

## REFERENCE SERVICES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

[by Laura Coles, 1988]

- **Provide access on an equal basis** to all who abide by the rules and regulations of the archives.
- **Prepare adequate finding aids** for holdings in the archives and make them easily accessible in the reference area.
- **Have all visitors to the archives sign a register**, including the date, their name, address, any identification, their signature, and perhaps their research interest. This register is valuable not only for keeping a record of how many visitors come to the archives but also to identify users on a particular day in the event of loss or damage.
- **Keep a count of all telephone, mail, reference, or other queries** received, for statistical purposes.
- When providing written answers to research questions, **keep a copy of all correspondence**, indicating who enquired and what information was provided. File these letters in chronological order in a correspondence file or, if numerous, alphabetically by subject. Eventually, frequently asked questions might often be answered from the correspondence file, saving you time and effort.
- **Do not allow researchers to retrieve or reshelve archival materials themselves**. If needed, have the researcher complete a request form for material desired. Such a form may help you maintain control over material taken from the stacks, and it provides a record of items used. File the used forms in date order in a box in the storage area.
- **Do not allow access to restricted material** without written permission from the person or agency imposing the restrictions.
- **Replace valuable or fragile items with copies** whenever possible or supervise their use closely.
- **Consider whether to allow researchers to use unprocessed material**. If you decide to allow access to unprocessed material, warn users of the difficulty of using unarranged material and instruct them to maintain the existing order.
- **Determine your photocopying policy**. If you have access to a photocopier and intend to provide copies for researchers, decide: a) if you will set limits on the quantity copied; b) if you will charge for copying, and how much; c) if you will copy restricted, fragile, or damaged materials; and d) if you will allow the public to use the photocopier (this is not advisable).
- **Determine what other copying services you will provide**, such as copies of photographs, maps, or microforms, and under what conditions.
- **Outline any fees or conditions** for any services you provide.
- **Include your reference policies in a handout** for visitors and researchers, explaining the rules and regulations of the archives, the researchers' rights and responsibilities, and details about access and various services.
- **Maintain a staff manual or procedures book**. Record all decisions, policies, and procedures you implement and keep these notes in a three-ring binder. Keep the manual up to date and organized. Such a document will save time and effort as your archives grows and expands.

Excerpt from:

Archives Association of British Columbia. *A Manual for Small Archives*. Vancouver: AABC, 1999.

<http://aabc.ca/media/6069/manualforsmallarchives.pdf#page=109>