

American Heritage Center

Acquisitions Guidelines

The American Heritage Center, an archival research institution at the University of Wyoming, acquires specific material relating to its core collecting areas: Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West (including but not limited to politics, settlement, and western trails) environment and conservation, the mining and petroleum industries, air and ground transportation, the performing arts (particularly radio, television, film, and popular music), journalism, US military history. In addition, the AHC maintains one of the largest and finest collections of rare books between the Mississippi and the West Coast, and is glad to consider donations to that collection. The AHC is also the archives for the University of Wyoming. The AHC is a public research repository, and accepts donations of collections with the primary purpose of making those collections available to students, scholars, and the general public.

The following document provides guidelines regarding the responsibilities of the Center to its donors, the conditions under which a donation may be accepted, and the types of material collected by the Center for the use of its patrons.

When accepting material, the American Heritage Center is responsible for:

- Maintaining the materials, ensuring accepted practice for preservation and security, preparing the materials for research use through professional arrangement and description and making them available in our research area to interested researchers on an equal basis during regular business hours.
- Ensuring that the use of any material identified as sensitive by the donor is restricted from use in accordance with an agreement in writing accepted by both the donor and the AHC. The AHC cannot accept collections that are restricted indefinitely or for which the restriction cannot be enforced or applied equally to all researchers.
- Returning to the donor, offering to another institution, or discarding materials that the AHC wishes to remove from the collection, in accordance with the donor's instructions in a written agreement accepted by both the donor and the AHC.
- Securing legal documentation for every gift that makes clear the terms of the transfer and any instructions of the donor. The AHC only accepts collections for which legal title to the physical items is transferred to the University of Wyoming by deed of gift.
- Asking donors to donate not only the physical papers but also any copyright in them that the donor might own. (Ownership of copyright is separable from ownership of the physical item--the letter or photo). This request is made to make it easier for researchers to use quotations from the papers in their work. However, the AHC will consider donation of the physical material without donation of copyright.

When accepting material the American Heritage Center cannot:

1. Accept donations without transfer of title.
2. Accept material for which the donor does not have clear title.
3. Provide appraisals of the monetary value of gifts. This is forbidden by IRS regulations.
4. Accept liability for loss or damage of materials due to deterioration, fire, or other disasters which befall the material or are inherent within it.

Types of Material Collected

The AHC, like most repositories, may not accept everything that is offered to it because of staff and space constraints. An archivist can help you determine what documents or materials fall within the scope of the repository.

Personal Papers from Individuals.

The AHC accepts donations of as little as a single item and as large as hundreds of boxes. Material need not be organized; it need not be “old”; and it need not relate to a famous individual, event, or organization in order for it to be historically significant. Generally, however, we are more interested in a coherent body of material rather than individual items; photos, sound recordings, and films (whether analog or digital) should be identified. We ask that historical material itself not be mailed or dropped off without first consulting with the staff; our repository must evaluate all material offered and we will ask the donor to sign a donation agreement.

While it is important that AHC staff be permitted to survey analog or digital papers and records in order to determine which materials have enduring historical value, listed below are types of materials that are often valuable to a researcher. This list, which is suggestive and *not definitive*, illustrates the wide range of documentation sometimes useful for historical research. If you have any questions about this list, please ask a member of our staff.

AHC Generally Acquires (in either analog or electronic forms)

- Letters.
- Memoirs/reminiscences.
- Diaries.
- E-mail.
- Scrapbooks/photo albums/snapshot of Facebook page.
- Professional papers.
- Genealogical information.
- Speeches/lectures (final drafts).
- Business and organizational records.
- Final drafts of unpublished works (sometimes earlier drafts can be important, as with scripts for a groundbreaking television special).
- Legal documents.
- Minutes/reports.
- Visual materials produced by the donor such as posters, designs, blue prints, etc.
- Publications, scripts, music, or other materials written by the donor.
- Brochures and flyers.
- Photographs (labeled)--standard and digital.
- Films/videos/audio tapes (labeled).
- Personal Web sites and podcasts.
- Files relating to the individual's civic, business, religious, political, and social activities may also be of interest (please see “Records from Organizations and Institutions”).

AHC generally does not acquire:

- Personal financial records including checks or income tax returns.
- Medical records.

- Duplicates of any items.
- General readership books, periodicals, or other printed material not written by or about the donor.
- Art and artifacts.
- Galleys, proofs, and final drafts of published works.

Organizations and Institutions. Many of the records produced by an organization have long-term value. The AHC is interested in the records that best illustrate the purpose, activities, and policies of an organization. Such documents usually represent an "end product"—a final report, for example, instead of a draft. We are more interested in related groups of materials rather than individual items. Records should be inactive—that is, no longer regularly used for routine business. Before records are transferred to the AHC, an archivist should survey the organization's papers or speak with knowledgeable staff to determine which materials have enduring historical value. Listed below are some of the types of documentation that the AHC often preserves for historical and administrative research. This list is suggestive and *not definitive*; if you have any questions about this list, please ask a member of our staff.

AHC generally acquires, in either analog or digital form:

- Annual and/or quarterly financial records.
- Architectural records.
- Articles of incorporation, charters.
- Audio recordings.
- Budgets (annual).
- Bylaws and revisions.
- Clippings (about the organization).
- Constitution and revisions.
- Correspondence of officers.
- Directories.
- E-mails.
- Financial ledgers up to 1900.
- Handbooks.
- Legal documents.
- Memoranda.
- Minutes of meetings.
- Membership lists.
- Motion picture film and videotape (labeled).
- Newsletters and other publications (generated by the organization).
- Organizational charts.
- Personnel rosters, directories, and similar records (if not confidential).
- Printed material including pamphlets, brochures, catalogs, newsletters, periodicals, etc., produced by the organization.
- Photographs (labeled)--standard and digital.
- Planning documents.
- Podcasts.
- Press releases.
- Reports (annual, committee, etc.).

- Rosters.
- Scrapbooks.
- Speeches.
- Topical files.
- Web sites.

Material Generally Not Having Research Value

While there may be exceptions, the following types of material are usually not accepted by the AHC as collections or parts of collections:

- Personnel time cards, payroll documents, or personally confidential files.
- Day-to-day financial records such as bank statements, canceled checks, receipts, daily balances.
- Invoices.
- Duplicates.
- General readership books, periodicals, or other printed material not written by the donor. (Rare books or special collections of books, periodicals, or pamphlets of unique historical interest may be collected by the AHC.)
- Art and artifacts.
- Personnel time cards, payroll documents, and confidential files.
- Day-to-day financial records such as bank statements, canceled checks, receipts, invoices, and daily balances.