



RULES FOR ARCHIVAL ARRANGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these rules is to provide a consistent and common methodology for the arrangement of archival material within a fonds, based on traditional archival principles.

Archival arrangement is arrangement by the creator of the fonds, not arrangement by the archivist. It is the process of revealing how the creator created and maintained the fonds and the state in which the creator left it. Arrangement is determined through analysis of the physical and intellectual properties of the records and their creation. Misidentification of arrangement (due, for example, to failure to take into account organization or reorganization by the creator, changes in a classification scheme, rearrangement by the archivist and disturbance of, or failure to restore original order where it is possible to do so) can lead to inaccurate and misleading description.

Arrangement precedes, governs and is the basis of description; its purpose, however, is to identify and preserve the internal structure of the fonds, which can be described at more levels than it can be arranged. Description depends on arrangement and must represent it accurately, though not necessarily completely. For example, a fonds may be arranged but not described at the series level. Arrangement conducted for the sake of or in order to facilitate description will likely be skewed and may prevent the descriptive record from accurately representing the fonds.

Archivists adhere to certain principles which enable them to identify the arrangement of a fonds. These principles have guided the preparation of *Rules for Archival Arrangement*:

(1) The first principle is that the way archives are arranged depends on their original order, reflecting the physical and intellectual pattern in which the records were created, received, used or managed. Implicit in the archivist's observance of *respect des fonds* is the assumption that the way a creator "automatically and organically created and/or accumulated records" will determine the way the fonds is arranged. The archivist must discover the creator's own arrangement, which is an inherent property of the fonds. In arranging archival materials the archivist must respect the physical and intellectual order given them by their creator, however unsatisfactory it may appear from the archivist's point of view, or for the purposes of description.

(2) The second principle governing arrangement practice is that the existence of levels of arrangement must be proved; it cannot be assumed. The presumption of arrangement is that aggregate levels do not exist if their existence was not demonstrably known to the creator of the fonds. Unless the contrary can be proved, the fonds is assumed to be only one unit which is not further divisible or arrangeable; it merely consists of files or items. Therefore, the archivist must first analyse the fonds to determine whether its elements combine to form levels of arrangement. For example, in order to arrange at the series level, the archivist must have identified the files or items which comprise each series. The existence of series (the series level) must be proved through an analysis of relationships among the files or items comprising the fonds. Files or items are parts of the fonds or series, not levels of its

arrangement. The fonds or series may *consist of* files or items but it cannot be *arranged* at the file or item level.

The application of the rules may result in the arrangement of the fonds at the series level, and in any case makes possible the creation of descriptive records below the fonds level. Though levels of description follow and reflect arrangement, the existence of a descriptive level does not necessarily mean the existence of a corresponding arrangement level. Levels of arrangement and levels of description are not commensurate. Fonds, file and item are levels of description only, not levels of arrangement. The fonds is the *subject* of archival arrangement; files and items are the elements which combine to establish levels of arrangement, not the levels themselves. The series is both a level of arrangement and a level of description.

The examples used in these rules are illustrative and not prescriptive. That is, they illuminate the provisions of the rule to which they are attached, rather than extend those provisions. The *Rules for Archival Arrangement (RAA)* imitate the structure of the *General International Standard Archival Description [ISAD(G)]* in that each rule proceeds from a specific purpose. The organization of the rules reflects the preferred sequence of activity in the arrangement process. These rules comply with NSARM's Policy on Archival Arrangement

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/ahm/arrangement.pdf>

0.1 Preliminary steps

Though most archivists start to gather information about arrangement during the appraisal process, the rules assume that the archival unit has already been defined and determined. The rules, therefore, are to be applied at the stage when appraisal has been completed and the content of the fonds is known.

0.2 Sources of information

Sources providing evidence of arrangement may be both internal and external. They include, but are not limited to, physical organization, form of material, alphanumeric designations borne by the material, file lists produced by the creator, electronic record-keeping systems and file classification schemes.

0.3 Scope

These rules aim to provide a consistent and common foundation for correctly identifying the arrangement of archival materials within a fonds, based on established archival principles. Rules governing arrangement can be viewed as a set of instructions, as specific as possible, that embody standards in a particular context with the object of confirming and preserving archival arrangement. They enable the archivist to recognize whether the unitary elements of the fonds – files and items – constitute aggregate levels of arrangement.

1.0 Identification of arrangement

PURPOSE: To identify levels of arrangement found within a fonds.

RULE: Analyse the fonds for evidence of original order, utilizing the sources of information set out in 0.2.

2.0 Levels of arrangement

2.1 Series

PURPOSE: To identify series within fonds.

RULE: Examine the contents of the fonds to determine whether there are files or items arranged systematically or maintained as a unit because they relate to a particular function or subject, result from the same activity, have a particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation or out of their receipt and use.

Examples

Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes (*fonds*)

Divorce court records (*series*)

Divorce case files (*series*)

Eastern Shore Development Commission (*fonds*)

Minutes of meetings (*series*)

President's correspondence (*series*)

Case and subject files (*series*)

Tuzo-Wilson family (*fonds*)

Tuzo family papers (*series*)

Wilson family papers (*series*)

Sir John S.D. Thompson (*fonds*)

Thompson family papers (*series*)

Minister of Justice records (*series*)

2.2 Subseries

PURPOSE: To identify subseries within series.

RULE: Examine the contents of the series to determine whether there are blocks of files or items distinguishable from the series and related to each other in terms of provenance, original order, type, form, content or medium.

Examples

Divorce court records (*series*)

 Cause books (*subseries*)

 Proceedings (*subseries*)

 Decree registers (*subseries*)

Thompson family papers (*series*)

 David Pottinger papers (*Subseries*)

 John S. and Charlotte Thompson papers (*subseries*)

 Frances Chisholm papers (*subseries*)

3.0 Equality of parts

PURPOSE: To ensure the consistency of levels of arrangement.

RULE: A level or sublevel of arrangement shall consist of a minimum of two equal parts.

Examples

Fonds consists of three series

Not Fonds consists of three series and three files

Not Fonds consists of one series

4.0 Documentation

PURPOSE: To declare and document arrangement.

ACTION: Create arrangement record.

4.1 Arrangement record layout

Field 1 Creator of Archival Unit

Field 2 Nature of Archival Unit
(Fonds **FO** Collection **CO**)

Field 3 Level of Arrangement
(Yes **Y** No **N**)
[If YES, identify Series **SE**]

Subfield 3.0 Series

3.0.1 Number

3.0.2 Provisional Identification

3.0.3 Justification

[If **SE**, identify which Series further divided into Subseries **SS**]

Subfield 3.0.1 Subseries

3.0.1.0 Series forming part of

3.0.1.1 Number

3.0.1.2 Provisional Identification

3.0.1.3 Justification

Field 4 Authorization

FIELD DEFINITIONS

Authorization. Confirmation of arrangement by Manager, Archival Holdings Management.

Creator of archival unit. Provenance of fonds or collection.

Justification. Evidence of original order.

Nature of archival unit. Fonds or collection.

Provisional identification. Supplied title.

APPENDIX (Glossary)

Arrangement. The processes involved in the intellectual organization of records based upon the principle of **respect des fonds**.

File. An organized unit of documents brought together because they relate to the same subject, activity or transaction.

Fonds. The whole of the documents, regardless of form or medium, automatically and organically created and/or accumulated and used by a particular individual, family or corporate body in the course of that creator's activities or functions.

Item. The smallest indivisible archival unit [SAA].

Level of arrangement. A level identified during the analysis and ordering of the fonds into its constituent parts.

Original order. The intellectual or physical arrangement imposed on the fonds by its creator.

Provenance. The person(s) or office(s) of origin of the fonds, i.e., the person(s), family (families), or corporate body (bodies) that created and/or accumulated and used records in the conduct of personal or business life. *See also* **Respect des fonds**.

Respect des fonds. The principle that the records of a person, family or corporate body must be kept together in their **original order**, if it exists or can be restored, and not be mixed or combined with the records of another person, family or corporate body. *See also* **Provenance**.

Respect for original order [Respect pour l'ordre primitif]. The principle that archival records should retain the arrangement established by the creator, so as to preserve existing relationships and reference numbers. *See also* **Restoration of original order**.

Restoration of original order. Reconstituting the arrangement of a group of archival materials which has been disturbed by accidental causes, or through deliberate rearrangement conducted by persons or corporate bodies that had custody of the material in its inactive life.

Series (archival). (1) The first level of arrangement. (2) Files or items within a fonds arranged systematically or maintained as a unit because they relate to a particular function or subject, result from the same activity, have a particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation or out of their receipt and use.

Subseries. Files or items within a series arranged systematically or maintained as a unit because they relate to a particular function or subject, result from the same activity, have a particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation or out of their receipt and use.