



Donating Records to the Archives

Customer Service Guide 105

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Donating Records to the Archives

This guide is intended for members of the Ottawa community and beyond who are considering giving individual, family, or an organization's records to the City of Ottawa Archives ("Archives"), and would like to know more about the acquisition process, our mandate, different types of donor agreements, and tax receipts.

1. What we collect

Thank you for considering us as a home for your records. The Archives is focused on preserving our shared documentary heritage, with a particular mandate to acquire, preserve, and make available records relating to Ottawa's development.

Our goal is to ensure that we represent the breadth and diversity of Ottawa history. At this time, we would most like to build our collections pertaining to local **agriculture**, the natural **environment**, **military** and **legal** matters, and local **manufacturing**. We are also interested in acquiring records showing the changing **cultural diversity** of the Ottawa area, including records of the **francophone** community.

We are always adding to the collections in our care and accept materials for two general collections: archives and reference.

a) Archival community collections

Our archival collections of community records consist primarily of original documents relating to individuals, families or organizations in Ottawa, which are acquired and kept for their historical value. Examples of records that we accept include:

- Correspondence
- Diaries, journals, scrapbooks
- Minutes of meetings, reports, and membership lists
- Photographs, films, videos
- Drawings, maps, plans
- Unpublished works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and speeches

These records are documented on many different formats or types of media, including:

- Paper
- Electronic records (stored on DVDs, CDs, flash drives)

- Magnetic tape
- Linen
- Photographic paper or negatives

b) Archival civic collections

As the official repository for civic government records, the Archives typically receives these documents through direct transfers from City departments. Occasionally, however, residents may find that they have civic records in their possession. A relative of former City staff, for instance, may discover such documents when reviewing their family member's estate. Should this be the case, please contact the Archives, as they may be official records or fill gaps in our civic government collection.

c) Reference collections

Although our main focus is on original archival records, we also collect books and other published and unpublished secondary source materials about Ottawa for our reference collections. We also maintain special collections which include maps, self-published family histories, and other publications. These collections support research on Ottawa's history and are made available through our Reference Room library.

d) Working with other archives

The Archives works cooperatively with other heritage institutions to ensure that community records are collected in the most appropriate location, and to keep collections from being spread over several institutions. For this reason, we may decline to accept records ourselves but will recommend that they be offered to another institution. This is a practice embedded in the Association of Canadian Archivists' [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#).

2. What we don't collect

Preserving, acquiring, and making archival materials accessible in perpetuity requires significant resources, therefore the Archives are unable to acquire all records we are offered. As well, there are some types of materials that are unsuited for acquisition.

Here are a few examples of those materials we must respectfully decline. Contact us if you have questions about whether we would be interested in your donation.

- Artefacts - Because archives are focused on the context in which records are created, we do not collect artefacts (e.g. furniture, jewellery) except where they

are accompanied by documents and, typically, where they include additional information of some kind. Artefacts are better cared for by museums, like the Bytown Museum in Ottawa.

- Discrete items - We also typically avoid acquiring single items without any additional contextual information or supporting documentation, such as an undated photograph of an unidentified individual.
- Financial records - Generally speaking, we do not acquire detailed financial records unless these have additional significance.

3. Who uses the records

Our mandate is to not only preserve Ottawa's documentary heritage, but also to make it available for research. Community records show how our region's residents, businesses and organizations live, work, and play. They can also show how civic government policies and programs are implemented and impact the community.

Many different clients use the records we have acquired:

- City employees researching the impact of City programs or decisions
- Media
- Homeowners and other property researchers
- Genealogists and family historians
- Professional historians
- University professors and students

4. How we acquire records

a) Meeting with a donor or lender

Our archivists are happy to meet with you to discuss your materials, our collections, and our processes. This can take place at your home/organization or at the Archives.

b) On-site review

Archives staff usually begin by making an on-site review of your records. The archivist will select some, none, or all of your records to be delivered to the Archives. This decision will be based on different appraisal factors, including our mandate and our

current Acquisition Strategy objectives. They will also make a preliminary check for pests or other conservation issues.

Regardless of whether the review takes place on-site or at the Archives, please keep in mind that the actual appraisal process and final decision concerning the material you are offering often takes some time. Delivery for review does not guarantee that the Archives will acquire the material.

NOTE: Please do not drop off materials at the Archives without consulting an Archivist, as we do not have the space or resources to accommodate them.

c) Preparing the records for delivery

Please contact the Archives before you start to prepare your records for delivery. Our staff are knowledgeable on how best to arrange materials and can help guide you.

Box lists and descriptions of the records and the people or organizations who created them are extremely helpful, as these provide important information to Archives staff concerning their contents and context. Be sure to retain old folders and boxes, as they often include useful information.

If you require boxes, let us know and we can arrange for some to be picked up or delivered. It is best if the records are transported in boxes that you no longer need, as we cannot guarantee their return.

d) Looking for pests and mould

Before delivering materials to the Archives, we ask that you examine items for evidence of pests or mould. These can contaminate our existing collections, are expensive to treat, and cannot be made available for research. Below are some tips on how to spot mould and insects.

Mould is a fungus that eats the material it lives on. It requires moisture to grow and appears as a circular pattern, growing outward from a central point. As mould grows, it can change in colour. One indication of a fungal problem is a musty, mildew or earthy odour.

A common misconception is that inactive or dormant mould is not dangerous. This is not true. Mould does not lose its allergenic or toxic properties when it is dormant or inactive; it can still pose a health risk to humans and growth can restart at any time.

If you suspect that mould is present, it is best to avoid bringing the item to the Archives. Isolate it in a sealed plastic bag and contact an archivist. Unfortunately, due to the associated risks and work involved, mouldy materials are less likely to be accepted by the Archives.



Figure 1: Example of mould spots on paper.

Figure 2: Dark spots at the edges indicate insect activity.

Insects can damage documents, textiles and artifacts. They live in dark, hidden places such as between tight pages in a book, in the binding or spine, or in the bottom of a box. Look for fecal matter (these may appear as small specks), spots, dark rusty stains, and smearing. Again, any of these signs are an indication that the material is high risk and is unlikely to be accepted for storage at the Archives.



Figure 3: Book lice are very small.

Figure 4: Look for fecal matter and holes in the binding.

The Archives generally avoids bringing in textiles, as moths can be impossible to detect, especially as larvae, and once mature can cause enormous damage. Wooden objects likewise are high risk, as beetle larvae can lie undetected for years and, once fully grown, multiply quickly.

5. Giving records: Gifts

When materials are gifted to the Archives, we will own and manage them indefinitely in accordance with our mandate. Records can be gifted as a **donation** or **bequest**. Once gifted, the materials may be used or made available by the Archives for public consultation through the Reference Room, for photo reproduction orders, digitization projects, etc.

a) Donations

Reasons for donating records can vary, but often the donor wants to give records to the Archives to ensure their physical preservation, and allow for public access for research and/or publication purposes. Donating records permits the Archives to put our resources into the arrangement, description, and digitization of the records. An acquisition of this nature requires a Deed of Gift.

b) Bequests

A bequest occurs when an individual has willed records to the Archives. These posthumous gifts require different paperwork than regular gifts. Please contact us for more information should you wish to remember the Archives in your will.

6. Giving records: Deposits

When records are acquired by the Archives by deposit, we only hold these materials temporarily, and ownership remains with the depositor. Records can be deposited in two ways: **deposits** and **loans**. In general, the Archives will not manage the deposited records, meaning that reference services, photo reproduction orders, and/or digitization projects are not possible in most instances. Also, since we do not own the records, the Archives cannot devote resources to the arrangement or description of the materials. As a result, the Archives rarely accepts deposits that will not be donated at a later time.

a) Deposits

A donor typically places records on deposit so that the Archives can ensure physical safekeeping of records or to allow for public access over the course of many years, without giving up ownership of the records. Each deposit agreement will include a clause specifying how long the Archives will hold the records. A deposit frequently leads to a donation.

NOTE: Potential depositors should be sure that their use of the materials has come to an end, as we do not have the resources to facilitate “operational” access to these records once they are in our custody.

b) Loans

A loan agreement is entered into when the Archives takes temporary control of an individual/organization’s records, often for an expressed purpose. Loans enable the Archives to include original or copies of materials from outside our collections in exhibits, or for preservation purposes.

7. Buying records

Unfortunately, the Archives does not normally have a budget to purchase community records. Our budget is approved annually by the City of Ottawa’s Council, and we are 100% supported by Ottawa taxpayers.

8. Agreement

The Archives enter different types of agreements with donors, based on a standard form with terms that satisfy the needs of both parties. Below are the most common elements included in agreements.

a) Deed or agreement

The Archives requires formal agreements to receive materials from the public. Gifts are completed using a Deed of Gift or Donation Agreement, whereas loans involve a Loan Agreement. A donor or lender may negotiate with the Archives to arrive at suitable terms and conditions, especially involving issues of **access** and **copyright**. The agreement is then executed to provide for the legal conveyance of the material to the Archives.

b) Access

Archives were first created in order to provide public access to records. However, where donors wish to impose restrictions on access to certain records, especially in relation to sensitive information, the Archives may agree to do so. There may also be legislation requiring access to be restricted for reasons of privacy, as in the case of personal health information. A donor should discuss any access concerns with an archivist. Please note, however, that records cannot and will not be restricted forever.

c) Copyright

While the transfer of copyright is a standard term in the donation agreement, the donor may negotiate with the Archives to arrive at an alternate arrangement. If the materials you wish to donate or lend to the Archives contain material under copyright protection, such as photographs or music, it is helpful to know who holds the copyright (often the creator, such as the photographer or the writer of the music).

9. Delivery

An archivist will work with you to arrange delivery of materials to the Archives. If there are fewer than five boxes, you may drop your records off at the Archives. For larger donations, or if you need assistance, we may come to pick up the records. Alternately, you may ship them through a delivery service. An archivist can provide advice on packing your records should you wish to have them delivered by a third-party service. Due to limited resources, donors will be responsible for delivery costs if sending materials from outside the City limits.

Sometimes a Deed of Gift can be signed upon delivery, but more often we will use a temporary custody form to confirm that the Archives is holding the materials. The Deed of Gift will only be signed once the records have been appraised and their acquisition approved by the City Archivist.

a) Triage

Upon delivery, any items that enter the Central Archives building at 100 Tallwood Drive must first go to our triage room, except for new, store-bought goods. This prevents contamination of existing collections should pests or mould be present.

In triage, our staff will examine each item and box for pests and, if any evidence is found, then they are immediately bagged and placed in quarantine and when time allows, will be carefully examined in detail. As mentioned above, it is preferable to review your materials in advance and only deliver those clear of pests and mould due to the cost, time and effort required when dealing with contaminated materials.

10. Tax Receipts

The City of Ottawa can provide tax receipts for goods donated by the public through the Archives Branch. This includes donated archival collections and other materials that support the Archives' programming and operations (such as equipment or other property) but does not apply to loans or deposited collections.

Receipts show the appraised value as of the date of donation, and the donor may enter this amount as a charitable donation on an applicable tax return. The tax receipt may be applied in whole or in part as a tax credit beginning in the year in which the Deed of Gift was concluded. This is true regardless of the date of the monetary appraisal of the property or the date of issue of the tax receipt. The donor can spread any credit that was not used for the year of the donation over the five years following the donation.

Typically, the Archives can request that a tax receipt be issued by our Financial Services Unit in the year following the signing of the donation agreement. However, several factors can affect the timing for issuing a tax receipt, including the quantity, organization, and physical condition of the documents making up the donation; the availability of appraisers; and the time of year.

Below are some of the requirements which must be met for a tax receipt to be provided following a donation to the Archives.

Note: This guide is for information purposes only. For authoritative advice concerning your taxes, it is suggested that you contact the Canada Revenue Agency (C.R.A.). You may also wish to refer to a tax lawyer and/or an accountant.

a) Corporate policy

The Archives must abide by the City of Ottawa's donation policies and related procedures (available upon request).

b) Conveyance

A donor wishing to receive a tax receipt for a donation must first ensure that the materials have been formally conveyed to the Archives through the signed Deed of Gift.

c) Value

Due to administrative costs, materials must be expected to be valued above \$500 in order to be eligible for a tax receipt. Exceptions may be possible for materials accompanied by a third-party monetary appraisal.

d) Request

The Archives can only offer tax receipts as initiated by the donor. If you are interested in pursuing a tax receipt for donated materials, you must first contact the Archives.

e) Monetary appraisals

In order to receive a tax receipt for donated archival materials, an appraisal for monetary value must be performed. This appraisal may be conducted by the Archives or by an external appraiser. In either case, it will generate a fair market value which is used on the tax receipt. Fair market value is defined by the Canada Revenue Agency as the highest price that property would bring in an open and unrestricted market, between a willing buyer and a willing seller who are both knowledgeable, informed, and prudent, and who are acting independently of each other. The Archives may cover the cost of monetary appraisals.

Donors are free to engage a qualified external appraiser, whose appraisal report may be used to request a tax receipt provided the appraiser has followed relevant professional standards, including the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal and Practice (U.S.P.A.P.). The Archives cannot accept external appraisal reports which do not meet such standards.

The Archives, following advice from C.R.A., has trained members of its staff to perform monetary appraisals for archival donations of up to \$1,000. The Archives ensures that these employees do not have a personal financial interest in the acquisition of the archival materials and that they are not in any conflict of interest with the donors.

For the purposes of carrying out monetary appraisals of materials expected to be valued above \$1,000, the Archives will contract an independent external appraiser. Appraisers are selected from a list of local specialists according to their area of knowledge.

If the donor wishes to contest a monetary appraisal performed or contracted out by the Archives and wishes to obtain other opinions concerning the value, the donor is free to contact the Archives. If any additional monetary appraisals are required, however, such costs must be paid for by the donor.

For further information on Gifts and Income Tax, see the [Canada Revenue Agency pamphlet P113](#).

f) Certification of Cultural Property

Archival donations with a value of more than \$5,000 may be submitted to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board (C.C.P.E.R.B.) to request certification of the donation as cultural property. As a Class A repository, the Archives can put forward applications for C.C.P.E.R.B. certification of your donated archival material, should it be

warranted. Since there is only a slight difference between a City of Ottawa tax receipt for a charitable donation and a federal tax certificate where the donated materials are valued at \$5,000 or less, the Archives does not prepare requests for certification as cultural property for such donations, in accordance with best practice as recommended by C.C.P.E.R.B.

For the appraisal of materials for Board review, an external appraiser will be required at the expense of the donor. The receipt for a tax deduction from the federal and provincial governments is sent to the donor only after the Review Board has sent the Archives a copy of the letter issuing the tax receipt (Form T-871).

For complete details on C.C.P.E.R.B. and what qualifies as cultural property, please refer to the [Review Board's website](#).

NOTE: Tax receipts cannot be issued by the City of Ottawa for donated archival materials for which certification by C.C.P.E.R.B. has or is being sought.

11. Contact us

If you or an organization you represent are interested in giving community records to be held and made accessible to the public at the Archives or have specific questions about a potential offer of records, please contact us.

E-mail

archives@ottawa.ca

Telephone

613-580-2857

Fax

613-580-2614

Mail

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