Arrangement and Description

Course description:

The course covers the theory and practice of archival description and descriptive tools. Emphasis is on the selection and application of appropriate archival descriptive standards to archival materials and the creation and dissemination of finding aids. The relevance of the appraisal and arrangement functions to descriptive practices will also be investigated.

Goals and objectives:

This course provides advanced applied archival studies in the area of arrangement and description. The material presented will focus on the evaluation and classification of archival records, the comparison of various national and international descriptive standards, the application of these standards to archival records and the production of appropriate reference tools such as 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

2. Appraisal Theory and Practice
   - Records as cultural heritage and collective memory
   - Appraisal systems
   - Cooperative acquisition programs
3. **Applied Appraisal**  
   - Selection of authentic, reliable and comprehensive records  
   - Weeding of archival holdings  
   - Diplomats  
   - Hierarchical appraisal techniques

4. **Arrangement Principles**  
   - Intellectual vs. Physical arrangement  
   - Determination of original order  
   - Managing disorder

5. **Applied Arrangement**  
   - Historical perspective on records creation and use  
   - Use of historical sources to find organizational context  
   - Creation of fonds and series

6. **RAD Canadian Descriptive Standards Part I**  
   - Rules for Archival Description for textual records

7. **RAD Canadian Descriptive Standards Part II**  
   - Rules for Archival Description for textual records

8. **Access Points: Subject and Provenance Based Systems**  
   - Standardisation of names  
   - Compilation of thesauri  
   - Scope and Content Notes

9. **RAD - Descriptive Standards for Special Media**  
   - Rules for Archival Description for special media such as photographs, moving images and sound recordings

10. **Other National and International Archival Descriptive Standards**  
    - British  
    - American  
    - International

11. **Physical processing of Archival Holdings**  
    - Preservation issues  
    - Applied evaluation techniques  
    - Management tools
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 are designed to provide the opportunity to apply the basic archival principles and practices covered in the Archives Principles and Practice course (645).

**Evaluation:**

Finding aid project: (50%): Each student is expected to work 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%).

**REQUIRED READING:**

On 3 hour Reserve in the Education Library


Z695.2 D83 2001
SUGGESTED READINGS:
On 3 hour Reserve in the McLennan Library


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.*
This right applies to all written work that is to be graded, from one-word answers to dissertations.

This statement is not needed for courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives or for courses in which students do not submit written work that is to be graded.

Instructors who cannot grade French written work should consult their Chair/Director or Dean, in faculties without departments, to make arrangements for grading French submissions.

2) Academic Integrity statement [approved by Senate on 29 January 2003]:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

N.B. Failure by an instructor to include a statement about academic integrity on a course outline shall not constitute an excuse by a student for violating the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures [Senate, 29 January 2003].

RESOURCE DOCUMENTS Academic Integrity


www.mcgill.ca/files/students/AI-InstructorsResourceGraduateStudents.pdf
### Schedule of Courses

**Class meets Thursdays at 5:35 in Room 210 Bronfman Building**  
**Office Hours Thursdays 5:00-5:35 in Room 210 Bronfman Building or by appointment**  
**Contact by e-mail: gordon.burr@mcgill.ca**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Archival Principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Appraisal Theory and Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Applied Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Arrangement Principles Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Applied Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 14</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>RAD Part 1 Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>RAD Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28</td>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Access Points: Subject and Provenance based systems Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Study week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>RAD Descriptive Standards for Special Media Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Other National and International Descriptive Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Practicum Due 50% - Take home exam distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Dissemination of Finding Aids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take home Final Exam 30% due by April 12</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>