JUDICIAL LEARNING CENTER
EST. 1742
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Today is your day to be the archivist!



What is an archives?



- **Archives** are established to collect and preserve historic materials, based on why the archives was created.
- **Example**: The Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center is an archive that focuses on preserving pre-1913 court records.
- These materials are usually primary sources**. Primary sources** are original records (such a diary) reflecting direct experience of a person from a time period being studied.
- Primary sources are different then secondary sources. **Secondary sources** are typically created later and talk about the past by summarizing information found in primary sources (Example: textbook).
- Universities, government, religious organizations, historical societies, and corporations may have an archive.

How are archives and libraries different?

- Items are often unique or rare in some way.
- Books/Documents **cannot** be checked out.
- Only pencils or laptops are allowed for note taking.
- No drinking (or eating) in an archive.
- Visitors may have to pay for copies.
- Taking photos may not be allowed. If photos are allowed, it is usually allowed only without the flash.
- Typically, visitors look at one book or one folder of loose items at a time.

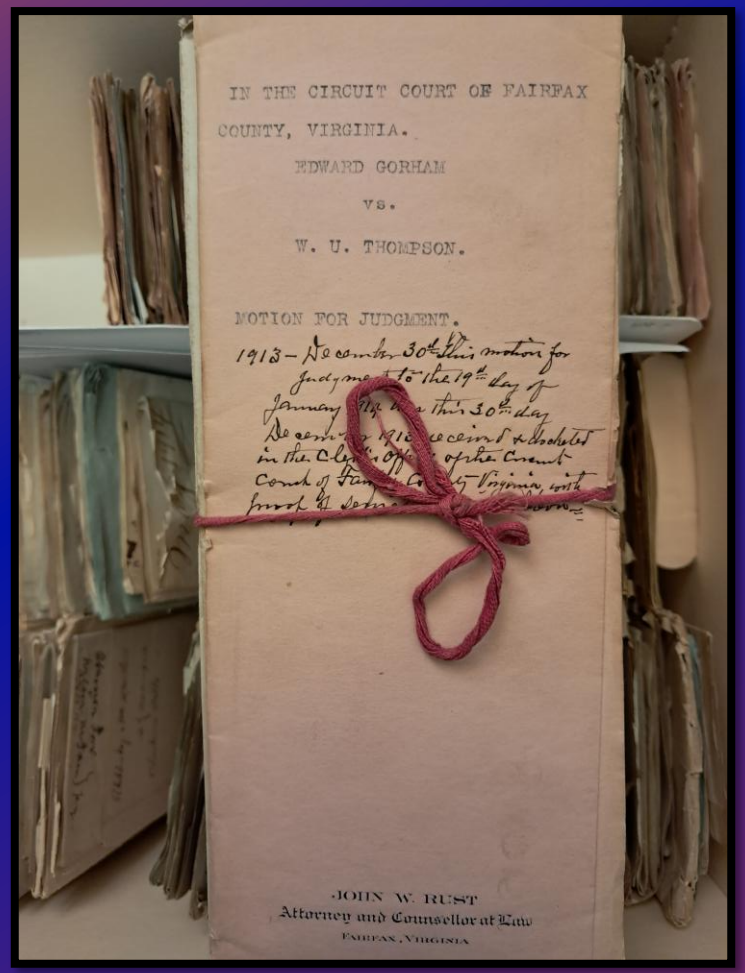
What is an archivist?

- Most archivists have both a bachelors and masters degree or professional training in library & information science or a related field such as history.
- Archivists manage and organize historic records.
- Archivist make records accessible and focus on preserving records for as long as possible.



Historic Record Center staff 2025

Archivists…


IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

EDWARD GORHAM

vs.

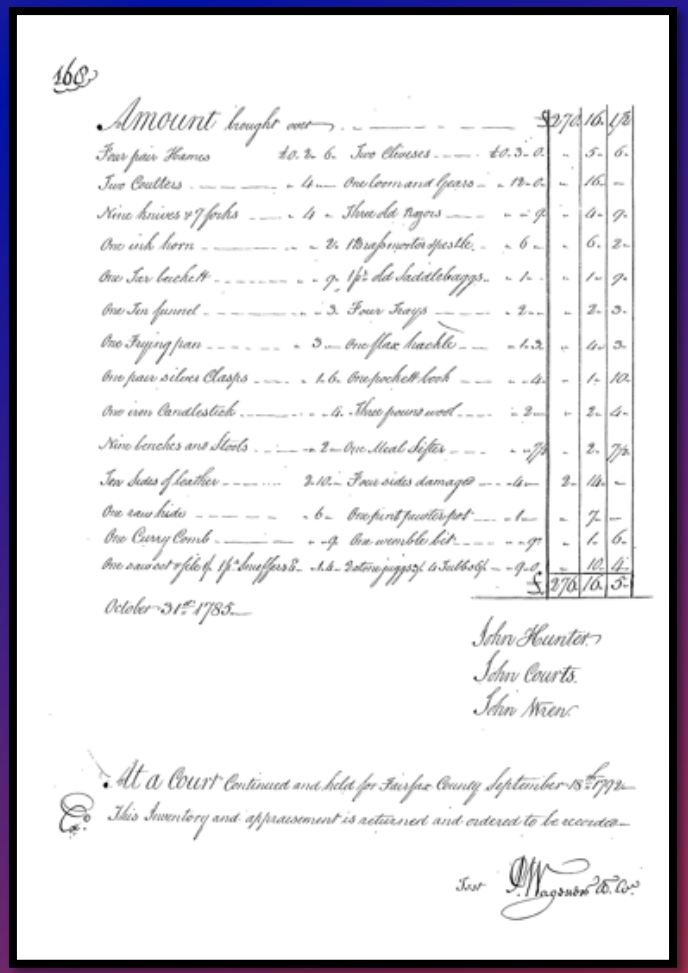
W. U. THOMPSON.

MOTION FOR JUDGMENT.

JOHN W. RUST
Attorney and Counsellor at Law
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

Make historical records **accessible**.

Example: Archivists will untie and flatten these records for better handling.


168

Amount brought over

October 31st 1785

John Hunter
John Courts
John Wren

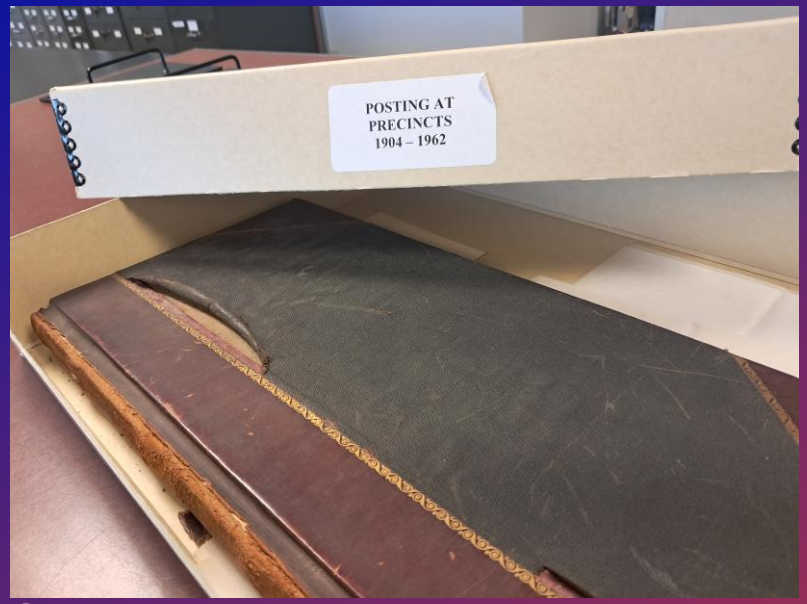
At a Court Continued and held for Fairfax County September 18th 1792

This Inventory and appraisement is returned and ordered to be recorded

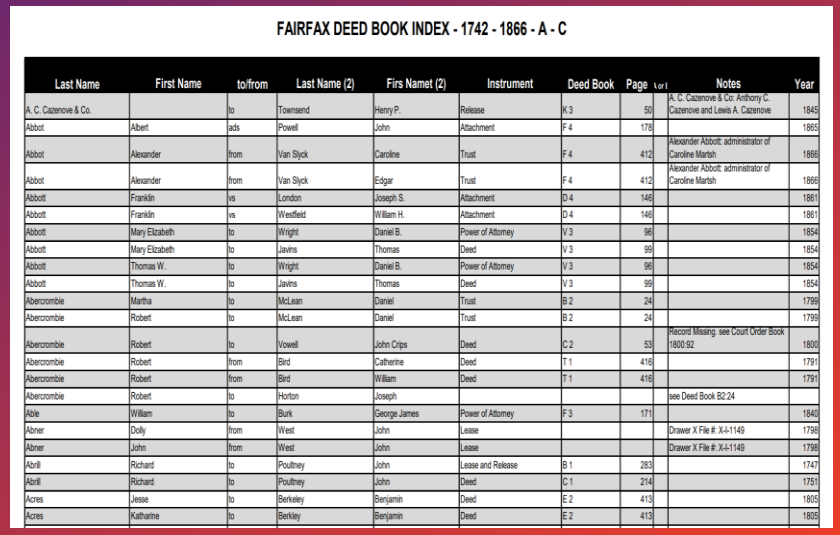
Test

Digitize records.

Pictured: an example of a digitized record



Store historic materials in boxes or folders to assist in **preserving** them.


FAIRFAX DEED BOOK INDEX - 1742 - 1866 - A - C

Last Name	First Name	to/from	Last Name (2)	Firs Namet (2)	Instrument	Deed Book	Page	Vol.	Notes	Year
A. C. Cazenove & Co.		to	Townsend	Henry P.	Release	K 3	50		A. C. Cazenove & Co. Anthony C. Cazenove and Lewis A. Cazenove	1845
Abbot	Albert	ads	Powell	John	Attachment	F 4	178			1865
Abbot	Alexander	from	Van Slyck	Caroline	Trust	F 4	412		Alexander Abbott: administrator of Caroline Martin	1866
Abbot	Alexander	from	Van Slyck	Edgar	Trust	F 4	412		Alexander Abbott: administrator of Caroline Martin	1866
Abbott	Franklin	vs	London	Joseph S.	Attachment	D 4	146			1861
Abbott	Franklin	vs	Westfield	William H.	Attachment	D 4	146			1861
Abbott	Mary Elizabeth	to	Wright	Daniel B.	Power of Attorney	V 3	96			1854
Abbott	Mary Elizabeth	to	Javins	Thomas	Deed	V 3	99			1854
Abbott	Thomas W.	to	Wright	Daniel B.	Power of Attorney	V 3	96			1854
Abbott	Thomas W.	to	Javins	Thomas	Deed	V 3	99			1854
Abercrombie	Martha	to	McLean	Daniel	Trust	B 2	24			1799
Abercrombie	Robert	to	McLean	Daniel	Trust	B 2	24			1799
Abercrombie	Robert	to	Vowell	John Crips	Deed	C 2	53		Record Missing; see Court Order Book 1800:92	1800
Abercrombie	Robert	from	Bird	Catherine	Deed	T 1	416			1791
Abercrombie	Robert	from	Bird	William	Deed	T 1	416			1791
Abercrombie	Robert	to	Horton	Joseph					see Deed Book B2:24	
Able	William	to	Burk	George James	Power of Attorney	F 3	171			1840
Abner	Dolly	from	West	John	Lease				Drawer X File #: X-I-1149	1798
Abner	John	from	West	John	Lease				Drawer X File #: X-I-1149	1798
Abrill	Richard	to	Poultney	John	Lease and Release	B 1	283			1747
Abrill	Richard	to	Poultney	John	Deed	C 1	214			1751
Acres	Jesse	to	Berkeley	Benjamin	Deed	E 2	413			1805
Acres	Katharine	to	Berkley	Benjamin	Deed	E 2	413			1805

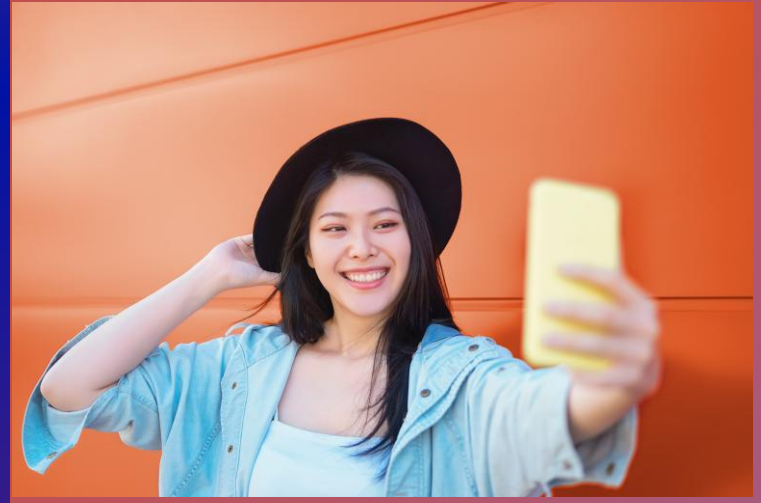
Create **indexes** so researchers know what is in the archives.

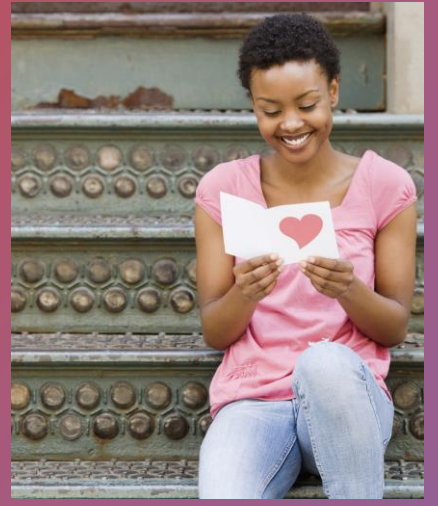
Get started:

Pick an item

- Ideally, pick something that means something to you, but it doesn't have to be significant.
- It can be a physical item or digital.
- Archives generally deal with papers or photographs, but it can be an object.

- **Examples**:
  - A poem
  - A certificate
  - A photograph
  - An email













After selecting an item, consider:

Recommended: write your answers down

1. How was the item created?
2. How did you get the item?
3. When was it made?
4. Who made the item?
5. Who was the item made for?
6. How would you describe the item?
7. Why is the item important?
8. Would you share this item with others? Why or why not?
9. If you did share it, how would you share it?
10. How would you preserve the item to make sure you could look at it again?
11. Is there something you don't know? How would you find out more?

These are all things archivists think about!

Why these questions?

The who, what, when, where, how help archivists to:

- Properly care for the item.
- Develop an understanding of the time the item was created.
- Help other archivists identify and locate an item in the archives.
- Assist an archives in determining whether they should take a new item into their collection or not.
- Assist researchers in accessing and viewing the collection.
- Learn about the past.



Why should answers be written down?

- Writing down the answers to the question help other archivists understand why the object is in the archives and the archive's institutional history of ownership of the item.



Activity 2: With a friend or relative

1. **Ask a friend or relative to share an item with you.**
2. **All the questions from the first activity apply. Additionally, think about the following:**
3. What can you learn about the person from the item?
4. What questions do you have about the item or for the person?
5. If you were creating an archive, would this item be organized together or do you think they would be stored in separate places? Why or why not?



Activity 3: Visit An Archive

- Start by identifying archives near you
- Look at when they are open, how you would get there, and what they offer.
- Look at their website to see what items you would like to view when you visit.

Tips:

- Use a pencil or laptop for notes.
- Handle materials with clean hands.
- Do not drink or eat near the archives. This helps to ensure materials don't get wet or dirty and that bugs aren't attracted to the archives.
- Review archive guidelines before visiting.

Washington D.C. Metro Area Archive Examples

- District of Columbia Archives
- Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center
- George Mason University Special Collections and Archives
- Library of Congress
- National Archives
- Virginia Room, Fairfax City Library