

DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES COLLECTION POLICY

Purpose

This document exists to guide the Delaware Public Archives (DPA) Accessions Committee in making intellectually sound and ethically defensible decisions regarding collections development and management. It will also allow donors and other interested parties to understand our standards prior to donating.

Statement on Collecting

Prior to 1970, the DPA was empowered by statute to solicit and collect private manuscript materials documenting Delaware's history, in addition to public records of significant evidential or informational value. The current Delaware Public Records Law under which the DPA operates provides no such mandate.¹ Now, state and local government records with archival value are transferred into the legal and physical custody of the DPA through dispositions mandated by the records retention and disposition schedules.²

Materials We Accept:

In addition to the state and local government records that are transferred into the custody of the DPA according to their records retention and disposition schedules, the DPA will accept private donations of the following:

- Documentary materials³ that directly relate to government holdings
- Documentary materials that add to the knowledge of government policies, actions, or transactions
- Accretions to collections that already exist in our holdings
- Public records removed from public custody at some time in the past⁴
- Publications of the state, its agencies, and its subdivisions
- Publications that directly supplement our existing holdings
- Technical publications related to the archival field

¹ The Delaware Public Records Law is found in 29 *Del. C.* § 501-536.

² 29 *Del. C.* § 512; 29 *Del. C.* § 524.

³ Documentary materials include paper, maps, books, photographs, sound recordings, film, and digital records.

⁴ 29 *Del. C.* § 518

Materials We Do Not Accept:

Any exceptions to this list will be determined by the Accessions Committee.

- Loaned records or collections
- Collections on “deposit”
- Donor wishes that the DPA cannot fulfill
- Documents in peril, e.g., insect infestation, water damage, mold
- Three-dimensional objects, e.g., clothing, toys, tools, cutlery, personal accouterments

Procedure for Determining Additions to the Collection

The State Archivist and Records Administrator, the Public Services Manager, the Records Services Manager, Records Services Supervisor, and the Marketing and Exhibits Manager shall constitute the “Accessions Committee.” This committee is charged with the review and evaluation of proposed accessions into the DPA holdings that are not a result of the records retention and disposition schedule process. The Committee shall meet quarterly (January, April, July, October) to review each proposed donation and use this Collection Policy as their guide. The Accessions Committee will hold additional meetings if time-sensitive decisions are necessary.

All donations to the DPA shall result in a signed “Deed of Gift.” The DPA will provide a form for this purpose.

Tax Appraisals

The DPA cannot appraise donated materials to determine their fair market value since the Archives is considered an interested party in the transaction. Donors interested in monetary appraisal of records should contact the American Society of Appraisers to help locate an appraiser in their area.

Deaccessions

Just as acquiring new materials is essential to build and strengthen the DPA’s holdings, it is also important to periodically reevaluate our holdings and to remove materials from the permanent collection through a deaccessioning process.

Materials may only be disposed of or destroyed with the written approval of the State Archivist. In accordance with the spirit of the Delaware Public Records Law,⁵ which requires documentation of the disposal of government records. Proposed removals require written and/or photographic documentation from the Records Reappraisal and Deaccessioning Committee (RRDAC) presented to the State Archivist.

For materials that fit the Deaccession Criteria, the DPA shall make every effort to: create a digital surrogate, migrate to another form or format, transfer to a more suitable repository, return to donor, or destroy. (Destruction will be the last resort.)

Deaccession Criteria

Records from the DPA's collections to be considered for deaccessioning must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The record is outside the scope of the DPA Collection Policy.
- The record is incomplete, in unsalvageable condition, or has deteriorated to the degree that it cannot be used for research or exhibit purposes.
- The record is duplicated in the collections by more representative information or higher quality materials.
- The DPA is unable to preserve the material properly.
- The material constitutes a physical hazard or health risk to staff, the public, or other collections.
- There exists a more appropriate repository for the material.
- It is discovered that the material has an unethical or illegal provenance.
- To comply with the law, e.g., replevin.

Effectuated by the Administrative Team January 4, 1999

Revised by Records Services Manager and Records Services Supervisor April 5, 2021

⁵ 29 Del. C. § 501-536