

Academic Archive Mission Statements

The mission statement seems to be an expansion of the core responsibility of an archive: to collect, preserve and provide access to records. It briefs what information is collected, why that information is collected, who it is collected for, and who can access the information. It may also elude to public relations efforts and state very briefly that it seeks to 'preserve' materials in its care. After looking at several examples of academic mission statements (but mainly VSU and GA Tech), I came up with these basic statements for use in describing the mission statement of an academic archive:

1. Collect material that documents 'life' and legal/administrative aspects of greater institution that houses the archives.
2. Collect material that pertains directly to curriculum/academic/research needs of institution.
3. Collect material produced by faculty and students of institution.
4. Collect material pertaining to larger community/region surrounding institution.
5. Provide access to materials for the main client (students, faculty, and administration) and for secondary clients (researchers/community).
6. Encourage research & teaching effectiveness using original source material by advocating outreach programs within the greater institution and local community.
7. Preserve/Conserve materials within their care.

Academic Archives Collection Statement

The collection statements seem to vary more from institution to institution, but still have a similar core of statements that cover the primary information about the collection activities of an archive. The largest difference is seen in the inclusion of more information pertaining to the actual collections housed within the particular archive. I have listed below, what I feel are the core statements needed to be covered in developing a collection policy. The amount of detail put into these statements will help an archive to narrow their focus and keep within predetermined borders for their particular collections; this attention to detail can also help outline how to deal with items the archive cannot or will not collect.

Statements to include in a collection policy cover:

How the archive decides what to collect based on historical/administrative value of materials.

How this value is determined by archives' (and/or records managements') appraisal of material.

Who makes the actual accessional decision (usually, the responsibility of the University Archivist.)

Why materials are collected (the particular materials and the particular purpose for collecting).

What materials are given collection priority over other materials.

What materials from the community may also be collected.

Why the archives may decline to accept collections.

How donations are handled, recorded and 'paid' for.

What the main collecting areas are by type and/or collection specialty, this may also place emphasis on particular collection strengths of the archive (for public relation uses). Some types may include: organizational records of departments and student organizations, manuscripts (personal papers of faculty), institutional history, visual materials, digital collections, memorabilia (3D artifacts), student theses and dissertations, rare books, and faculty publications. Large special collections may be separated out from the rest and given their own type status.

I cannot yet determine if 'a' and 'b' should be used over 'j', since each archive will have its own agenda that will determine what to include in the mission and collection statements/policies. I can see how the use of these statements can be critical for the continued development and justification of the archives' purposes; especially for those housed under the larger university umbrella.

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