Mount Royal University Archives and Special Collections

ACQUISITION GUIDELINES

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PURPOSE

These guidelines govern the acquisition of archival records and publications by the Mount Royal University Archives and Special Collections (hereafter the “Archives”) through transfer, donation, or purchase. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that acquisition directly supports the Archives’ Mandate “to support teaching, learning, and scholarship through the development of archival holdings and specialized library collections.” Keeping acquisition focused ensures that the Archives remains a valuable educational resource, and it is important in practical terms because each acquisition requires an investment of resources including storage space, archival supplies, and staff time to process it.

The Archivist and Special Collections Librarian (the “Archivist”) oversees the application of the guidelines, and has authority to decide which records and publications are suitable for acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

The Archives acquires archival records in digital and non-digital formats. Records are defined as data or information in a fixed form that are created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity and set aside/preserved as evidence of that activity for future reference.¹ Records are typically unpublished and may include:

- Textual records, including correspondence, meeting minutes, reports, diaries, and memoranda
- Graphic materials, including photographs and artwork
- Cartographic materials, including maps and charts
- Architectural and technical drawings
- Moving images, including motion picture films and video recordings
- Sound recordings

The Archives only acquires records that have archival value, which means ongoing usefulness or significance based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information they contain which justifies their continued preservation.² Archival value is determined by the Archivist through appraisal based on archival theory. Transitory records do not have archival value and are typically not acquired. Only original records are usually acquired, not copies, and especially not copies of records that are already accessible in other public repositories.

¹ Definition of “record” from the Society of American Archivists’ Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology, 2005: http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/r/record
² Definition of “archival value” from the Society of American Archivists’ Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology, 2005: http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/archival-value
The Archives also acquires publications in all formats that have enduring value and which cannot be part of the Library’s collections because of their rare or unique nature which would make them difficult or impossible to replace. Publications are defined as any copy of a work that is distributed to the general public with the consent of the author, such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers, catalogues, musical albums, and films.

The Archives will not acquire records or publications

- that have been illegally and/or unethically obtained
- for which ownership is contested
- that cannot be preserved and/or made accessible in a reasonable period of time

Artefacts and other three-dimensional objects are not usually acquired, as the Archives does not have suitable storage/exhibition space or staff expertise necessary for their preservation and access.

**SCOPE OF ACQUISITION**

The Archives seeks to acquire institutional records, private records, and publications in the following categories.

**INSTITUTIONAL RECORDS OF MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY**

The Archives selectively acquires institutional records of Mount Royal University, including the records of:

- Governing bodies, including the Board of Governors and the General Faculties Council
- Faculties, schools, centres, institutes, and other academic units
- University administration, including the offices of the President, Vice Presidents, Provost, and Deans

The Mount Royal University Records Retention Schedule identifies categories of records that may be selected for permanent retention by the Archives. The Archivist conducts appraisal and may make decisions about the acquisition of institutional records in consultation with the Information Management and Privacy Office.

The Archives focuses on acquiring operational records, meaning records that document policy and decision-making as well as the main functions of the University. The Archives does not usually acquire administrative records, that is, those records common to all large organizations, such as those concerning the management of finances, personnel, information technology, and property.
Institutional records should only be transferred to the Archives once they are no longer being actively used or consulted by the originating office. All transfers to the Archives are permanent and transferred records cannot be returned to the originating office, although they can be consulted in the Reading Room during open hours.

PRIVATE RECORDS RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

The Archives selectively acquires records of archival value of private individuals, families, and organizations that are significant to the academic and cultural history of Mount Royal University. For example, records may be acquired from current and past faculty members, administrators, alumni, and students, as well as from organizations affiliated with the university and its community.

Selection of private records for acquisition is partly based on the significance of the records’ creator to the institutional, academic, or cultural history of the University, as determined by the Archivist.

PRIVATE RECORDS SUPPORTING TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SCHOLARSHIP

The Archives selectively acquires private records of archival value that directly support teaching, learning, and scholarship at Mount Royal University. The Archivist may consult subject librarians and faculty members in other academic units to identify records and publications that could be acquired to support their teaching and research. The Archives strives to acquire records in concert with other local archives and heritage institutions, respecting their mandates and acquisition areas.

PUBLICATIONS

The Archives selectively acquires publications that are relevant to the history of Mount Royal University, or which support teaching, learning, and research at the University. Generally, publications are best added to the Library’s open collections, where they will be more easily accessible. However, publications may be acquired by the Archives if they are of a unique or rare nature, which would make them difficult or impossible to replace.

MEANS OF ACQUISITION

The Archives acquires records and publications through the following three means:

1) Transfer – A direct transfer of institutional records from a university office or unit to the Archives. The Mount Royal University Records Retention Schedule helps identify records of potential archival value, but the Archivist appraises all potential transfers and may consult the Information Management and Privacy Office in making the final selection.
Each transfer must be accompanied by a Transfer Agreement signed by a representative of the transferring unit who has authority for the disposition of records. Transfer agreements must be permanently retained by the Archives.

2) **Donation** – A transfer of private records or publications to the Archives from individuals or organizations exterior to the University.

Each donation must be accompanied by a Gift Agreement signed by the donor, which documents the transfer of ownership and the terms of the donation. Gift agreements are permanently retained by the Archives.

3) **Purchase** – Private records and publications are only purchased from reputable dealers when the cost is justified and there is budget available for the purchase.

All records and publications once transferred, donated, or purchased become the permanent property of the Archives. Once in the custody and control of the Archives, they may be reformatted, described, made accessible, exhibited, disposed of, and used in any manner that the Archivist deems suitable and which is consistent with the terms in the Gift Agreement or Transfer Agreement, and which is permitted under the **Copyright Act** and Alberta’s **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**.

The Archives cannot accept loans of records or publications. The Archives is unable to assume the liability of being a temporary custodian, and cannot justify the expenditure of resources on loaned material because its value will be lost when it leaves the custody of the Archives to be returned to its owner.

**SELECTION FOR ACQUISITION**

The Archivist selects records and publications for acquisition and is responsible for acquisition decisions. Records and publications are selected for acquisition based primarily on their relevance to the Archives’ mandate to develop archival holdings and specialized library collections that support teaching, learning, and scholarship. The Archivist conducts appraisal of potential acquisitions based on archival theory to determine that they are of enduring archival value, as records and publications that will not be preserved in the Archives and make accessible indefinitely should not be acquired. The following factors may also be factors in selection:

- The Archives’ existing holdings, as records or publications may be more desirable if they complement fonds or collections, or less desirable if they duplicate them.
▪ The investment of resources (staff time, storage space, supplies) required to preserve the records or publications and to make them accessible indefinitely
▪ Physical condition, as the high cost of conservation may necessitate rejecting records or publications in poor condition if the cost of preserving and making them accessible is prohibitive.
▪ Serious preservation risk, as acquiring mouldy or infested records could pose a danger to existing holdings.
▪ Access restrictions, if they conflict with the Archives’ mandate to make its holdings publicly accessible.
▪ Format, as the acquisition of records in obsolete digital or machine-readable formats may not be possible if they are unreadable and it would be prohibitively expensive to reformat them.
▪ The acquisition policies of other local archives, as records may be more appropriately acquired by other institutions if they better fit their acquisition areas.