Procedure: Noel Butlin Archives Centre collecting

Purpose

To specify procedures for the acquisition of material which the Noel Butlin Archives Centre (NBAC) seeks for its collection.

Procedure

Application of policy: provenance

1. The NBAC collects the records of businesses which are nationally significant in respect to their:

- operation in many arenas (nationally or internationally);
- contribution to the national economy and society;
- unique and ground breaking nature; and
- longevity.

2. It will also collect records where few records of an industry survive and the records form a representative sample of broader national activity which is not documented elsewhere.

3. The NBAC concentrates on the records of the company's principal activity or 'core business' and does not necessarily take the records of all subsidiary functions undertaken or businesses acquired as a result of diversification or expansion.

4. The NBAC collects the records of industrial organisations registered with the Fair Work Commission. Generally it collects the records of the central administration of the industrial organisation, but also of branches where the branch operated as the central administration, was autonomous in its operations, or undertook nationally significant activities. Records of the predecessors of these organisations are also collected.

5. The records may exist as part of formal recordkeeping systems or form part of a collection of material accumulated by a trade union official.

6. The NBAC collects records of nationally significant professional associations and industry bodies which are:

- peak bodies representing an industry or professional group at the national level;

- organisations related to the working environment, particularly to sectors already represented in NBAC collections; or
- active and influential in social and political arenas.

7. The NBAC seeks to acquire the records of business people, union officials, and others closely associated with business and the labour movement where they contain records of a nationally significant business, federally registered union, nationally significant professional association or industrial body or add significantly to their official records. These ‘personal papers’ often contain material which documents action conducted on behalf of the business or organisation and may contain confidential records not included in the organisation’s own records.

Application of policy: continuing value

8. The NBAC uses tools such as the Trade Union Records Disposal Guide and Schedule, jointly developed by the Noel Butlin Archives Centre and the University of Melbourne Archives, as well as National Archives’ records authorities, to determine continuing value.

9. Records of continuing value include (but are not limited to):

- minutes and agenda papers of decision-making bodies such as a board of directors, federal executive committee, policy committee, or an annual general meeting of members or shareholders;
- prospectuses, certificates of incorporation, memoranda and articles of association, and rules;
- records documenting policy development, precedent and high-profile cases, high-level negotiations and agreements, significant research, key business activities and performance and activity reporting;
- correspondence and diaries of the chairman of directors, managing director, branch managers, and office-bearers;
- share registers, balance sheets, profit and loss accounts, and ledgers;
- membership data and staff employment records including personal and workplace details and dates of enrolment or employment;
- audio-visual and photographic material documenting the organisation’s development, activities, staff and members, such as photographs and films of people, buildings and events, and oral histories of significant people; and

* master sets of publications such as annual reports, journals, newsletters, media releases, conference proceedings and promotional material such as brochures and catalogues.

10. Personal papers are assessed for continuing value with reference to the degree of duplication with official records, and the person's role and the significance of their contribution to the business, organisation or the labour movement.

11. Material not of continuing value includes:

* routine correspondence received as a union member or employee;
* copies of meeting minutes (where the official set of minutes is held by the Archives);
* personal copies of employment and membership records;
* day-to-day operational records created to support business efficiency and accountability;
* financial records such as bank statements, invoices, receipts, petty cash books and cheque butts;
* drafts and proofs of publications, and research data and bibliographic information which has been incorporated into publications; and
* newsletters and circulars where master sets are held and the publications are readily available elsewhere.

Application of policy: format and condition

12. Paper records include files, letters received, copies of letters sent, memoranda, minutes, agenda, reports, submissions, faxes, printouts of emails, manuscripts, diaries, notebooks, registers, index cards, drawings, maps and plans. Printed and published material is accepted when it is included on a file or as part of a master set of publications. Collections of published articles, newspapers and books are not accepted where these are readily available elsewhere, such as in the University Library or the National Library of Australia.

13. Audio-visual records such as audiotapes and cassettes, film, videocassettes, compact disks and DVDs are accepted where they are in playable condition. The content is migrated to a more stable medium where possible to ensure the preservation and accessibility of the content, and digital copies made are stored in the University's digital repository.

14. Photographs in the form of contact prints, negatives, slides and digital images (either on compact disk or in electronic form) are accepted. Digital images are stored in the University's digital repository with appropriate metadata attached.

15. Records created and maintained in digital form are accepted and held in the University's digital repository with appropriate metadata and access controls where appropriate. Electronic records on floppy disks and other superseded formats are only accepted if the electronic files can be accessed and the content is not already held in paper format. The NBAC may request conversion to standard formats to support preservation of the digital content.

16. The NBAC accepts significant objects and memorabilia, such as medals, trophies, plaques, banners and commemorative merchandise as a record of the activities of the depositing organisation, but does not seek to collect artworks or samples of merchandise.

Application of policy: subject matter

17. Areas of collecting strength include:

* pastoral industry, farming enterprises and agricultural companies;
* forestry and timber milling businesses;
* stevedoring and shipping companies;
* companies involved in financing or dealing in the products of agricultural, mining, forestry or maritime industries;
* manufacturing businesses based on agricultural, mining or forestry products;
* employer groups and trade unions representing agricultural, mining or forestry sectors;
* the banking and finance industry;
* the health industry including friendly societies and responses to HIV/AIDS; and
* professional associations in the education, health, immigration, and information sectors.

Acquisition

18. All material offered to the NBAC is assessed against the collection policy and the procedure for the application of the policy principles. Advice is provided to the owners of the records on the disposal of material which is not required by the NBAC, including referral to more appropriate archives institutions.

19. Transfer of ownership effected by a Deed of Gift is the preferred form of deposit in the NBAC. Deposits under existing Deposit Agreements are also accepted. The NBAC does not purchase records. However it does accept donation of records under the Commonwealth Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

20. It is the NBAC's preference to receive hard-copy records organised in their original order, housed in suitable folders and boxes, and listed by the organisation or person transferring them. Electronic records similarly require contextual documentation including technical and content metadata.

Access

21. The NBAC acquires records for the purpose of research and expects that records are made available to the public immediately or at least when they are twenty years old (in line with access to government records). While some information may be restricted for a longer period, the NBAC does not accept transfer of material with unrealistic restrictions on access, including closure in perpetuity. Any restrictions on access are to be specified at the time of acquisition.

Relationship to other collections

22. Records which fall within the collecting policy are held by a number of other institutions with overlapping collecting policies. These include the University of Melbourne Archives and other university archives, manuscript collections in state libraries, the National Library of Australia, and the National Film and Sound Archive. The NBAC liaises with these institutions to ensure that records are held in the most appropriate institution and that appropriate access, disposal and storage conditions are met.

Review of collection

23. Recommendations for disposal of material from collections are made when detailed examination of the records is undertaken during archival description work. Records are deaccessioned from the collection, in consultation with the owners:

* to remove duplicated or lower value material;
* to allow the repatriation of cultural property;
* where the records have been lost or returned permanently to their owners; or
* where damage or deterioration makes records unreadable or unmanageable.

24. Material owned by the University may be deaccessioned by destruction (in accordance with the disposal recommendations) or by offer to another institution, in accordance with University asset disposal procedures.

25. Unsolicited material which does not meet the collecting policy is offered back to the owner with a recommendation of a more appropriate collecting institution. Where the owner cannot be contacted, the material may be deaccessioned by destruction or offer to another institution.

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