

Preparing Your Records for Donation

When preparing for your donation it helps to look at your records as a whole. What records do I have that illustrate the life of an individual, organization, or business? Are the records organized in any particular way? For example, are photographs kept in an album; are minutes filed by committee; is correspondence filed chronologically or alphabetically? Unlike a library which is organized by subject, archival records are in fact organized by their creator (provenance) and arranged in the order in which they were created and maintained (original order). This allows researchers to fully appreciate the **context** in which the records were created--who created them, why they were created, and how they were used. Therefore, the **current arrangement of your records is important**. If there is no discernable order, that's okay too. The archivist will be able to reveal some sort of grouping that makes sense to the organizational structure and to the records.

Once you have determined which records you wish to donate you can take the following steps:

1. Place records into boxes, preferably in their original sequence and in their original enclosures (file folders, albums, envelopes). These enclosures can be beneficial in determining places and dates.
2. Prepare a simple file list outlining what is contained within each box and any additional contextual information (a general rule of thumb is to ask WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE).
3. Dates, places, names and occasions should also be provided for all of the photographs, whenever possible.
4. A simple administrative history of the organization or business, or in the case of an individual, a biography of the person or family who created the records is highly desirable, as this is a useful tool when locating relevant records for researchers.