

Donating Your Personal or Family Papers

A Guide from the Kennesaw State University
Archives and Special Collections



Personal and Family Histories Preserved for Community Memory

For millennia, written records have provided essential clues to the past. Through letters, diaries, and unpublished writings of many types, and also through the audible, visual, and electronic records of recent times, researchers have been able to study and understand much about the history of particular families, communities, businesses, and organizations, the history of specific events and broader societal trends, and the history of the United States in general.

Whether or not you or members of your family attained a degree of fame, they have contributed to the heritage of a certain place and time. When you donate your personal or family records to the Kennesaw State University Archives and Special Collections, your history becomes a part of our community's collective memory.

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

Archivists' priorities are the selection and preservation of archival records, as well as making these materials available for research. If you are considering donating materials to our archives, we can discuss the historical significance of your records and advise you if KSU would be the best repository for these materials. If your records are a good fit for our collections and you agree 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 to the public, and
- collaborate with KSU instructors to develop course assignments utilizing the records.

What documents should be placed at KSU?

The KSU Archives preserves written, visual, audible, and electronic records of enduring value that provide a rich look at some aspect of regional or University history. We ensure that personal and family records entrusted to our care will be available for research by generations to come.

What is historically valuable material?

Many types of materials can be valuable for researchers. These can include documents relating to a person or family's day-to-day life, as well as their civic, business, religious, political, and social activities. To be historically valuable, materials do not necessarily need to be organized, "old," or relate to a famous individual, event, or organization. We accept donations of as little as a single item and as large as dozens of boxes or terabytes of digital files. Our goal is to collect sets of items that provide insight into regional history through an individual or family's story.

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 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 research.

- Photographs and photo albums (with subjects and locations identified)
- Correspondence (letters/email)
- Diaries or journals
- Oral histories
- Scrapbooks
- Writings (speeches, articles, etc.)
- Professional papers
- Records of participation in organizations
- Clippings
- Awards and certificates
- Genealogical information
- Motion picture film, videotape, audio recordings, DVDs, and CDs

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 items not aligning with 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 Records

Donations

You 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.

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 you before completing the deed of gift.

Sensitive material may exist in physical and born-digital records. To protect the privacy of individuals, 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.

Copyright

Assignment of copyright can be complex, and you should discuss issues of copyright ownership with the archivist and with your 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 legal counsel.

Tax Deductions

You should speak with your 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 you with a list of appraisers who can make monetary appraisals of the materials for the organization, for a fee. The donor 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 records.

“What appeared mundane or ordinary from my view of my father’s involvement in community and military activities was identified as *key participation in historical achievements*.

The KSU Archives team helped my family identify, preserve and *enabled this information to be available for research and contribution to progress.*”

- Michael Thomas, donor of the Marion Thomas Collection



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Cover image

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Papers

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David Neubecker Papers

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Marion Thomas Collection

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