



Houston Metropolitan
Research Center

Thinking About Donating?

Before You Call

...Questions to Ask Yourself

Take a look at the materials you are interested in donating and ask yourself:

- Does this material relate to Houston?
- What type of material is it?
- How large is the collection?
- What condition is it in?
- Who created the materials and why?
- What people and topics are represented?
- Approximately what dates does it cover?
- Is there any arrangement or organization to the material?

Write this assessment down as it will help archival staff better understand the collection as a whole.

Please note: The research center does not purchase archival material. Staff cannot give tax advice or appraise the monetary value of your donation. Qualified appraisers can be found through the American Society of Appraisers (ASA) and the International Society of Appraisers (ISA).

Donation Process

Contact the Research Center to speak to an archivist about your potential donation. The archivist will determine if the materials align with our collecting scope. If it is decided that the materials are a good fit for our collection, then we will move forward in the donation process.

Some of the things we collect:

- Letters
- Diaries
- Speeches
- Business records
- Legal documents
- Architectural drawings
- Brochures and flyers
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks

- Maps
- Audiovisual material
- Digital files

Before your materials are officially added to our collection, an archivist will ask you to fill out a Donor Agreement form. This is a necessary step to give the archive legal ownership and custody of the material.

Processing the Collection

Preparing archival collections for use by researchers is a detailed operation. When your materials arrive to the archive, they are accessioned. This is the moment they become a part of our collections. Your donation is then further evaluated to determine its place in the processing queue. “Processing” refers to the stage where materials are re-housed, organized, cataloged, and described.

Supporting Your Donation

Processing material can be a shared responsibility between the donor and the archivist. Remember that assessment? Any descriptive and organizational information about the contents a donor provides will help staff accurately describe the material. Donors can also help write biographical and historical notes to better relay important information to researchers.

You may also consider applying to volunteer at the research center or supporting us with monetary donations to assist towards the arrangement, cataloging, digitization, and conservation of donations. Your time and monetary donations are highly appreciated!

Donor FAQs

I have materials I would like to donate, what should I do?

- Make note of what you have and contact the Research Center to discuss the material and their suitability for the archive.

Should I arrange or separate material before you look at it?

- Try to maintain the order your material has been in. Only separate out material you know you don't want to donate.

Is there a formal procedure to donating materials?

- Yes, all donors are required to read and sign a Donor Agreement Form.

How do the materials get to the archive?

- We allow drop-off at the archive or staff can pick up the material. If you live outside of the Houston area, please contact us to make arrangements.

What happens once the materials are at the archive?

- Materials are placed in a processing queue and will be arranged according to archival priorities.

I'm still not sure if my stuff fits the archive.

- Contact the center to speak to an archivist about the material. You can email the center at txr.reference@houstontx.gov or call 832.393.1662.

Our mission is to locate, preserve, and make available the documentary evidence of Houston's history.

When you donate your material to the Research Center, your history becomes a part of our community's collective memory. Researchers and the general public may find your material both interesting and of value to their work.

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