

ARCHIVES & RECORDS ASSOCIATION

REGISTRATION SCHEME

LEARNING OUTCOMES FORM

Place a completed copy of this form at the front of the evidence for each credit

DEVELOPMENT AREA: 3 Work Achievements

ACTIVITY: 3.1 Appraisal of Semi-Current records

DATES: October 2005 – June 2006

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / motivation:

I was employed by Company A on a short-term contract to appraise the records in their Head Office Central Filing Store. This was my first professional post after qualifying from the MA course and I was attracted to it because it would give me the opportunity to work in Records Management, an area in which I previously had limited experience. My main role was to appraise a large backlog of semi-current records from head office departments in accordance with the company guidelines (XHA), select records of historical importance for preservation and organise the confidential destruction of others. These records were roughly sorted, re-housed and box listed. Following this the selected records were accessioned using CALM and transferred to the Historical Archive.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

This was a very steep learning curve for me, as I had never worked on a project of this scale before. I soon realised that I needed to understand the structure and functions of the departments that created these records before I could assess if they held any evidential value. For guidance about which records to retain I drew on the XHA cataloguing classification system, retention schedules and on the advice of my colleagues. When examining records I learnt how to assess the type of information contained, its value and if of a sensitive nature, what closure periods may be applicable. I learnt that appraisal should also identify records that are no longer needed for the running of the organisation and can be destroyed. After roughly arranging and listing the records I accessioned them onto the CALM database. This was my first experience of working with an electronic collection management database and although I did not use the catalogue function, I learnt a great deal about the functionality of the system. At first I was very slow and hesitant when appraising, but after ten months of working on this project I realise that a more pragmatic approach is suitable. Now I can easily recognise the types of records and information that should be preserved and can justify my destruction decisions.

Follow up / continued benefit:

During this project I developed a working methodology of how to approach the appraisal of records that will be of use throughout my career. The lessons learnt from the project have also spilt over into other areas of my work at A company. I am also responsible for managing transfers of new material to the Central Filing Store. My increased knowledge has enabled me to offer advice to departments on the retention of records, as well as developing the documentation that accompanies new transfers and reviewing the confidential destruction process.

July 2006-June 2007: A key lesson that I learnt from the project was to do your homework about the organisation or individual who created the records before attempting to appraise their value. Regardless of size I find the methodology I developed useful when appraising collections for acquisition and during cataloguing. My familiarity with the CALM system was beneficial when Archive B was installing and testing their new system.

July 2009: In my current post at Archive C I am often called upon to advise departments on the types of records to retain and to appraise records prior to the transfer to the Archives. I apply the skills that I learnt at Company A to these.

Evidence:

Page from box list showing research, appraisal decision and my name
Screenshot of accession record

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 3 Work Achievements

ACTIVITY: 3.2 Jubilee Exhibition

DATES: February – November 2009

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description/motivation:

My repository, a hospital archive, has benefited from royal patronage since its foundation in the 1820s and it was therefore felt that the Queen's Golden Jubilee should be appropriately marked. I was invited to join a small committee responsible for organising these celebrations, and was asked to produce some kind of historical exhibition. I was very pleased to be given this high-profile opportunity to raise awareness of the hospital's history and archives.

Taking into account the lack of a suitable display area within the hospital, and the security issues surrounding the display of archival materials in a building open to the public on a 24 hour basis, I decided to make use of the window of a recently vacated high-street bank situated in the ground floor of the hospital. The window was perfectly situated to enable the exhibition to be seen by staff, patients and visitors: facing the public cafeteria and next door to a shop run by the Friends of the hospital.

The exhibition consisted of eight large laminated panels which incorporated text and high quality reproductions of documents and photographs held in the archives. These panels were commissioned from graphic designers working within the medical illustration department at the hospital. The theme of the exhibition was "The Royal Family and the Hospital", and the first seven panels focused on visits to the hospital and medical school by members of the royal family from Queen Victoria to our present patron, HRH the Duke of York; the final panel focused on life at the hospital in 1952, the year of the Queen's coronation.

What I achieved/learnt from the activity:

This was the first time that I had been called upon to interpret archival material for the public rather than for specialist researchers, and I therefore found the preparation of the exhibition an extremely useful learning experience. My only previous attempts at writing had been for a specialist audience or within an academic context, and as a result it was a considerable challenge to develop accompanying text for the display that would be interesting and informative as well as easily accessible to a wide range of readers.

The experience of serving on a committee established to achieve identified goals within a strictly limited period of time was very useful, and helped me to develop my team-working and time management skills.

Follow up/continued benefit:

Producing displays and exhibitions has become a regular feature of my role at the hospital, and this initial experience has therefore been of great practical value in my working life. The close relationship I developed with graphic designers in the medical illustration department as a result of the Jubilee exhibition has encouraged me to develop further projects with them, such as the provision of explanatory plaques for wards and other areas within the hospital named after renowned historical figures associated with the hospital.

2010: The experience of working with designers within the hospital has also proved useful in my role as secretary to a Archives & Records Association region. The regional officers recently arranged to have a quarterly regional mailing produced and distributed by a professional company, and I have been responsible for liaising with designers in developing a house style for the newsletter.

Evidence:

Photograph of exhibition panel

Page from correspondence with exhibition designers, showing my role

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 3 Work Achievement

ACTIVITY: 3.3 Teaching a WEA Evening Class – *Centuries Past: Exploring Local Archives*

DATES: September – December 2005

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / motivation:

I was approached by a local branch of the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and asked if I would consider running an evening class at the Record Office. My predecessor had run classes in House History and they hoped that I would do something similar. I did not want to do another House History course but suggested running a Local History course entitled *Centuries Past: Exploring Local Archives*. The course needed to include a palaeography aspect, and as I did not feel confident in running this element of the course, I recruited a more experienced colleague who did not have time to run the whole course but was willing to work with me.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

The course lasted for ten weeks and involved a great deal of work. Firstly, the course syllabus had to be planned and a booklist provided, as well as publicity for the WEA brochure. The course then had to be planned in depth for each of the ten weeks. Each week I produced a programme from this initial plan. I found out a lot about the different types of records available for local history research, as I needed to talk about the documents and their uses. I also gained experience of particular examples held in my workplace, as the course was weighted towards the handling and evaluating of original documents. The students were encouraged to undertake a small project of their choice so I also had to give them basic information and guidance to enable them to complete this part of the course. Finally, I had to get the students to complete evaluation forms and send in my own tutor report. I felt that I had learnt a lot from running this course, not only about local history sources and Record Office holdings but also about how the documents can be used to encourage the local community to undertake research and use the facilities available. It was also an opportunity to promote an understanding of the unique nature of archives and the need to take appropriate care in handling them. I also increased my knowledge of palaeography when my colleague was running these sessions for the class.

Follow up / continued benefit:

I have found that my experience of running this course has greatly helped me in my work, including giving presentations and training new staff. I was asked to do a WEA

course again the following year, this time for twenty weeks. However, my colleague would not have been available to help me and, although I had gained in confidence, I felt that it would be too much to undertake on my own. I would consider running a similar course in the future, as I would be able to utilise all the work I have done.

August 2009: In the four years since teaching the course, I have gained much more experience of palaeography in English documents in my daily work, meaning I would now be prepared to run this aspect of any course that I decided to take on in the future.

Evidence:

Page from syllabus, showing my name

Pages from booklist and a weekly programme which I devised

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 3 Work Achievement

ACTIVITY: 3.4 Creation of a source list for a family archive and development of a database

DATES: July – October 2007

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / Motivation:

The nature of the holdings of the family archive often causes difficulties for researchers trying to trace an aspect in the history of particular individuals, events or subjects. In order to aid both staff and researchers, we decided to create a series of documents listing the sources for particular individuals who are represented in the collection. The choice of this particular family member stemmed from his interest to researchers and the wealth of the material in the Archive. My previous experience in the museum sector led me to take a multi-disciplinary approach to the collection, including in the source list not only documents, but illustrations, slides and paintings. I also decided to compete the exercise by reviewing the secondary sources available as these provide excellent background information to researchers.

My initial task was to check the electronic finding aids previously created, and which are available to staff only. Much updating was required and archival material had to be checked for the accuracy of the descriptions. The existence of various finding aids, created at different times for different reasons is confusing to both staff and researchers. The aim of this project was therefore to bring together all the relevant information from these disparate items into a single definitive document, which would be made available to researchers.

Once all the material relating to this family member had been identified, it was necessary to group it within the list in order to aid retrieval. I decided to use subheadings which described, roughly, the nature and origin of the records, and which would simplify the listing for researchers: Estate Papers, Collections, Personal Papers etc. The result was a definitive list, held in electronic format on the shared drive for staff, with the potential of being made available in this format to researchers, and available in hard copy format in the reading room.

During the course of the project, I began work on four boxes of private receipts and invoices that form part of a series. In the past attempts had been made to catalogue this series as the receipts shed great light on the purchases of the family in areas as diverse as art and furniture; racehorses and plants for the garden. A database already

existed for the series. The problem was that the physical items had not been individually numbered so that any reference given in the database only directed you to a box and then a trawl through several hundred items was necessary to find a particular receipt. In addition the database only contained a small selection of the receipts, with no indication of why certain ones had been chosen. It was therefore an incomplete source that was potentially misleading and that needed to be catalogued in full. The first thing that had to be done was to physically number each item in the sub series – over 1200 items in total. Only then could they be listed accurately with a full individual reference that would aid retrieval. I then edited the existing database, adding new entries and updating those already in existence. Once complete, I improved the layout of the database to make it more ‘user-friendly’.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

These two linked projects enabled me to greatly increase my knowledge of the collection in general, and the archives relating to an individual in particular. I am now much better equipped to deal with enquiries relating to the collection as I now have a good understanding of what we have and how it can be used. The database development enabled me to develop my cataloguing and computer skills.

Follow up / continued benefit:

The listing has been used by several researchers, who gave positive feedback regarding the structure and content of the list. It has enabled them to consult further material in the Archive, which they might not have initially considered relevant to their studies. As a result of the success of this project it has been decided to extend the method to other prominent members of the family, thus increasing our knowledge-base and finding aids. The database has also been useful in highlighting items for display and exhibition.

May 2008: Both the source list and database has been published on our website.

March 2009: I used the experience of this project to continue the listing of the receipts, dealing this time with those relating to another prominent family member. Because of my previous work I was able to carry out this listing quickly and efficiently, using the existing database as a template and following the methods I had used before.

Evidence:

Page from source list, showing my name as author

Screen shots from the website showing database and source list

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 3 Work Achievement

ACTIVITY: 3.5 Researching and writing an Emergency / Disaster Plan and Pest Management Strategy for a University Archives Department

DATES: Ongoing since Autumn 2008

NO. OF CREDITS: 2

Description / motivation:

I was given the responsibility of researching and writing a disaster plan for the university archives department. This proved to be a major project running over a number of years. Currently the second drafts of the department's *Emergency / Disaster Handbook* and *Integrated Pest Management Strategy* are awaiting approval.

What I achieved / learnt from this activity:

In order to understand the basic elements of a disaster plan and how institutions approached the preparation and implementation of such a plan, I read extensively through the literature in both print and electronic format and consented with professional colleagues to see what other cultural institutions were doing in this area. I also had to gain an understanding of the university's health and safety policies and the procedures it has put in place to deal with emergencies and disasters within the university as a whole. This was an essential part of drawing up a workable response to an emergency or disaster that affected the department.

I addressed the issue of insurance with the Principal Archivist, the university Safety Office and the university's insurance broker, which has resulted in the university extending its policy to cover the restoration and / or replacement costs of any material damaged in a disaster. Insurance cover has also been arranged for the off-site storage of the department's silver halide master negative microfilm. I sourced an appropriate off-site storage facility for the master negatives and made arrangements for their transfer. I have also arranged for the department to sign up with a disaster recovery company. The main threats to the department have been assessed and are documented in the handbook.

Preparing this plan has used analytical and administrative skills as well as professional ones and has been and continues to be a challenging undertaking. I have felt it a real personal achievement to extract from the huge body of information available in this area, that which is relevant to the department, conforms to best

practice and organise it in a logical and manageable way that can be used when people are in an emotional and pressurised situation.

Follow up / continued benefit:

Once the drafts have been approved, it will be necessary to discuss the implementation of the plan with the university risk-manager and ensure that all those responsible for various aspects of health and safety and security within the university understand the particular needs of the Archive Department in the event of an emergency or disaster. I have set out criteria to establish a level of service continuity in the event of an emergency or disaster, and criteria to establish the department's collection priorities. The next step will be to apply these criteria to identify collection priorities and a pre-determined level of service continuity. This will be done under the direction and guidance of the Principal Archivist. It will also be necessary to organise training for all departmental staff in the implementation of the plan. This will include creating various disaster scenarios to test how we respond to specific situations.

March 2008: I attended a workshop on Disaster Planning run by Harwell Drying and Restoration Services. This allowed me to test the department's plan in a general way against established best practice in the area and note areas that needed to be addressed or thought through in a different way. This was a really useful workshop that happened at just the right stage of the project's development.

April 2009: I attended a two-day course on Adaptive Project Management run through the university's staff development and training programme. This course equipped me with tools and skills to manage what was a continuous and continually reviewed process.

One of the unexpected benefits to this project was in the area of outreach as I developed good working relationships with key personnel in other departments in the university.

Evidence:

Pages from the draft disaster plan and pest management strategy documents, showing the overview of contents and my name as author

Pages from correspondence regarding insurance cover, offsite storage and disaster recovery company

Page of notes taken on disaster planning course

Certificate of attendance for project management course