from the creator's activity. The second layer is a detailed description of the content, which may be indexed manually or, increasingly, part of a computerized system with a range of search functions.

Meeting expectations that records should have been created when they were not is almost impossible. Explaining why records that once existed are no longer around can easily be demonstrated if the right archives and records management policies are in place.

Having said it is not necessary – or even possible – to choose the archives we keep because of the research interests of our users, it is useful to think about the main categories of research that users come to archives to pursue, since this can help to meet their needs. Table 1.4 gives the main categories of archive users, suggesting their motivation and characteristics.

**Table 1.4** *Archive users and their perspectives*

User/Researcher group	Perspectives
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually highly educated, organized, focused</li> <li>may be experienced archive users</li> <li>often expect archives to contain material relevant to their research and be organized as they want</li> </ul>
Genealogists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>could have any level of education, organizational skills and experience of archives</li> <li>may be easily satisfied if lots of personal name indexes – or disappointed if not</li> <li>new genealogists need coaching</li> </ul>
Journalists, film and TV producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confident and empowered</li> <li>expect records of subjects interested in to be there and organized in ways they imagine</li> <li>don't distinguish between archives, books and artefacts</li> <li>may expect special treatment without offering remuneration for services received</li> <li>can be experienced researchers</li> </ul>
Schoolchildren	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>should come with teacher or parent</li> <li>don't know (or need to know) complexities of archival description</li> <li>probably need resources based on school curriculum</li> <li>offers opportunity to introduce them positively to archives</li> </ul>
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>could be highly educated, organized, focused, depending on level and reason doing research</li> <li>can be inexperienced or more experienced</li> <li>may be interested in course-related materials</li> <li>may need lots of help if beginning research</li> </ul>
Freedom of Information/Open Data/Big Data researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ordinary citizens</li> <li>very varied in terms of education and experience of using archives</li> <li>focused on particular information in archives/records not records in context</li> <li>may need to think laterally to find what they are looking for</li> </ul>
Personal history researchers (e.g. for adoption details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>probably inexperienced in archive use</li> <li>probably anxious or stressed</li> <li>interested in names, institutional records</li> <li>need sensitive and/or appropriately qualified support</li> </ul>
Local historians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be very knowledgeable and know archives better than archivists</li> <li>may have own collections of archive materials</li> <li>may expect archives to be organized like a local studies library</li> </ul>
House history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>very focused on own house</li> <li>probably not experienced in using archives</li> <li>may be frustrated at lack of archival resources</li> </ul>



## Round-up

We have now explored the concepts behind managing archives and records, looked at the wider context of this field of activity, examined its constituent parts (albeit in summary) and considered the creators' and users' points of view. It is time to look at the principles and activities required to create and organize current records, control and manage non-current records and look after archives over time.

## Notes

- 1 <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>.
- 2 [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/accreditation.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/accreditation.htm).
- 3 [www.ica.org](http://www.ica.org).
- 4 [www.ica.org/13619/toolkits-guides-manuals-and-guidelines/principles-of-access-to-archives.html](http://www.ica.org/13619/toolkits-guides-manuals-and-guidelines/principles-of-access-to-archives.html).
- 5 [www.ica.org/12586/fida-funding-and-support/fida-funding-and-support.html](http://www.ica.org/12586/fida-funding-and-support/fida-funding-and-support.html).
- 6 [www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/homepage](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/homepage).
- 7 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001256/125637e.pdf>.
- 8 [www.archive-skills.com/training/index.php](http://www.archive-skills.com/training/index.php).
- 9 <https://www.archivists.org.au/learning-publications/accredited-courses> and <https://www.archivists.org.au/documents/item/203>.
- 10 [www.enc-sorbonne.fr/fr/rubrique-ecole/ecole-nationale-chartes](http://www.enc-sorbonne.fr/fr/rubrique-ecole/ecole-nationale-chartes).
- 11 [www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/jobs-careers/professional-registration/levels-professional-registration/revalidation](http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/jobs-careers/professional-registration/levels-professional-registration/revalidation).
- 12 <http://rimpa.com.au/professional-development/cpd-scheme>.