

# **Creating a Collection Development Policy for Local Historical Records in Public Libraries**

**Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board  
Wisconsin Association of Public Librarians**

*With support from  
the National Historical Publications and Records Commission*

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# How We Created this Manual...

## *and for Whom*

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### **Creating this Manual**

In 1997 the Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board (WHRAB) began working on the Best Practices Project. Funding for the project was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Council (NHPRC), an affiliate of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

The goal of the Best Practices Project is to help three partner organizations establish best practices for care of historical records. The project grew out of the realization that many of Wisconsin's historical records are cared for by dedicated individuals who never had the opportunity to learn about archives management.

In addition to the Wisconsin Association of Public Librarians (WAPL), the project team worked with the Wisconsin Council for Local History and the Registers in Probate Association. The first step for all three partner groups was to appoint a task force from the ranks of its membership. Nine librarians from small, medium, and large libraries across the state volunteered to participate in the librarians' task force. Peter Gottlieb (WHRAB Deputy Coordinator) and Sally Jacobs (Project Archivist) met with this group three times between March and November of 1997. Through this process participants decided that the most important need for public librarians is a manual on how to write a collection development policy dealing with historical records.

The products of the Best Practices project, including this manual, were designed to become the property of the associations that helped to create it. The initial workshop of this project will be presented in conjunction with the release of this manual. Additional workshops, led by representatives of the Records Advisory Board and WAPL, will be possible with the help of curriculum packet.

### **This Manual Can Help - Even If You Don't Collect Historical Records**

First, this manual can assist you in creating a collection policy for your local history collection. Many such collections focus on books, newspaper clippings, and magazines rather than historical records. Second, records are likely to show up at your door whether or not you want them. Members of the WAPL task force described public libraries as the "front lines" for donations of family, organizational, business, and even local government records. One of the steps in creating a collection policy is to find out what kinds of records are collected by the various repositories in your area.

# Acknowledgments

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We are grateful to the following librarians who donated so many hours to this project. It is no exaggeration to say that this manual would not have been possible without their help.

## **Task Force Participants:**

- ☪ **Anita Doering**, Chair - *La Crosse Public Library*
- ☪ **Jo Don Anderson** - *SW Wisconsin Library System*
- ☪ **Tom Bachman** - *Brewer Public Library*
- ☪ **Julie Flemming** - *Fox Lake Public Library*
- ☪ **Polly Gropen** - *Delafield Public Library*
- ☪ **Sue Koehler** - *Madison Public Library*
- ☪ **Virginia Schwartz** - *Milwaukee Public Library*
- ☪ **Cecilia Wiltzius** - *Appleton Public Library*
- ☪ **Sandra Zuehlke** - *Hancock Public Library*

# What Are “*Historical Records*?”

*Before we begin, let’s make sure we’re speaking the same language...*

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## **Definition of a Record**

A record can be any type of recorded information in any format. A record can be created or received by an individual or a group. Interested in a more formal definition? Random House defines a record as “an account in writing or the like preserving the memory or knowledge of facts or events,” and “information or knowledge preserved in writing or the like.”

## **Definition of an *Historical Record***

Given the above definition, just about any item can be labeled an historical record. In real life, however, the term is most often used in a narrow sense to describe unpublished, rare or original items with historical value. A Civil War diary is an historical record. Last year’s best seller is not. The minutes of the first meeting of the village board is an historical record. The form letter they sent you last year with your water bill is not.

## **Examples of Historical Records**

There are many categories of historical records including genealogical or family history records, business records, and government records. Records also exist in a variety of formats including original documents, photographs, films, tapes, and maps. Some examples of documents are letters, diaries, and meeting minutes.

## **Differences Between Records and Published Items Such as Books**

Records and published items have different access, cataloging, and storage needs based on their relative scarcity / availability and physical condition. Many historical records are one of a kind items that cannot be replaced. Others are so scarce that replacement would be a formidable challenge. It’s easy to see why materials of this type must be handled carefully, and are seldom allowed to circulate. Cataloging historical records can be a special challenge since the title, author, subject, and date of creation can be difficult to determine. Finally, historical records can require special storage considerations: they exist in a variety of shapes and sizes, they are sometimes irreplaceable and therefore must survive as long as possible, and they can be in fragile condition due to age, improper storage, or mishandling.

While it is convenient and helpful to draw a sharp distinction between records and published materials, the difference is not absolute. Even mass produced items may become scarce someday. A newspaper is a published item, and is not usually considered an historical record. On the other hand, a library that has the only existing set of a now defunct local newspaper is responsible for an important historical record.

## **Definition of an archives**

The term “archives” is sometimes used to refer to a *collection* of materials (such as the written records of an organization) but it is most often used to describe the *repository* that houses such collections.

## **Glossary**

A more detailed glossary can be found in Appendix A.

# Caring for Historical Records

## *Minimal Best Practice Today -- Ideal Practice Tomorrow*

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### **The value of historical records**

Historical records have been called the building blocks of history. By saving them, you are helping to preserve the collective memory of your community. You are probably familiar with the saying that those who refuse to learn about the past are condemned to repeat it. But the importance of history reaches beyond this concept. We cannot fully understand who we *are* as a community or as individuals if we don't understand who we *were* as a community, and what it once meant to be a member of that community.

Saving unique historical records and photographs that document the past is one of the important services a public library can provide. Large institutions, like the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, collect a variety of materials relating to the history of Wisconsin, but cannot collect extensively for each region, county, or town. Local historical societies also collect local materials heavily, but each institution is constrained by the limits of its resources.

### **The cost of caring for historical records**

Collecting, maintaining, and providing access to historical records involves significant costs. These costs may be incurred in staff time, available space, money, or all of the above. We realize that state-of-the-art conditions are beyond the limits of most library budgets. Our recommendation is to provide a minimal level now and to strive toward ideal practice.

## **TODAY: Implement Minimal Best Practices**

- ☛ Decide what you want to collect.
- ☛ Decide what you don't want to collect.
- ☛ Find out what materials are already being collected by neighboring:
  - ✓ libraries
  - ✓ historical societies
  - ✓ genealogical societies
  - ✓ private collectors

## **TOMORROW: Work Toward Ideal Practice**

- ☛ Create a written collection development policy and update it regularly.
- ☛ House records in a **secure, safe, separate, space**. (*The "Big S's"*)
- ☛ Have enough funds to acquire, maintain, and make the records available now and in the future.
- ☛ Have a way to reproduce rare or fragile items that can't survive repeated handling.

## **REMEMBER:**

- ☛ Historical records require long-term stewardship. By long-term we mean **permanent**.  
*We urge you to treat this responsibility seriously.*
- ☛ You can have a local history collection that does not include historical records.
- ☛ You can often save historical records by finding them a different home.

# Steps to Creating Your Collection Policy

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- Step One**      Review your library's mission, collection policies, and long range goals.
- Step Two**      Decide who should write the policy.
- Step Three**     Examine your current collection. Look for strong areas as well as gaps.
- Step Four**     Check out what other area repositories are collecting. (Use Appendix C worksheet)
- Step Five**      Using the fictional example on page 3 as a guide, draft a policy that at the very least:
- defines the geographical focus of the collection
  - defines the formats you will and will not accept
  - outlines items that will *not* be accepted  
          (*based on condition, duplication, etc.*)
  - requires a deed of gift for items destined for the permanent collection
- Step Six**      Get the policy approved by the board of directors.



# You Can't Keep It All!

## *Why a written collection policy is important*

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No institution has either the resources or the physical space to collect *every* historical record. As budgets get leaner, the need for focus becomes even more critical. A collection policy contains a set of criteria that must be satisfied when historical materials are added to a library's collection. It is an important tool that will help librarians decide which records to actively collect, which records to accept if offered for donation, and which records to decline.

### What a collection policy can do for you

Collections tend to grow haphazardly without a collection policy to guide decisions. If you plan the growth of your local history collection, it will be better organized and more valuable to researchers. You'll also be less likely to waste precious resources on the storage of unwanted or duplicate materials.

A collection policy is also an important tool when dealing with potential donors. *For Example:* Betty wants to donate her late husband Frank's piggy bank collection to the library. What do you do? Your collection policy could draw a clear boundary between two dimensional and three dimensional items, which would make the decision much easier.

### There are several advantages to a written policy:

- ☛ Decisions are not personal, they are policy.
- ☛ It is easier to decline unwanted materials.
- ☛ It is easier to explain acquisitions to donors, your supervisors and the library board.
- ☛ It provides continuity through changes in staff and administrators.

Let's return to the piggy bank example. If the policy is in writing, Betty knows you'd make the same decision no matter who offered you the collection. What if Frank had served on the library board? Wouldn't it strengthen your decision if Frank himself had approved the "no artifacts" policy?

Donors can have strong emotional attachments to their papers. It can be a relief to point to policy and explain that you are not judging a person's collection as *bad*. "I'm not saying that Frank's piggy bank collection is unimportant. It's just that our collection focuses on photographs and written material about our town. Frank's piggy banks don't fall within our collecting area."

Another benefit of a written policy is that it will still exist after you leave. Your successor will not accept a piggy bank collection out of ignorance. We're not saying that policy never changes. It can, and should, evolve over time. A carefully written plan will last for years and ensure a focused collection.

**"Planning** is central to the organization and operation of an effective local history collection. While many libraries have such collections, too few have written development policies. The lack of such document nearly always results in unclear goals and inconsistent acquisitions. A written policy forces the librarian to determine and state the basic collection objectives.

A well-conceived, written policy frequently proves useful in explaining acquisitions to patrons, library governing bodies, and supervisors."

The Genealogy / Local History Committee  
of the North Carolina Library Association  
"Establishing and Maintaining a Local History  
Collection," in *North Carolina Libraries* Summer 88  
(p. 68)

# The Anatomy of a Collection Policy

*We break it down for you section by section...*

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We created this fictitious collection policy to illustrate what such a policy might look like. Each numbered section is explained in depth on the following two pages. (Use the numbers to find the appropriate paragraphs).

## ANYTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY

### *Local History Collection*

#### **Purpose and Scope of the Local History Collection**

- ① The purpose of the local history collection is to preserve materials that document the history of Anytown and \_\_\_\_\_ County and to make these materials available to researchers and the general public. The library holds these materials in trust for future generations, and therefore they can be examined in the local history room only.

- ②
- ③ The major emphasis of the collection is historical and current information about the city of Anytown and the surrounding communities of \_\_\_\_\_ County. Subject areas include: early settlers, ethnic groups, family, business, work, and prominent individuals and events. Materials on these subjects will not be declined based on language.

- ④
- ⑤ The collection houses materials in a variety of formats including, but not limited to: books, pamphlets, posters, diaries, letters, maps, photographs, and scrapbooks. The collection does not house materials in the following formats: three dimensional artifacts, original government records, posters larger than 36" x 48," or electronic records.

#### **Purchases, Gifts, and Loans**

- ④ Purchases over \$500.00 must be approved by the library director. Donations will be accepted provided that (a) there is a signed Deed of Gift form that legally transfers ownership of the materials to the Anytown Public Library, and (b) the donor does not require excessive restrictions on use. Items will not be accepted on deposit except by separate signed agreement that is approved by the full library board. The only exception is the temporary loan of items for exhibition. Under special circumstances, items from the Anytown Public Library will be loaned to other institutions for exhibition.

#### **Discarding Materials**

- ⑤ Anytown Public Library reserves the right to dispose of materials inappropriate to our collections. Options include returning materials to donors, selling items, and offering collections to other institutions (when feasible).

#### **Cooperative Agreements**

- ⑥ Occasionally, Anytown Public Library enters into cooperative arrangements with other organizations in order to preserve historical materials and / or to make them more widely available.

## ❶ Purpose / Mission of the Collection

We are not suggesting that you re-write your library's mission statement. The purpose of your local history collection should fall within your library's larger mission, but you may want to devote a separate section to it. For example, you can state that since the collection is historical in nature, no material will be removed due to age.

## ❷ Users of the Collection

You may or may not want to specify certain user groups. The Madison Public Library, for example, does not collect extensively for genealogists because the State Historical Society Library, which holds a nationally recognized genealogical collection, is just down the street.

## ❸ Focus of the Collection

Some questions to help you get started:

### ⇨ What do we already have?

If you already have a collection of local materials, identify its *strengths* and *weaknesses*.

What types of materials do you currently have? Local authors? Published histories? City directories?

Are there gaps in your collections, areas that seem to be missing documentation? Do you have lots of portrait photographs, but few of city buildings?

### ⇨ What do other institutions have?

Remember, you can't collect everything! There's no need to duplicate what someone else has already accomplished. Contact other libraries, State Historical Society Area Research Centers, local historical societies, preservation societies and genealogical societies. See *Appendix C* for tips on finding phone numbers, and a form for recording collection descriptions.

### ⇨ At minimum you should define:

#### **Geographic Area**

This is the most common type of focus. As you define the geographic scope of your collections, it's a good idea to keep in mind the types of materials that other repositories in the area are collecting.

*Example:* The collection will document the history of Fox Village and the Mill Creek valley region.

#### **Format**

Records in different formats have different access and preservation requirements. For additional information on the preservation needs of various media, please consult the bibliography in *Appendix B*.

You should know that the State of Wisconsin has very specific laws regarding who can and cannot collect government records. Please see *Appendix D* for a more thorough discussion, including references to the specific statutes.

In addition to requirements, a collection policy can also express preferences. *Example:* The library will accept oral history interviews on cassette tape, but requests that they be accompanied by a typewritten summary or transcript. *Another example:* Oral history interviews that are offered along with a transcript will have a higher collection priority than interviews solely on tape.

## ⇒ Other types of focus that you may (or may not) want to specify:

### **Subject**

You can mention specific subjects in your policy, either as items you will or will not collect. If there is a certain industry of particular importance in the history of your region, you can cite it as a desirable subject for your collections. On the other hand, if there is another repository in your area that collects extensively on a specific subject, you may want to exclude that subject from your collections. *Example:* Subjects of particular interest to the library include the tourism industry, family-owned farms, and the political career of Senator Mitch Abbot.

### **Time Period**

Do you want to collect current information as well as history? Is there a certain time period that you would like to focus on, such as a period of rapid growth? *Example:* Time periods of particular interest to the library are early settlement and the first village government.

### **Language**

There's a good chance that the early European settlers in your region kept their records in languages other than English. You may want to specify that no collection will be refused based on language, especially if such practice deviates from the library's overall collection policy.

## **④ Gifts, Purchases, and Loans**

We *strongly* recommend that you include information about legal transfer of ownership in your collection policy. For a brief overview of legal ownership issues and a sample Deed of Gift form, please refer to Section 5, called "**Acquisition - Transfer of Ownership.**"

## **⑤ Unwanted Materials**

A collection policy can address two types of unwanted materials: those that may be offered in the future, and those that have already been cataloged and added to the permanent collection. In the first instance, you can use your collection policy to define items that will not be collected, such as duplicates, items in poor condition, or items with restrictions on use. In the second instance, you should use your policy to delineate authority for the removal of items from the permanent collection. Section 6 is devoted to this latter topic.

## **⑥ Cooperative Agreements**

We will go into the legal aspects of cooperative agreements in Section 5 entitled "**Acquisition - Transfer of Ownership.**" You may want to include a note about cooperative agreements in your collection policy. Agreements can range from being as simple as offering unwanted items to another agency before disposing of them, or as complex as a project to microfilm complete set of the local newspaper.

## **TWO FINAL SUGGESTIONS: *Create a Flexible Policy* and *Schedule Regular Updates***

Policy can provide structure for decision making, but you don't want to leave yourself closed to new possibilities. You may need to amend your policy as you add items to the collection, or when new repositories open. And finally, the more you use your policy, the better you will understand how it can help you in your work.

## Putting Your Policy to Work, Part 1

## Archival Appraisal - *Deciding What to Keep*

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### Archival Appraisal is not Monetary Appraisal

An archivist “appraises” a collection to determine if it has enough historical value to justify the expense of storage and preservation. An archivist does *not* appraise a collection to determine its monetary value. In the past, archivists sometimes determined the monetary value of a donation and the donor used that figure to request a tax deduction. Today this situation is viewed as unethical and a conflict of interest. Indeed, the Society of American Archivists’ professional code of ethics explicitly forbids this practice. If a donor is interested in obtaining a tax deduction under Section 501c(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code of 1954, the donor must arrange and pay for his or her own appraisals.

### How appraisal works

Unfortunately, there isn’t an easy answer to this question. Appraisal is an analytical process that involves asking a lot of theoretical and practical questions. There is no simple formula that can replace the complex analytical process. Fortunately, you have already taken a crucial step in the appraisal process: deciding on a focus for your collecting efforts. This decision making process is similar to appraisal work, though just on a larger scale than a single box of materials. Now that you have a written collection policy, you can decline materials that are “out of scope.”

**One of the most important appraisal questions is:**  
*“Does this material fit within  
the scope of our collecting policy?”*

### This manual cannot “do” appraisal for you

While we’ve made this manual as helpful as possible, there’s no way it will act as a substitute for years of archival course work. We have included a list of questions that will help to guide you through the appraisal process, but these questions are merely a starting point. **Please do not treat these questions as a formula for appraisal.** You must understand and accept that *only you and your colleagues* can decide which questions are relevant for your collection, and how to weigh the answers. Please refer to *Appendix B*, the bibliography, for a more complete appraisal discussion.

## Sample Appraisal Questions

**1. Did the donor create the materials?**

**2. If not, does the donor own the materials?**

**3. If yes, is the donor willing to sign a deed of gift that transfers ownership to the library?**

**4. If not, is the donor willing to sell the materials to the library?**

Can the library afford to purchase the materials?

**5. Do the materials fall within our collecting area?**

**6. Who created the records?**

Did this person or group play an important role in the community? Was this person or group representative of the community as a whole, or representative of a group within the community?

**7. Why were the records created? Do the records provide information beyond this initial purpose?**

Does a diary record just the weather, or does it also detail community events and people?

**8. Is this information available somewhere else?**

A little research can go a long way in answering this question. Examine the published histories in your collection. Think about what other area repositories have.

Issues to think about include: AGE: the older an item is, the less likely it is duplicated somewhere else; SCARCITY: how often do you see items like this? You may want to contact colleagues at other repositories to confer on this question.

**9. Do we have similar materials already?**

This is tricky because you can decide to keep or not to keep with either a yes or a no answer. If the answer is yes, then the follow-up question is, "Does it duplicate what we already have, or does it add depth to our collection in this area?" If the answer is no, then the follow-up question is "Does it fill in a gap, or is it outside of our collecting area?"

**10. Does it document prominent citizens and/or everyday folks ("non-elites")?**

Which is documented more heavily in your collection? Depending on your collection policy you may want to focus on well know community leaders, and also try to fill in gaps with documentation of under-represented groups such as minorities, the poor and uneducated.

**11. How complete are the records?**

Do they document a short period of time, a lifetime, or something in between? Are there gaps in the dates that would make research difficult? Unidentified photographs are another example of an incomplete record.

**12. How large is the collection?**

What is the proportion of useful material to the overall size? Size will play a factor in not only the amount of shelf space devoted to it, but it will be costly in terms of supplies.

**13. Are the records in a discernable order, or are they in chaos?**

The time needed to arrange a collection for use should be a factor in your appraisal decision.

**14. What kind of physical condition are the materials in?**

What are the preservation needs? Will you need to impose strict handling procedures?

**15. Will the format cause problems in the future?**

Oversize materials have special storage and preservation needs. Film and video are very fragile media that may need to be transferred in the future. Electronic records such as an author's draft novel on computer disk will also need to be updated as word processing programs and operating systems change.

**16. Is there any information that is restricted?**

Examples include student information or medical information.

### Putting Your Policy to Work, Part 2

# Acquisition - *Transfer of Ownership*

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This section covers no more than the basics of legal ownership. We've written it for those folks who have not had to wrestle with these issues yet. For a more detailed examination of ownership, please refer to the bibliography.

#### Who owns this material?

When you purchase a book for your collection there is little question about who owns the physical item. Unfortunately, gifts and donations are slightly more complicated. Each transfer of private property should be clearly documented and in writing.

This documentation serves several purposes. First, it begins the process of expressing the library's thanks for the donation and demonstrates to the donor the library's commitment to provide appropriate care and management for the materials received. Second, the written documentation records the particulars of the transaction such as the date of the gift and the donor's address for future reference. Finally, the documentation establishes that the library has become legal owner of the materials it has accepted.

There are many horror stories about collections that had to be returned because the library could not prove ownership. One Wisconsin library was forced to return an entire collection of photographs to a man who claimed his father never intended to *donate* the collection, but merely to *loan* it temporarily to the library. The donation had been sealed with a handshake, and the library could not produce anything bearing the donor's signature. Even more painful was the fact that the library had devoted a significant amount of resources to catalog, index, and house the photographs in acid-free folders. Fortunately, there are standard forms that can help to prevent a nightmare like this from happening to you.

#### Legal transfer of ownership

There are three common instruments of gift: exchange of letters, wills, and deeds. Correspondence and wills can be adequate, but we recommend a standard Deed of Gift form because:

**A Deed of Gift can cover legal ground that is often left out of a letter or a will, including:**

- date of transfer
- name of donor (and contact information)
- signed statement that the property is his/hers to donate in the first place
- description of the materials being offered (a brief but important record)
- name of new owner (your library)
- signed statement acknowledging that the library will become the sole owner, and therefore can sell, donate, or discard unwanted items in the future
- an optional clause specifying that all unwanted items shall be returned to the donor
- an optional clause for restrictions on use

### **Items on deposit**

Generally speaking, you don't want to spend resources for housing and maintaining collections that you don't own. You may want to accept loaned items for a specified time period, such as an exhibit or anniversary event. If you decide not to accept materials without a deed, you can spell out in your collection policy: "XYZ Library will acquire materials through purchase or deeded gift. Loans will be accepted for exhibit only."

### **Cooperative arrangements**

We've already pointed out that you don't want to spend money on collections that you don't own. One exception is cooperative arrangements. There are many libraries that house materials for a local historical group that doesn't have its own building. Make sure you have some sort of written, signed agreement. An oral agreement can collapse when the folks who shook hands on the deal leave the library.

### **Materials already in the collection**

This information about legal ownership may be new to you. If so, you may be concerned about materials that were added to your collections before a deed of gift was required. *Every* collection includes materials of unknown origin. In these situations, it's best to get everything you know into writing, including possible origin and how long the materials have been housed in the collection.



# *Sample Deed of Gift:*

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Anytown Public Library  
**Statement of Gift**

I own the materials described below and voluntarily donate them to the Anytown Public Library to become its permanent property and to be administered in accordance with established policies. The purpose and intent of this gift is to transfer and assign all rights, title and interest I possess to these materials to the Library, except as specified below. The Library may use its discretion to dispose of material inappropriate for its collections, unless instructions to return unwanted materials to the donor are stated below.

**Description of materials:**

**Restrictions on the use of and/or access to these materials:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Donor or Agent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Library Representative**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Donor Name:**

**Donor Address:**

**Donor Phone:**

### Putting Your Policy to Work, Part 3

# De-Accessions - *Removing Items Permanently*

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Working with historical records is not a one way process of adding more and more items to a collection. Materials sometimes need to be removed. A written collection policy ensures that the removal of unwanted materials is done in a formal, consistent way. The process is called *de-accessioning*.

A record is created for each item or group of items removed. This deaccession record includes a brief description of the material, the reasons for removal, and information on its new location (if applicable). Many repositories require approval of their governing Board before anything is permanently removed.

De-accessioning is an issue that may surface as a result of your newly focused collection policy. Your new policy clearly states that you are interested in some historical materials, but not interested in others. You may realize that materials already in the collection fall under your new “not interested” category. Or you may discover that a neighboring institution has a collection that would be a better home for some of your materials.

You should also use your policy as a guide to evaluate how well the collection is documenting what you have set out to document. If you have added items that are outside the parameters of your collection policy, you need to either revise the policy to reflect the new areas, or get your collecting back “on track” and remove some items. Be sure to offer the de-accessions to other repositories when feasible.

### Putting Your Policy to Work, Part 4

# Outreach - *Describing Your Collection to Others*

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Your collection policy can do more than help you deal with unwanted donations and gain greater control over your historical materials. It can also serve your library's outreach and advocacy work.

With the library's mission statement, your carefully worded collection policy explains fundamental principles and policies for historical materials. You can familiarize your constituents with your library's policies in several ways:

- ☛ Put the entire collection policy (or the essential parts of it) on your web site so the public, other libraries, and archives in your community can easily review your priorities for historical collections.
- ☛ Bring the collection policy to a meeting of your library board, your county board, your library's friends organization or other influential groups to help them better understand your responsibilities and how you meet those responsibilities.
- ☛ Give the local media a copy of the collection policy, with a "pitch letter," and invite a reporter to do a story on your historical collection. The collection policy provides context for the feature article or TV or radio spot focusing on the interesting items in your holdings.

Your collection policy can serve the library's planning for public programs. To meet your community's interest in history, your library may find itself called on to provide exhibits or organize programs focusing on local history. A collection policy helps plan these opportunities by directing work to subjects, themes, and time periods where your collection has the most to offer. Use the collection policy to inform history teachers in your community about your collections and invite them to use the material for class projects and for field trips to the library.

Your collection policy also helps your library engage in active collecting of historical materials. Instead of just filtering out unwanted items, the policy can be used to persuade potential donors that the library is the best place for material the library does want. With a well planned collecting policy, a library can move beyond a reactive collecting program and begin to contact potential donors directly. To donors, the collection policy expresses the library's commitment to take good care of the documents that they have often treasured for many years.

## Glossary

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### *Archival Appraisal*

Appraisal is the process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon the degree to which they fit into an institution's collecting policy. Appraisal also takes into account records' administrative, legal, and fiscal use; their informational and artifactual value; their arrangement and condition; and their relationship to other records.

### *Archives*

The term *archives* is sometimes used to refer to a *collection* of materials (such as the written records of an organization) but it is most often used to describe the *repository* that houses such collections.

### *Accession*

The term *accession* is used in two ways, as a verb and also a noun. As a verb *accession* refers to the formal acceptance into custody of an acquired collection, both physically and intellectually, and the recording of such act. As a noun *accession* refers to an acquisition so recorded.

### *Collection policy*

A collection policy is an official statement issued by an archives which identifies the kinds of materials it accepts and the conditions or terms which affect their acquisition. It serves as a basic document for the guidance of archival staff and organizations and persons interested in depositing their records or papers.

### *Collections*

The term *collections* is used very broadly. *Collections* include individual manuscripts, archival or manuscript collections, public records series, or other groups of historical documents found in repositories in any format.

### *De-Accession*

*De-accession* refers to the process by which an archives formally removes material from its custody. An archival institution may deaccession material because the material has been reappraised and found to be unsuitable for its holdings, the legal owner has requested permanent return of the materials, or the institution has agreed to transfer the materials to another repository.

### *Deed of Gift*

A *Deed of Gift* is a signed, written instrument containing a voluntary transfer of title to real or personal property without monetary consideration. Deeds of gift to archives frequently take the format of a contract establishing conditions governing the transfer of title to documents and specifying any restrictions on access or use. A deed of gift is also known as an instrument of gift.

### *Donor*

A *donor* is person or organization who has given documents to an archives.

### ***Reappraisal***

*Reappraisal* is the process of reevaluating the holdings of an archives to determine which holdings should be retained and which should be deaccessioned. Reappraisal should be based on how the collection fits into the collecting policy.

### ***Record / Historical Record***

A *record* can be any type of recorded information in any format. A record can be created or received by an individual or a group. Many types of historical records are created in our society: genealogical or family history records, business records, and government records. Records also come in a variety of formats including documents, photographs, films, audio tapes, and maps. Some examples of documents are letters, diaries, manuscripts, and meeting minutes.

Given the above definition, just about any item can be labeled an historical record. In real life, however, the term is most often used in a narrow sense to describe original, unpublished items with historical value. A Civil War diary is an historical record. Last week's best seller is not. The minutes of the first meeting of the village board is an historical record. The note village board sent utility customers with their water bill is not.

# Bibliography for Further Reading

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## General Books:

- ▶Phillips, Faye. *Local History Collections in Libraries*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1995.  
*An excellent overall resource. Well written and current, this book was created specifically for librarians. Includes information on acquisitions, access and use of all formats of material; preservation; copyright; computer applications; and outreach activities.*
- ▶"Establishing and Maintaining a Local History Collection." *North Carolina Libraries* 46 Summer 1988: 68-103  
*The information was compiled by members of the Genealogy / Local History Committee of the North Carolina Library Association. Excellent section on preparing a collection policy. The only drawback is that a portion of the information is specific to libraries in North Carolina only.*
- ▶Dearstyne, Bruce. "Local Historical Records: Programs for Historical Agencies." American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet 121. Also published in *History News* 34 (1979): 1-3.  
*Includes additional appraisal questions to ask.*
- ▶RASD Guidelines for Establishing Local History Collections, 1993. Developed by the Local History Committee of the History Section, Reference and Adult Services Division, American Library Association, June 1979. Reaffirmed by RASD Board of Directors, January 1993.
- ▶SAA Basic Manuals Series. Titles include:
  - Bellardo, Lewis and Lynn Lady Bellardo. *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992.
  - Ham, F. Gerald. *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992.
  - Miller, Fredric M.. *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1990.
  - O'Toole, James M.. *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1990.
  - Pugh, Mary Jo. *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992.
  - Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn. *Preserving Archives and Manuscript*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: SAA, 1993
  - Wilsted, Thomas and William Nolte. *Managing Archival and Manuscript Repositories*. SAA Basic Manuals Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1991.

## **Appraisal / Selection:**

- ▶ Ham, F. Gerald. *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscript*,. SAA Basic Manual Series Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1993.

## **Legal Ownership:**

- ▶ Peterson, Gary M. and Trudy Huskamp Peterson. *Archives and Manuscripts: Law*. SAA Basic Manual Series, vol 2. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1985.
- ▶ Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 19.21:4-8.
- ▶ Strand, Benita. “How to Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth, or How to Tell People You Can’t Use Their Old Junk in your Library.” *Collection Building*. 14:2 (1995): 29-31.

# Information About Other Collections

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## A. The Area Research Center Network

The State Historical Society, the University of Wisconsin System, and the Superior Public Library cooperate in a network of Area Research Centers located at campus libraries throughout the state and at the Superior Public Library. Records particular to the local area are housed permanently at each Center and also circulate within the network.

### **Eau Claire**

Lawrence D. Lynch  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire  
Phone: 715/836-3873

### **Green Bay**

Debra Anderson  
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay  
Phone: 920/465-2539

### **La Crosse**

Paul Beck  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse  
Phone: 608/785-8511

### **Milwaukee**

Timothy Ericson, Mark Vargas, Christel Maass  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Phone: 414/229-5402

### **Northern Great Lakes Center (NGLC)**

History Center  
Route 3, Box 418  
Ashland, WI 54806

### **Oshkosh**

Joshua Ranger  
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh  
Phone: 920/424-3347

### **Parkside**

Ellen Pedraza  
University of Wisconsin-Parkside  
Phone: 414/595-2411

### **Platteville**

Mary Freymiller  
University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
Phone: 608/342-1719

### **River Falls**

Sue Ginter Watson  
University of Wisconsin-River Falls  
Phone: 715/425-3567

### **Stevens Point**

William Paul  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Phone: 715/346-2586

### **Stout**

Kevin Thorie  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menominee, WI  
Phone: 715/232-2300

### **Superior**

Julie Zachau  
Superior Public Library  
1530 Tower Ave.  
Phone: 715/394-8860

### **Whitewater**

Karen Weston  
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater  
Phone: 414/472-5520

### **SHSW**

State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
Madison, WI  
Phone: 608/264-6460



**Not sure which Area Research Center (ARC) serves *your* county?  
Here's an alphabetical list by county...**

Adams.....Stevens Point	Jackson.....La Crosse	Portage.....Stevens Point
Ashland.....NGLC	Jefferson.....Whitewater	Price.....NGLC
Barron.....Stout	Juneau.....Stevens Point	Racine.....Parkside
Bayfield.....NGLC	Kenosha.....Parkside	Richland.....Platteville
Brown.....Green Bay	Kewaunee.....Green Bay	Rock.....Whitewater
Chippewa.....Eau Claire	La Crosse.....La Crosse	Rusk.....Eau Claire
Clark.....Eau Claire	Lafayette.....Platteville	St. Croix.....River Falls
Columbia.....SHSW	Langlade.....Stevens Point	Sauk.....SHSW
Crawford.....Platteville	Lincoln.....Stevens Point	Sawyer.....NGLC
Dane.....SHSW	Manitowoc.....Green Bay	Shawno.....Green Bay
Dodge.....Oshkosh	Marathon.....Stevens Point	Sheboygan.....Milwaukee
Door.....Green Bay	Marinette.....Green Bay	Taylor.....Eau Claire
Douglas.....Superior	Marquette.....Oshkosh	Trempealeau.....La Crosse
Dunn.....Stout	Menominee.....Green Bay	Vernon.....La Crosse
Eau Claire.....Eau Claire	Milwaukee.....Milwaukee	Vilas.....NGLC
Florence.....Green Bay	Monroe.....La Crosse	Walworth.....Whitewater
Fond du Lac.....Oshkosh	Oconto.....Green Bay	Washburn.....NGLC
Forest.....NGLC	Oneida.....NGLC	Washington.....Milwaukee
Grant.....Platteville	Outagamie.....Green Bay	Waukesha.....Milwaukee
Green.....Platteville	Ozaukee.....Milwaukee	Waupaca.....Stevens Point
Green Lake.....Oshkosh	Pepin.....Stout	Waushara.....Stevens Point
Iowa.....Platteville	Pierce.....River Falls	Winnebago.....Oshkosh
Iron.....NGLC	Polk.....River Falls	Wood.....Stevens Point

## **B. Local Historical Societies**

The Wisconsin Council for Local History publishes an annual Roster of repositories, societies, and museums. Many libraries own copies of it, including Reference and Loan. It is a Wisconsin state document. This valuable directory includes phone numbers and contact information.

The Roster doesn't include descriptions of what each institution has in their collections, so we created a worksheet that you can photocopy, fill out as you contact other area institutions, and file in your manual. (See page 19)

# Collection Survey

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Name of institution:  
(Or private collector)

Address and Phone Number:

Hours of Operation:

Director:

Librarian / Archivist:

Main collecting area(s):

Formats collected (Circle all that apply):

- |  |  |                          |                 |
|--|--|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Books  | Maps                                   | Artifacts<br>(3-D items) | Films           |
| Papers/Records<br>(Unpublished primary<br>source material) | Sound recordings                       | B/W Photographs          | VHS Video tapes |
|  | Electronic records<br>(computer disks) | Color Photographs        | Posters         |

Materials *not* collected:

# **Local Government Records in Wisconsin**

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The State of Wisconsin recognizes only one method of disposal for local government records. If the creating governmental agency no longer wants to keep the public records, they must be offered to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. If the Historical Society declines the materials, then the records must be destroyed.

Relevant Statutes: Chapter 19.21, paragraphs 4-8.