



# Northeastern University

## *University Libraries*

### **INFORMATION FOR JUSTICE COLLECTION DONORS**

#### **Preserving the History of Boston's Diversity**

The Archives and Special Collections at Northeastern University Library houses and carefully curates one of the largest collection of historical records relating to Boston's fight for social justice. Our charge is to preserve the history of Boston's social movements, including civil and political rights, immigrant rights, homelessness, urban and environmental justice, the history of Boston's African American, Chinese, LGBT, Latino and other communities, and Boston's various neighborhoods' built and natural environments. The primary source materials we collect and make available are used by community members, students, faculty, scholars, journalists, and others from across the world as the evidence on which stories, histories, and biographies are built. The use of these records will lead to a deeper understanding of the past. An understanding of the past can help better understand the region's present, and might even inspire the next generation of leaders to continue the fight for equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.

#### **What to Donate**

Types of records we regularly look for include organizational administrative records, organizational program records, and personal and family material. The following are lists of what types of records typically appear in these types of collections. Please note that these lists should not be viewed as comprehensive.

##### *Organizational Collections often include:*

Programmatic records, including Audio visual materials (photographs, video and audio tapes), planning documents, program evaluations, project reports, training manuals.

Administrative records, including constitution/bylaws, annual and planning reports, correspondence, memoranda, meeting minutes, agendas with backing documentation, publications (newsletters, brochures, etc.), budgets, financial statements and audit reports, job descriptions, newspaper clippings about the organization, organizational charts and historical summaries, policy and procedure manuals, press releases and public relations material, fund-raising materials.

##### *Personal Collections often include:*

Letters, diaries, speeches, scrapbooks, autobiographical sketches, photographs, films, audio and video tapes. Files related to professional and/or volunteer work.

## **The Donation Process**

If you are interested in donating organizational records or personal papers to Northeastern, please contact the University Archivist and Head of Special Collections, Giordana Mecagni (617.373.8318; archives@neu.edu). Typical steps in the process include:

- **Evaluation:** Archives staff visit your home, office, attic, basement, or storage space and work with you to identify historically significant materials
- **Gift agreement:** Archives staff will create a Gift Agreement, outlining the materials to be transferred. Title and copyrights on unpublished materials are transferred when the donor signs the agreement. It is important for donors to transfer copyright with donated unpublished records so that the Archives has the ability to allow scholars to quote from records. Stipulations for access restrictions (e.g. until donor's death) are negotiated and included at this time.
- **Transportation preparation:** Archives staff will pack material from file cabinets into boxes and as needed. Because the research value of historical materials may be diminished if items are removed or rearranged, donors are encouraged to contact the Archives before discarding or rearranging materials.
- **Transfer:** Northeastern arranges for the material to be picked up and delivered to the Archives.

## **Collection Care**

Once at the Archives, collections are housed in an area with strict environmental controls to enhance preservation of historical materials. Strict security measures are also in place to safeguard the collections. No materials circulate; records are retrieved for researchers and used in the Archives' supervised research room, with a reference assistance on hand to assist as needed.

## **Research Access**

*Accession level description:*

All collections are accessioned promptly into our collections control system. The goal of accessioning is to establish sufficient intellectual and physical control to enable a basic level of discovery and retrieval. Accession level description steps often include:

- Records may be re-housed in archival-quality containers
- Records are identified by activity/function
- The containers are numbered and located in a tracking system
- Box contents are described or a folder list is created
- A catalog record is created in Northeastern's online catalog so that basic information about the collection is electronically available to researchers.
- A description of the collection is included on the Archives' website.

*Full (finding aid) description:*

When resources become available (via a grant or private donation), Archives staff will prepare a more detailed cataloging record and describe the collection more fully. Collections are arranged and described by experienced, professional archivists. The resulting finding aid or guide to the collection is posted on the Archives website, making it available to anyone with Internet access. The finding aid includes:

- A brief biography of the creator;
- A scope note describing the contents of the collection as a whole;
- Additional detailed series descriptions for its components; and access points,
- Standardized terms that describe the creator, activities, and subject matter of the collection.
- The catalog record in Northeastern's system is revised to reflect the additional descriptive information and access points

More extensive preservation, reformatting, and digitizing may be applied to the collection materials if deemed necessary, and announcements are made about a collection's availability. Including:

- Selected material might be earmarked for digitization and placed permanently in Northeastern's digital repository
- A/V material on obsolete media might be transferred to more modern formats
- The completion of the finding aid is announced to listservs, publications, and interested parties
- Completed collections may be the subject of a library exhibit or lecture.

For further information or questions, please contact the University Archivist and Head of Special Collections, Giordana Mecagni (617.373.8318; [archives@neu.edu](mailto:archives@neu.edu)).