Treasure or Trash?
How to Assess the Historical Value of What You've Stored Away (and what to do about it)

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BOARD OF REGENTS POLICY: Libraries and Archives

Subd. 1. Scope.
This policy governs the libraries and archives of the University of Minnesota (University).

Subd. 2. Collection of Libraries and Archives.
The resources comprising the collections of the University's libraries and archives shall include all books, serials, maps, manuscripts, newspapers, documents, audiovisual materials, archives, statistical and data compilations, objects, and any other information sources in any format that are acquired, licensed, or managed for instructional and research purposes of the University, except for those items that are included in the collections of the University's museums and galleries.

Subd. 3. Guiding Principles.
The following principles shall guide the development and operation of the University's libraries and archives:

(a) The libraries and archives shall serve the University's mission of creating and sharing knowledge through broad access to information resources in published or unpublished form.
(b) The libraries and archives shall support the products and processes of scholarship through the collection, mediation, and preservation of information resources in all formats and media.
(c) The archives shall collect and preserve the historically valuable documentation of University units and individuals, including faculty, staff, and administrators.
(d) The libraries and archives shall be developed and made accessible to all members of the University community and to a broader state and global community through library resource sharing programs.
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What people give us

Small donations of single items related to University history

Personal collections documenting a person’s research or professional career
Small donations

Given to us by staff, alumni, families & the general public

Includes yearbooks, programs, photographs, scrapbooks, homecoming buttons & more

Accept most as a gesture of goodwill; also fills a need
Student experience

Documenting the student experience adds depth to institutional history & raises our understanding of how they shape the University.
Personal papers

The materials created by you in the course of your professional life and activities

Common to also include small sets of materials collected by you
What we collect

Biographical material (CVs, photographs, interviews/clippings)
Correspondence
Talks and lectures
Teaching materials including lecture notes, course syllabi
Committee records
Diaries and journals, personal and professional
Research files, notebooks, grant records
Photographs related to University or research
Professional contributions
Why we collect

Archives are not created to collect old things, but rather, serve as a stepping off point to create new information.

Archives are future facing.
Making decisions

Scope determines what the focus of an archives is e.g., institutional, subject, regional, community, etc.

Value allows us to express the importance of the archival materials.
### Primary value

The usefulness or significance of records based on the purposes for which they were originally created.
Secondary value

The usefulness or significance of records based on purposes other than that for which they were originally created.
Evidential value

The usefulness of records that provides information about the origins, functions, and activities of their creators.

**THINGS TO DO:**

1. Schedule meeting with Steve Morris, Mike McCausley, Gene Allen, Bob Brokken, Terry Boek.
2. Survey of Waseca - Sue Hendre.
4. Send planning document to president.
5. Send set of principles to practioner.
7. Achievement coming to Brunkin.
The usefulness or significance of materials based on their content, independent of any intrinsic or evidential value.
Intrinsic value

The usefulness or significance of a record or item derived from its physical or associational qualities, generally independent of its content.
Enduring value

The usefulness or significance of items based on the evidential, informational, or intrinsic value they contain that justifies their permanent or ongoing preservation.
Where to donate

Start local

Be creative

Consider the outcome

List of organizations and associations

https://www2.archivists.org/assoc-orgs
Donation process

Transfer of ownership

Drop-off or delivery

Asking for a copy

Items are primarily donated rather than purchased regardless of their monetary value.
Nostalgia vs historical

Some items are made to make us think about the past.

Historical items are contemporaneous.
Unique vs rare

One-of-a-kind items can be important to preserve but that doesn’t necessarily make them rare.

Rare would indicate other other copies exist and that there is a monetary market for them.
Repurposing

In 1952, Herb Wright photographed this Bedouin settlement in Syria.

Today, these records can show environmental loss and refuge displacement due to war.
Longitudinal information


This image marks a quadrant from 1929.
Later, Don Lawrence would inherit the project from Cooper until the quadrants were lost. This image was taken in 1982.

In 2016, a researcher using Cooper & Lawrence’s maps and photographs relocated the quadrants to create a new dataset marking 100 years of vegetation growth.
The long game

Reappraisal may change the way we view these items in a generation.

Associated values today do not dictate how the items will be used.

Those who use the archives do that.
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