

# School Archives as Institutional Identity and Temporal Memory

SARAH BUCHANAN

**Abstract:** The preservation of institutional history, while often a long-standing goal of school leaders and community members, can attract increased attention during commemorative occasions. Studies of educational history in America have observed a widespread participation in and public expenditure on formal education since the nineteenth century. Nonpublic schools were similarly established countrywide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As such, many schools bearing a continuous history to these eras have recently or will soon commemorate their establishment in celebrations marking a centennial, or divisions therein.

Taking as its disciplinary frame the emergence of an archival tradition within unique communities and focusing on the characteristics of primary and secondary American schools, this investigation illustrates previous and potential uses for historical materials housed in these academic institutions. It considers how the (recent) institutionalization of archives in schools is manifested in a sampling of departmental frameworks which have traditionally provided oversight and guardianship for historical materials. This poster demonstrates how school archives can be used to document the passage of time at the institutional level and to facilitate the visibility of a school's history across the school community through interactions with school groups and participation in such activities as yearbook production and annual rituals and events. Partnerships with other organizations, and commemorative occasions such as History Day or Founder's Day can also serve as springboards for further actions related to school history preservation. Professional aspects of school archival work are addressed pertaining to the organization and usability of historical school materials.

## **About the author:**

*Sarah Buchanan* is an archivist and librarian at The Meadows School in Nevada, where she performs arrangement of archival materials and teaches Latin. She is also serving as archivist at the Neon Museum, and has worked previously as a metadata specialist and cataloger. Her research interests include the use and accessibility of archival materials in education, recordkeeping practices, and informatics applications in the arts and humanities. She received an M.L.I.S. from the University of California, Los Angeles.