Brooklyn College Archives and Special Collections
Collection Development Policy

INTRODUCTION

Archives and Special Collections (ASC) is the repository for the rare and unique materials in the Brooklyn College Library, offering patrons access to primary source materials documenting the history of the College, Brooklyn and distinguished alumni. The collections of manuscripts, books, photographs and other formats are non-circulating and shelved in closed stacks.

We promote the use of our collections through collaborative efforts with teaching faculty in various departments, the creation of exhibits from materials in the collections, and other forms of outreach. Our collections are open to students, staff and faculty at Brooklyn College, as well as local public school students and other researchers.

I. Mission

The mission of the Brooklyn College Archives and Special Collections is to acquire, preserve, and provide access to the original records of enduring value that document the Brooklyn College community (administrators and administrative offices, academic programs and courses of instruction, and academic departments and committees) and the Borough of Brooklyn, as well as the papers and memorabilia of individuals and alumni who have national and social importance.

II. Additions to the Collections

While most collections are acquired through donations (solicited and unsolicited) and transfers from College departments and offices, additions to some collections are made through purchases funded by gifts or the Library budget. ASC on occasion may accept materials from another repository.

Material accepted into the collection should supplement existing collecting areas or strengthen weak areas that have been identified as areas of interest by this policy.

Acquisitions that do not fall into existing collecting areas sometimes are made in anticipation of new emphases. In addition to scholarly research value, staff may also take into account items’ exhibit and/or outreach potential.¹

III. Responsible Collecting

A responsible level of collecting should be maintained by staying within the constraints of available storage space, ability to process material within a reasonable amount of time, and ability to provide for the care and preservation of, and access to, the material. In addition, consideration must be given to the best placement of materials. Dispersal or fragmentation of a research collection is inconvenient to researchers and does nothing to enhance the reputation of the
institution. ASC will try to avoid acquiring material known to be primarily collected by another institution, unless there is a strong connection with an existing ASC collection or some other compelling reason to accept the material. Donors will be directed to appropriate repositories if their material is not deemed relevant to our collections.  

Brooklyn College is fortunate to be located near other collections of rare and primary materials that complement our holdings, including the collections of the Brooklyn Historical Society, and the Brooklyn Collection at the Brooklyn Public Library. Our goal is to develop our collections in such a way that we do not duplicate holdings of nearby institutions or enter into direct competition with them for collections and resources.

IV. Nature of Ownership

Material will be accepted into the collection by deed of gift, bequest, or other forms of documentation by which full and absolute title is transferred to Brooklyn College Archives and Special Collections. We reserve the right to determine retention, location, cataloging treatment, and other considerations relating to the use or disposition of the material. Any limitation on use must be approved by the College Archivist at the time of accession into the collection. To the best of our ability, material accepted into the collection will be housed in appropriate containers and stored in secure, climate-controlled areas.

ASC will not accept items and collections on “deposit” or “loan” or by any other means whereby Brooklyn College Library does not become the owner of the items. Rare exceptions may be made for items placed on permanent deposit or loan. Such deposits or loans must further the mission of Brooklyn College Library in a considerable fashion and must be approved by the College Archivist. ASC will not knowingly acquire items that have been stolen or illegally exported.

V. Subject Areas We Collect

For a list of all archival collections in ASC, please contact the Archives at 718-951-5581 or specialcollections@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

Guides for processed collections may be accessed by visiting the CUNY Academic Works website: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bc_arch/.

1. Brooklyn College

Records of Brooklyn College date from the college’s founding in 1930 and include photographs, official reports and publications, student newspapers, yearbooks, artifacts and documents from academic departments and offices, including the President and Provost. Following the guidelines listed below, papers of noted faculty are also collected, including Procope Costas and Alfred McClung Lee. Papers of prominent alumni such as Shirley Chisholm are also collected. The Archives continues to collect relevant materials in this area.

Faculty Papers Collecting Criteria
Space limitations and limited resources prohibit us from collecting papers of all Brooklyn College faculty members, so we have established the following criteria to determine if a collection warrants acquisition and preservation by ASC:

- research value of the papers;
- faculty member’s record of service to Brooklyn College and contribution to its growth and development;
- faculty member’s record of service and contribution to community, state and/or national affairs;
- faculty member’s national or international reputation in an academic field.

Not all documents merit permanent retention. The lists below show what types of documents ASC does and does not collect.

If you have questions about whether your papers belong in the Archives, or have any questions about the types of records we collect, please contact us.

ASC Collects:
- correspondence (including email)
- diaries and journals
- biographical material (resumes, curriculum vitae, bibliographies, biographical sketches, personal memoirs, etc.)
- grant proposals and reports
- records of committees that the faculty member chaired
- literary manuscripts
- speeches and lectures
- lecture notes
- course syllabi
- photographs
- audio-visual materials (unique, non-commercial recordings and raw tape/files)
- observational research data (data that are time bound and difficult to recover, repeat or reconstruct)

ASC Does Not Collect:
- drafts of significant publications (may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis)
- student records such as papers, assignments and grades (these are confidential under the Family Educational and Privacy Rights ACT (FERPA))
- experimental research data (data that is generated though a repeatable process; the documents accumulated during literary and historical research are included in this category as they can be reassembled)
- books and other publications, such as journals and magazines, including reprints, off-prints and pre-prints **EXCEPTION: books and articles by the faculty member**
- college publications

Please contact the library’s Collection Development Librarian to discuss donations of other books.
2. Brooklyniana - Brooklyn History and Politics

The Archives’ documentation on the borough of Brooklyn includes photographs, maps, community and county histories, and papers of Brooklyn legislators and civic leaders, including civil rights leader William Augustus Jones and Peter McGuiness, a Greenpoint politician; as well as the YWCA of Brooklyn Archive. *The Archives continues to collect materials in this area.*

3. Historic Manuscripts

The Historic Manuscript collection contains the papers and memorabilia of individuals of national and social importance, including child psychologist Dr. Lauretta Bender, mountaineer Annie Peck Smith, and Civil War veteran Captain James M. Pettit. ASC is also home to several boxing collections, including the Hank Kaplan Boxing Archive. *Given the breadth of the existing collections on boxing, this is no longer an active collecting area.*

4. Rare Books

There are approximately two thousand volumes of rare books in ASC, including titles of significant literary, historical, geographical and scientific value. *This is not an active collecting area, but the Archives will consider donations on a case by case basis.*

5. Africa

Robert L. Hess Collection on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa - Former Brooklyn College President Robert L. Hess was a noted Ethiopian scholar. Upon his death, the Hess family donated his rare book and ephemera collection to the Archives, and supports the collection with an annual gift, used to expand the collection via purchase of related documents, ephemera, and photographs, and also to support the care and preservation of the records. For more information on the Hess collection, see [http://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/asc_hess](http://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/asc_hess).

Stuart Schaar Collection on the Middle East and North Africa – History professor Stuart Schaar, a retired Brooklyn College faculty member, donated his books and personal papers to the Archives. There are over 4000 books and periodicals, along with 77 boxes of manuscript material, as well as a number of artworks from the region.

VI. Formats We Collect

**Printed or Published Material**

- Atlases (selected and limited)
- Biographies and autobiographies
- Books and pamphlets
- Broadsides
• College publications
• Directories
• Ephemera
• Maps
• Memoirs and other primary sources
• Moving images
• Newspapers
• Periodicals
• Sheet music
• Sound recordings
• Student publications

Manuscript and Archival Material
• Audio recordings
• Business records
• College records
• Correspondence
• Diaries and similar first-person accounts
• Maps, surveys, and similar items
• Organizational records
• Professional, personal, and family papers

Audiovisual Material
• Photographs of all varieties
• Engravings
• Lithographs
• Moving images
• Music
• Oral histories
• Postcards
• Posters
• Videos and similar materials

Electronic or Digital Material
Where items originally existed in a non-digital format, we prefer to acquire items in the non-digital format, accepting the digital format as a supplement or, if the original no longer exists, as a substitute. Material that is “born digital” will be considered if it is accessible for research, can be migrated and preserved relatively easily using accepted industry standards and common technologies, and includes appropriate metadata. Materials that are born digital will be added to the College’s institutional repository when appropriate.

VII. Materials and Subject Areas We Do Not Collect
• Collections unrelated to the College’s academic mission or the Archives’ existing holdings
• Photocopies of materials held in other repositories
• Photocopies or other reproductions of original material, unless the originals are no longer in existence or are unavailable to the public
• Images of museum objects
• Duplicates of material already in Archives collections, unless the duplicate is in better condition than the existing copy
• Research notes, unless included as a sub-unit of a collection of related primary material
• Current local, state, and federal government records
• Autographs (signatures with no historically significant information), in most cases

VIII. Accession Procedures

All items permanently added to ASC will be assigned an accession number and catalogued when appropriate. All paperwork related to the acquisition of the items will be maintained permanently in the Archives’ Administrative files.

Gifts
The College Archivist may accept donations of individual manuscripts, photographs, maps, collections, or other items for immediate accession into the collections if they are within our collecting areas. The College Archivist may reject any items that are not within ASC collecting areas, duplicate items already in the collections, are in poor condition, or have little historic interest.

All gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Donors must obtain their own tax valuations by qualified appraisers. Archives staff may not participate in the appraisal. Donors wishing to have a signed IRS gift documentation form must provide the College Archivist with a signed copy of the appraisal as well as the appropriate IRS forms. The Library Director will sign the IRS forms on behalf of Brooklyn College.

Purchases
The College Archivist also may acquire items through purchase, providing that acquisition funds are available.

Exchanges
ASC will consider exchanging items with other historical repositories. Items from collections to be exchanged must be de-accessioned according to the procedures outlined in this document. Items accepted from other repositories must fit into Archives collecting areas. All exchanges should be equitable. The Archives will assume all costs for incoming items, while the exchange partner will assume all costs for outgoing items.

Transfers
The College Archivist and Associate Archivist may accept transfers from College departments and offices with no further authorization required, so long as the transferred records fit with the CUNY Records Retention policy: http://policy.cuny.edu/records_retention_schedule/#Navigation_Location.

IX. Reappraisal and De-accessioning

Collections are not always added to an Archive’s holdings as part of a defined collection development policy. Reappraisal of collections is an accepted and necessary activity that permits archives to identify materials that would not be accepted under current standards or no longer fall
within the scope of the Archives’ mission or collection development policy. A collection development policy may change over time, or be newly adopted in the absence of an existing written policy.

De-accessioning is the official removal of items from our collections. Unless a deaccession is due to the deterioration or loss of items by theft or other means, deaccessioned items should be disposed of through transfer to or exchange with other historical repositories, offered back to the donor, discarded, or on rare occasions sold, if the deed of gift permits. De-accessioning does not apply to items removed or discarded in the course of regular archival appraisal and processing of incoming collections.8

In the de-accessioning of rare books and manuscripts, the Archives and Special Collections department of the Brooklyn College Library will take into account the interests of the scholarly and cultural community and the public, as well as the mission of the Archives itself.

The decision to dispose of materials must be made only after full and scrupulous consideration of the public interest and the needs of researchers; the process of deaccession will be carried out in as open and public a manner as possible and will include a statement of the purpose of the deaccession.

Mandatory restrictions on disposition which accompanied a donation will be observed unless it can be shown clearly by appropriate legal procedures that adherence to them is impossible or substantially detrimental to Brooklyn College. When statements of donor’s preferences accompany an acquisition, any departure from them will be carefully considered and negotiated with the donor or the donor’s heirs or settled by appropriate legal procedures.

Criteria for De-accessioning Items from Archives and Special Collections

Items may be de-accessioned when:

- they duplicate other material in the collections which are in equally good or better condition
- they are of marginal use to Special Collections, are outside the scope of our collection policy, or would be more appropriately housed at another institution
- they are in such poor condition as to be virtually unusable or threaten other collections or staff
- they cannot be properly stored, preserved or used
- the item or collection is owned by Brooklyn College Archives and Special Collections

Procedures

Before proposing items for de-accessioning, the College Archivist will make every effort to resolve issues of uncertain ownership and comply with the intentions of donors and restrictions on collections. No donated item will be de-accessioned within five years of its acquisition, unless its condition poses a threat to other collections or staff.

Alternatively, ASC may exchange or transfer items to other historical repositories. CUNY employees and members of the CUNY Board of Trustees may not acquire de-accessioned items directly from ASC.
Items or collections considered for deaccessioning must meet one or more of the criteria listed above, and the decision to deaccession must be approved by both the College Archivist and the Associate Archivist.

Once the decision to deaccession has been made, the ASC will determine the most appropriate method and in the case of a donated item or collection, will notify the donor or the donor's heirs of the final decision. ASC will disclose to the potential new owner any action, such as the retention of a photocopy of the material, which may affect the monetary or scholarly value of the material.

ASC will make public information on the disposition of deaccessioned materials.

X. Other Resources

Other major collections of primary materials for the study of Brooklyn include the Brooklyn Historical Society, and the Brooklyn Public Library’s Brooklyn Collection.

Adopted February 2018

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1 Modeled on the Vanderbilt University Special Collections policy.
2 Modeled on the College of William and Mary Special Collections Collecting policy.
3 Ibid.
4 Policy modeled on that of UNC Chapel Hill’s Wilson Library policy.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Modeled on the Fales Library (NYU) Collection Development policy, American Heritage Center Collection Development policy, and the College of William and Mary Collection Development policy.
8 In the course of appraising and processing a collection, some materials are determined to be non-archival, and thus are not retained.