

Terms in Archives

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ARCHIVES OF PENNSYLVANIA BOOK BONUS

ArchiveGrid: A database of over 7 million collection descriptions from archive catalogs. Not a comprehensive list of all available archives. Located at: <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/>.

Archives: A repository of preserved historical records of all kinds. Archives may be public or private, in physical form or digital form or both.

Catalog: A complete listing of items arranged systematically.

Corporate archive: A department within a company or corporation that preserves the history of the organization and its employees. When corporations merge or acquire other companies, the archives can transfer to the parent corporation or be donated to an institution near the corporate headquarters.

Database: A set of records, usually all related to one source, indexed for searching. Example: Another name for a catalog. Can also be

Diary: A written record of events or personal observations made daily or at regular intervals. Sometimes used interchangeably with "journal".

Digital collections: Images of archival materials usually hosted on a website. In most cases, what is digital also exists in original paper form too. Some materials today are "born digital", such as posts on social media, and did not begin in physical form first.

Digitize (digitization): The process of turning physical documents into digital images. To search digitized images, requires indexing (see below).

Document (n and v): As a noun, writing on paper. As a verb, the act of writing on paper.

Family Papers: A collection of personal documents usually for one individual and his or her immediate family. Typically includes letters, diaries, journals, and receipts.

Finding Aid: A document detailing the contents of an archival collection. The descriptions provided are usually by container (box or folder) and broad in nature. Sometimes there are narrative sections providing the historical context of the collection and how the archives acquired it.

FOIA: Acronym for Freedom of Information Act. Applies to requests to federal agencies for release of documents.

Government archive: A building separate from the regular government offices which stores materials according to that government's archival policy. All levels of government – federal, state, county, and municipal – each have an archive to store records and save space in offices.

Historical societies: Non-profit organizations often staffed by volunteers who seek to preserve and promote the history of a specific region, person, or event.

Image: A digital reproduction of a physical object. In genealogy, this is usually documents, but it can also be photographs, maps, and artwork.

Indexing: The process of building a database using the metadata attached to digital images. Once images are indexed into a database they are searchable by computer programs.

Journal: A regular recording of events of current interest. Sometimes used interchangeably with "diary".

Ledger: A written record of transactions or events made at regular intervals, usually daily.

Manuscript: A handwritten or typewritten document. In archives, manuscripts are unpublished works, as compared to books which are published works.

Microfiche: A sheet of microfilm the size of an index card containing rows of images of documents.

Microfilm: A film roll containing images of documents.

Museum: A building which exhibits art and artifacts. Sometimes museums also store books and papers related to artists, artwork, and/or the local area where they are located.

Processing: The name for organizing a newly donated collection to an archive. During processing, usually a finding aid and/or catalog entry is created, and the materials are sorted in folders and boxes for storage.

Public records: Records created by government department and agencies. Public records are by default open to anyone for research, unless restricted for privacy reasons.

Published: An written document or image, created by one or many individuals, and released for distribution physically or digitally.

Record (n and v): As a verb, to set down in writing. As a noun, a document noting events in detail for official purposes.

Religious archives: Also commonly called "church archives". A place which stores the records of a religious denomination collected from around a specific region or the entire country. Example: The Presbyterian Historical Society collects historical membership records from all its churches in the United States.

Restricted collection: Archival material that is limited in use due to content, age, or condition of materials. Each archive sets its own policy for restrictions.

Special collections: The part of a library collection that holds rare and valuable manuscripts, books, and papers. These are often of historical value to the local region around the library.

WorldCat: An internet-based catalog of library materials, located at: <https://search.worldcat.org>.