

Archivists in the Making!

Archivists work with archives. Yes, but what are archives exactly? Have you ever heard this word? What do you think an archive is?

What are archives?

1. Archives are **documents**, such as newspapers, postcards, letters or photographs. An archival document is often on paper, but not always! A music CD or a film on DVD are also archives.
2. Archives contain **information**. Newspapers inform us about world events, letters bring us messages, mp3 files contain music we can listen to. Therefore an object, an empty page or a plant are not archives!
3. Archives can be old or new. A newspaper article written in 1900 is older than a newspaper article written in 2007, but both are archival documents.
4. **Everyone** produces or receives archives in the course of their daily **activities**, whether they are people (like your mother, teacher or doctor) or institutions (like a company, school or restaurant).



For example:

- Your grandmother and her wedding picture
- Your father and the receipt for his car
- The local restaurant and its menus



Did you know?

Even you have archives! Your archives tell the story of your life and its important stages. They leave a trail of your activities.

For example:

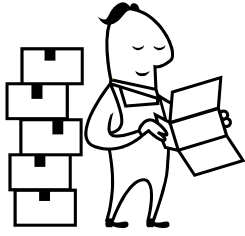
- Your birth certificate tells when and where you were born
- Your baby picture shows you what you looked when you were little
- Your karate diploma proves you passed the class

Name a document that is part of:

Your archives: _____

Your school's archives: _____

A store's archives: _____



Archivists in the Making!

Now that you know what archives are, do you know what they are used for? In your opinion, are they helpful?

What are archives used for?

1. They are used to **conserve information** so it is not forgotten.

For example:

- To help you remember your friends' telephone numbers, you write them in your address book
- The doctor writes the dates of his patients' appointments in his engagement book so he won't forget them

2. They are used to **communicate** information.

For example:

- Your grandmother sends you a birthday card to tell you she loves you
- Your school sends your parents an invitation to the next parent-teacher meeting

3. They are used to **prove** things.

For example:

- Your report card proves you passed your year, so you need to keep it
- The receipt for your parents' car proves that they paid for it. Since it is used as a guarantee, they need to keep it



4. They **remind us of the past**:

For example:

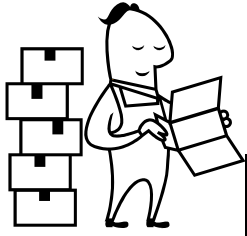
- Your grandparents' wedding photo shows you what they looked like when they were young
- The front page of a newspaper dated August 23, 1913, attests to the major world events of the day



Did you know?

When you visit a museum or surf through a virtual exhibit on the Internet, you consult many archives. Can you name some of them?





Archivists in the Making!

As you now know, archives are precious because they contain important information. Therefore, they have to be conserved. In an institution, that's what archivists do. It's their job! But what do you think archivists do exactly?

What do archivists do?

1. Archivists **organize** archives. You possess only a few archives, but institutions like hospitals, schools or cities have a huge quantity of them. Archivists file archival documents so they can be found easily.

For example:

- If you were an archivist, you would file all your archives from your school activities together (your report card, your homework, your class photo, etc.), all your letters together and all your travel photographs together

2. Archivists **describe** archives and they summarize the information archives contain.

For example:

- If you were an archivist describing one of your letters, you would note the name of the person who sent it, the date and subject of the letter



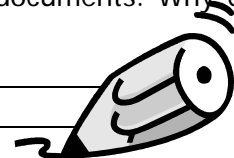
With the permission of the Centre d'histoire de Montréal

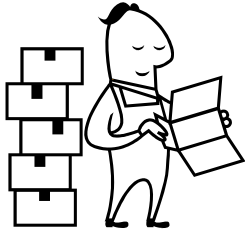
3. Archivist **preserve** archives and they conserve them so that they can be consulted for many years to come. Archives are often fragile. They can be damaged by dust, light, heat and humidity. Archivists have to **protect** archives by keeping them in special boxes or containers, thus conserving them as long as possible.



Did you know?

Archivists usually wear lab coats and cotton gloves to manipulate documents. Why do you think they dress this way?





Archivists in the Making!

Now you get to try your hand at being an archivist. You'll describe a photograph that you've chosen from your personal archives. Then you'll preserve it in a class album.

It's your turn!



Here are the steps you must follow:

1. **Choose** a photograph.

Try to pick a photo with a lot of detail, like a landscape. If you choose a photograph with people, try to find one with many individuals in it.



Here are a few ideas:

- A photograph of your birthday, your family or your house
- A postcard from a trip you took
- A black-and-white photograph belonging to your grandfather

2. **Describe** the photograph.



Using the photograph description fact sheet on the following page, describe the contents of the photograph you've chosen with as much detail as possible.

Fill in all the sections on the fact sheet.

If you have questions, ask your teacher or your parents for help.

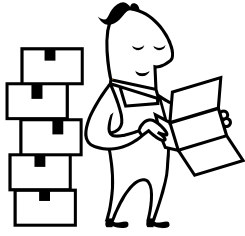
3. **Preserve** the photograph.

In the album provided by your teacher, place your photograph in the sleeve prepared for it.

Be careful not to bend the photograph. Its corners are fragile. Also, be careful not to touch the photograph with your fingers. Hold the document by its edges because fingers can smudge the document.

In the same sleeve, behind your photograph, insert the corresponding photograph description fact sheet.

4. Once the album is finished, **have fun** looking at it!



Archivists in the Making!

My Photograph Description Fact Sheet

Identifying the photograph

Student's name

Title of the photograph

Photographer's name

Dimensions (height x width)

Colour or black-and-white

Contents of the photograph

When? When was the photograph taken? If you don't know the exact date, at least indicate the approximate year it was taken.

Answer:

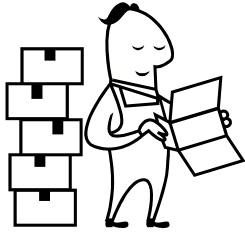
Where? Where was the photograph taken? Outdoors or indoors? In which city? In which house? Be specific.

Answer:

Who? Who is in the picture? How many people do you see? Name them if you can, and write down their relationship to you (Your father? Your cousin? Your friend? Etc.). Indicate where they are in the picture (On the left? In the middle? On the right?). If there are no people in the picture, don't write anything.

Answer:

(continued on the following page)



Archivists in the Making!

My Photograph Description Fact Sheet

What? What do you see in the picture? Is it a landscape? What objects are there? Are there any animals? Describe what you see and where it is in the picture as specifically as possible.

Answer:

Why? Why was this photograph taken? On what occasion? During a trip? At a party? Be specific.

Answer:
