



"How It Starts" - Teachers' Displays

# SCHOOL ARCHIVES

## As Institutional Identity and Temporal Memory

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### Abstract

The preservation of institutional history, while often a long-standing goal of school leaders and community members, can attract increased attention during commemorative occasions. A widespread participation in and public expenditure on formal education since the nineteenth century is observed in several studies of educational history in America. Nonpublic schools were similarly established countrywide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many schools bearing a continuous history to these eras have recently or will soon commemorate their centennial year, or divisions therein.



*Awareness:* Anniversaries or new openings shift the archiving practice from one of gathering materials or even "rescuing" them from certain loss, to one of regular acquisition procedures.



Special Objects for Special Occasions



### Uses, Visibility, and Integration in the Life of the School

Students and parents may already be aware of their school's history through participating in celebrations such as History Day or Founder's Day, and archivists can increase their presence at these occasions to foster community participation in the building and growth of the archives. The archivist may also outreach with school groups such as the yearbook class, history department, webmaster, or events coordinator both to promote students' new research using the materials and to communicate archival activities. Jan Riley (1997) has argued strategically on behalf of locating the school archives in a prominent position within the continuum of school functions.

### References

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\* I dedicate this presentation to the late archivist Jan Riley who contributed greatly to the development of school archives in Western Australia.

### School Archives: A Historical Tradition

The public school educational system in the USA has experienced significant growth since its beginnings in the mid-1800s (Carpentier 2006), with a systematic focus on teaching and curricula that is not characteristic to public libraries (Wiegand 2007, McMullen 1991). The first primary schools (kindergartens) were established in private homes in the 1850s, and classes soon opened in public schools (Prochner 2010, 357-360). In the early 1900s, "progressive private day schools began to emerge in growing numbers" (Kraushaar 1972, 81 from Semel and Sadovnick 1995, 66) and each developed independent educational identities. The archives of such schools have been collected purposefully by school leaders, and also haphazardly by individuals with strong "ties" to the school community (Gleaves and O'Neill 2003), as was long the case in public schools (Kalisch 1971). Globally, Mogarro (2006) thoughtfully considers Portuguese school archives, as do Vidal and Zaia (2002) in Brazil, and Put (2004) in Belgium. Peter Orlovich (1985) outlined five reasons why schools may establish archives: 1. administrative value, 2. legal value, 3. financial value, 4. public relations value, and 5. research value.

### Frameworks and Methods of Practice

A range of school departments may have provided guardianship of these unique materials - including the library, records office, business manager, principal, and others - and in some cases the activity has matured into its own Archives Department. For those responsible for the archives, they may have begun the process of documenting the passage of time at the school by asking questions such as "What has changed since our founding? Since 1995? Since last year?" Developing a general **timeline** of the school can guide archivists toward focusing their efforts on compiling representative photographs of each division, each teacher's class, or each academic area. Once the archives has established breadth, it can draw upon this framework to delve into depth of each area (i.e. following individuals longitudinally). The archivist can conduct oral history interviews with retiring faculty, and actively create documentation for certain areas.



*Before:* "Do we have Joe's sixth grade play?"

*After:* "Here's the box you're looking for."

