

Jones Library Collection Development Policy for Special Collections

Mission Statement

The Jones Library will be a community hub to a diverse population of Amherst residents, where books are celebrated and all members of the community can enhance their educational, cultural, and lifelong learning pursuits.

Introduction

The Special Collections consist of materials relevant to the history and culture of Amherst and Hampshire County, and the lives of Amherst Authors, particularly Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson, in a variety of physical and digital formats. They include printed books, manuscripts, maps, photographs, prints, periodicals, scrapbooks, original works of art, microfilm, audiovisual materials, memorabilia and other physical and digital objects.

As part of the history of Amherst, Massachusetts, the materials in Special Collections have permanent value to the community. They are intended for research on local, genealogical, and historical issues, and therefore do not circulate. Materials are acquired to document and record the community and its people and provide for future researchers, and not for monetary or investment value.

Collection Development Goals

An active effort is made to add to the recognized strengths of the collections in the Local History and Special Collections Departments. We collaborate with community partners such as the Amherst Historical Society, Amherst College, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and other local history institutions to avoid duplication and competition for collections. Library staff solicit gifts, consult with dealers, online vendors, and examine publishers' catalogs and book review publications for the purchase or acquisition of the following types of material:

- Materials that record the history, development, and current life of Amherst and the greater Hampshire County area. Materials that record the history and ancestry of Amherst area families.
- Materials that contribute to a better understanding of the area's geography, climate, demographics, culture and built landscape.
- Materials by and about Emily Dickinson, her family, and her work.
- Materials by and about Robert Frost, his family, and his work.
- Materials written by Amherst Authors, which we define as an author who is or was a resident of Amherst for at least 2 years whose work is not collected by one of the Five Colleges.
- Materials representing the creative life of the community, including artists' interpretations of local places and works by local artists (limited as to display and storage space)
- Materials with Amherst or Hampshire County as a subject.
- Materials created by or representing the experiences of historically underrepresented members of our community.
- Materials that provide instruction relating to genealogy, local history, preservation, oral history and similar topics ("how to") will be added to the collection as resources for patrons, but will not become a part of the permanent collection.

Selection Criteria

Approved by the Jones Library Board of Trustees January 30, 1996; Revision Approved 4-27-22

Acceptance of additions to the permanent collections shall be made based on the following conditions:

- The acquisition must meet the Library's mission statement and the purpose of Special Collections
- Collections will maintain authority, authenticity and reliability
- Materials should have educational, interpretive, and/or exhibit value
- Donated materials must be clean of mildew and mold, and be physically stable
- The Library must have the resources to properly house and preserve the acquisition
- All possible efforts must have been taken to ensure that the present owner has clear title and no conflict of interest with the Library
- The donor must be willing to sign the Library's Deed of Gift, with no restrictions concerning use or further disposition of the acquisition
- If an item is being purchased, staff must arrange and verify funding before purchase
- The Library shall not authenticate an item or provide an appraisal of its monetary value

Limitations on the Addition of Materials

Gifts to the Library are evaluated under the same conditions as purchased materials. The Special Collections Department may decline to accept any gift of material that seems inappropriate to the collections or that would be more appropriate in another repository. In such cases, the would-be donor should be informed of the scope of the Local History Department collections and, if possible, put in touch with an institution that might wish to accept the offered gift.

The Library may refuse to accept materials that are:

- Outside the library's mission and scope;
- Deteriorated or lacking in physical integrity;
- Inauthentic;
- Duplicate;
- Irrelevant.

The Library may also decline to accept gifts that are too large to be accommodated in the climate controlled Special Collections spaces. Similarly, the availability of staffing to process a sizeable addition to the collections may be a factor.

Collection Maintenance

In keeping with the purpose, nature and scope of the Special Collections, weeding of these collections does not follow the same guidelines as those set out for the Circulating collections. As part of the heritage of Amherst, these collections have more permanent historic and cultural value.

However, physical space limitations combined with the ongoing need to add new materials, and changes in technology and archival practices, make it necessary to periodically reevaluate the composition of the collections.

Deaccessioning Criteria

The first consideration in applying a weeding policy to these collections is the recognition of three distinct categories of materials and the nature of each category.

These categories can be defined as follows:

1. Permanent Historical Value:
 - First editions of local histories
 - Items signed by, or from the collections of Amherst Authors

- Original documents, pamphlets, maps and manuscripts;
- Original photographs, portraits and other works of art;
- Other materials deemed to be of a similar nature.

All items of permanent intrinsic value are valuable to the cultural heritage of Amherst in and of themselves. These materials should be preserved and permanently retained. Little to no deaccessioning is expected in this category.

2. **Permanent Informational Value:** Other materials in the collections are of permanent value for their informational content, but are not intrinsically valuable. Items that fall into this category are candidates for replacement and/or reformatting should space considerations or the condition of the material make it desirable to do so. Informational value can be preserved by replacing items in poor condition with reprints or micro formats, although digital versions of materials with permanent informational value should not be the only medium retained. Management of materials in this category is an ongoing process within the department.
3. **Temporary Informational Value:** Time sensitive materials, current informational reference sources, how-to books of a technological nature and some periodicals have a finite period of usefulness. Items that fall into this category should be routinely evaluated and removed or replaced as appropriate. Systematic review of materials in this category should be conducted on an ongoing and rotating basis, with all areas of the collection receiving attention every two years.

Materials in the collection may also be deaccessioned because they are:

- Outside the library's mission and scope;
- Deteriorated or lacking in physical integrity;
- Inauthentic;
- Duplicate;
- Irrelevant

Deaccession Procedure

Items withdrawn according to the deaccession criteria are offered to other libraries or museums if possible. Items that cannot be disposed of this way will be sold at public auction or offered through reputable dealers. If rare, valuable items are withdrawn and sold, funds from the sales go to the Special Collections Fund to be used for the care and maintenance of the collections or acquisition of new special collection materials that fit current criteria. Archival collections are not to be viewed primarily as capital for reinvestment or collateral. This procedure is in keeping with the American Alliance of Museums' Code of Ethics which states that special collections "are organized as public trusts, holding their collections and information as a benefit for those they were established to serve" and "disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections."

Jones Library will not allow materials from its collections to be acquired privately by any library employee, officer, or volunteer, unless they are sold publicly and with complete disclosure of their history.