

# 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?

**Commentaire :**  
To introduce the subject, ask students this question

## 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).



**Commentaire :**  
**Exact definition:** Any document produced or received by a physical person or corporate entity in the course of their activities, regardless of its medium.

**Commentaire :**  
**More possible examples:** a diary, record, video cassette, slide, digital photograph, email, invoice, report card, account statement, bank statement, birthday card, etching, etc.

### For example:

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

**Commentaire :**  
You can add some personal examples or examples from students' experience.



## 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:

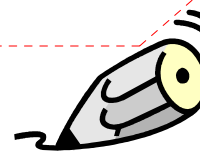
- Your birth certificate tells when and where you were born
- Your baby picture shows you what you looked like when you were little
- Your karate diploma proves you passed the class

## Name a document that is part of:

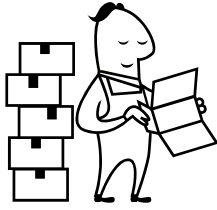
Your archives: \_\_\_\_\_

Your school's archives: \_\_\_\_\_

A store's archives: \_\_\_\_\_



**Commentaire :**  
**More possible examples:**  
- *For personal archives:* report cards, homework assignments, family photos or videos, a diary, cards, letters, etc.  
- *For school archives:* report cards, letters, receipts for school manuals, exams, students' and teachers' files, etc.  
- *For the store's archives:* invoices, catalogs, delivery slips, order forms, etc.



# 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?

**Commentaire :**  
To introduce the subject, ask students this question.

## 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

**Commentaire :**  
**More possible examples:**  
- Students and their planners  
- A concert programme  
- Etc.

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

**For example**

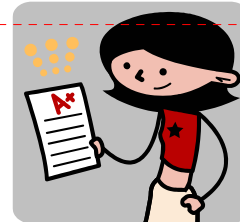
- Your grandmother sends you a birthday card to tell you she loves you
- Your school sends your parents an invitation to the next parent-teacher meeting

**Commentaire :**  
**More possible examples:**  
- A phone bill tells your parents how much to pay  
- An invitation to a party or a wedding  
- Movie posters tell us which films are playing  
- Etc.

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



**Commentaire :**  
**More possible examples:**  
- Your older brother's diploma proves that he completed high school successfully  
- Your mother's passport proves she is a Canadian citizen  
- Etc.

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?

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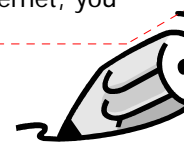
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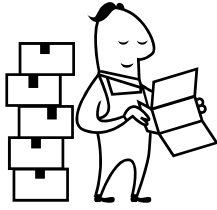


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**Commentaire :**  
Here are some examples: Posters, photographs, old letters, films, etchings, etc.

**Commentaire :**  
During a computer period, invite students to visit virtual exhibits on the Internet. Exhibits on many different themes can be found on the following site.  
<http://www.archivescanada.ca/fr/virtuel/search.asp>





# 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?

**Commentaire :**  
To introduce the subject, ask students this question.

## 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:**

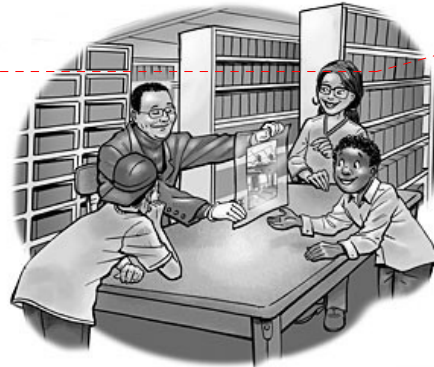
- If you were an archivist, you would file all your archives from your school activities together (your report card, your homework, your class photo, etc.), all your letters together and all your travel photographs together.

**Commentaire :**  
Draw the following analogy if the idea is not clear: "It's a bit like a librarian who files all the books in the library. How could you find a book if it wasn't filed properly?"

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



**Commentaire :**  
Draw the following analogy if the idea is not clear: "It's a bit like when you look up the file card for a library book. How could you find a book on the shelves without its file card?"

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.

**Commentaire :**  
Draw the following analogy if the idea is not clear: "It's a bit like covering books to protect them, then putting them away on shelves. How could you read a book if it was damaged?"

**Commentaire :**  
**Answer:** First, archivists wear gloves to **protect the documents**. (Have them rub their fingers together so they can see that they all have a layer of oil on their hands that is transferred to documents when handling them and that damages them over time.)

Second, archivists wear gloves and a lab coat to **protect themselves from the documents**. Because archival documents are sometimes very old, they are often dusty and sometimes carry mould, tiny fungi which can irritate the skin and cause itching on repeated contact.



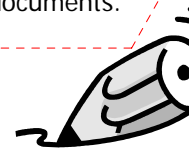
### Did you know?

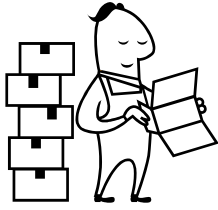
Archivists usually wear lab coats and cotton gloves to manipulate documents. Why do you think they dress this way?

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## 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.

#### Commentaire :

Explain to students that they must fill in their fact sheets in pencil—just like archivists do—so they don't risk staining the photograph.

#### 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

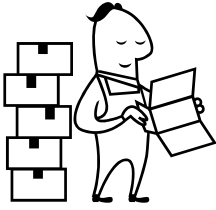
#### Commentaire :

Ideally, you should use one transparent plastic sleeve (8 x 11) per student. Students should insert their photographs into one side of the sleeve and their photograph description fact sheets into the other.

Then, place all the sleeves into a ring binder to make the album.

#### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**Commentaire :**  
Ask students to come up with a title based on the contents of their image.

**Some examples:**  
- My dog, Patof, and I  
- Christmas at Granny Blanche's house  
- My dad on the beach in Florida  
- Etc.

### 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:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Commentaire :**  
**Example:** Decembre 25, 1990

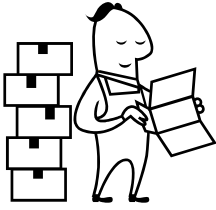
**Where?** Where was the photograph taken? Outdoors or indoors? In which city? In which house? Be specific.  
**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Commentaire :**  
**Example:** Granny Blanche's basement in her Quebec City home.

**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:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Commentaire :**  
**Example:** My brother Gabriel is sitting on Santa's lap. My cousin Roxanne is standing on the left, holding a doll.

(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:**

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**Commentaire :**  
**Example:** There are four red and green presents at Santa's feet and Patof, the dog, is gnawing on a bone. There are wrapping paper and ribbons all over the floor.

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

**Answer:**

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**Commentaire :**  
**Example :** At Christmas.