

Center for Arkansas History and Culture (CAHC)

Collection Development Guidelines – (February 2026)

Purpose: Provide clear guidance for building, stewarding, and providing access to CAHC’s mission-centered collections, in alignment with our vision as UA Little Rock’s **teaching archive**—training graduate assistants and interns through a structured, competency-based program—and as a public-facing resource for Arkansas history and K–12/college classrooms.

1) Mission & Collecting Philosophy

CAHC collects, preserves, and provides access to materials documenting the people, places, and organizations of Arkansas. We prioritize materials that:

- Advance research, teaching, exhibitions, and community learning.
- Complement and deepen CAHC’s established strengths.
- Are stewardable within our staff, space, legal, and preservation capacities (including the total cost of stewardship).

CAHC is committed to ethical collecting, transparency with donors and communities, and broad, equitable access that respects privacy, donor agreements, and legal requirements.

Teaching archive commitments. CAHC provides hands-on training for graduate assistants and interns, grounded in archival theory and practice, with clear learning outcomes and assessments. Students work on substantial projects (processing, digitization, metadata creation, and exhibits) that lead to professional portfolios. These projects, combined with coursework and faculty partnerships in UA Little Rock’s Public History program, create pathways for careers in archives, libraries, and museums.

2) Collecting Scope

Geographic focus: Arkansas statewide, with an emphasis on Little Rock/Pulaski County and Arkansas institutions and people who have statewide influence. Materials with strong Arkansas ties, even if created outside the state, are included. To highlight the state’s connection to the world, documentation of Arkansas institutions’ international work and global networks is also collected.

Chronological scope: Territorial era to present, with a focus on the late 19th through 21st centuries.

Language: Predominantly English, with special consideration given to non-English materials where image dominates text or the work is of significant importance to the subject areas.

Communities & subjects (priority areas reflecting strengths):

- **Arkansas's global connections:** International development, philanthropy, trade, migration, and other transnational ties that illuminate the state's impact beyond its borders.
- **Arkansas politics & public policy:** Governors, legislators, constitutional conventions, statewide campaigns, civic groups, courts, and administrative agencies.
- **Arts, culture, & music:** Arkansas musicians, artists, writers; cultural organizations; and community arts.
- **Civil rights & education:** Desegregation, Little Rock Central High, school reform, and community organizing.
- **Labor & economic life:** Unions, worker organizations, industries, farms, and small businesses.
- **Little Rock's urban fabric:** Planning organizations, public utilities, photographic documentation, and architecture.
- **Under-documented communities:** African American, Indigenous, immigrant and refugee communities, LGBTQ+, rural and working-class Arkansans, and other groups historically underrepresented in archives.
- **Women's history and organizations:** Clubs, associations, suffrage, women's leadership, and cultural production.

Formats collected:

- **Documents (print and born digital):** Personal papers, organizational records, minutes, reports, correspondence, oral history transcripts, scrapbooks, and financial and legal documents.
- **Photographs and graphic materials:** Negatives, prints, slides, postcards, engravings, posters, broadsides, maps, and digital images. Preference given to identified/dated images.
- **Audiovisual recordings:** Audio cassettes, audiotapes, LPs, films, videotapes (e.g., VHS and DV cassettes), and born-digital recordings. Preference given to uncopyrighted/non-commercial materials.
- **Born digital:** CDs, DVDs, floppy disks, external hard drives, and email correspondence.
- **Ephemera:** Printed materials that document Arkansas public life and culture, such as advertisements, tickets, brochures, and pamphlets.

Selectively collected formats: Websites and social media data; datasets; and 3D artifacts (e.g., plaques), copyrighted audiovisual materials, and restricted materials that are closely tied to documentary collections where context is strong, research value is high, and storage/preservation are feasible.

Out of scope formats: materials without an Arkansas focus; 3D artifacts lacking documentary context; materials beyond our preservation capacity; widely accessible published materials (e.g., books and commercial films); duplicate materials; materials missing provenance or with unresolved legal status; hazardous materials.

Digitized surrogates: Emphasis is placed on acquiring materials in their original states. However, if preservation concerns or storage needs cause undue burden, the materials can be digitized, with the digitized files retained and the original materials deaccessioned. Originals will be retained when they hold display, artifactual, or provenance value; Deaccession of originals

after digitization occurs only when artifactual/exhibit value is minimal and after documented review.

3) Acquisition & Appraisal

Acquisition methods: Donation or institutional transfer, with rare exceptions for purchases. All accessions require a signed deed/gift agreement that specifies rights, restrictions, and any conditions.

Appraisal criteria (applied equitably):

1. **Relevance** to Arkansas and to CAHC priority areas.
2. **Significance & research value** (evidential, informational, artifactual).
3. **Uniqueness & provenance** (documented origin, creator context, custodial history).
4. **Condition & risks** (hazards, privacy/PII, preservation needs).
5. **Rights** (copyright, licenses, privacy expectations, donor restrictions).
6. **Extent & description feasibility** (staffing, storage, processing).
7. **Total cost of stewardship** from acquisition through long-term preservation and access.
8. **Overlap/fit** with regional repositories (CAHC will refer donors elsewhere when material is better served at another archive).

Born-digital intake: CAHC accepts hard drives, removable media, cloud transfers, and email exports when feasible. Donors must identify any restrictions or known PII. Preference given to open/stable formats.

4) Accessioning & Processing

- During accessioning, CAHC staff and students inventory, stabilize, and provide basic descriptions of collections so they are discoverable before full processing is completed.
 - As a teaching archive, CAHC prioritizes educating students on full processing and preservation procedures. However, some aspects of minimal processing may be applied to optimize access across a large backlog. A deeper arrangement/description is scheduled based on research value, demand, risk, and available resources.
 - Sensitive content (e.g., PII, HIPAA/FERPA-regulated records) is flagged, restricted, or redacted in accordance with policy and applicable law.
-

5) Access & Use

- CAHC aims to provide **timely and equitable access to processed collections, both** on-site and online, in a manner consistent with donor agreements, privacy, and legal obligations.
- **Educator support:** CAHC develops classroom-ready lesson plans and primary-source sets for K–12 and undergraduate teaching.

- **Unprocessed collections** may be available by appointment, subject to staff screening. Staff may limit box counts, restrict portions, require digitization for obsolete media, or defer access when risks are present.
 - Research room use, duplication, and publication permissions follow CAHC procedures. Users must observe handling guidelines, and citations should credit CAHC.
-

6) Deaccessioning & Reappraisal

- CAHC may reappraise holdings and **deaccession** materials that fall outside the collecting scope, duplicate holdings at CAHC or other repositories, pose unmitigable preservation risks, or exceed storage capacity.
 - Assessment of materials for deaccession will utilize the collecting scope (see section 2) and appraisal criteria (see section 3). Actions will be documented, and legal/ethical obligations honored. When appropriate, materials will be returned to donors/heirs, transferred to a more suitable repository, or disposed of responsibly.
-

7) Collecting Priorities (2026–2030)

1. **Documentary photography of Arkansas people and places**, prioritizing identified/dated/located images.
 2. **Winthrop Rockefeller-related materials**, including oral histories.
 3. **Women’s leadership and organizations**, especially underrepresented voices, and regional/rural clubs and networks.
 4. **Little Rock planning, infrastructure, and built environment**, including planning organizations, utilities, and photograph collections.
 5. **Under-documented communities** in CAHC’s collection, with an emphasis on co-created documentation, oral histories, and community-archive support.
 6. **Arkansas in the world**, with a focus on Arkansas-based international organizations.
 7. **Arkansas politics and policy**, including gubernatorial/legislative records, campaigns, advocacy groups, and constitutional reform efforts.
 8. **Labor, working lives, and small businesses**, including unions and worker associations across the state.
 9. **Education, civil rights, and community organizing** since the 1950s, including ongoing school equity efforts and oral histories.
 10. **Digital heritage**, including email, documents, and audiovisual media with clear rights and manageable risk profiles.
-

8) Donor & Community Engagement

- Provide donors with clear guidance on appraisal, privacy, and rights; encourage creators to prepare inventories, contextual notes, and metadata.
- When out-of-scope gifts are offered, assist with **referrals** to more appropriate repositories.
- Collaborate with Arkansas communities and organizations to co-create documentation projects.

- Showcase collections through web exhibits and physical exhibits with partners, including UA Little Rock Downtown.
-

9) Digital Preservation & Rights

- CAHC maintains preservation copies and access derivatives where feasible; prioritizes open/stable formats; and captures basic technical and rights metadata.
 - Access copies may be limited by rights, donor restrictions, or privacy concerns. CAHC will seek permissions for online display when needed and will honor takedown requests in accordance with applicable law and policy.
-

10) Governance, Review, & Contact

- This guidance is approved by CAHC leadership and reviewed **every five years** or as needed.
- Exceptions to scope require approval by the Executive Director or Head Archivist (or designee) based on mission fit and stewardship capacity.

Contact: Center for Arkansas History and Culture (CAHC) UA Little Rock · 407 President Clinton Ave., Little Rock, AR 72201 · cahc@ualr.edu · 501-320-5780
