USING SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES AT VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

2019-2020
AGENDA

1. What is archival material?
2. Archives and Special Collections at Victoria
3. How are archives arranged?
4. How to use finding aids and where to find them
5. Requesting and consulting archival materials
6. Other archives
7. Archival literacy
I. WHAT IS ARCHIVAL MATERIAL?

- In the course of daily life, individuals and organizations create and keep information about their personal and business activities.

- The records of these activities can have *enduring value* based on the administrative, legal, evidential, or historical information they contain.
  - Archivists identify, appraise, acquire records of enduring value.
  - These records are preserved in the archives.
  - Archival records are unique and unpublished.

- Types of archival records: correspondence, reports, unpublished manuscripts, meeting minutes, photographs, home movies and recordings, architectural drawings, etc. Archival records come in all different formats.
Archivists play a major role in the life-cycle of a record:

- Archivists keep records that possess informational or archival value (administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical) but this requires a judgement be made.

- The very act of appraising, or selecting a document for permanent retention, is an act of interpretation, assigning the document value.

- Not everything is archived – what is kept, and not kept, shapes our cultural memory and reflects the biases and opinions of our time.
2. ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT VICTORIA

There are two repositories of archival material at Victoria University:
- Victoria University Archives
- Victoria University Library – Special Collections

The main difference between the Special Collections Archives and the Victoria University Archives is that Special Collections holdings represent records of an individual's life BEYOND their years at Vic. Whereas the University Archives holdings represent records of the time individuals and organizations spent at Victoria.
2. ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT VICTORIA

Victoria University Archives
Focuses on collecting records created by the University and community that document the ongoing work of the university and student life.

Collections include:
Records of administrative bodies; student/alumni groups; affiliates; and the personal papers of staff, faculty, and alumni documenting their time at Vic.

Special Collections
Focuses on collecting personal papers created by University community members that document their life and work beyond their time at Victoria.

Collections include:
Norman Jewison (filmmaker, Vic alum and former Chancellor); Al Moritz (poet and professor); Jay Macpherson (poet and professor).
3. HOW ARE ARCHIVES ARRANGED?

- Archives are arranged in a different way than libraries which organize their material by SUBJECT.
- Archives instead use a principle called PROVENANCE – the focus is on the creator and the activity rather than the subject. Records of one creator are never mixed with those of another even if they related to the same subject.
- The whole of the records of one creator is called a FONDS.
- Archives are described and accessed through a FINDING AID. Finding aids are hierarchical and organize the records into activities. I.e. Records related to Teaching
**ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES: DIFFERENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archives</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed stacks – you can not browse the shelves – your material will be retrieved for you; secure and humidity controlled</td>
<td>Open stacks – you can browse and take items off the shelf on your own</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect primarily original, unpublished material (e.g. letters)</td>
<td>Collect published material (e.g. books, periodicals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unique material; irreplaceable</td>
<td>Other copies of the material may be available in other libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Items do not circulate; you cannot take the material home</td>
<td>Items circulate; you may take the material home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually organized in the same way that creator organized or kept the records (original order and provenance)</td>
<td>Material is organized within a classification system such as Library of Congress call numbers – organized by subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group of material is described on a number of different levels: fonds level, series level and item level (hierarchy for context)</td>
<td>Material is described on an individual level (e.g. catalogue record for a single book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You search the finding aid (listing of everything in the fonds) associated with the creator to find relevant records</td>
<td>You search for materials on your subject using an online catalogue</td>
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4. HOW TO USE FINDING AIDS

The **FONDS** (the first level of description) is the whole of the records organically accumulated by the creator in the course of his/her activities or functions. The fonds contains a **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH** and a note called **SCOPE and CONTENT** which gives an overview of all the records contained in the fonds.

You: Search for the name of the creator or fonds.

The **SERIES** is a group of similar records that were created, received, or used in the same activity. Sometimes there are sub-series which further break down the activity into smaller events. The series will appear in the Scope and Content note of the fonds and will also have their own Scope and Content note which will go into more detail about the contents of the particular series.

You: Review the series to identify where the records you are interested in viewing are.

The **FILE** is the lowest level of description in our finding aids (we don’t often have item level descriptions). This is a group of documents related by use or topic, typically housed in a file folder. The files are all listed in the finding aid under the **BOX/FILE** list.

You: Review the files to identify which have relevance. Note the **Box #, File #** and the **Accession #** to order.
4. HOW TO USE FINDING AIDS & WHERE TO FIND THEM
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Finding aids for **Victoria University Archives** are available in two places.

1. **The Vic Archives web page:**
   - Navigate to the “Our Holdings” page and click on the link to “finding aids.”

2. **Through the Discover Archives portal:**
   - Click the “Victoria University Archives” link under the “Participating Repositories” headline.

Finding aids for the **Pratt Library’s Special Collections** are only available through the **Pratt Library web page.**

1. **Look under the link to “Collections”, then click on “Special Collections”**
5. REQUESTING & CONSULTING ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

HOURS
• Monday-Friday, 9:30am - 4:30 pm.
• Not available evenings or weekends.

CONTACT
• Special Collections: r.kail@vicu.utoronto.ca
• Victoria University Archives: archives@vicu.utoronto.ca

TO REQUEST
• You MUST EMAIL your complete request at least ONE FULL BUSINESS DAY before you plan to visit with all the details of your request, including the date and time you want to visit. (Special Collections requests may need more advance notice)
• Your request should also include:
  • Fonds Name or Number, Accession, Box, and File Numbers/Title.
  • This information is found in the Finding Aids
• Staff retrieve the material for you based on these details.
5. REQUESTING & CONSULTING ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

When you arrive:

- Visit the Inquiry Desk and complete a registration form.
- No food or beverages (including water) are permitted.
- No talking on cell phone is permitted; please be considerate of other researchers in the room.
- Please use pencils or laptops only. No pens are permitted.
- For this course, we are permitting you to take non-flash photos with your digital camera or cell phone.
- Materials cannot leave the designated Reading Room.

Reminder! You must arrange an appointment (date and time) to reserve your seat.
5. REQUESTING & CONSULTING
ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

Special Collections Specific Rules:
• Records are consulted at the E.J. Pratt Library.
• Special Collections permits only 5 students from VIC 184 in the Reading Room at once.
• Staff retrieve the items you pre-ordered and sign it out to you.
  o ONE FILE IS GIVEN AT A TIME.
• Photocopying may be arranged at the Librarian’s discretion. Staff must do all the copying.
  o We allow you to request up to 3 copies (no charge).

Victoria University Archives Specific Rules:
• Records are consulted at the Emmanuel College Library.
• Staff retrieve the items you pre-ordered and sign it out to you.
  o There is a two box maximum, but we discourage researchers from reviewing them simultaneously.
• Photocopying may be arranged at the Archivist’s discretion. Staff must do all the copying.
6. OTHER ARCHIVES

- ARCHEION (portal for archival collections across Ontario) - http://www.archeion.ca/
- Discover Archives (U of T Archives portal) - https://discoverarchives.library.utoronto.ca/

Many institutions have their finding aids online.
7. ARCHIVAL LITERACY: ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Meet the Document: Observation and Description


3. Assess the Document’s (Historical) Significance
7. ARCHIVAL LITERACY: QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Archival Literacy involves questioning the records and also why they were kept.
  - Just because a record appears in an archives, does not necessarily mean that it is reliable.
  - Just because personal records do not appear in an archives, does not necessarily mean they were never written.

- Ask critical questions such as:
  - Who created the document? What was their background?
  - Why did they create the record?
  - What is the historical context (time, place, and situation) within which it was created?
  - Why was the record kept?
  - Is there a bias? How is it revealed?
  - What evidence does this record contribute to my research?
  - What does the absence of certain records say? Who's history is missing?
QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU!

Exterior of the E.J. Pratt Library, October 2003

Interior of the Emmanuel College Library, 1933