

## **Manuscripts**

### **Contents**

- I. Scope
- II. Research Strengths
- III. Collecting Policy
  - A. Personal papers - United States
    - 1. General criteria
    - 2. Fragmentary groups of personal papers
    - 3. Single items
  - B. Personal papers - Foreign
  - C. Manuscripts of published works
  - D. Records of organizations
    - 1. United States
    - 2. Foreign
  - E. Reproductions of manuscripts in microform or digital formats
    - 1. General criteria
    - 2. United States
    - 3. Foreign
  - F. Legal documents
  - G. Codices and individual manuscripts: facsimile editions
- IV. Acquisition Sources: Current and Future

### **I. Scope**

This policy statement pertains to original manuscripts (personal papers, organizational records, single items or small groups of papers in either paper or born digital format), microform copies, and physical or digital/electronic facsimile editions of individual manuscripts and codices. It does not pertain to music manuscripts (see Music Collections Policy Statement) or to original manuscripts in Oriental languages.

### **II. Research Strengths**

The Library's pre-eminent areas of distinction are the presidency (major collections of the papers of 23 presidents), Congress (the papers of more than 900 members), the federal judiciary (41 Supreme Court Justices from John Jay to Harry Blackmun), military affairs, foreign policy (secretaries of state from Thomas Jefferson to Henry Kissinger), arts and literature (Walt Whitman through Philip Roth), science (Benjamin Franklin to Sigmund Freud), African-American history and culture (Booker T. Washington to the NAACP), and women (Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Ruth Bader Ginsburg). See [Collections Overviews-Special Materials/Formats-Manuscripts](#).

### **III. Collecting Policy**

The Library of Congress acquires manuscript source material for study of the history, law, and civilization of the United States. The Library will not acquire manuscripts merely for their value as autographs, nor will it ordinarily acquire (except by gift) individual manuscripts for which photographic copies, accurate transcriptions, or archival copies are generally available. Practical considerations which necessitate a selective policy within this broad field include the present collections of the Library, its primary responsibility to Congress, limitations of staff and space, and the collections of other U.S. institutions.

Manuscript materials are typically acquired through donation by their owners as gifts or in special circumstances by deposit (with a commitment to donate the deposited materials at an appropriate time). Selected manuscript items or collections are also obtained through copyright deposit, transfer, or by purchase as funds are available and circumstances permit.

#### **A. Personal papers - United States**

##### **1. General criteria**

- a. The Library will acquire the personal papers of nationally eminent Americans whose activities have significantly influenced the history, law, and culture of the United States or the national policy of the United States government, and whose papers constitute important source material for the study of the period which they cover, throwing light on major movements, developments, controversies, or events.
- b. The Library defines personal papers in the broadest sense to include correspondence, diaries, notebooks, research notes, logs, scrapbooks, memoranda, journals, production material for publications, photographs, biographical data, originals, carbons, letterpress copies, microfilm, computer diskettes and various kinds of ephemera.
- c. The Library will also acquire the papers of individuals who are not nationally eminent if these papers constitute source material of substantial importance. Examples of such materials include letters of soldiers and sailors written during the Civil War, letters and papers of migrants crossing the Western plains during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and letters and papers of individuals involved in significant reform, religious, or social movements. See also Folklore and Folklife Collections Policy Statement.
- d. An effort will be made to acquire collections which provide a representative coverage of each period in the history of the United States as well as geographic range and cultural diversity.
- e. Collections of personal papers which qualify under the terms above will be sought out and acquired, provided that the integrity of a collection is respected; i.e., the collection has not been divided, with the major part already present in, or committed to, another repository.

##### **2. Fragmentary groups of personal papers**

The Library of Congress acquires fragmentary groups of personal papers that conform to the stipulations of Section III.A.1. under the following conditions:

- a. when the fragmentary group fills a gap in, or is complementary to an existing collection in the Library of Congress;
- b. when the fragmentary group appears to be all that has survived (as is often true of collections of the more distant past);
- c. when a donor cannot be persuaded of the inadvisability of dividing a collection;
- d. when additional fragmentary groups are known to exist at other repositories, no one of which can be considered the main body of the papers in question. (In conformity with Section III.A.1. above, the Library will not acquire fragmentary groups of personal papers when the body of these papers is known to be in another American repository and the fragmentary papers are sought by that repository);
- e. when the fragmentary group forms a part of a special subject collection which embraces other forms of library materials (books, prints, maps, etc.), and the entire collection is desired by the Library.

### 3. Single items

Single items which conform to the stipulations of Section III.A.1. will be acquired only when:

- a. they fill gaps in collections already in the Library, or
- b. they are of considerable importance, (e.g., diaries, narratives, letters or speeches describing or commenting on a particular historical event, period or personage).

### B. Personal papers - foreign

Ordinarily, the Library of Congress will not acquire the personal papers of citizens of foreign countries. In considering individual exceptions, the following factors will be weighed:

- 1. the importance of the papers as source material for the study of the United States;
- 2. the presence in the Library of closely related collections which the proposed acquisition would complement;
- 3. the eminence of the individual as a world figure and the importance of his/her papers as source material for the study of history and culture generally;
- 4. the prior rights in the papers of the individual's own country.
- 5. the location and ownership of the collection (in the United States or elsewhere, in institutional or private hands, etc.);
- 6. whether the collection is available as a gift or by purchase;
- 7. the holdings of other American repositories in relation to the collection under consideration;

8. the present safety and security of the papers.

### C. Manuscripts of published works

It is the policy of the Library of Congress not to acquire manuscripts of published works apart from the personal papers of the author. Individual exceptions to this general policy may be made when some or all of the following considerations apply:

1. The author is nationally eminent, the work is intrinsically important, and the manuscript contains materials, such as extensive revisions, which are important for a study of the author's creative methods in general and the individual work in particular;
2. the manuscript would significantly supplement personal papers of the author or of related figures already in the Library's collections;
3. the acceptance of the manuscript would contribute substantially to the acquisition of personal papers desired by the Library.

### D. Records of organizations

#### 1. United States

The Library of Congress does not normally acquire the records of organizations. The Library may, however, consider in occasional cases of special importance exceptional acquisition of: (1) records from organizations with which the Library conducts joint programs to promote Library activities, goals or objectives; (2) records from ad hoc or other transitory organizations that have enduring value in documenting issues and episodes in American politics and culture; and (3) records of organizations of national scope that are assured to have broad interests and enduring scholarly value.

The Library of Congress will receive additions to records of organizations already in the collections, if those records clearly have broad scholarly interest and if they augment collecting areas of pre-eminent strength.

Records of organizations that do not meet these criteria will not be solicited or acquired if offered. Records already part of the Library's holdings which, upon review, are found not to meet these criteria, will be considered as candidates for de-accessioning from the Library's collections. Disposal of any records recommended for de-accessioning will be subject to the provisions of LCR 515, Disposal of materials not needed for the Library of Congress collections, or to such prior understandings as may have been reached with the originating organization (or legal successors) at the time of acquisition, or execution of any relevant legally binding agreements, such as Instruments of Gifts, etc.

Future records received from organizations must, as a general rule, be processed (prepared for reader use) by the originating organization (or legal successor) before they arrive at the Library. The Library will be prepared to offer advice and, in some cases, assistance to enable such organizations (or their successors) to process collections on their premises prior to delivery to the library. Alternatively, they may supply the Library with funds or personnel to process organizations records once they arrive here.

The Library of Congress believes that it is generally in the best interest of organizations to retain their own records and to develop programs to administer and preserve them according to canons of modern archival practice. The Library is prepared to offer advice on these matters to organizations that request it.

## 2. Foreign

The Library of Congress will not ordinarily acquire the original records of organizations in foreign countries. Individual exceptions to this policy will be made only in the rarest instances; and only when in addition to meeting the conditions specified in Section III. B., Personal Papers-Foreign, the foreign organization is considered to have played a role of such enduring national importance in the history and culture of the United States that its records would constitute source material of exceptional importance for the study of American history and culture. All of the specifications and criteria set forth in Section III.D.1., Records of Organizations - United States, shall apply.

## E. Reproductions of manuscripts in microform or digital formats

### 1. General criteria

Manuscript collections in microform or electronic formats or successor technologies may be acquired by copyright deposit, exchange, gift, or purchase, and shall not be subject to the limitations noted above for original manuscripts. The public offer of a commercially filmed or electronically reproduced manuscript collection shall be considered publication, and the acquisition policies for other publications shall be followed as far as applicable. When a micropublishing or electronic publishing project includes a variety of original formats, any problems concerning assignment of custody and service will be resolved in consultation with the recommending officers and custodial divisions concerned. In acquiring microform or electronic copies of manuscripts, the provisions of the Microfilms - Quality, Electronic Resources, and Web Archiving Supplementary Guidelines will be consulted.

### 2. United States

The Library will acquire microform or electronic copies of selected unpublished manuscript and archival materials when such materials meet the criteria specified (see above Section III.A. for original manuscript materials). In judging the importance of two or more items, when funds are limited, the following priority order will be followed:

- a. collections in private hands, especially when the integrity or preservation of the collection is imperiled;
- b. collections of presidential papers;
- c. collections that will complete, supplement or complement existing collections of the Library of Congress;
- d. other available collections of widespread potential research value.

### 3. Foreign

The Library will observe the following policies in acquiring microform or electronic copies of unpublished manuscript and archival materials originating in other countries:

- a. A special effort will be made to acquire the following:
  1. unpublished materials relating to the history of the United States;
  2. bodies of manuscripts relating to the general history of the Americas.
- b. The following will be acquired on a selective basis:
  1. materials from the archives of foreign governments, and other manuscript and archival collections of potential research value in any subject of major concern to the Library, except those mentioned in Section III.E.3.a.
  2. unpublished guides, catalogs, inventories, calendars, and other means of access to collections abroad;
  3. codices antedating the general use of printing which supplement Library's holdings.

#### **F. Legal documents**

Copies of legal documents often arrive at the Library as part of the personal papers of Supreme Court justices, lower court judges, attorneys, and legal advocacy groups, but for formal collecting guidelines, see the Law Collections Policy Statement.

#### **G. Codices and individual manuscripts: facsimile editions**

The Library attempts to acquire a comprehensive collection of codices in facsimile editions, especially those originating prior to the year 1500 A.D.

The Library will acquire facsimile editions of individual manuscripts in accordance with its customary policies governing acquisition of current printed materials. The following criteria will be taken into account:

1. completeness (all introductory pages, even without text, should be included);
2. color accuracy;
3. preservation of original size and format;
4. margins and binding of facsimile to correspond to original;
5. uniqueness of work being printed;
6. meaningful commentary, translation of text.

If facsimile editions are available in more than one size, the order of preference is:

1. the same size as the original;
2. smaller than the original;
3. larger than the original.

#### **IV. Acquisitions Sources: Current and Future**

The Manuscript Division currently acquires its collections principally from donations by individual American citizens and organizations whose materials have been solicited by division specialists and other Library officials, including the Librarian, according to guidelines described in this Collections Policy Statement. The Manuscript Division also obtains collections and single items by purchase from individuals and professional manuscript dealers. In addition, the division receives transfers from the Copyright Office, other institutions, and other custodial units of the Library. The division anticipates that in the future it will acquire its collections from these same sources.

Revised November 2008