

GUIDELINES & Examples



BASIC ISSUES

4.1 Private Records

Most business records are private materials, although older resources are often deposited at archives and libraries that allow on-site research. Some major firms have corporate archives that are available to serious researchers from the public sector. Random business records can be found at county courthouses and city halls. All these materials can be cited in much the same fashion as other archival collections (chapter 3) or as local civil records (chapters 9 and 10).

Other institutions have records of immense historical value but usually limit public access to their files. Funeral homes, hospitals, penal institutions, and schools are common examples. In these cases, your citations will be to communications and, perhaps, photocopies you have received from those institutions.

In citing business records particularly, researchers are plagued by corporate changes. Companies fold and merge. Historic records may be discarded. A document or file that is properly cited to a business one year may later be difficult to locate from that citation. Nonetheless, a thorough reference note will provide a starting point for future efforts to find elusive records.

When constructing your Source List, if you are the person who obtained the record from the institution, your Source List Entry should reference the institution, not yourself or your collection of papers. However, some researchers prefer to list or group these records by an individual or a family name, rather than institutional name. This chapter offers alternative models for all these approaches.

4.2 Published Records

When you use business records that have been extracted and published

in print form, this chapter does not apply. You are not using an actual record or an original communication from a firm. You are using a derivative *publication* that can be simply cited by the basic QuickCheck Models for books and periodicals in chapters 12 and 14. If you are using online *images* of the original or a database of the originals, then you will find models in this chapter.

4.3 Records Cataloged as Files vs. Individual Items

Business and institutional records are an assorted lot. The same type of item may be handled differently from one site to another, depending upon the cataloging system preferred by the archive. For example, when creating a Reference Note:

LOOSE ITEMS

These are typically cited in a smallest-to-largest pattern, such as

ITEM OF INTEREST, "RECORD"; FILE, COLLECTION; ARCHIVE, LOCATION.

BOUND VOLUMES

When found in large or formal archives, bound volumes follow this same pattern more or less. In smaller archives, bound volumes may be shelved and cited like authored manuscripts (as with the Stocks Funeral Home example at 4.9). The pattern for registers held by small libraries is typically this:

"TITLE OF VOLUME," PAGE/ITEM; RECORD TYPE; LIBRARY, LOCATION.

4.4 Records Cataloged by U.S. vs. International Systems

Increasing globalization of industry means that history researchers working in business archives now encounter cataloging systems that differ from those typically used in American academic and governmental archives. International cataloging styles vs. U.S. cataloging styles has already been discussed at 3.3.

The Reference Notes to the Canadian Hudson's Bay Company records at 4.5 follow the coding system commonly seen internationally, in which (*a*) the specific item is identified, then (*b*) the file location (series, file, subseries, and item) is coded from the largest element to the smallest —i.e., D.38/6, wherein

D	=	Section (Record Group)
38	=	Series
6	=	Item number

In contrast to the international-style example at 4.5, the bank-records citation at 4.6 follows the conventional American style.