

LSUS Northwest Louisiana Archives
Noel Memorial Library

Archives vs. Libraries

A Comparison of Materials

There are fundamental differences between an archive and a library that are most apparent when considering the differences in the materials collected by each. The differences in collections are distinguished using the following categories:

Nature

LIBRARIES:

- Published
- Discrete items
- Independent significance
- Available elsewhere

ARCHIVES:

- Unpublished
- Groups of related items
- Significance from relationship to other items
- Unique

Creator

LIBRARIES:

- Many different individuals or organizations

ARCHIVES:

- Parent organization or institution

Method of Creation

LIBRARIES:

- Separate, independent actions

ARCHIVES:

- Organic - normal course of business

Method of Receipt

LIBRARIES:

- Selected as single items
- Decisions revocable

ARCHIVES:

- Appraised in aggregate
- Decisions irrevocable (destruction is forever)

Arrangement

LIBRARIES:

- Predetermined subject classification

ARCHIVES:

- Provenance and original order (relation to structure and function)

Level of Description

LIBRARIES:

- Individual items

ARCHIVES:

- Aggregate (record group or series)

Descriptive Media

LIBRARIES:

- Built into the published item (title page, table of contents, index)
- Card catalog, online public access system (OPAC)

ARCHIVES:

- Must be prepared by the archivist
- Guides and inventories, online systems

Access

LIBRARIES:

- Open stacks
- Items circulate

ARCHIVES:

- Closed stacks
- Items do not circulate