

Donating Your Organization's Records

A Guide from the Kennesaw State University Archives
and Special Collections



Organization Histories Preserved for Community Memory

The heart of your organization's memory is in its people and records. To save its history, it is important for an organization to save the original letters, minutes, reports, photographs, publications, and other documents—in both physical and digital forms—that officers, members, directors, employees, or volunteers have produced and compiled over the years. These documents provide unique testimony to the achievements, progress, and identity of your organization. Such materials are also extremely valuable for administrative, legal, fiscal, and public relations purposes. Your organization's history is important to your community, too. By donating your organization's records to the Kennesaw State University Archives and Special Collections, you will assure that its history and heritage will be part of your community's collective memory.

What can KSU's professional archivists do with my organization's donation?

Archivists' priorities are the selection and preservation of archival records, as well as making these materials available for research. If an organization is considering donating materials to our archives, we can discuss the historical significance of these records and advise you if KSU would be the best repository for these materials. If the organization's records are a good fit for our collections and the organization agrees to donate them, our repository can:

- provide the materials with environmentally-controlled and secure storage
- oversee their proper handling and use,
- provide research access to the contents of the records, both to your organization and to the public, and
- collaborate with KSU instructors to develop course assignments utilizing the records

What Documents Should Be Placed at KSU?

Many of the records produced by an organization have long-term value. The KSU Archives is interested in the records that best illustrate the purpose, activities, and policies of your organization. Such documents usually represent an “end product”—a final report, for example, instead of a draft. Archives are more interested in related groups of materials rather than individual items. Records should be inactive—that is, no longer regularly used for routine business. Records of defunct organizations are also often of interest to an archival repository.

The KSU Archives collects records of organizations which pertain to North and Northwest Georgia. These include collections such as the Cobb County Chapter of the NAACP Records, the Georgia Marble Collection, and the Marietta Housing Authority Records.

What Is Historically Valuable Material?

Many types of materials can be valuable for researchers. KSU's professional archivists are experts in identifying materials that should be transferred to an archival repository or manuscript library. Before records are transferred to KSU, an archivist will survey your organization's papers and digital files to determine which materials have enduring historical value. The research value of records may be diminished if items are removed or if the records are rearranged, so you should contact our archivists before weeding, discarding, or reorganizing papers and records, regardless of their location or format.

Listed below are some types of records that archival repositories preserve for historical and administrative research.

- Architectural records
- Articles of incorporation, charters
- Audio recordings
- Budgets
- Bylaws and revisions
- Clippings
- Constitution and revisions
- Correspondence/email of officers
- Data sets
- Directories
- Financial statements
- Handbooks
- Legal documents
- Memoranda
- Minutes of meetings
- Membership lists
- Motion picture film, videotape, audio recordings, DVDs, and CDs
- Newsletters and other publications (generated by the organization)
- Organizational charts
- Pamphlets, brochures, fliers, etc.
- Photographs
- Planning documents
- Press releases
- Reports (annual, committee, etc.)
- Rosters
- Scrapbooks
- Speeches
- Subject files

Please note that the above list pertains to digital versions of such items as well.

To ensure the preservation of materials for potential transfer to the KSU Archives, physical items should be kept in a cool, dry, temperature-stable environment. Digital materials should be backed up regularly and have descriptive file names and consistent naming conventions.

While we may not accept everything that you offer (due to space constraints or our collecting mission), we always welcome the chance to review material. If it does not fit the scope of our repository, we may be able to refer you to another institution.

Donating Your Organization's Records

Donations

Representatives of your organization and the repository will sign a deed of gift that documents the legal transfer of ownership and outlines the conditions of the donation to the mutual agreement of all involved.

As a condition of accepting the gift, the KSU Archives reserves the right to exhibit or use for research any collection of materials, but we cannot promise or guarantee that donated material will be used in any specific manner.

If your organization is an ongoing enterprise, it is best to make periodic donations of records to your selected repository at regular intervals determined through discussion with our archivists. To assure regular contact, your organization can add the periodic transfer of inactive records to the duties of one of its officers.

Our digital archivist will be able to advise you further on the donation of digital materials. Part of the process is discussing how you use your computer in your work or personal life, including organization, file names, and file storage, especially storage in places, such as backup disks or thumb drives, other computing devices, networked or cloud storage, or on the Internet. The archivist will also discuss any concerns you may have about deleted content, passwords, and personally identifiable information contained on donated digital storage media.

Access to Collections

KSU's policies regarding availability, duplication, and publication govern access to the materials in our repository. An archivist will discuss the repository's access

policies and any special needs or concerns with a representative of your organization before completing the deed of gift.

Sensitive material may exist in physical and born-digital organizational records. To protect the privacy of individuals or trade secrets, it may be necessary to discuss restrictions on access to portions of the collection. While our preference is to make all materials freely accessible to researchers, we will agree to reasonable and equitable restrictions for limited periods of time.

*“Donating the Cobb County Branch NAACP archives to KSU was a **win-win for Cobb County**. . . . Now **students attending this major university can learn** the contributions our branch is making in Cobb.”*

- Deane Bonner, donor of the NAACP Cobb County Branch Records



Copyright

Assignment of copyright can be complex, and your organization should discuss issues of copyright ownership with the archivist and with your organization's own legal counsel before completing a deed of gift.

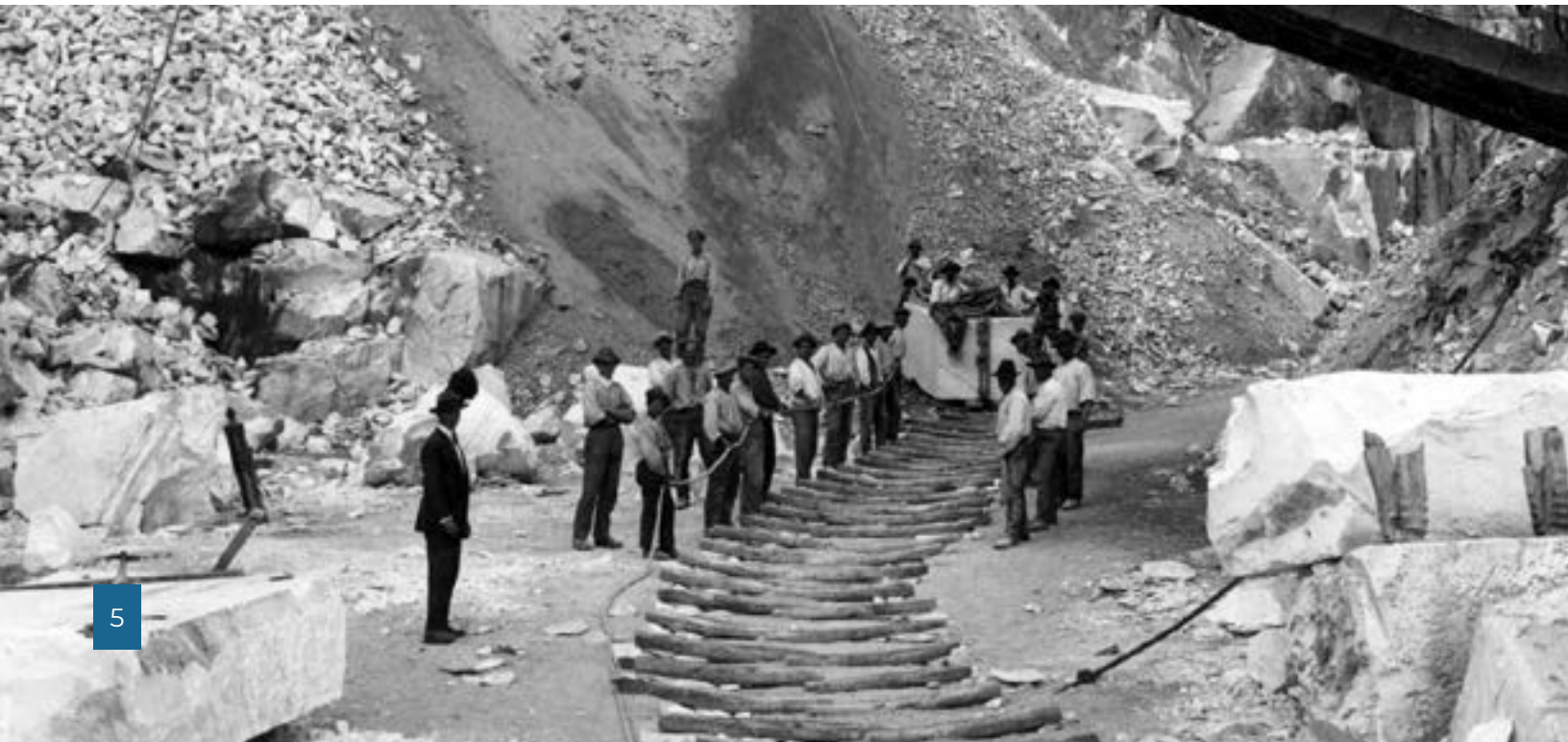
Under the terms of U.S. Copyright Law, repositories may provide copies of items in their collections for scholarly research use. Under the "fair use" exemption, the law permits that researchers may publish portions of an item under copyright. Permission to publish or quote extensively from the material must still be obtained from the copyright holder. To learn more about copyright, see www.copyright.gov, or ask your organization's legal counsel.

Tax Deductions

Your organization should speak with its tax accountant or attorney about the possibility of a tax deduction for the donation of material to an archival repository. Our archivists cannot give tax advice, nor are they permitted to appraise the monetary value of a collection being considered for KSU. They may provide your organization with a list of appraisers who can make monetary appraisals of the materials for the organization, for a fee. The donor organization arranges and pays for any such appraisal.

Monetary Donations

Preparing materials for use by researchers is the most costly operation in a repository. We are grateful to donors who are able to assist by providing funds toward the arrangement, cataloging, and conservation of their organization's records.



This guide was adapted from content prepared by the Manuscript Repositories Section of the Society of American Archivists (CC-BY 4.0) and Georgia State University.

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Page 4
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP) Cobb County
Branch Records

Page 5
Georgia Marble Company
Records

Page 6
Bobbie Bailey Collection



Contact us!

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