The Foundation Review

Volume 12 | Issue 1

3-31-2020

Archiving Forward and Backward: Two Perspectives on Capturing the Impact of Limited-Life Foundations

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doi: 10.9707/1944-5660.1508

Archiving Forward and Backward: Two Perspectives on Capturing the Impact of Limited-Life Foundations

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Keywords: *Archives, foundation, spend down, limited life, preservation, records management*

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Introduction

The records a foundation creates document its grantmaking and make it possible to tell both the foundation's story and the story of the nonprofits and initiatives it supported. In addition, "the records of foundations can provide guidance for future generations in tackling new and continuing social problems" (Craig, 2012, p. 6).

For any foundation, creating an archives makes it easier to locate important documents, such as board minutes and grant agreements, and to understand and learn from its own history. For limited-life foundations, the documents stored in archives are even more critical. They are a unique fingerprint of the foundation's impact: the only authentic record left after the last staff member has moved on to other work. Archives preserve and provide access to the raw data embodied in these records that allow future researchers to analyze, study, and make sense of a foundation's grantmaking and its impact on people and communities.

Establishing Foundation Archives: A Reader and Guide to First Steps (Rose & Stapleton, 1991) is likely the only resource available that directly addresses archiving the records of foundations. It was published in 1991, however, and is woefully out of date. The authors of this article hope that by sharing their experiences establishing the archives of two limited-life foundations — the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies — they can offer guidance to other foundations. These foundations began planning their archives at different stages in their corporate life, one at the beginning of its existence and the other during its sunset years, both dedicating time and resources to preserving their legacies.

Key Points

- Foundations that document their knowledge through an archives are creating a rich legacy of information. Archives preserve and provide access to the raw data that allow researchers to study and analyze grantmaking and its impact on people and communities.
- Limited-life foundations may have an even greater incentive to capture their work in an archives: Once they close their doors, much institutional knowledge is lost. By examining two specific cases — the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which began planning for its archives early it its work, and the Atlantic Philanthropies, which began the process later — this article discusses what it means to build, manage, and preserve an archives of a limited-life foundation.
- This article also offers recommendations for foundations seeking to plan and structure an archives, with specific suggestions for organizing and preserving records at various stages of an organization's lifespan.

At each foundation, program officers, administrators, and trustees all had a hand in creating, storing, preserving, and managing the records that would become part of the archives. In the heat of grantmaking, little thought was initially given to how and where files were stored or how they were labeled or named. The volume of documents, in both physical and digital form, held in Atlantic Philanthropies offices around the world was daunting. The staff at the Wilson Foundation were working at such speed and storing records in so many folders in so many digital storage locations that they were in danger of losing track of records that documented major initiatives as well as the foundation's history.

This article describes the work the authors have done and continue to do for these two foundations. It also recommends actions that foundation staff can take to begin creating an archives, and concludes with suggestions for foundations at different stages of their lifespan.

Opening Strong: The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr., believed that to make effective change, the impact should be felt from the start yet carry long into the future. To do both, he earmarked a portion of his estate and the eventual sale of his beloved Buffalo Bills to fund his namesake foundation. The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation began operating in 2015 with assets of $1.2 billion to spend by 2035. Wilson wanted the foundation's grantmaking to be directed by those who knew him. The founding documents contained two key stipulations. The first was the appointment of four life trustees, each of whom knew Wilson. The second was a limited life for the foundation: "It is my intent that the Foundation not have perpetual existence, but rather that the funds which will eventually be transferred to the Foundation be distributed for charitable purposes within a period of twenty (20) years" (Wilson, 2012, para. 2).

According to David Egner, president and CEO of the Wilson Foundation, the impetus to create a foundation archives came out of conversations he had with Maura Dewan, vice president for corporate affairs, and Jeffery Littman, one of the four life trustees, about how to document the foundation's story. Their list of pros and cons tipped heavily in favor of the pros: honoring Wilson's values, documenting the evolution of the organization, and contributing to knowledge in the field of philanthropy about strategies for sunsetting. "We knew there would be a story to tell and learnings to share," said Egner (personal communication, August 12, 2019). "We were afraid if we waited until the end of the foundation's life, we would have forgotten what happened in the early days."

A foundation's archives typically includes only a small percentage of the records it creates. Deciding what should be permanently saved in the archives requires foundation staff to understand the whole universe of records.

The Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University began working with the Wilson Foundation on strategic visioning in 2017. As the conversation around developing an archives grew, the Johnson Center offered consulting support. In November 2018, the first of this article's authors began working with the foundation to more fully develop an archiving plan, including criteria for what needed to be saved and a system for preservation and access.

Locating and Managing Records

A foundation's archives typically includes only a small percentage of the records it creates. Deciding what should be permanently saved in the archives requires foundation staff to understand the whole universe of records.

The first step is to conduct a records inventory, looking across the organization at all the types of documents it creates. Everything is fair game: emails, grant files, minutes of board meetings, and much more. The next step is to determine which documents constitute a "record" (e.g., minutes, personnel policies, annual reports, emails agreeing to a grant amendment), and which do not (e.g., duplicate copies of minutes,

TABLE 1 Retention Schedule for Communications Record Group

Communications Records: Documents Created or Received by the Communications Team		
Records Series: Communications	***Storage Location***	***Retention Period***
Annual reports	Paper = Office archive Digital = SharePoint	Archive (both versions)
Audio and video	SharePoint	Archive
Branding	Electronic = SharePoint Paper = Office archive	Archive
Contact lists for events, grantees, mailings	SharePoint	EoFL
Email (general)	Outlook	3 years
Email (subject specific or important)	SharePoint	EoFL + 7 years
Events	SharePoint	Archive
Media coverage	SharePoint	Archive
Media kits and press releases	SharePoint	Archive
Photos	SharePoint	Archive
Presentations	SharePoint	Archive
Promotional materials – foundation	Paper = Office archive Digital = SharePoint	Archive
Promotional materials – grantees and projects	Paper = Office archive Digital = SharePoint	Archive
Reports	Paper = Office archive Electronic = SharePoint	Archive
Social media	SharePoint as PDF	Archive

emails about the staff picnic, research published by other organizations).

Foundation staff members can make a quick inventory of the kinds of documents they create and determine which should be considered a record: Does the document provide information about important decisions or transactions? Does it contain information about key people, activities, or events? Keep in mind that emails to a grantee are records, but so is a photo of the white board from a planning session for a major initiative. Each department may find it helpful to create a file plan that describes what kinds of documents it creates, where they are saved, and which should be included in the archives.

Foundation leadership can direct a more comprehensive inventory of the organization's records. The records interviews with Wilson staff uncovered some pain points resulting from the on-premises server, the desire to keep this highly mobile staff connected, and the need to collaborate both inside and outside the organization. Not only did the records inventory allow for better records management, but it also led to improved access to shared files and facilitated collaboration.

Once a records survey has been completed, a retention schedule can be developed that defines how long each type of record should be kept. (See Table 1.) Some types, such as accounts payable or bank statements, can be destroyed after a set number of years. Other records should be kept permanently; these have archival value because they:

- Provide evidence of the foundation's activities, such as grants, evaluations, reports, and publications;

- Document how the foundation's mission was carried out, such as board and committee minutes, annual reports, and financial statements; or

- Have enduring legal, regulatory, administrative, or historical value, such as articles of incorporation, audits, photographs, and trustee interviews.

The Wilson Foundation created a unique category for end-of-foundation-life records. These are records to be retained through the year 2035, when the foundation ceases grantmaking, and then the number of years established by the foundation's retention schedule. Many of these are financial and administrative records of operations rather than programs. For example, accounts payable records are typically retained for seven years, after which they can be destroyed. Once the Wilson Foundation spends down and completes payment on all grants and contracts, those accounts payable records must be retained for an additional seven years.

A records-management policy[1] can help everyone in the foundation understand what is expected when it comes to creating and storing documents. It should define responsibilities, identify the systems where records can be stored, and describe how to destroy records whose retention periods have expired.

This policy is also a good place to define how staff are expected to manage email. Some foundations delete all emails from the electronic mail system after a certain number of years; others retain email indefinitely. In either case, staff should not use their email in-box as a filing system. Good email hygiene includes:

- saving important emails with associated files,

- downloading important attachments and storing them in the appropriate project folder, and

- deleting junk mail, subscriptions, or interoffice messages that are no longer relevant.

Most important, set aside time to manage email so the task does not become overwhelming. At the Wilson Foundation, a "records day" was dedicated time for staff to clean up email, file important records in the shared file system, and delete documents and emails that were clogging in-boxes and keeping people from working efficiently.

Building the Archives

Developing an archives for a foundation involves a sequence of steps — selection, arrangement and description, preservation, and access. At the Wilson Foundation, the focus has been on selecting records and ensuring they will be preserved through the spend-down period.

In archival terms, selection is "the process of identifying materials to be preserved because of their enduring value, especially those materials to be physically transferred to an archives" (Pearce-Moses, 2005, p. 356). The following groups of records should be organized by department, and then chronologically:

- *Board records,* created in support of board meetings, capture strategic decisions. They include minutes, agendas, committee reports, grant approvals, financial reports, and trustee and senior correspondence and email.

- *Corporate records* are created to provide guidance to the board in managing the foundation, and include documents such as articles of incorporation, resolutions, and bylaws.

- *Program records* document the evolution of strategies that shape grantmaking, including evaluations, theories of investment, cross-sector research, and the thinking behind major initiatives.

[1] For more information on records management, visit ARMA International, the nonprofit organization for information professionals, at arma.org.

Paper documents, placed on a shelf and forgotten, will most likely still be legible in 20, 50, or even 100 years. This is not the case for digital records. Born digital records require special attention if they are to survive indefinitely.

- *Grant records* include grant applications, supporting documents, grant agreements, reports, amendments, and associated emails.
- *Communications records* describe the foundation's work and priorities, and include annual reports, press releases, websites and social media, and speeches.
- *Foundation history records* capture major events in the life of the organization, and may include biographies of the founders and key staff, oral history interviews, timelines, organizational charts, photos, and videos.

An archives-management policy can help to codify these series as archival and define how and where they will be preserved.

Most of the records created by the Wilson Foundation will be born in a digital environment. Paper documents, placed on a shelf and forgotten, will most likely still be legible in 20, 50, or even 100 years. This is not the case for digital records. Born digital records require special attention if they are to survive indefinitely. While a physical archives has been established to preserve and provide continued access to analog (print) documents and historical objects, a more technical solution was required for digital records.

Managing and Preserving Digital Records

Digital records are susceptible to viruses, data loss, and obsolescence. Developers of proprietary formats may change or cease to support them. "Digital data requires continuous, active intervention to preserve it" (Brown, 2013, p. 195). For the Wilson Foundation, there was no guarantee that a PowerPoint presentation created for a board of trustees meeting in 2018 would be compatible with the software environment of 2035, when the foundation spends down.

To address this, the foundation's archivist evaluated digital preservation systems based on the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's criteria for Levels of Digital Preservation.[2] Preservica, a cloud-hosted digital preservation solution, was ultimately selected. It meets the key criteria for preserving and authenticating files in all formats over the long term, provides secure cloud storage, checks for viruses, and is ready to use out of the box. Preservica offers the option to set up a user-friendly access portal for all staff to conduct research, and it uses open export protocols that will make it easier to transfer the foundation's records from the preservation system to an external institutional repository after the spend-down process is completed. In another bonus, the Archives of Michigan, a government entity responsible for preserving records for all the state's agencies, had recently set up a consortium of Preservica users that offered reduced subscriber rates and a regional user group to lean on for advice.

Foundations of any size, with or without dedicated information technology staff, can create a digital preservation plan. In *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation,* Trevor Owens (2018) lays out three approaches:

1. Create an inventory of records that will be preserved and describe them. Include key information such as the department or person who created the records, number of records, record type, and where they are stored. Save a copy of the records to a

[2] The alliance released a new Levels of Digital Preservation assessment tool in October 2019; see https://ndsa.org/activities/levels-of-digital-preservation/

cloud storage location, such as Amazon Web Services Glacier or Microsoft Azure. The key is to make sure this backup copy is stored in a geographic location separate from where the original records are saved.

2. Buy a hosted solution, such as Preservica or ArchivesDirect,[3] that offers "user interfaces to automate a lot of the work required for checking and maintaining copies of your content" (Owens, 2018, p. 115).

3. Invest in staff with the technical ability to configure and run open-source software, such as Archivematica,[4] combined with a storage service, such as DuraCloud.[5] Management of open-source tools requires time and attention.

The Wilson Foundation has 15 years left to build the archives before closing its doors. The foundation started early and is committed to dedicating resources to the task. However, as the case of the Atlantic Philanthropies that follows will show, starting early is not a prerequisite for leaving behind a robust archives.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation: Top Five Takeaways

1. Ask each staff member to make a quick inventory of the kinds of documents they create and determine which are records.
2. Initiate a comprehensive records inventory to capture the kinds of records that are being created and where and how they are stored.
3. Write a records-management policy to help staff understand what is expected of them when it comes to managing documents and email.
4. Write an archives-management policy to define record series and how and where records will be preserved.
5. Put together a digital preservation plan.

Closing Strong: The Atlantic Philanthropies

Unlike at the Wilson Foundation, the decision to plan for institutional archives may come nearer to the end of a limited-life foundation's operations. While such a delay in planning may present challenges, the case of the Atlantic Philanthropies demonstrates that it can be done successfully. Many lessons can be drawn from this experience that may benefit foundations seeking to preserve their archives and demonstrate that planning archives in the sunset years is possible.

There are many reasons why planning for an institutional archives may not begin until later in a foundation's lifespan. Atlantic Philanthropies operated anonymously for the first 15 years of its existence and, therefore, communications and archives had not been of interest. Furthermore, until 2002, Atlantic was not a limited-life foundation; thus, archival planning would not have been a matter of urgency. In Atlantic's final decade, however, attention turned to its legacy and the lessons it could share with other limited-life foundations. It was at this point that the importance of preserving Atlantic's vast archives became more apparent.

While the online and print publications generated by Atlantic's robust communications program in the past several years provide a wealth of information on how the foundation operated over the four decades of its existence, the raw materials contained in the office files present even greater insight into its grantmaking and such landmark decisions as to go public and, later, to spend down. From an archivist's perspective, Atlantic's records represent a diversity in grantmaking programs and geographic areas

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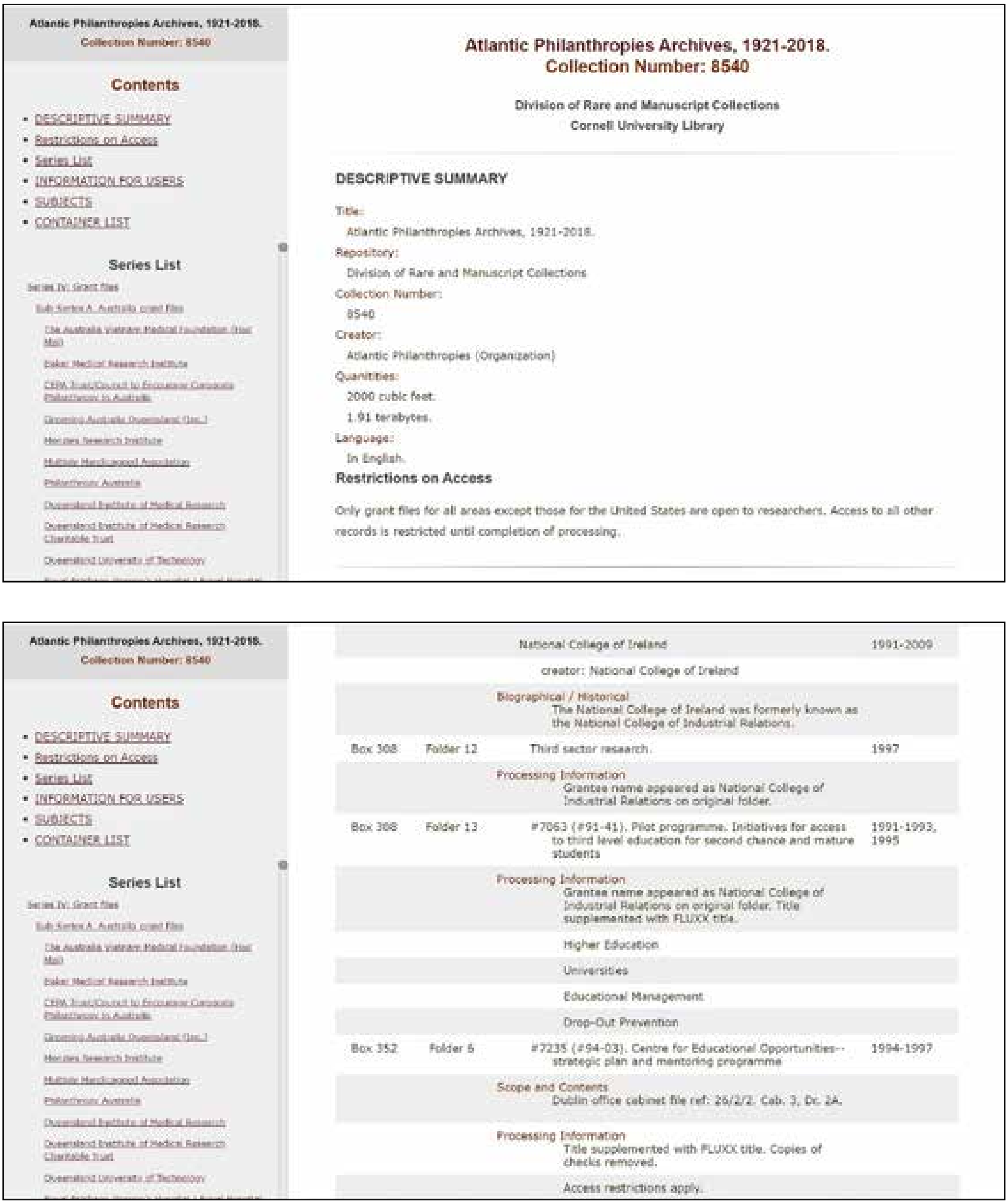
[3] Other options are available, at a variety of price points.

[4] See https://www.archivematica.org/en/

[5] See https://duraspace.org/duracloud/

FIGURE 1 Online Finding Aids for the Atlantic Philanthropies Collection at Cornell University



and can serve as a rich resource for academics interested in such areas of study as post-apartheid South Africa, peace in Northern Ireland, or marriage equality in the Republic of Ireland, to name a few.

Doing Some Homework

The first step a limited-life foundation staff should take is to learn the basics of what archives are and how they work. For a quick overview, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) presents a good summary on its website (https://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives).[6] In order to understand how their archives will be used, staff should also acquaint themselves with how archival materials are made accessible to researchers.

Archives use online finding aids to provide researchers with a summary of a collection, provide its historical context, and, perhaps most importantly, list an inventory of included records. (See Figure 1.) Finding aids are published on the repository's website and can also be discovered through a quick online search. A researcher studying a foundation's archives without a finding aid would find the work difficult, if not impossible: Atlantic's archives, for example, constitutes a collection of approximately 1,200 banker boxes of records. Foundation staff should note that finding aids are not webpages; they are straightforward digital stand-ins for the collection itself and, as such, simplify research.

Finding aids are created after a collection is processed. Processing is a labor-intensive task by which an organization's records are rehoused, inventoried, arranged, and described. Files are removed to acid-free folders, placed in acid-free boxes, and then inventoried at the folder level. Digital media, such as DVDs and CDs, are flagged and removed so their contents can be transferred to a more stable digital format. Finally, each folder is reviewed for sensitive information before the box is bar-coded and labeled. Digital records are more challenging than their analog counterparts; they require active maintenance in digital preservation systems due to the speed of technological obsolescence as well as the fact that such records can be easily damaged. The records are then arranged, ideally following the original file-keeping system of the foundation, and a finding aid is written.

Reaching Out to an Archival Institution

Armed with a basic sense of how archives work, foundation staff should begin researching possible repositories that have the capacity to preserve their organization's archives in perpetuity. Viable candidates can be universities with ties to the foundation, or those with special collections or academic programs that overlap the subject areas addressed by the foundation's grantmaking. A foundation may also consider an archival institution with special focus on philanthropy, such as the Rockefeller Archive Center or the Philanthropy Archives at Indiana University–Purdue University at Indianapolis. Foundation staff should browse potential repository websites to evaluate their collections, the ease of accessing those collections, and the presence of digital records. Some questions to ask when selecting an archival institution include:

- Does the repository have the resources to process the collection in a timely manner?
- Does it have the capacity to manage digital preservation and migration over time?
- Does it include other collections of a similar nature and interest to researchers?
- Will the repository promote the collection through outreach and storytelling?

Depending on the size of its collection, a foundation should plan on contributing funds to hire additional temporary staff to process the collection. In the case of Atlantic, Cornell University was chosen not only because it was founder Chuck Feeney's alma mater and a major recipient of Atlantic's funding, but also because its Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections has an excellent reputation for its work in preserving digital records, which have a strong presence in Atlantic's archives. Cornell, located in Ithaca, New York, also has the capacity to host symposiums and exhibits and to organize other outreach efforts to encourage the use of the Atlantic Philanthropies Archives.

In 2014, the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections was invited by Atlantic to apply for project-planning funding. After the submission was approved, Cornell hired an archives

[6] The SAA has also published a book on donating an organizations' records to a repository; the book can be ordered through its website: (https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-orgrecs).

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In addition to providing the transfer of title, the deed of gift outlines the physical transfer of the collection and lists types of records to be included, excluded, or restricted from the archives.

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consultant to survey all paper and electronic records at Atlantic's offices in New York City, New York; Belfast, Northern Ireland; Dublin, Ireland; and Bermuda; she drafted an in-depth processing plan and proposed a structure for the collection. After successfully demonstrating a strong, well-thought-out plan for Atlantic's archives, Cornell was awarded the grant to process and house the collection.

Opening Strong Lines of Communication

When a suitable repository has been selected, close communications between foundation and repository staff should be initiated and maintained for as long as the foundation's doors remain open. This would begin with the drafting of a deed of gift between the foundation and the repository. In addition to providing the transfer of title, the deed of gift outlines the physical transfer of the collection and lists types of records to be included, excluded, or restricted from the archives. While drafting this list, foundation staff should consult their records retention policy as well as the repository to discuss what should not be included in the archives. Invoices for office supplies, for instance, have little informational or evidential value; human resources records contain far too much personal and sensitive information and are not worth preserving. Foundation staff should also call attention to sensitive records that they may not want researchers to immediately access. In many situations, confidential documents are restricted for a period of time before researchers are allowed to access them. It is important to note that restrictions are not immediately reversed on the date they are scheduled to end. Rather, staff will re-review records at that time to ensure that sensitive information is not provided to researchers.

In the case of Cornell and the Atlantic Philanthropies, the deed of gift also established the Archives Advisory Committee, which facilitated continued and regular dialogue between Cornell and Atlantic and allowed for Atlantic to remain an active participant in planning the future of its archives. Twice a year, the committee has met with project staff in New York City or in Ithaca, New York. Furthermore, Atlantic staff with close connection to the project have held biweekly phone conferences with archives staff to discuss such important matters as coordinating shipments, setting time limits on restricted materials, and approving of outreach efforts. These meetings became less frequent as the project proceeded and details were ironed out. This regular communication has been beneficial to both organizations; Atlantic remains aware of every step of the archives project, while project staff benefit from Atlantic's institutional knowledge.

Shipping Records

To ease the transition of archival records from the foundation to the repository, foundation staff can work with the repository archivist to develop a consistent process for shipping records. While preparing shipments, foundation staff should consult the deed of gift to ensure that excluded records are not transferred. Although repository staff will weed excluded records from collections, it saves time and money for both organizations if records such as phone bills and invoices are not shipped in the first place. Files should be boxed in the order in which they were originally kept in filing cabinets and desk drawers.

To accurately provide context to future researchers, the archivist must understand who created or managed the records in a box sent to the repository. An organization-wide standard for labeling should be implemented and followed by staff as they prepare materials for shipments. Such a standard should include the name of the person or office where the files originate. Although such details seem minor, mislabeled or unlabeled boxes can complicate archival processing. In several instances, it appeared that boxes received from Atlantic's offices were packed and labeled by staff who were not necessarily the same individuals who created or kept the records they contained. Boxes were often unlabeled or mislabeled. In several instances the names of the individuals who packed boxes appeared on the labels, which initially led project staff to believe that they were the names of the staff members in whose offices the records were originally kept. While the detective work of identifying records and their original keepers are part and parcel of an archivist's job, it can be particularly challenging and time-consuming in processing a collection as large as Atlantic's, especially when boxes arrive in multiple shipments over the course of several years. In the case of Atlantic, these challenges were greatly abated by the close communications with Atlantic staff, who have the deep institutional memory that the project staff simply do not have.

Transferring Digital Materials

In addition to paper records, foundations will have voluminous digital materials that should be in the archives, including office files, email, social media, websites, and databases. This project may seem intimidating, but the example of the Atlantic Philanthropies demonstrates that it does not need to be. File servers from Atlantic's offices have been saved on hard drives and sent to Cornell.

While digital records can easily be transferred to a hard drive, emails can be trickier to capture and save. Since late 1998 Atlantic's staff emails have been captured and preserved by Symantec, to which Cornell will continue to have access. Given the volume of emails saved, the Archives Advisory Committee decided to preserve only the emails from CEO accounts. Although software exists to identify and redact sensitive information such as Social Security numbers and bank account information, none are sophisticated enough to identify other types of confidential information. For this reason, access to emails will continue to be mediated by Cornell staff even after the general restrictions are lifted in 2025.

In addition to paper records, foundations will have voluminous digital materials that should be in the archives, including office files, email, social media, websites, and databases. This project may seem intimidating, but the example of the Atlantic Philanthropies demonstrates that it does not need to be.

Project staff have been given access to Atlantic's SharePoint file-storage platforms and its grants management (Fluxx) and corporate entity (Secretariat) databases, from which they have begun extracting records. In October 2018, Atlantic transferred management of its website and social media accounts to Cornell, the contents of which will be preserved for the archives.

Making the Website Legacy Ready

As a foundation winds down operations, it should consider reevaluating its website as a lasting resource for researchers. In 2016, Atlantic rebuilt its website in order to better create the narrative of its legacy. In addition to considering the story it wanted to present through the website, Atlantic also consulted with members of the philanthropic sector, its primary intended audience, to glean what they hoped to get out of the resource. As communications officers Elizabeth Cahill and David Morse have stated:

> The foundation wanted its final (and posthumous) website to be something both more intimate and more exhortatory: an expression of why and how Atlantic had conducted its intensive, limited-term philanthropy, bundled together with stories about its experiences and some lessons it had learned along the way. It wanted a site where visitors do

Atlantic Philanthropies: Top Five Takeaways

1. Begin researching possible repositories with the capacity to preserve the foundation's archives in perpetuity.
2. Maintain close communications with the selected repository staff as long as the foundation's doors remain open.
3. Develop a consistent, well-thought-out process for shipping physical records and transferring digital content to the repository.
4. Consider reevaluating the foundation website as a lasting resource for researchers.
5. Share organizational resources that will assist in the arrangement and description of their archives.

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> not simply download data but inquire, peruse, weigh pros and cons, and, in the best case, draw inspiration and guidance for their own philanthropy. (Proscio, 2017, p. 32).

Given the volume of resources and level of curation, Atlantic's website has played an important part in helping archives staff understand Atlantic's history and identify the records in its archives. Even more importantly, as Morse and Cahill (2017) have stated, "it [will] continue to be useful even after Atlantic ceased to exist" (para. 13), and will serve as the starting point for most researchers. The publications and grants database available on the website will provide a valuable narrative that can guide research. Since the website's transfer to Cornell, it will continue to add new content for the foreseeable future, including the recent addition of a webpage, which guides visitors to the finding aid where the website will eventually be preserved once it is no longer on the live web. The rich resources available on the website, and its interconnectedness with the finding aid, will allow for a particularly seamless transition for researchers.

Providing Resources

In addition to maintaining open channels of communication with repository staff, foundations should share resources that will assist in the arrangement and description of their archives. Early on, the foundation should send repository staff any foundation publications that discuss the history of its grantmaking and capture its philosophy. Office and staff organizational charts are also useful to guide the identification and arrangement of records. Access to the foundation's grants-management systems would also help streamline archival processing. For Atlantic Philanthropies Archives staff, access to the foundation's Fluxx system has been invaluable. Fluxx stores records for each grant and grantee organization, and has supplied important information such grant titles, grantee names, and geographical areas of impact. During processing, staff have frequently come across grant files labeled with nothing more than grantee name and grant number. Using the grant number, staff were able to locate the record for the grant and include the official title in the inventory.

Fluxx was also useful in helping staff identify the official names of grantee organizations. Over the decades of Atlantic's grantmaking, grantee names have sometimes changed. In order to create uniformity, grant files have been organized by the name of the organization as it appeared in Fluxx. Fluxx is also a rich resource for electronic grant-related records; Cornell's digital archivist has been working diligently to extract these records so they can be preserved after Atlantic's contract with the Fluxx database is closed.

While planning an institutional archives early in a foundation's existence is ideal, the example of the Atlantic Philanthropies Archives at Cornell demonstrates that the process can begin later in a foundation's lifespan, as long as communication remains strong and resources such as publications and a grants-management system are made available to archives staff. The care given to preparing shipments can greatly make up for the lack of a strong records-management program.

Begin Where You Are

There may never be an ideal time to start an archives. Whether a foundation is at the beginning of its life, like the Wilson Foundation; at the end of its life, like the Atlantic Philanthropies; or somewhere in between, the most important decision a foundation can make is simply to get started. Where and how you begin may depend on how close you are to spending down.

Foundations with five years or less could:

- Gather records in the core record groups outlined in this article (print and electronic),
- Retain a staff member with institutional memory to inventory and organize the records, and
- Consider locating an outside institutional repository early and talk with repository staff about which records should be donated and what, if any, access restrictions should be applied.

Foundations with five to 10 years could:

- Engage senior leadership in developing a policy to manage the archives,
- Seek the help of a consulting archivist to guide conversations about which records should be preserved and how best to set up systems to provide preservation and access,[7]
- Select and implement a system for preserving digital records designated as archival, and
- Collect and inventory physical records (printed documents and physical media such as CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes, photos, etc.) and store them in a central location.

Foundations with more than 10 years left could:

- Engage senior leadership in developing an information governance plan that includes a records-management policy and retention schedules;
- Actively manage records through the retention schedule, file plans at the department level, establish a "records day" to help staff manage files, email, etc.;
- Hire an archivist to develop an archives-management policy and to manage the archiving program; and
- Develop methods for preserving physical and digital content.

Conclusion

When people think of archives, they frequently think of the past. However, so much of the work done by archivists looks to the future — the future condition of the records and the researchers who will use them. Just as an archivist must look ahead, so, too, must a foundation that wishes to preserve a legacy from which future generations can learn. Start where you are and seek the counsel of professional archivists to provide advice and hands-on assistance along the way. Although a foundation may have an end date on the horizon, it also has the opportunity to construct a well-organized, well-contextualized record of its past for the benefit of both current staff and future researchers.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the trustees and staff of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Archives Advisory Committee of the Atlantic Philanthropies for allowing us to share their stories.

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[7] The SAA website includes a directory of archives consultants; see https://www2.archivists.org/consultants

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