Researching Archives

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Introduction to UEL Archives

- The purpose of this session is:

- To introduce the Archival collections held here in the University of East London and to begin to consider and examine ways in which the Archives may be useful for your own academic research projects.

- The session will consist of an introduction to the Archives followed by a hands on practical session.
What Are Archives?

- Definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary:

- Archive:
  - (noun - A) A place in which collected public or corporate records are kept, a repository of documents.
  - (noun - B) Records so kept.
  - (verb) To place or store in an archive.
Primary and Secondary Sources

- An Archive will normally consist of primary source materials; namely records which are written at the time of the events they describe and which normally provide a first-hand account of the events being witnessed. Examples would include letters, diaries, minutes of meetings and account books. These materials are often created by individuals or institutions in the course of undertaking their daily work or private affairs, often without an awareness that they will eventually be stored within an Archive. In essence, these are unpublished materials.

- Libraries, by contrast, will usually consist of Secondary source materials, like books and journals for example. These are normally written after the event and utilise the existing primary materials in order to make observations and to draw conclusions. They are not based on direct observation, and are usually written after the event. They often use primary sources in order to make observations and conclusions. Typical secondary sources include articles and books. These materials are often written with the intention they will be read by external readers. In contrast to the Archive, this material is often written specifically for publication.
The difference between an Archive and a Library

- What are the differences therefore between an archive and a library?

- Library collections normally contain published materials, (books, journals, DVDs) with material available for loan and browsable on open shelves.

- An Archive will normally hold original, unpublished materials, which are normally only for reference and not available on open shelves but in secure storage. Archives will often also hold books, periodical and supporting materials of an historic nature to complement the collections held.
Refugee Council Archive

What Does the Refugee Archive Contain:

- Refugee Council Institutional Archive
- Books
- Journals, Newsletters and magazines
- Research Reports
- Grey Literature, e.g. conference papers, reports and unpublished materials.
- DVDs (published & off-air recordings)
- Audio-visual materials
- Press Cuttings
Refugee Council Official Archive

- A second donation of materials from the Refugee Council.
- Includes the official Archive of the Refugee Council as an organisation.
- Cataloguing is ongoing for this material and it includes:
  - Minutes of Meetings
  - Administrative Files
  - Correspondence
  - Case Files
  - Annual Reports
  - Financial Records
  - Publicity
Refugee Council Archive

- The Refugee Council Archive therefore includes both an organically created selection of primary resource materials created during the course of the organisation’s work, as well as an artificial special collection of thematic materials.
- The earliest materials in the collection date from the 1951 onwards when the forerunners of the current organisation were established.
Refugee Council Archive

The Refugee Council Archive at the University of East London represents one of the largest collections of materials relating to the study of forced migration and the refugee. It is a source of information and analysis on displacement, flight and exile; on legal, political and social issues; and on refugee community life.

The Archive contains materials on refugees in all parts of the world, with special emphasis on Britain. It was originally housed at the Refugee Council, the lead organization in Britain on refugee issues. For over 30 years the Refugee Council collected official and unofficial reports, books and journals, newsletters, conference proceedings, research documents, field reports, informal data, and working papers. It also developed an extensive library of press cuttings. In addition to this Special Collection, the Archive also contains archival material recording the history of the Refugee Council as an organisation.
What Are Archives 1

- Archives are often perceived to be dusty old manuscripts stored in a forgotten basement! However, Archives can consist of records of any age, from ancient manuscripts right through to contemporary digital records and can be in any format. Archives act as our cultural and social memory, recording our personal, social, economic and political activities throughout history, and they provide the primary evidence on which our history is based.

- Archives are primary source materials that have been created by individuals, groups or organisations during the course of their life or work and deemed to be worth keeping permanently for the purposes of research.
The term Archive can therefore be used as both a noun and a verb to describe both:

- The act of storing or keeping records as well as describing the buildings or rooms in which these records are kept.
- The act of archiving can also be seen as a professional practice in relation to managing and preserving these records in a professional manner.
What Are Archives 3

- Within the archival profession, Archivists will use the term ‘Archive’ to refer to:
  - Material created by individual or organisations created as a consequence of their daily work (naturally) and preserved as evidence of these activities or as a result of the information they contain. Sometimes the term ‘manuscripts’ is used to describe individual or family records to distinguish from ‘archives’ referring to the records of businesses or organisations.
  - Material that has been brought together (artificially) about a subject and has been selected and managed as a collection.
  - The building (and room) used to store the collections. Sometimes referred to as a record office or repository.
How do I make a start in researching archives, they all seem so daunting?

In order to make the best use of researching archives, an important first step is to have a good understanding of your own research project. If you know your subject area, e.g. researching racism with Jamaican refugees in London, this can make it easier to frame your research questions and facilitate the search for primary sources.
When undertaking research with primary materials held within archival collections, it is important to be always asking questions of the material you are looking at. It will be important to try and contextualise the source materials you are researching.

- What types of materials am I looking at?
- By whom was it written and when was it written?
- Why was the document written and who was it written for? Is there an agenda associated with this document?
- What does the document say and how does it relate to the topic I am researching?
- Why was this document considered important enough to be preserved in the Archive?
- Always consider the context, when was the document written and for whom. Are there any agendas or biases evident in the document?
Citing Archives 1

- Based on Harvard Referencing

- Details on how to cite archival documents can be found in Cite Them Right, where they are listed as Manuscripts

- Cite Them Right online - Cite Them Right - Manuscripts:  http://www.citethemrightonline.com/books/more-books/manuscripts

- Hard Copies available at: 808.027 PEA (ST & DL Libraries)
Citing Archives 2

- Citation order:
  - Author
  - Year (in round brackets)
  - Title of manuscript (in italics)
  - Date (if available)
  - Name of collection containing manuscript and reference number
  - Location of manuscript in archive or repository
As a result, the final citation will be:

- Surname, Initial. (Year) *Title of manuscript, Date*. Name of collection containing manuscript and reference number, Location of manuscript in archive or repository.


- For Example, in-text citation: (Sondh, 1984).
UEL Archives and Social Media

- Follow us on Twitter at:
  - @refugee_archive
  - @ArchivesUEL

- For further information and updates, you might also wish to subscribe to our Refugee-Research Jiscmail email service - www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=REFUGEE-RESEARCH
Web References and Online Resources

- Using Archives: A Guide for the Inexperienced (Archives Hub):
  - [http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/guides/usingarchives/](http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/guides/usingarchives/)

- London Metropolitan Archives:

- Black Cultural Archives:
  - [http://bcaheritage.org.uk/](http://bcaheritage.org.uk/)

- The Black History Collection at the Institute of Race Relations:
  - [www.irr.org.uk/resources/bhc/](http://www.irr.org.uk/resources/bhc/)
References

- **QU9.2 BAS**: Community archives : the shaping of memory. By Jeannette Allis Bastian; Ben Alexander.
- **QU9.2 HAM**: Refugee archives : theory and practice. By Anthony Grenville; Andrea Hammel; Sharon Krummel.
- **QU9.2 HIL**: The future of archives and recordkeeping : a reader. By Jennie Hill.
- **QU9.2 MIL**: Archives: Principles and Practice. By Laura Millar.