

University Archives Preservation & Access Policy

University Libraries

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In order to achieve the mission of the University Archives there must be an appropriate balance between the physical preservation of the collection and the needs of researchers who wish to access information contained in the collection. While it is understood that the major value of archives is to provide information to researchers, the first priority of an archives program must be the physical security and preservation of the collection for future use. Therefore, access to the University Archives collection shall be balanced with arrangements for the physical safety and preservation of the collection.

I. Preservation

The highest priority of the University Archives program and personnel is to provide every possible protection for the physical safety and preservation of the collection. Preservation deals with immediate and ongoing challenges due to the unique nature of materials of irreplaceable historical value to the University and due to the likelihood, that such materials cannot be replaced if lost or damaged. Therefore, every request for access to the collection must be measured against the need to preserve the collection for future users.

II. Access

A. Direct Access

Due to the nature of much of the archives collection direct physical access to the archives collection is generally viewed as the last option if alternative types of access are available. A few archives materials are available (through the Reserves/Circulation Desk, the regular book collection and the reference book collection) for direct access in the Harriett K. Hutchens Library, to anyone with a current SBU library card. All other materials owned by the University Archives are housed in the Archives Room in the Harriett K. Hutchens Library. Two other factors mitigate against providing unsupervised, direct access to researchers.

- 1) The archives facility is not designed to accommodate direct access by researchers.
- 2) Loss of materials from the collection and damage to materials in the collection have occurred when researchers were granted unsupervised access to the collection.

Other types of access are now available and are described in the following paragraphs.

B. Call System Access

All members of the university community, as well as approved guest researchers, may access information in the archives collection through the call system (a traditional access system used in many archives). This system allows patrons to identify the materials or information they need using finding aids or with assistance from the archivist. The identified materials shall be gathered from the collection by the archivist (or other approved library personnel) and the patron shall be allowed to use the material in one of two ways as follows.

- 1) Use of archives materials for a two-hour period in the library. Restrictions may apply and shall be communicated to the patron.
- 2) Use of archives materials in a supervised area of the library, such as the library conference room, for more in-depth research activities. Restrictions may apply and shall be communicated to the patron.

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C. Restrictions on Handling

Restrictions may include, but are not limited to:

- 1) No photocopying.
- 2) No scanning.
- 3) No use of ink pens, scissors or other potentially damaging items.
- 4) No direct handling of an item.
- 5) No access to sealed or otherwise restricted items. For example some materials are restricted by donor agreements, confidentiality or privacy issues, etc..

Use of the call system depends on the use of finding aids, which should be developed, as resources allow, and made available to researchers. Research request forms shall be used to assist the patron in stating their research interests, to assist the archivist in locating any relevant materials to be gathered and to expedite the process.

D. Alternative Means of Access

Alternative means of access to materials in the archives collection may include, but are not limited to:

- 1) providing access to duplicate copies of the material in the regular collection;
- 2) providing access to archival or regular photocopies of material;
- 3) providing access to electronic copies of material; and/or
- 4) providing access to web-based archival information.

It is the responsibility of the archivist to determine what type of access is in the best interest of collection preservation versus patron access, on an individual basis and in general. In addition, the archivist shall pursue new technologies that would enhance the quality and availability of archival materials and work with the Dean of Libraries to try to acquire such technologies.

III. Limiting or Closing Access to the Collection

During such times as the University Archives may be without an archivist, or due to other circumstances that might adversely affect the archives collection, the Dean of University Libraries shall:

- 1) make arrangements to use temporary personnel trained in archival processes to continue normal access as described under Call System Access or Alternative Access; or
- 2) close all or some types of archives access to researchers until the archivist is replaced.

If the Dean of Libraries determines that it is in the best interests of the collection to close the collection, the dean should:

- 1) confer with the Library & Archives Policies Committee.
- 2) notify the Provost.

If the closure is due to a vacancy in the archivist position, the dean shall notify the Provost of the need to replace the archivist. Until an archivist is hired, the archives shall remain closed.

IV. Researchers

A. University Researchers

A person who is formally associated with the university as a currently enrolled student, currently employed faculty member, staff or administrator, shall be classified as a university researcher.

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B. Guest Researchers

A person who is not formally associated with the university as a currently enrolled student, currently employed faculty, staff or administrator, shall be classified as a guest researcher.

Alumni and friends of the University who are not currently under any formal or legal association with the university, shall be classified as guest researchers. Requests for archives research assistance from guest researchers shall be accepted, as resources and personnel allow. Such requests should be directed to the archivist.

C. Certified Researchers

Some requests for in-depth research activities may require more involved researcher access to the collection. Upon receiving such a request, the archivist shall consult with the Dean of Libraries and if necessary, the Library & Archives Policies Committee, to determine if the request should be granted and to determine what arrangements need to be made. Should such a request constitute an undue burden on resources or personnel of the archives program, the archivist may deny the request.

If the request is granted the archivist shall work with the researcher to make arrangements that accommodate reasonable requests from the researcher if:

- 1) the requests of the researcher are compatible with archives policies, and
- 2) archives personnel and resources are available to provide the needed assistance.

If such a request is granted the researcher shall not be granted access to the entire collection. The materials needed shall be gathered for them to use in a supervised area such as the library conference room. Use of a photocopier is available in the office for a small charge. University personnel may charge copies to their departmental accounts.

D. Other Certified Researchers

Because the Archives collection operates on a call system, no researcher, including university researchers, shall be granted direct, unsupervised access to browse through the collection except by certification from the SBU President or the SBU Board of Trustees. Such certification is discouraged but, if required, the archivist shall work with the researcher to minimize incidental loss or damage to the collection.

V. Assisting Researchers

Assistance with "walk-in" archives research requests shall be provided Monday through Friday during posted hours, if archives personnel are available. Hours shall be posted at the Research Assistance Desk. Absence or lack of archives personnel may require that the regular hours be suspended until personnel are available.

Research requests that require extensive research assistance must be scheduled with the archivist.

Research assistance requests received by mail, telephone, e-mail, fax or other means shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If possible research assistance shall be provided.

The "Archives Research Request Form" is available at the Research Assistance Desk. This form is to be used by the archivist to document research requests and to assist in collecting statistics. The form may be given to the researcher by other library personnel should the archivist not be

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on duty, in which case the form must be routed to the archivist as soon as possible. This form is designed to help the researcher communicate their research interests to the archivist who shall follow up on the request as resources allow.

VI. Responsibilities of Researchers

It is the responsibility of all researchers to inquire, in advance of their research visit(s), about the current hours, policies, photocopying policies/charges, copyright restrictions, etc., of the University Archives. Failure to ascertain such information before traveling long distances or planning research sessions may result in disappointment for the researcher.

It is the responsibility of researchers to take appropriate care of the archive materials they use. They are responsible that all contents of folders, any individual items and all groups of items that they use be returned complete and whole and without damage.

It is also the responsibility of researchers to follow any directions from the archivist regarding the care and handling of materials, instructions related to preservation (for example restrictions on photocopying) of materials or use of the facilities and equipment.

VII. Security

Only authorized archive personnel shall be allowed direct unsupervised access to the collection. The doors shall remain locked at all times except at such times as an approved event (for example, an open house) might occur with the area under appropriate supervision by the archivist or other approved library personnel.

Other library personnel shall not enter the Archives Room except to respond to emergencies or at the request of the archivist or the library dean.

Other university personnel shall not enter the Archives Room except on official approved business. Official approved business is defined as:

- 1) that which is necessary for routine maintenance and cleaning, such as when physical plant personnel need to address maintenance concerns.
- 2) certified researchers working in cooperation with the archivist or library dean.

The archivist or other approved library personnel shall accompany other university personnel who are approved to be in the room on university business.

Procedures detailing emergency and disaster preparedness procedures for the University Archives should be prepared, kept attached to this document and kept updated at all times. The procedures document should be reviewed annually.