

October is American Archives Month

Autumn is the perfect time to promote your archives. October is National Archives Month!

Check out some ideas for promoting the value of your cultural resources and the work that you do at the Society of American Archivists' site

<http://www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/index.asp>.

I have found that promoting archival causes through my local media has benefitted my goals. The following is a letter that I sent out to some New Hampshire newspapers to get out the message about Archives Month. Feel free to take ideas from me. Use some or all of this letter to get out the word in your community:

To the Editor:

All of us have valuable resources in our homes that help define American history, while few of us realize their importance. October is both New Hampshire and National Archives Month. It is a time to recognize the significance of our recorded history.

Archives are the "primary" records created during our everyday activities and during the outstanding occasions in our lives.

Archives provide a key to knowledge, memory, and cultural identity. Archival materials help build bonds between generations. They can be used to teach children about their heritage. They help form one's sense of self, helping us understand from where we came and how we got here. They help us remember loved ones after they are gone. They serve as evidence, documenting our time and our story. They can be useful tools to keep us from making the mistakes of the past. They are important for recording our possessions, documenting our accomplishments, and identifying truth. Archives include such common resources as meeting minutes, communications, financial records, and diaries. They also include more notable items such as the U.S. Constitution.

Abraham Lincoln noted in his first inaugural address that "the mystic chords of memory stretch...to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land..." Archives are all around us, preserving these memories. Within every home one can find the documents that support a family's recollections. These personal papers help form a foundation for American cultural awareness. You cherish the personal papers in your home – items such as your photographs and family letters – because they help retain your sense of family and self. But these personal

effects may also have worth to your community as items that reveal what it was like to live in our society during a particular time and place.

Take some time this October, as you appreciate the change of seasons in New England and our rich natural resources, to also appreciate your cultural heritage resources. Note the archives around you. Visit your local historical society or travel to one of New Hampshire's larger cultural repositories to see one of the many exhibits that use archives to tell a story. Make yourself aware of archives that are used in advertisements, to decorate local shops, or to enhance tourist information sites. See how many materials on display may have come from people like you. Examine your own personal papers and vow to properly save your family treasures. Consider the institutions that preserve our heritage and see yourself as part of a cooperative endeavor to preserve our history.

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A Little Bit of Drama

Photos can make a dramatic statement. I find that many people who think they are not that interested in history can make a connection with it through photographs. I recently had the opportunity to do a little scanning project. I digitized a client's old photos to keep a "preservation" copy. I altered the digital image and removed evidence of deterioration. Then, I preserved the original photos in acid/lignin free boxes and supplied the client with a disk containing digitized originals and altered copies. I also provided a second disk of just altered images that she could take to the local photo reproduction shop to make new prints. She will hang the new prints on her wall while the old ones will be safely stored away. Voila! A visual declaration about how to care for our personal archives.



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Please send questions and comments to melissa@mannon.org.

For more information about ArchivesInfo and for access to past issues of this newsletter see www.archivesinfo.com



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Before



After



Next Month: Disaster Planning: How to Be Prepared before Disaster Strikes.

Lately I have talked a lot about our public face and getting the word out about the importance of archives. Thanks to a suggestion from one of my newsletter subscribers, I will be turning to a more hands-on subject next month.

Is there an archives topic about which you wish to learn more? Is there a newsworthy issue that you think other keepers of cultural heritage may find interesting? Please write to me with your suggestions.