

Nipissing University and Canadore College Archives and Special Collections

**CARE AND MANAGEMENT
OF HOLDINGS POLICY**

By Peter Houston, September 2014

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SCOPE

This policy governs the care and management of archival holdings and special library collections (hereafter referred to collectively as “holdings”) at the Nipissing University and Canadore College Archives and Special Collections (“Archives”). This policy explains the responsibilities of Archives staff (“staff”) and the Manager of Archives and Access Services (“Manager”).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that holdings are cared for in a way that supports their long term preservation and protects them from deterioration and damage. Proper care of holdings is central to the Archives’ mandate to maintain holdings that are significant to the academic and cultural heritage of the University and College, and holdings which support research, teaching, and learning at both institutions. This policy explains the responsibilities of Archives staff (“staff”), including the Manager of Archives and Access Services (“Manager”), in caring for and managing holdings.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND CONTROL

Staff must provide a storage environment for the Archives’ holdings that is suitable for long term preservation. Agents of chemical deterioration such as moisture, heat, and visible light must be kept within set limits by monitoring and maintaining control over the environment in the Archives Room, which contains the storage stacks and a reading room/staff work space. Located on the ground floor of the Harris Learning Library, the room was constructed to house an archival repository, and has the following features and equipment in place that enable effective climate control:

- A Liebert heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) unit, which monitors and controls the room's temperature and relative humidity, keeping the room at a constant 21C (± 2 C) and 30% RH (± 5 % RH) in the winter, or 40% RH (± 5 % RH) in the summer.
- The unit is equipped with audio and visual alarms that alert staff to any deviations from pre-set limits.
- An air circulation system that is independent of the rest of the Harris Learning Library building, keeping the room protected from air pollution, heat, and moisture from external sources.
- A pair of HOBO UX100 data loggers, which continuously collect and record temperature and relative humidity readings at fifteen minute intervals, creating environmental data that can easily be downloaded, reviewed, and plotted to observe long term trends.
- Timed motion sensor lighting that turns the lights off after ten minutes if no motion is detected, keeping visible light to a necessary minimum.

- Sufficiently insulated walls to protect the room against temperature and relative humidity fluctuations in the rest of the library and outside the building.

Staff monitor and control the Archives' storage environment through the following regular activities:

- Monitor the HVAC unit's digital readout, check for alarms, and liaise with Facilities staff to ensure that the unit is regularly maintained, filters are replaced, and any malfunctions and alarms are investigated immediately.
- Download and inspect temperature and relative humidity data collected by the data loggers every week.
- Ensure that visible light levels are kept within acceptable limits and that no light sources are used that emit ultraviolet radiation or high levels of visible light that may damage light-sensitive materials, such as camera flashes.

PEST PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Staff prevent the introduction of pests by thoroughly inspecting all new donations/transfers before they are allowed into the Archives. If any evidence of potential infestation is discovered, the material must be quarantined and may have to be treated in consultation with a conservator before it can be accepted.

Staff also prevent pests by making the Archives Room an unsuitable environment for them by

- Maintaining a low temperature and relative humidity according to set limits
- Keeping the storage area and reading room clean and clear of clutter that could provide shelter
- Prohibiting food and drink in the Archives Room, as these can attract pests
- Storing holdings at least 15 centimetres off the ground on steel shelving, making it more difficult for pests to come into contact with them

Staff receive training to identify common pests that can threaten archival and library holdings (such as insects, rodents, and mould), and are expected to keep a constant lookout for any evidence of them. Glue traps are deployed throughout the Archives Room and are checked monthly, with all findings recorded in the Pest Monitoring Log.

If any evidence of pests is discovered, staff must immediately isolate the material affected and make a full report to the Manager, who notifies the Assistant to the Executive Director of Libraries, who is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the library building. The Assistant will report the issue to Nipissing University and Canadore College's Facilities departments and will contact pest control service contractors (currently Orkin Canada) to investigate and advise a course of appropriate action. All pest infestations must be documented in the Pest Monitoring Log, which records details of the incident including type of pest, actions taken, and results.

For information about handling mould-contaminated material, please see the “Disaster response - Mould outbreak” section of the [Disaster Prevention and Response Plan](#).

STORAGE ARRANGEMENTS

The Archives’ holdings must only be stored in the stacks in the Archives Room on enamelled steel shelving at least 15cm off the ground. The stacks must be kept clean, uncluttered, and free of material that is not part of the holdings in order to facilitate retrieval and provide an optimal preservation environment. Only Archives staff may enter the stacks in order to retrieve.

Holdings must be stored in clearly labelled and chemically inert storage enclosures (containers including boxes and envelopes) to protect them from light, physical damage, and fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity. Enclosures should suit the media they contain, and must be the correct size and design to provide optimal support. Bound volumes should contain rare book identification strips and be stored upright on shelves, except for very large volumes which should be stored horizontally in low stacks that will not put undue pressure on their bindings. Volumes with fragile or damaged bindings should be held shut with unbleached cotton pull fasteners or tying tape, and may be further protected by being enclosed in a rare book box.

DISASTER PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Staff must familiarize themselves with the [Disaster Prevention and Response Plan](#), which guides disaster prevention, response, and recovery in the Archives. The plan contains: a risk analysis of potential disasters with preventative measures to be taken for each, disaster response and recovery procedures, an overview of the Archives Disaster Recovery Team, emergency contact information, an inventory of disaster supplies and equipment, and a quick reference guide for water-damaged material. The Archives Manager is responsible for ensuring that the plan is regularly updated, distributed, and understood.

INTELLECTUAL AND PHYSICAL CONTROL

Maintaining intellectual control allows archivists to know exactly which records are in their holdings, allowing them to make them accessible to researchers. Maintaining physical control allows archivists to know where the records are physically located, so that they can be retrieved from storage. In order for staff to preserve and make accessible the Archives’ holdings, it is necessary for them to establish and maintain intellectual and physical control through the following activities: accessioning, deaccessioning, arrangement, and description.

ACCESSIONING

Staff must accession all donations and records transfers when they first arrive at the Archives, in order to formally document their receipt and the assumption of legal and physical custody. Each donation must be accompanied by a [Deed of Gift](#), and each records transfer by a completed Record Transfer Form, which must be completed and signed by the donor/transferring party and the Archives Manager. Once received, staff must assign the donation or transfer a unique accession number for identification and tracking purposes, and log it information about its condition, content, donor, custodial history, and any access restrictions in the Accessions Database. . Deeds of gift/record transfer forms and the information in the Accessions Database must be permanently retained by the Archives as the official records of each donation or transfer. The records in the database also serves as a basic description providing limited intellectual control until a full finding aid can be created.

DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning is the process by which records are officially removed from the Archives' holdings. Deaccessioning occurs rarely and only in the following circumstances:

- 1) The records do not meet the criteria in the [Acquisition Policy](#).
- 2) The records consist of hazardous materials that threaten the preservation of the rest of the holdings, or the Archives is unable to care for the records any longer.
- 3) The records have been permanently lost, stolen, or destroyed, or have deteriorated past the point of readability.
- 4) The records exactly duplicate material in the Archives' holdings, and are in comparatively poorer condition.

In order to deaccession records, staff must complete a [Deaccession Form](#), which provides a justification for its removal from the holdings. All deaccessions must be approved by the Manager. The Archives must permanently retain all completed deaccession forms and must make them accessible when requested.

Once deaccessioned, records can be removed from the holdings and disposed of through transfer to another archives or heritage institution, secure destruction, or return to the donor or transferring office.

ARRANGEMENT

Arrangement is the process of organizing archival records with respect to their **provenance** and **original order**. According to the archival principle of **provenance** (also known as *respect des fonds*), records originating from a single creator (an individual, family, or organization) must be kept together as a *fonds*, which is defined as the entire body of records of a records creator. Each fonds must be kept separate from the fonds of other creators in order to preserve the

context of the records' creation. According to the principle of **original order**, records must be maintained in the same order that they were originally placed in by their creator in order to preserve the *archival bond*, the contextual interrelationships between records originating from the same activity, from which the records draw much of their meaning.

In accordance with these principles, staff must keep records from the same creator together and avoid imposing any order other than the original. Arrangement is therefore largely an intellectual activity and does not generally involve much physical rearranging. Records may only be physically rearranged if doing so restores an original order that was previously disturbed but which is clearly evident. Wholesale physical rearrangement is only ever permissible in rare cases where a body of records is in total chaos and it is clear that the original order has either been irredeemably lost or that it never existed. In such cases, staff may impose a new physical order to make the records easier to describe and access, but only after checking with the Manager.

DESCRIPTION

Description is the process of analyzing and recording information about a record or group of records (such as creator, title, dates, extent, content), in order to create a finding aid that allows the records to be identified, managed, and understood. Description negates the need for physical rearrangement, as records can be arranged intellectually within finding aids into logical groups based on the functions and activities of their creator. Finding aids are used by researchers to find records relevant to their research and to help them better understand the records' context of creation, arrangement, custodial history, and content.

Archives staff describe records according to the most current Canadian archival descriptive standard, the *Rules of Archival Description (RAD)*, 2008 version. All completed finding aids are made available online via the Archives' ICA-AtoM descriptive database and the Archives Association of Ontario's [Archeion](#) network. Finding aids must be updated whenever an accrual (an additional donation/transfer) is made to an existing fonds or collection.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL

The Archives must permanently retain all documentation related to the custody and maintenance of its holdings, including storage location information, management of rights and restrictions, conservation treatments, reformatting, and exhibition history. For example, the storage location of all records must be recorded in the Archives' physical storage database, which must be updated whenever records are moved, removed, or added so that physical control can be maintained.

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

Preservation is the act of protecting archival holdings from chemical and physical deterioration and damage in order to extend their lives and minimize the loss of information. In contrast to the preventative activity of preservation, conservation aims to actively repair or offset already-existing damage or deterioration.

Preservation and conservation can only be carried out by Archives staff that possess appropriate training and experience. The goal of preservation and conservation must always be long term preservation with the least alteration possible of the original material. Staff regularly carry out preservation tasks such as rehousing or reformatting records (see below), or replacing staples and fasteners with inert plastic clips.

Basic conservation tasks like mending torn paper or cleaning records may be carried out by staff, but more advanced conservation treatment must be provided by a professional conservator who adheres to the [Code of Ethics of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators](#). The Manager decides on a case-by-case basis if conservation treatment is required and which records to prioritize, based on an assessment of the need for conservation, the cost of treatment, the value of the records, and the risk of damaging their physical and intellectual integrity. A permanent record of all conservation treatments must be made in the [Conservation Log](#), and any examination or treatment reports provided by the conservator must also be permanently retained by the Archives. A note should also be added to the finding aid of the records' treated so that researchers are made aware of past conservation treatments.

REHOUSING

Enclosures protect records from exposure to deterioration agents such as visible light and ultraviolet radiation, and provide a buffer against temperature and relative humidity fluctuations. Types of enclosures include file folders, boxes, envelopes, and other containers. Newly donated or transferred records that lack protective enclosures or have enclosures made of materials inappropriate for long-term preservation (such as those containing acids, lignin, or other harmful chemical agents) will be rehoused by staff in enclosures made of chemically-inert materials such as vinyl, polypropylene, or acid-free, lignin-free, or pH buffered paper or cardboard. Staff must transcribe or document any descriptive information attached to the original enclosures before they are discarded so that no information is lost.

REFORMATTING

Reformatting is the activity of migrating information from one physical format to another, usually for the purposes of preservation or access. Archives staff may reformat records if they are at risk of not being accessible in the future due to their format or condition. By reformatting

these records to a more accessible or stable format, their informational content can be preserved and made accessible for the long term. Records potentially eligible for reformatting include:

- A. Records on fragile or unstable physical media that may deteriorate past the point of recovery or readability in the short to medium term, or that pose a hazard to the preservation of other records. Examples: Newsprint and other highly acidic papers, nitrate and cellulose acetate film, and magnetic tape.
- B. Records in machine-readable formats for which the hardware required to read them may not be available now or in the future. Format examples include: 8-track, Betamax, Laserdisc, 3.5" floppy disks, punched cards.
- C. Digital records in uncommon and/or proprietary software formats that are not accepted by the archival community as digital preservation standards, as the software required to read such records may not be supported or available in the future. Examples of accepted digital preservation formats include uncompressed TIFFs for images, Broadcast WAV for audio, and PDF-A for textual documents.

The Archives Manager must approve reformatting projects, and a permanent record of them must be made in the records' finding aid in order to inform future users of the original format.

DIGITAL PRESERVATION

Digital preservation aims to ensure that digital records remain accessible, usable, and authentic over time. It is a complex and continuous process involving activities including managing backups, monitoring file fixity, and migrating to preservation formats. A digital preservation program has not yet been implemented to preserve the Archives' born digital and digitized holdings, but a system based on the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model is being planned. In the meantime, Archives staff must maintain three independent backups of all digital holdings, with one backup stored offsite, as a safeguard against data loss.

ACCESS, SECURITY, AND HANDLING

The [Security Policy](#) governs the security of archival holdings and special library collections, and provides a fuller explanation of the following summary.

Only Archives staff have unrestricted access to the Archives Room, the stacks, and the archival holdings stored there. All staff, including contract staff and volunteers, must have sufficient training and experience in archival theory and current best practices in order to be entrusted with retrieving, handling, and processing holdings. The Manager is responsible for ensuring that Archives staff have sufficient training to safely work with archival records. Staff must also abide at all times in their work by the principles in the [Association of Canadian Archivists' Code of Ethics](#).

Archival holdings can only be accessed by researchers in the Reading Room during open hours when the Manager or other staff are available to supervise researchers; when they are not, the sole entrance to the Archives must remain locked. Keys to the Archives Room are in the possession of the Library Executive Director, the Director's Assistant, the Manager of Archives and Special Collections, the library front desk, and Campus Security.

Due to the unique and irreplaceable nature of archival records, researchers and staff must handle records carefully and are responsible for keeping them safe while handling them. Staff are responsible for ensuring that all researchers have fully read and understand the [Archives Reading Room Rules](#) before handling records, and for supervising them to ensure their compliance. The Manager may decide to restrict access to specific records if they are in such a fragile condition that handling may pose a risk. In this case, access copies (surrogates such as digital scans) may be made accessible to researchers instead of the originals.

EXHIBITION AND LOANS

Due to the unique and often fragile nature of archival material, items from the Archives' holdings can only be exhibited if appropriate measures have been taken to protect them while on display. Wherever possible, reproductions should be displayed rather than originals, especially if the items are fragile or light-sensitive. If it is necessary to display original items, the exhibition space and display cases used must meet the Archives' own standards for environmental control and security, providing reasonable protection against threats including theft, vandalism, accidental damage, fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity, ultraviolet radiation, and damaging levels of visible light. Archival material may be exhibited for a maximum of six months.

Loans to external institutions (such as archives, libraries, galleries, and museums) are only made for the purpose of exhibition. The borrowing institution is responsible for any and all loss or damage to borrowed items that may occur while they are in its custody, including during transportation. Loans cannot be made to private individuals or for research purposes, and cultural property certified or acquired through grants under the [Movable Cultural Property Program](#) cannot be loaned to private organizations.

If an institution wishes to borrow items for exhibition, the loan must be arranged with the Manager of Archives and Special Collections. Requests should be submitted in writing and include: a list of the items to be borrowed, the reason for and period of the loan, and an overview of the proposed exhibition space with a description of its climate controls and security measures. The Manager will assess the potential risk to the items loaned, based on the information provided by the potential borrower and in consideration of the preservation needs of the items requested, before making a decision.

If the loan is approved, the borrower and Manager must complete and sign a [Loan Agreement](#) prior to the start of the loan. The agreement contains the conditions of the loan as well as the

borrower's contact information, the reason for and period of the loan, a description of each item to be loaned, and a detailed explanation of the exhibition space and the measures taken to safeguard the items, including descriptions of environmental controls, security measures, insurance coverage, and staff training. The signed agreement will be retained permanently by the Archives and a copy of the agreement will be provided to the borrower. When the borrowed items are returned, the Manager will inspect them for any damage and record any changes in their condition as well as the date of their return in the Loan Agreement.

APPROVAL AND REVISION HISTORY

Prepared by: Peter Houston, Manager of Archives and Special Collections, 2014

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Updated by: Peter Houston, Manager of Archives and Special Collections, June 2015

GLOSSARY

The majority of the glossary terms are adapted or borrowed directly from the Society of American Archivists' [A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology](#) by Richard Pearce-Moses, 2005.

A

- Access - 1) The ability to locate relevant information through the use of catalogs, indexes, finding aids, or other tools. 2) The permission to locate and retrieve information for use (consultation or reference) within legally-established restrictions of privacy, confidentiality, and security clearance.
- Access copy - A reproduction of a document created for use by patrons, protecting the original from wear or theft; a use copy.
- Accession (verb) - 1) To take legal and physical custody of a group of records or other materials and to formally document their receipt. 2) To document the transfer of records or materials in a register, database, or other log of the archival repository's holdings.
- Administrative control - The responsibility for management of materials in an archival repository's custody, including the documentation of actions taken on those materials.
- Archives (or archival repository) - 1) The division within an organization responsible for maintaining the organization's records of enduring value. 2) An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations. 3) The building (or portion thereof) housing archival collections. 4) The entire body of records of an organization, family, or individual; see *fonds*.
- Archives Room - The room located at the east end of the ground floor of the Harris Learning Library that houses the Nipissing University and Canadore College Archives and Special Collections. The room consists of storage stacks and a reading room/staff work space.
- Archives staff (staff) - Employees of the Nipissing University and Canadore College Archives and Special Collections, including archivists, archival assistants, student interns, and the Manager.
- Archivist - A professional responsible for selecting, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to records of enduring value, according to the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control to protect the materials' authenticity and context. Archivists have the education, knowledge, abilities, and experience to formulate and carry out archival activities in accordance current archival theory and practice, and abide in their by an ethical code such as the [Association of Canadian Archivists' Code of Ethics](#).
- Arrangement - The process of organizing materials with respect to their provenance and original order to protect their context and to achieve physical or intellectual control over the materials.

B

- Born-digital - Describes records originally created in an electronic format. Born-digital is distinguished from digitized, which was originally non-digital before was digitized. Ex: A document created using a computer and word processor software is a born-digital record, whereas the scan of a handwritten letter on paper would be considered digitized.

C

- Chemically inert - Stable under specified conditions and having only a limited ability to react chemically.
- Collection - A collection of materials with different provenance assembled and organized to facilitate its management or use. Unlike fonds, collections are not created organically as records accumulate in the filing system of a records creator, but created artificially and are made up of discrete items brought together because of some shared characteristic like a common subject.
- Conservation - The repair or stabilization of materials through chemical or physical treatment to ensure that they survive in their original form as long as possible. Conservation counters existing damage, as distinguished from preservation, which attempts to prevent damage.
- Conservator - A professional whose primary occupation is the practice of conservation and who, through specialized education, knowledge, training, and experience, formulates and implements all the activities of conservation in accordance with an ethical code.

D

- Data logger - An electronic instrument that records measurements at set intervals over a period of time. In the case of the loggers used in the Archives, temperature and relative humidity.
- Deaccession - (verb) To officially remove from the holdings of an archives.
- Description (archival description) - The process of analyzing, organizing, and recording details about a record or collection of records' formal elements such as creator, title, dates, extent, and content, in order to facilitate the record's identification, management, and understanding.
- Digital preservation - The act of ensuring that digital information remains accessible, usable, and authentic over time, despite the rapid obsolescence of digital hardware and software technologies.
- Digitization - The process of transforming analog/non-digital material into binary electronic (digital) form, especially for storage and use in a computer.
- Document - Information or data fixed in some media. In some contexts, document is synonymous with record.

- Donation - Material for which legal title is transferred from a private party to the Archives without compensation, except for a charitable tax receipt. A donation is different than a records transfer, which consists of institutional records transferred from departments, offices, or individuals within Nipissing University or Canadore College.

E

- Enclosure - A container for storing materials.
- Environmental monitoring and control - The process of monitoring, creating, and maintaining stable storage or display conditions which are appropriate to protect holdings from adverse effects of temperature, humidity, air quality, light, and infestation, as well as human risks associated with housekeeping procedures, security, and fire and water damage.

F

- File - A group of documents related by use or topic, typically housed in a folder (or a group of folders for a large file).
- Finding aid - A description of records that gives the archival repository physical and intellectual control over the materials and that helps researchers gain access to and understand them.
- Fonds - The entire body of records of an organization, family, or individual that have been created and accumulated as the result of an organic process reflecting the functions of the creator.

H

- Holdings - The whole of an archival repository's collection.

I

- Intellectual control - The creation of tools such as finding aids, catalogues, or other guides that enable researchers to locate records relevant to their interests.
- Item - A thing that can be distinguished from a group and that is complete in itself. An item may consist of several pieces but is treated as a whole (for example, a letter may have several pages but is treated as an item because of its content).

M

- Manager - In this policy, refers to the Manager, Archives and Special Collections.
- [Movable Cultural Property Program](#) - A federal government program administered through Canadian Heritage that aims to ensure that cultural property of outstanding significance and national importance remains in Canada. This is to be achieved through the designation of Canadian organizations to preserve and make accessible cultural

property, and the provision of tax incentives to encourage Canadians to donate or sell important cultural property to these organizations.

O

- Original order - The organization and sequence of records established by the creator of the records.

P

- Physical control - The function of tracking the storage of records to ensure that they can be located.
- Preservation - 1) The professional discipline of protecting materials by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage to minimize the loss of information and to extend the life of cultural property. 2) The act of keeping from harm, injury, decay, or destruction, especially through non-invasive treatment.
- Provenance - 1) The origin or source of something. 2) Information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection.
- Publication - Any copy of a work that is distributed to the general public with the consent of the author. Examples include books, journals, magazines, newspapers, catalogues, albums, and films.

R

- Records - Data or information in a fixed form that is created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity and set aside (preserved) as evidence of that activity for future reference.
- Records creator - The individual, group, or organization that is responsible for the production, accumulation, or formation of records.
- Records transfer - A transfer of institutional records from departments, offices, or individuals that are part of Nipissing University or Canadore College. In contrast, donations are from private (i.e. not University or College) sources.
- Reformat - 1) To create a copy with a format or structure different from the original, especially for preservation or access. 2) To migrate information from one carrier to another.
- Rehouse - To transfer records from an enclosure (a box, file folder, envelope, or other container) that is not suitable for long term preservation, to one that is.
- Relative humidity - The amount of moisture in the air, expressed as a percent of the maximum moisture air can hold at a given temperature.
- Researcher - An individual who uses the collections and services of an archival repository; a customer; a patron.

S

- Series - A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system and that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity.
- Staff - See "*archives staff.*"

U

- Ultraviolet radiation - Electromagnetic radiation present in sunlight and produced by some types of lighting that can cause many materials that make up archival records to fade or degrade.