

Archives in Libraries
Susan F. Walker
Fire Protection Publications
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK

The purpose of this presentation will be to discuss how to care for an archival collection housed in a library. Theoretically I'm not using the terminology correctly. An **Archives** collects for the preservation of a specific institution's records and contains a records management or records retention program. A **Special Collection** collects for the preservation of specific areas and can be very general but usually has a defined scope. But our collection is relatively small, is specific to the fire profession, and most people can relate to the term, so I'm calling the whole thing "**Archives**".

Archival collections fall into two categories: historical and records management. Records management or information management is a service that you can provide to your parent organization.

Records or Information Management

Records management:

- recognizes a responsibility to the parent organization to preserve records documenting the activities of the organization,
- follows a policy for the collection, preservation and maintenance of records,
- provides consistent operational practices among units and
- ensures compliance with government regulations.

They serve two purposes:

- short term: provides management with the means to monitor transactions and in the
- long term: if provides the management with information to help them with the IRS and other governmental regulations.

Each department should have a representative who receives some training in records retention and who could work with the archivist. Various documents will have different retention periods. At the end of the times, records should be destroyed unless, of course, it has been decided they should be kept for their permanent historic significance. For example material relating to contracts and grants should be kept for at least seven years, business transactions should be kept six years, payroll information seven years from retirement or termination, taxable income records, six years from the end of the fiscal year. We keep everything forever. An Archivist has trouble throwing anything away.

Steps:

Take into consideration the staff and space you have when presenting the proposal to the management. It is possible that this will help you get more staff and more space - if you can sell your management on the importance.

You will need a policy statement. It probably would be best to draft it yourself and present it to management.

Schedules and policies are available via the Internet. A few URLs that cover these are on your handouts. I also have some hard copies here if anyone would like to see them.

A big issue that you will have to deal with is: Paper or Plastic - The whole question of storing material electronically and the cost of keeping current with storage medium and computer systems and software to be able to retrieve the information in the future is a big enough issue for a whole other presentation.

Special Collections

Much more fun, but not as useful to your administration is **Special Collections** or **historical collections**. For example, we collect "archives" of Fire Protection Publications, including such items as financial records, correspondence, training records, and manuscripts and research for the IFSTA manuals. We also collect "special collections" or anything having to do with the history of our academic program, such as college scrapbooks, photos, graduation announcements, student society paddles; and anything having to do with the history of Stillwater Fire Department and Stillwater firefighters, including fire department annual reports, photographs, newspaper clippings, even turn-out gear.

Storage

Ideally, the storage area for your collection should be in a closed stack, temperature controlled (70 degrees and 45% humidity) room. Realistically, this sometimes is not possible. I do have a room for archival collections, but it's not temperature controlled and it filled up in about a week. The rest of the collection is in a little used area of the library, and in my sight, which provides some security. It's not ideal, but the other choice was the Warehouse, which would have no security at all.

All collections are housed in archival supplies; including boxes, folders, sleeves, interweaving paper, virtually anything that touches the items. I've brought samples of archival supplies and some archival products catalogs.

A data folder is prepared for each collection as it is received, which will include any information received at the time of the donation, including donor and address, approximately size of collection, date received, rough description of contents - any information that we can get. We use an Accession Record form to collect this information, but any correspondence, personal recollections, anything from the donor is also included.

Finding Aids

The collection is then arranged, following AACR2 and SSA guidelines, and a finding aid is prepared. The information is arranged so it can be easily converted to MARC format if we ever decide to include these collections on OCLC.

The cover sheet contains:

Title of collection including date span

Type of collection

Collection Number - we use the year and a three digit consecutive number (99-023)

Description of types of materials in the collection and dates

Biographical or historical background of the collection

Restricted or Unrestricted

Availability of finding aid

How the collection is arranged

Donor and date of donation

Number and types of boxes

Who processed the collection and the date

Location

Holdings statement

Box listing or inventory

I'm very lucky because I have an archives assistant who is very meticulous and prepares very detailed inventories. All the information is entered into a Word document which is keyword searchable. We are exploring the possibility of using INMAGIC dbTextworks or some other database software for this in the future.

Uses of Archives

Uses of our Archives include: exhibits, video documentaries, research done by our editorial department, research for historical markers, web site photos, slide presentations both in-house and outside the state, student research papers, IRS inquiries, records of training verification,

Collect or Not Collect

There are many advantages to developing an archival collection in your library. The options are to either not accept historical material and not provide storage for your organization's records or to transfer non current materials to a another facility and that can come back to haunt you. In my case, in the 1970s, the Fire Chief of the Stillwater Fire Department gave a large collection of materials to Special Collections in the main library. I know that two collections have been processed together and that many items and not identified or improperly identified. Unfortunately, the librarian in charge has very strict access policies and does not take recommendations favorably. In this case, that collection would be more accessible for researchers if it were available with other Stillwater fire department collections. I know, I worked on it, many years ago.

Once you have made the decision to keep archival materials in your library, it's easy to do it right.

Slides

1. Fire Protection Publications/IFSTA Examples of Records Retention Schedules
2. Director's correspondence - the types of materials collected for archives
3. Financial records, sales reports - more
4. Financial records on microfiche - requires maintenance of a reader
5. Draft pages with corrections of IFSTA manual - this is the 4th ed. of Essentials - concern that we are moving toward electronic means and that's a whole big problem for archivists
6. IFSTA Annual Meeting committee reports
7. Copyright records - we have them back to the 1930s
8. Early firefighting manuals put out by Oklahoma A&M - many of the early manuals had hand-drawn illustrations. Many were done by J. Ray Pence
9. Photographs play an important role in archives - documenting the history of an organization. These are fire protection students whose aid was enlisted in mimeographing the pages, collating, stapling and even were salesmen
10. Another
11. Fire Service Training Manual, Oklahoma Firefighters
12. Early IFSTA manuals were called "Redbooks" - we are trying to collect a complete set
13. Mr. Cox and Mr. Hudiberg - director, writer and educator at IFSTA and the academic fire services program - see an early booth behind them - compare this with the one we have now. Also, the "big bad red binder" - used to hold the individual Redbooks - highly acidic, falls apart, and hard to read contents. I saved one for historical purposes and throw the rest away
14. Display showing the transition from the Redbooks to the next design. We are now changing to a third design, if you've seen the 4th Ed. of Essentials
15. Annual Report of the Stillwater Fire Department, 1940
16. R.J. Douglas Collection - Instructor in the Dept. of Firemanship Training, at OAMC (1934). During WWII, with the resultant drop in enrollment Oklahoma A&M couldn't afford his salary. He accepted a position as fire and safety engineer with Beech Aircraft in Wichita. These are copies of memos and correspondence dealing with his job at Beech. After the war he returned to teach at OAMC.

17. Types of materials being collected from the academic program - went through many names, now called Fire Protection and Safety Engineering Technology. Booster Line (WW2 newsletter keeping track of students in the military), newspaper clippings, Hose, Alumni magazine with coed firefighters on the cover.
18. Photographs are extremely helpful and what most people find interesting. Coed posed with fire extinguishers (no women were enrolled in the program), the first group of men who wrote the first training manual posed in front of Stillwater Fire Station No. 1, a classroom in the Campus Fire Station.
19. Photo of ladders training - on campus near where FPP Building is currently located
20. Photo of a classroom of firefighters
21. Examples of types of materials we collect for the Archives: reel to reel training films, 5 ¼ floppy disks (we're in the process of purchasing a disk drive to read these), slides - lots and lots of slides used for training
22. Sample of an inventory - includes names, dates, background information, types of materials found in the collection, donor information, processing information, preservation needs, container listing. Information is easily converted into MARC format.
23. Some of the more unusual items in the collection: a sample from the FPP carpeting
24. Turn out gear of a former student - came with a Plexiglas case but rubber was breaking down and off-gassing
25. View of the archival storage area
26. Matt Reed, Archives Assistant, hard at work
27. Exhibit cases in the reception area - show off our collections and also make people aware of the types of things in the Archives. We've done exhibit panels for the IFSTA conference, for the FIRET program, various slide presentations and a video on our history done for the Stillwater Fire Department's 100th anniversary. This was an exhibit on Stillwater Fire Department apparatus - unique because the students and firefighters made most of them
28. Other uses are good for historical perspective such as the Campus Fire Station, 1930s and...
29. Campus Fire Station today - Matt Reed is working on having the station listed with the National Historical Register