

UNDERSTANDING ARCHIVES

CHECKLIST FOR WRITING A COLLECTION POLICY

What are other archives in your community or area doing? Try to co-ordinate your collecting efforts with other institutions, so that a maximum of information is retained with a minimum of duplication and competition.

What type of media and what subjects or themes will you collect in your archives? If you have limited space, avoid accepting large materials such as maps or blueprints. If you specialize in records about a particular geographic region, don't collect items relating to another area.

What are your technical or financial restrictions? If you have no money for tape recorders, don't concentrate on oral history. If you can't afford a map cabinet, avoid acquiring large numbers of maps.

Will you only accept material if ownership is transferred to you, or will you take in material as a temporary loan? Aim to obtain ownership of all material in your archives, so that you have final authority about arrangement, use, and disposition.

Will you accept restricted or confidential material? A balance between the privacy of the creator and the rights of the public needs to be struck, but try to accept as few restrictions on access as possible.

What are the conditions of access to your holdings? Develop a clear policy about who can or cannot use your archives, what identification they must produce, and your right to refuse service.

What are your responsibilities with regard to copyright? Remember, you can own material and still not hold copyright to it. It is the researcher's responsibility, not the archives', to obtain copyright clearance to publish or distribute material.

Will you lend material, allowing it to leave the archives? There are only a few instances, such as for exhibits or reproduction, where a case can be made for allowing archival material to be removed from the archives building.

Will you incorporate a records management program into your archival work? If you are municipal or corporate archives, records management probably is the most efficient way to unused valuable records.

Taken from the Archives Association of British Columbia's A Manual for Small Archives. "Getting Started: Your Archival Organization" by Laura Coles, 1988 at <http://aabc.ca/media/6069/manualforsmallarchives.pdf#page=8>