

13. Library and Archives

Introduction
Library
Video Library
Photo Library
Archives
Categories

Introduction

Accurate and relevant information is vital if the movement is to lose its reputation for being 'too high on emotion and too short on facts'. In fact, many organisations now have comprehensive and efficient libraries and archives, and some employ a professional librarian to safeguard and organise information.

Although much research is now carried out on the Internet, there is still a real need for in-house information. Many organisations are continuously scanning their 'operating environment', keeping abreast of their issues, political developments, the moves of opponents and the work of other animal protection organisations. These information sources can remain useful if filed in an accessible way.

Important work-related information should also be referenced and kept in archives. How many of us have started new jobs only to find a total lack of continuity because relevant strategies, operating plans, time-lines, contacts etc. were missing (or simply impossible to find)? This situation can easily be avoided with good planning and logical record keeping.

For organisations that have a permanent library or information system, the difficulty may be rationalising the range of information kept. It is very tempting to make this as-comprehensive-as-possible, but this may be counter-productive (making it difficult to find relevant information sources amongst the mass of irrelevant information). It is also necessary to review information regularly and throw out unused or out-of-date materials.

Another difficulty is ensuring that staff are made aware of relevant information, but not bombarded with masses of information about every issue. We live in an 'information overload' society! Useful ways of dealing with this include digests (brief summaries of key information and details of where to obtain the full information, if required) and targeted distribution lists (i.e. distribution lists for each major issue, as opposed to general lists).

All libraries and archives need a system to book out materials, to ensure that these are traceable (and returned!).

A professional organisation will strive to keep relevant information sources in an easily accessible way – be they books, reports, photographs, videos or simply supporting paperwork.

Library

A library is a need, rather than a luxury. To be useful, it needs to include relevant and up-to-date books. There are details of many useful books in these course resources.

Amazon (www.amazon.com or search for your national Amazon site) is a good way of locating relevant books.

If your organisation has a magazine, one way to obtain new books free-of-charge is to ask for a review copy, and write a review for your magazine. Many publishers will give out free copies of books for review purposes.

Also, you could consider asking different animal protection societies to exchange magazines, so you keep abreast of the wider animal protection scene.

Video Library

Videos can be kept in a library, as well as books. Some organisations also take their own footage. If footage is needed for media work, then a supply of broadcast quality videos (Betacams or mini DVs) will need to be maintained. When videos are lent to the media, they should be accompanied by written instructions about lending conditions, including how copyright acknowledgement should be given. Some organisations have the relevant copyright burned through their broadcast quality videos, to ensure that this cannot be omitted.

Photo Library

Many organisations also keep a photo library for media and publications. Most are kept on computer these days (with hard copy photos being scanned and added). Photo libraries need to be well categorised (see below)

It is also good practice to make photo CD copies, which can be easily sent out in response to requests. There could be a general one, plus various subject or campaign photo CDs (or for individual investigations, companies, farming systems etc.).

It is also possible to include a Press Centre on the organisation's Web Site, where photos can be accessed and downloaded.

Copyright conditions also need to be given when photos are sent or accessed.

Archives

Archives need to be readily accessible. A logical system of categorising files (see below) can help with this. Another important aspect is the physical arrangement of the archives – space is needed to make these accessible. Most used information in the archives needs to be in physical proximity to the office (once off-site stores are used for archives, busy staff will tend not to use them again!).

Archives need to be regularly reviewed and unused information thrown away. However, certain information needs to be kept for a minimum period by law (for example, certain tax and accounts information, and charity documentation).

Historic information, such as the founding charter and/or first meeting of the organisation, should always be kept!

Categories

There are many ways to divide library materials and information into categories. You need to do this using categories that best suit the way in which your organisation works. The below is just a suggestion, using an *animal experimentation example*, to give an idea of how categories could work.

Issues

Animal experimentation – general
Primates
Cosmetic testing
Genetic engineering
Chemical testing
Medical/drugs testing
Household products
Pet foods
Alternatives

Organisational

Administration
Office
Accounts
Investments/reserves
Budgets
Strategy
Operational planning
Staff
IT
Campaigns
Political
Investigations
Education
Fundraising
Media
Trustees/Board
Health and safety

Geographical (if covering different countries)

Europe
Oceania
North America
Latin America and the Caribbean
Africa
Middle East
Asia

(Or even counties or regions, if a national organisation)

Then, each of these can have various sub-sections too