

Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc.

Archives Policy

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out the criteria for the management, acquisition, handling, arrangement, cataloguing, and storage of, and access to, the archives collection of the Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc.

This is a working document and will be regularly reviewed to ensure its relevance and applicability.

2. Definitions

An **Accession** is an item or a number of items that are received into the collection at the same time and from the same source. Related items received at different times or from different sources should be accessioned separately.

Archival collection means the collection of *archives* acquired or accumulated by the Society for the purpose of preservation and access (including the Society's own archives).

Archives means *records* (regardless of format) created or accumulated by a person or family in the course of their life or lives or by a business or organization in the course of its activities and transactions, and kept because of the ongoing value of the information they contain or that may be derived from them.

Archives Committee means the committee appointed under Section 3

Artefacts means articles, items and objects (kept for their significance display or sentimental value or because of their connection to a person, place or event, than for their informational value) including:

- clothing, costumes, textiles, crafts and furnishings
- furniture, machinery, equipment (domestic or commercial)
- published books, journals, newsletters, etc.
- works of art
- firearms and weapons,
- signs, plaques, badges, etc.

Honorary Archivist means one or more persons appointed by the Archives Committee in accordance with Section 3

Local area means Port Macquarie and the Hastings area, and other adjoining areas as may be agreed by the *Society's* Managing Committee from time to time

Museum means the Port Macquarie Historical Museum.

Records means all manner of communication or means of recording or transmitting information, and includes:

- correspondence, letters, facsimiles and electronic mail
- diaries, minute books
- ledgers, journals and other accounting records
- reports
- certificates and diplomas
- record copies of books, journals, newsletters etc. produced by the person or organisation
- plans, maps, and other cartographic or architectural drawings
- paintings, watercolours, drawings and other artworks
- contracts, agreements, deeds, conveyances, etc.
- files and dossiers

- photographs, negatives, slides, films, tape recordings, cassettes, video recordings
- CDs, DVDs, floppy discs, USB drives
- electronic formats such as word processing files, spreadsheets and databases

Society means the Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc., and, where the context requires, includes individual members and volunteers

3. Management

The Society's Management Committee will appoint an Archives Committee to oversee the management of the archival collection and to establish and review the Society's policies (including this policy) and procedures relating to the archival collection.

The Archives Committee may appoint one or more Honorary Archivists to administer the archival collection in accordance with such approved policies and procedures.

The archival collection shall be managed in accordance with this policy document and associated procedures.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Society's members and volunteers working with the archival collection will be responsible for implementing this policy and its associated procedures, under the direction of the Archives Committee and any duly appointed Honorary Archivists.

The Archives Committee will be responsible for training members and volunteers in the policy and its associated procedures.

5. Selection Criteria

The Society will collect archives of:

- people and families who have a long connection with, or who have made a substantial contribution to, the local area, and
- businesses and community organizations that have been based in the local area.

The Society may also collect archives of persons or organizations from outside the local area where the archives contain material with a strong or direct relationship with the local area or contain information about the local area. In such cases, the Society may choose to dispose of material that does not relate to the local area by donation or sale to another society or organization.

In determining whether to collect archives, the following factors will be considered:

- whether the archives are relevant to the purposes and collection aims of the Society
- whether the provenance or origin of the archives is clearly established, and if not, whether the information contained in the archives is reliable or verifiable
- whether the archives are historically relevant or significant, and if not, whether the information contained is unique and/or potentially useful
- whether the archives are in good condition, and if not, whether the information or research potential justifies the potential cost of preservation and/or storage
- whether the Society has the capacity to manage the acquisition, storage, cataloguing and care of the archives, and if not, whether the archives would be at significant risk if not acquired by the Society

- whether the donor/vendor has the legal right to donate/sell the archives to the Society and will transfer ownership to the Society unconditionally, and if not, whether the archives would be at significant risk if not collected by the Society, and whether the Society could be at financial risk if collecting the archives without acquiring unconditional ownership
- whether the archives (or part thereof) is a duplicate or copy of material already in the Society's collection, and if so, whether acquisition would enable the Society to replace material in poor condition

When considering the acquisition of archives of community organizations, the Society will apply the provisions of the *Model Records Retention Schedule for Community Organisations*.

The Society will also apply the provisions of the *Model Records Retention Schedule for Community Organisations* to the Society's own records when adding its own archives to the archival collection.

6. Acquisition

An *Archives Donation Form* (or an *Artefact Donation Advice Form* or an *Artefact Acceptance Form*) must be completed in full and signed by the donor for all archives donated to the Society. The donation form should clearly state that the donor:

- asserts that the donor owns the material and has the right to donate it
- donates the material unconditionally to the Society
- assigns to the Society such copyright as the donor owns in the material
- assigns to the Society the right to determine access to the material (subject to any temporary restrictions the donor may stipulate to protect the privacy of living persons)

Where the Society acquires archives by purchase, the purchase must be accompanied by appropriate documentation such as a bill of sale, invoice, receipt, etc. identifying the vendor, the price paid and the material acquired. If acquired at an auction, a copy of the auction catalogue should also be retained.

Acquisitions should be formally accessioned as soon as possible, preferably the same day the Society takes possession.

7. Accessioning

The principal purpose of accessioning is to ensure that the archives remain identifiable. Unaccessioned archives risk losing their identity and consequently their reliability.

Each acquisition (whether a single item or several boxes) should be treated as a separate accession (i.e. not as an addition to a previous accession), although the accession documentation should contain cross-references to any related accessions).

A record of each accession shall be made in the form determined by the Archives Committee. Each accession will be assigned a unique number, and that number shall be recorded appropriately on each box or container included in the accession and/or on labels attached to individual items.

8. Appraisal

The purpose of appraisal is to ensure that the archives are in accordance with the Society's collection policy, and that the archives are what they purports to be.

All archives should be appraised as soon as possible after accessioning. In the case of large or complex acquisitions, a preliminary appraisal report might be prepared to determine whether accession contains archives worth keeping, and then further, more detailed, appraisal might be carried out in conjunction with the arrangement and description of the material.

A brief appraisal report should be completed for each accession (or related accessions), identifying:

- who created or accumulated the archives (provenance)
- where the archives came from
- the type and quantity of the material comprising the archives

The appraisal report will conclude with recommendations for keeping or disposal of some or all of the archives. Recommendations for disposal will include recommendations as to the manner of disposal (e.g. destruction, return to donor, sale, or donation to another organization).

The Archives Committee has the responsibility for approving appraisal recommendations.

9. Disposal (de-accessioning)

The disposal of material, in accordance with approved appraisal recommendations, must be properly recorded. This may be done by annotating the original accession records, or by creating a separate de-accession record in a form determined by the Archives Committee.

10. Arrangement and Description (Cataloguing)

Arrangement is the process of sorting archival material; **description** is the process of preparing inventories, descriptions and/or indexes of archival material to facilitate access to the information they contain.

When arranging and describing archives, the following two principles are paramount:

- **Respect for provenance**, which requires that the archives of a person or organization are not mixed or confused with the archives of another person or organisation
- **Respect for original order**, which requires that the archives be kept in the order in which they were originally kept and used.

These principles may be kept *physically* (i.e. the items comprising an archives may be sorted and stored in accordance with these principles); they must be kept *intellectually* (i.e. documentation such as inventories, descriptions and indexes must follow these principles).

In practice, when storing archival items, they may be practical reasons for storing items of similar format or size together regardless of their provenance (e.g. it is more practical to store large bound ledgers separately from folders of correspondence), provided however labelling clearly distinguishes their provenance.

Similarly, although separate inventories, descriptions and indexes must be prepared for archives of different provenance, these can be combined (especially using electronic technology) to facilitate researching across the archival collection.

Items should be labelled with the appropriate control number resulting from the arrangement and description process. Labels must be removable and/or reversible.

The Archives Committee has the responsibility of determining standards for arrangement and description.

11. Storage

The archives collection should be stored in a secure location, and if co-located with other material, such as research materials, should be clearly identified.

It is important that the storage area has an appropriate environment. Generally, it is considered that the temperature should be consistent at 20°C ±2°C and that the relative humidity should be consistent at 50% ±5%, but this is probably impossible to achieve in the absence of 24 hour air-conditioning. More importantly, the storage area should be insulated to avoid rapid or frequent fluctuations in temperature and/or relative humidity, as rapid and/or frequent fluctuations will increase the rate of degradation of the archival materials.

At the same time, it is important for regular air circulation to prevent the possible build-up of pockets of air that might, for example, encourage mould.

As far as possible, the archival items should be placed into appropriate containers, such as folders and boxes, in order to protect them from possible damage (wear and tear) when being moved or accessed. This applies to large bound volumes as much as to smaller (and seemingly more fragile) items.

Storing items flat is preferable, as it places less stress on them (especially in the case of bindings). However, this may result in the need to stack items on top of one another, which reinforces the importance of using appropriate containers.

It is less wasteful of storage space, and better for the materials, to store items of similar sizes together, even though this results in the physical separation of materials from the same accession. Recording the storage location either in the accession records, descriptive documentation or in a separate location index will enable materials to be accessed together when necessary.

12. Access

Access to the storage area should be restricted to the Archives Committee, Honorary Archivists, and volunteers working under their direction.

Members of the Society and members of the public should be given access to archival materials, subject to any restrictions placed by the relevant donor, for the purpose of research. All such access should be strictly supervised in a designated area (separate from the storage area). Access might be subject to payment of a fee, if though appropriate.

Persons granted access must agree to the following conditions:

- they will obey all instructions given concerning the handling of the materials
- they will use pencils only for note taking
- they are permitted to take digital photographs, without flash, of material of interest to their research
- any photocopying requested will be undertaken only by trained personnel
- they will not reproduce any material without the Society's permission
- they will acknowledge the source of their information in any publication