Collecting Archives and Acquisition Policy

Collecting archives play a vital role in preserving the historical records of various organizations, families, and individuals. Unlike institutional archives, which primarily manage the records of their parent organizations, collecting archives have a distinct mission to gather records from diverse sources, such as the private sector, through methods like deposit, purchase, gift, or bequest. These archives are often found in national institutions, universities, specialist repositories, independent bodies, and community archives. The existence of collecting archives is essential to ensure the comprehensive documentation of our past, as they are not confined to a single provenance, but instead, they operate as hubs for historical records from different origins.

One of the key elements that govern the operation of collecting archives is the acquisition policy. An acquisition policy is a crucial aspect of all types of archival institutions, but it takes on unique significance in the context of collecting archives. It serves as a strategic roadmap that outlines the principles and guidelines for collecting records, ensuring that the process is planned, rational, and aligned with institutional needs and priorities. In essence, an acquisition policy answers the fundamental question of "Why are we saving this?" It provides a structured framework to identify the types of records that should be collected and the reasons behind their preservation.

The acquisition policy of collecting archives is typically defined in a written statement, summarizing the core principles upon which the archival holdings are based. It helps archivists make informed decisions about what materials to acquire, taking into account the scope and purpose of the archive. This ensures that the archives' collections remain focused and coherent, rather than becoming a haphazard assortment of records.

The basic steps in the acquisition process for collecting archives involve identifying potential donors, developing relationships with them, and negotiating agreements for the transfer of records. This process culminates in the signing of a Deed of Gift, which formalizes the donation of records to the archive. Collaboration with accessioning officers ensures the proper preparation and transfer of records, making them accessible for future research and historical preservation.

In conclusion, collecting archives and their acquisition policies are indispensable components of our cultural heritage preservation. They play a vital role in collecting, safeguarding, and providing access to a diverse range of historical records. Through the careful planning and implementation of acquisition policies, collecting archives can fulfill their mission of gathering, preserving, and making available a wealth of historical information from various sources, enriching our understanding of the past.