

Dalhousie University Archives

Archives Collection Development Strategy

Last updated: April 2025

1 Introduction

1.1 Mandate

Dalhousie University established the [University Archives](#) in 1970 as a unit in the Killam Memorial Library. The University Archives acquires and preserves archival collections that support the teaching and research activities of the university and document the administrative history of the university. The Archives acquires university records in accordance with the university's [Records Management Policy](#). The Archives also acquires, through donation, private records in designated collecting areas that support research and teaching in a wide variety of academic fields.

The University Archives manages archival collections held in the Killam Memorial Library and the MacRae Library. The materials held at the MacRae Library include agriculture collections and records of the former Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

1.2 Collection development goals

To achieve its mandate, the University Archives has set the following collection development goals:

1. Acquire and preserve official records of Dalhousie University.
2. Acquire and preserve private records that document academic activities of the university and its broader campus community.
3. Acquire and preserve private records in designated collecting areas that support research interests in a wide variety of academic fields.

1.3 Purpose

The Archives Collection Development Strategy guides the development of archival collections at the Dalhousie University Archives. The strategy defines principles of collection development activities, establishes broad scope of coverage for archival collections, and defines a range of designated collecting areas.

2 Principles

The University Archives develops archival collections in accordance with several core principles.

2.1 Indigenous data sovereignty

The University Archives recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples' inherent right to own, control, access, and possess their data and cultural heritage. The Archives considers Indigenous perspectives, protocols, and consent mechanisms in the acquisition, preservation, and use of Indigenous knowledge and archival materials.

2.2 Relevance and significance

The University Archives only acquires archival records that are relevant to the Archives' mandate. The Archives accepts university records transferred from other units in accordance with approved records classification and retention schedules. Archivists may appraise transferred university records and select certain records for long-term preservation.

Archivists will evaluate offers of private records from external donors and determine the significance and relevance of the material to the Archives' mandate. Archivists may decline archival material if the offered material does not align with collections development principles or if the material is outside of a designated collecting area.

2.3 University mission, vision, and values

The University Archives develops archival collections to support administrative functions of the university and to help advance the university's academic, research, and civic priorities.

2.4 Sustainability

The University Archives develops and manages archival collections in ways that reflect the university's commitment to the core principles of sustainability. This includes attention to global sustainable development goals as well as institutional processes focused on strategic planning, effective use of human and financial resources, and responsible management of library and archives collections and services.

2.5 Diversity of collections

Archival collections development activities reflect the university's ongoing commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. This includes redressing historical and ongoing inequalities and gaps in the private records collected by the University

Archives. Archival collections should represent diverse voices, languages, perspectives, and contributions within each designated collecting area. Archivists may prioritize records that document underrepresented communities in Nova Scotia.

2.6 Partnerships and collaboration

The University Archives develops archival collections through respectful and collaborative partnerships with other units across the university, and with external archives, data repositories, organizations, and communities. Care should be taken to establish meaningful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous bodies, Black and African Nova Scotian communities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and other equity-deserving groups.

The University Archives actively participates in the [Council of Nova Scotia Archives' Cooperative Acquisition Strategy](#), which promotes the cooperative acquisition of Nova Scotia's documentary heritage at the local, regional, and provincial levels.

2.7 Respectful relationships with donors

Dalhousie Libraries builds respectful and lasting relationships with donors who support the mandate and collections development goals of the University Archives. When the University Archives accepts a donation of private records, the acceptance reflects a positive assessment of the archival value of the offered material as well as the Archives' capacity to preserve and provide access to the material. Accruals to existing fonds and collections may be accepted, but the acceptance of archival material does not represent a commitment to accept additional offers from a donor.

3 Scope of coverage

The University Archives acquires archival material in several designated collecting areas. Archivists use the following criteria to determine if offered material is within scope.

3.1 Indigenous knowledge

The University Archives may acquire archival material that relates to the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. Archivists may refer prospective donors to relevant Indigenous communities or alternative archival repositories if the offered material concerns other Indigenous communities.

3.2 Geographic scope

The University Archives prioritizes records created or accumulated in mainland Nova Scotia, but archivists may acquire records created or accumulated anywhere in the world if the records are relevant to Nova Scotia or Dalhousie University. Archivists may

also refer prospective donors to other archival repositories if the offered material clearly matches the geographic focus of those repositories.

3.3 Race and ethnicity

The University Archives may acquire archival material that relates to any racial or ethnic group in Nova Scotia. Archivists may prioritize records that document African Nova Scotians and other underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Archivists may also refer prospective donors to other repositories if the offered material clearly matches the racial or ethnographic focus of those repositories.

3.4 Languages and scripts

The University Archives may acquire archival material in any language or script. Archivists may prioritize records in certain languages or scripts that are underrepresented in existing archival collections. The Archives publishes online finding aids and research guides in English.

3.5 Formats

The University Archives may acquire analogue and digital archival material in any medium or form. Archivists may prioritize records in excellent or good condition and may reject offered material if the material is in poor condition. The Archives acquires a very limited selection of Dalhousie memorabilia but generally does not acquire artifacts such as medals, plaques, trophies, articles of clothing, natural history specimens, and other items typically acquired by museums.

3.6 Historical periods

The University Archives may acquire archival material created during any time or era. Archivists may prioritize records created before 1950 due to their scarcity and fragility.

4 Collecting areas

The University Archives acquires three major categories of records:

4.1 University records

The official records of Dalhousie University, including those created by the Board of Governors and Senate, university committees, faculties, departments, and administrative offices.

These records form the corporate memory of Dalhousie University and are valuable in understanding the university's essential activities, legal obligations, and responsibilities. They also document how the university has developed and grown over time. The

University Archives selects and preserves university records in accordance with the Records Management Policy and related protocols, procedures, and guidelines.

The University Archives also collects reference material related to the university, including copies of publications, newsletters, annual reports, programs, flyers, calendars, yearbooks, convocation programs, student publications, etc.

4.2 Dalhousie campus community

Records not created by the university, but that document the academic, administrative, community, and student life of the university. This includes the research, teaching, and service activities of Dalhousie faculty and staff.

Campus community records enrich our understanding of the broader university community and supplement Dalhousie's corporate historical record. The Archives may acquire, through donation, records from campus community organizations and individuals affiliated with Dalhousie. Archivists may prioritize records in underrepresented disciplines, student groups, and other aspects of the university community.

Areas of interest include:

- Records from student organizations, advocacy groups, and alumni associations
- Records that document student protests, events, and campaigns
- Alumni records including lecture notes, correspondence, and campus ephemera
- Records that document Dalhousie's impact on its neighbours and local communities
- Records that document faculty research and non-traditional scholarship in disciplines supported by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, including but not limited to agriculture, architecture and planning, business, communications, English literature, engineering, gender studies, geography, history, law, medicine, music, performing arts, philosophy, science, sexuality and women's studies, social work, sociology and anthropology, and theatre
- Records that document traditional ways of knowing or experience that is specific to Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, Black, or other cultural communities within broader campus community

4.3 Private records

Records in designated collecting areas that support research interests at the university in a wide variety of academic fields.

Private records are donated by organizations, families, and individuals and include the personal archives of writers, artists, architects, politicians, activists, and private citizens as well as record of non-profit organizations, artist-run centres, businesses and community groups, labour unions, and other organizations. Private records fall into several designated collecting areas described below.

4.3.1 Activism and social movements

Records that document the activities of activists, community organizations, and social movements in Nova Scotia.

The Archives may acquire records of citizen action groups, public interest groups, or other collectives and alliances of individuals who come together to change or address specific situations or to bring attention to broader concerns that affect the public, such as social or environmental issues. This collecting area also includes the personal archives of activists and the records of fraternal organizations, missionary groups, and volunteer agencies.

Areas of interest include:

- Records that document the efforts of activists, community organizations, and social movements that relate to other collecting areas, including 2SLGBTQ+ communities, agriculture, business, labour rights, performing arts, and transportation
- Records that document the efforts of activists, community organizations, and social movements focused on Treaty Rights and local Indigenous issues, such as moderate livelihood fisheries, land claims, housing, education, and water rights
- 19th and early 20th century records that document activism and social movements on any situation or issue that affects the public

4.3.2 Agriculture

Records that document agricultural activities in Nova Scotia.

The Archives may acquire records that document agriculture, agricultural education, research, agri-business industries in Nova Scotia. Holdings in this area include the archives of growers, producers, food packers and processors, businesses, farm cooperatives and industry groups as well as the personal archives of farmers and other individuals associated with Nova Scotia agriculture.

Areas of interest include:

- Records that document agricultural fairs and exhibitions, farming and agriculture cooperatives, and commodity groups prior to 1970
- Records that document activities of Nova Scotia vegetable, berry, and tree fruit growers, nurseries, packers, and processors prior to 1970
- Records that document activities of Nova Scotia animal breeders and producers
- Records that document activities of the Nova Scotia aquaculture industry
- Records that document activities of Nova Scotia dairy, eggs, fur, chicken, cattle, and sheep farmers and producers prior to 1970
- 19th and early 20th century records that document any aspect of agriculture and food production in Nova Scotia
- Reference material including market reports, company catalogues, price lists, newsletters, pamphlets, annual reports, business directories, and other items related to agricultural activities in Nova Scotia

4.3.3 Business

Records that document Nova Scotia business and commerce in select industries and trades.

The Archives may acquire records of Nova Scotia businesses across a range of industries. Holdings are primarily focused on mid-19th to late 20th centuries. Acquisitions in this collecting area should add depth and diversity to existing areas of strength. Archivists are discouraged from expanding business archives into other industries and trades.

Areas of interest include:

- Historical business records in select industries and trades, including:
 - brewing industry
 - forestry and lumber
 - fishing companies
 - general stores
 - manufacturing
 - merchant shipping
 - shipbuilding
 - ship chandlers
 - telecommunications
 - trade and transportation

- Vessel papers, logbooks, and other shipping papers created prior to 1950
- Reference material such as company catalogues, price lists, annual reports, flyers, financial statements, business directories, etc. related to Nova Scotia companies
- Reference material including newsletters and other publications related to Canadian, British, and American shipping including the Lloyd's Register of Ships

4.3.4 Cartographic sources

Early maps and other cartographic sources that depict Nova Scotia at any scale.

The Archives may acquire cartographic sources that depict Nova Scotia at any scale.

Areas of interest include:

- Maps and nautical charts that document the exploration and development of the Eastern seaboard of North America prior to 1920
- Aerial photographs of Nova Scotia prior to 2000

4.3.5 Labour

Records of select labour unions and papers of individuals active in the labour movement.

The Archives may acquire the historical papers of Nova Scotia labour unions and labour activists. Acquisitions in this collecting area should add depth and diversity to existing areas of strength.

Areas of interest include:

- Personal archives of labour activists and union organizers prior to 1971
- Records that document efforts to establish maternity and parental benefits and the right to safety at work in Nova Scotia
- Reference material such as newsletters, histories, flyers, reports, collective agreements, etc. related to labour unions and movements

4.3.6 2SLGBTQ+ communities

Records of 2SLGBTQ+ organisations and individuals based in Nova Scotia.

The Archives may acquire records of Nova Scotia 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and community activists.

Areas of interest include:

- Records of non-profit organizations, collectives, and community groups that support 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Nova Scotia
- Records that document efforts to end discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ communities
- Personal archives of Nova Scotian members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities

4.3.7 Literature

The Archives may acquire the personal archives of select Nova Scotia authors and editors. This collecting area also includes the archives of Nova Scotia publishing companies, writers' guilds and collectives, and other organizations that support literary activities in Nova Scotia. Acquisitions in this collecting area should add depth and diversity to existing areas of strength.

Areas of interest include:

- Literary archives of established Nova Scotian authors, editors, and critics
- Records of writers' collectives and organizations

4.3.8 Performing arts

Records that document the development and presentation of performing arts in Nova Scotia.

The Archives may acquire archival records that document theatre, music, and other performing arts activities in Nova Scotia. Records can include the archives of theatre companies, music organizations, and artist-run centres as well as actors, composers, musicians, directors, costume designers, and critics.

Areas of interest include:

- Records of non-profit organizations, artist collectives, and other groups that organize and present theatrical and musical productions in Nova Scotia

- Theatre and music archives of professional actors, directors, composers, producers, musicians, and critics
- Music manuscripts of celebrated and international or national award-winning composers, musicians, and conductors that work or reside in Nova Scotia
- Significant musical works composed by Dalhousie alumni and faculty
- Reference material including programs and posters from performing arts productions presented in Nova Scotia or organized by Nova Scotia arts organizations

5 Review

The University Archives will review the archives collection development strategy annually.

Version control

Version	Date	Author	Version Notes
1.0	April 2025	Creighton Barrett	<p>Strategy incorporates feedback received from staff across the Dalhousie Libraries.</p> <p>This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License</p>