
Guidelines for Establishing Local History Collections

Developed by the Local History Committee of the History Section, Reference and Adult Services Association, American Library Association, June 1979. Reaffirmed by the Reference and Adult Services Division Board of Directors, January 1993. Revised 2005 and approved January 2006 by the Reference and User Services Association Board of Directors.

These guidelines are intended to assist librarians establishing local history collections.

GUIDELINES

1.0 Considerations before making a commitment to developing of a local history collection

- 1.1 Establish and maintain a dialog between local institutions and agencies. Consider what is currently being collected, what services are needed, to what depth such collections are being developed, and what collaborative or cooperative agreements are needed. Determine the most suitable repository for particular materials with respect to use, dissemination, and preservation.

2.0 Scope and Services of the Collection

- 2.1 Identify the focus and depth of the collection. Limiting factors may include geography, format, and so on.
- 2.2 Identify the range of services which will be provided, onsite and remotely.

3.0 Collection Development

- 3.1 Write an acquisitions policy for collecting local history materials.
 - 3.1.1. State the intended geographic collection area.
 - 3.1.2. Describe those materials desired by the institution and the extent to which they will be collected.
 - 3.1.3 Describe the formats you will collect.
 - 3.1.4 Identify the types of materials that will not be collected by the institution. Other institutions may be better equipped to handle a given type of material. Some items may not be accepted due to preservation issues.
 - 3.1.5 Identify those subject areas that will be acquired only on a cooperative basis.
- 3.2 Write a policy on acceptance of materials through gifts and bequests. Include forms for “deeds of gift”.

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See the Society of American Archivists Web page (www.archivists.org/publications/deed_of_gift.asp) for detail guidelines.

- 3.3 Write a policy on de-accessioning that is in keeping with the overall policy of the institution. Bear in mind policies already established by other professional organizations. (See www.archivists.org or www.aam-us.org for de-accessioning guidelines.)

4.0 Collection Location and Access

- 4.1 Establish the local history collection in an identifiable place in the library, separate from other collections. Create a separate area on the library's Web site for the local history collection.
- 4.2 Provide an environment that is conducive to the preservation of materials.
- 4.3 Designate a secure space for the local history collection with proper provisions for monitoring materials.
- 4.4 Provide a clear and visible access policy.
- 4.5 Provide equipment and workspace sufficient to use the collection.
- 4.6 Utilize professional staff to collect, process, maintain and provide access to the local history collection. Professionals may be assisted by trained paraprofessionals and volunteers.

5.0 Fiscal Considerations

- 5.1 Provide a budget sufficient to acquire, process, maintain, and staff the local history collection.

- 5.2 Provide a budget for physical and bibliographic access to the collection.

- 5.3 Provide a budget for reproduction and reformatting of rare and fragile materials.

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American Association for State and Local History series. Several titles available from AltaMira Press at www.altamirapress.com/RLA/wepublishin/localhistory.shtml.