

BEST PRACTICES

Guidelines for Organizing Community & Individual Archives

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SORTING AND ARCHIVING YOUR ORGANIZATIONS MATERIAL

In the future, others may be interested in the service activities and cultural contributions that built, shaped and influenced our diverse community. Your organization may have stored records or documents that are important to archive and conserve. The following is a basic guideline to organizing those materials for reference by future historians, writers, researchers or interested citizens.

The Red Mountain Road Environmental Archival Project hired archivists Kyle Kusch and student archivist Andria Green to organize and index twenty boxes of collected materials pertaining to watershed protection between the mid-1980s to 2007. This material, in proper archival storage boxes, was then donated to the Archives at the Silvery Slocan Museum in New Denver.

The project thanks Margaret Scaia (V.P. Silvery Slocan Museum Society), who provided knowledgeable assistance and support.

What to consider when collecting and saving materials for storage:



IMPACT

What impact did you/your group's activities have on your community and your area?

MATERIALS

What materials in your collection demonstrate you/your group's impact on your community your region?

UNIQUENESS

What is unique about you/your group and your activities?

IMPORTANCE

What do you believe is most important about your activities?

FOCUS

How do you want to be portrayed and remembered by future generations?

CONTEXT

How can you arrange your materials in a way that will provide context or ease of understanding for people looking through your materials?

STATEMENT

Have you considered writing a small statement or mini-history of your activities that can give future generations an idea of who you are and what you did?

OWNERSHIP

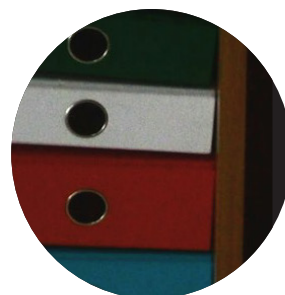
Do you own all of the materials you wish to donate or will you need consent from another party to donate them?

CONNECTIONS

Are there other people with materials related to yours that could also be contributed?

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP?

- Societal founding documents (if applicable)
- Meeting minutes (including committee meetings and reports)
- Membership lists
- Newsletters
- Publications and reports produced by/for the group/individual(s)
- Photographs documenting significant groups/activities
- Event/conference materials (e.g., flyers, programmes, presentation notes)
- Audio-visual materials (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, videos, recorded interviews)
- Significant correspondence (e.g., letters to and from government agencies, internal correspondence within the group, important correspondence with third parties)
- Legal papers (e.g., court affidavits & appendices, published court rulings, correspondence with lawyers)
- Materials used for research purposes by the group/individual(s) containing significant notes/markings/appellations that provide context for future researchers
- Certain ephemeral items pertaining to the group/individual(s) (e.g., business cards, pamphlets, buttons, stickers)
- Diaries and/or personal statements and anecdotes pertaining to the group/individual(s) that provide scope and context for the collection
- Pertinent media clippings (i.e., newspaper, website, and magazine clippings documenting group/individual activities), but ONLY if they are sorted and arranged in an album or scrapbook for context



WHAT CAN GENERALLY BE DISCARDED?

- Duplicate items
- Photocopies/non-original papers & photographs (unless they are the only surviving copies)
- Notes without context
- Old chequebooks, bills, receipts, and invoices
- Publications and reports not produced by/for the group/individual(s)
- Publications and reports that don't specifically pertain to the group/individual(s)'s activities
- Unsorted and unattributed media clippings



HOW TO SAFELY STORE MATERIALS?

Until such time as they are able to be donated

- Separate materials into boxes/tubs by topic and/or type
- Never use metal paper clips or clamps (they will rust, stain, and destroy paper over time)
- Never use elastic bands (they will eventually dry out and snap)
- Keep materials in a cool, dry place under cover
- Try and keep materials in a room with relatively constant temperature
- No open containers - use boxes and tubs with lids to protect materials from the elements
- Avoid outside/shed storage; if not possible, at least store boxes on shelving and not on the ground
- Don't stack boxes on top of each other if possible (non-reinforced boxes, even Banker's Boxes, can condense/collapse on each other over time if full)
- Pre-sorting and indexing are always appreciated by the receiving institution

