**McGill University Archival Description and Access**

**School of Information Studies Fall 2017 GLIS 641**

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# Archival Description and Access

**Course description**:

The course covers the advanced theory and practice of archival arrangement, description, and the creation of access tools to archival records and collections, including the selection and application of appropriate archival descriptive standards, metadata schemes, management tools, and outreach programs including the creation and dissemination of finding aids.

**Content:**

The course covers the following topics; arrangement and intellectual control over archival holdings, the descriptive process, the application of national and international descriptive standards, subject and provenance based access systems, and the evaluation and weeding of archival holdings. The creation of Internet ready findings aids based on professionally recognised descriptive standards will be emphasised as well as the use of archival materials in outreach programs such as virtual exhibits.

**Topics:**

1. Archival principles

* Provenance
* Respect des fonds
* Original order

1. Appraisal Theory

* Records as cultural heritage and collective memory
* Appraisal systems – selection of authentic, reliable and comprehensive records
* Cooperative acquisition program

1. Applied Appraisal

* Selection of authentic, reliable and comprehensive records
* Weeding of archival holdings
* Diplomatics
* Hierarchical appraisal techniques

1. Arrangement Principles

* Intellectual vs. Physical arrangement
* Determination of original order
* Managing disorder

1. Applied Arrangement

* Historical perspective on records creation
* Utilizing historical sources to find organizational context
* Creation of records fonds and series

1. Accessioning

* Planning
* Processing using MPLP methodology
* Digital Collections
* Copyright

1. RAD Canadian Descriptive Standards

* Rules for Archival Description for textual records
* Rules for Archival Description for special media such as photographs, moving images and sound recordings

1. RAD - Descriptive Standards for Special Media

* Rules for Archival Description for special media such as photographs, moving images and sound recordings

1. Access Points: Subject and Provenance Based Systems

* Standardisation of names
* Compilation of thesauri
* Scope and Content Notes

1. The Alphabet Soup of Archival Standards

* DACS American Standard
* EAD Finding aid data structure standard
* British standards
* International standards

1. Outreach Programs

* Community Archives
* Activist Archivist
* Collaboration with users
* Archival Literacy

12. Dissemination of Finding Aids

* Distribution options
* Web Presence
* Virtual exhibits to promote greater usage of finding aids

**Learning Outcomes:**

The students are expected to do readings from the course book and suggested readings and actively participate in classroom discussions and lectures.

The course requires the completion of an assignment on arrangement as well as projects involving the acquisition, appraisal and processing of archival materials to create a reference tool as a fundamental part of the learning process. Each student is expected to complete an archival arrangement and description project involving archival materials. The goal of these projects is to produce a finding aid at the series level according to the descriptive standards of the Rules for Archival Description. These projects and workshops are designed to provide the opportunity to apply the basic archival principles and practices as discussed in the class.

**Evaluation:**

Finding aid project: (50%): Each student is expected to work, as part of a team, on an archival arrangement and description project involving archival materials. The goal of the project is to produce a finding aid according to the standards of the Rules for Archival Description

Assignment: (20%) The assignment will involve a case study involving an arrangement problem based on archival materials.

Take Home Final Exam: (30%).

**Information for Students – Rights and Obligations**

**1) Right to submit in English or French written work that is to be graded**  [approved by Senate on 21 January 2009]:

*In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.*

**2) McGill University Values Academic Integrity – For further information on your rights and responsibilities see** <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/academicrights/integrity/cheating>

**SUGGESTED READINGS:**

**On 3 hour Reserve in the McLennan Library**

Australian Society of Archivists, *Keeping Archives*, 2008. CD931 K4 2008.

Black, Elizabeth. *Authority Control: A Manual for Archivists*. Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1991 Z693.3 A88 B53 1991

Cox, Richard J. Archival Anxiety and the vocational calling. Duluth, Minn.: Litwin Books, c2010 CD971 c68 2010

Duff, Wendy and Marlene van Ballegooie. RAD Revealed: A Basic Primer on the Rules for Archival Description. Ottawa: Canadian Council of Archives, 2001

Z695.2 D83 2001

Procter, M. and Cook, M. *Manual of Archival Description.* Aldershot, England: Gower, 2000. Z695.2 C67 2000

Purcell, Aaron D. *Academic Archives: managing the next generation of college and university archives, records and special collections,* New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers an imprint of ALA Publishing, c2012 CD3065 P87 2012

Miller, Laura *Archives: Principles and Practices,* London: Facet, 2010.

CD921 M55 2010

Nesmith, T., ed. *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*. Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1993. CD3621 C35 1993

Roe, Kathleen Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005. CD950 R64 2005

Society of American Archivists *Describing Archives: a Content Standard.* Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004. Z695.2 S625 2004