

City of St. John's Corporate and Operational Policy Manual

Policy Title: Archival Acquisition Policy	Policy #: 09-02-09
Last Revision Date: N/A	Policy Section: Community Services > Archives
Policy Owner: Paula French, Archives Technician	

1. Policy Statement

The mandate of the City of St. John's Archives ("the Archives") as part of the Archives and Records Management (ARM) Division is to collect, preserve and provide Access to Municipal Records of Enduring Value, regardless of media or format. At the discretion of the Archivist, the Archives also collects, preserves and provides Access to Non-Municipal Records deemed to have made a significant contribution to the City and its development.

This Policy provides direction to Archives staff on the management of the City of St. John's Archives, which provides services and support to internal staff and public researchers.

2. Definitions

"Access" means the authority to view Records.

"Accession"* means 1. An item, Fonds or Collection acquired at one time from a single source. 2. To document the addition of an item, Fonds or Collection to the Holdings of an Archives.

"Acquisition"* means 1. The process by which an item, Fonds or Collection enter the Archives' Holdings. 2. An addition to the Holdings of an Archives by transfer under an established and legally based procedure, by deposit, purchase or gift.

“Appraisal”* means the process of determining the archival value and Disposition of Records based on their former administrative, legal and fiscal use; their Evidential and Informational value; their arrangement; and their relationship to other Records.

“Archival Pre-appraisal” means the process completed by the Archivist of determining if the City Municipal Records listed in Disposition packages are correctly classified and if the Records will be retained or destroyed.

“Archival Records” means Records designated by the City Archivist that warrant continued Preservation.

“Archival Value”* means those values – administrative, fiscal, legal, intrinsic, evidential, and/or informational – which justify the Preservation of archival materials.

“Archivist” means the person employed by the City of St. John’s under the Office of the City Clerk to administer the City’s Archival Records.

“Collection”* means an artificial accumulation of documents of any source, brought together on the basis of some common characteristic, such as subject, language, medium or type of document which may be described as a unit under a common title.

“Culled Records” means Records that have been removed during Processing because they were determined by the Archivist to not meet the Mandate and lack enduring Archival Value.

“Deaccession”* means 1. The process by which an Archives formally removes material from its custody. 2. To remove an item from an Archives permanently.

“Disposition” means final destruction of Records or transfer to an Archives as permanent Records as determined by their Appraisal.

“Donor”* means a person, family or corporate body which has given materials to an archives.

“Donor Agreement” means a legal document between an Archives and another entity that establishes terms and conditions for transferring an archival resource.

“Enduring Value” means the archival value of a Record warranting preservation based on its administrative, legal, intrinsic, evidential, or informational value.

“Evidential Value”* means the value of the Records of a particular individual, family, organization or corporate body necessary to provide an authentic and adequate documentation of its organization and functioning.

“Fonds”* means the whole of the documents (Records), regardless of form or medium, created and/or accumulated and used by a particular individual, family or corporate body in the course of that creator’s activities.

“Holdings” means the whole of the City of St. John’s Archives Collections.

“Informational Value”* means the value of a Record that provides unique and permanent information for purposes of research.

“Monetary Appraisal” means the process of determining the fair market value of archival material, usually for the purpose of providing a tax receipt to a Donor for the appraised monetary value of the donation.

“Municipal Records” means Records created by the City of St. John’s during its administration and delivery of services.

“Non-Municipal Records” means Records not produced by the City of St. John’s that have been acquired by the Archives due to their archival significance.

“Preservation”* means the professional discipline of protecting materials by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage to minimize the loss of information and to extend the life of cultural property.

“Processing”* means the Accessioning, arrangement, description and proper storage of archival materials. During Processing, Preservation concerns are identified.

“Record” shall have the same meaning as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015, that is, “a record of information in any form, including a dataset, information that is machine readable, written, photographed, recorded, or stored in any manner, but does not include a computer program or a mechanism that produced records on any storage medium.”

Definitions marked with an * are taken or adapted from: Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives, *The ANLA Resource Binder for Small Archives*. St. John’s, Newfoundland: Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives.

3. Policy Requirements

3.1 Municipal Records

- a) The Archives is the official repository for all City of St. John's Municipal Records. Under the City of St. John’s Act, the City has an obligation to preserve Records of Enduring Value that document the municipality’s operations and history. All municipal departments shall transfer Records that possess Archival Value, according to retention schedules passed by Council, to the custody and control of the Archives.

- b) City Records are deemed archival based when:
 - i) their inactive period of retention has ended and they are identified as archival according to the City of St. John's Retention Schedule;
 - ii) their inactive period of retention has ended and they are identified as archival by selective retention based on recommendations by the Archivist;
 - iii) they preserve corporate memory;
 - iv) they provide evidence of significant City activities; or
 - v) they contain unique or valuable information relating to the City.

3.2 Non-Municipal Records

- a) The City of St. John's Archives may consider a donation of non-municipal material from businesses, organizations, families or individuals, if criteria include but are not limited to:
 - i) whether or not the Records meet the terms of the Mandate,
 - ii) whether or not the Records creator was based in St. John's or had a substantial relationship with the City or its citizens,
 - iii) the degree to which the Records are relevant to the development of St. John's,
 - iv) the degree to which the Records provide additional context to municipal Records that are or will be part of the Archives Holdings,
 - v) the presence of unique or valuable information in the Records, and
 - vi) the ability of the Archives to preserve the materials.
- b) Non-Municipal Records donations will be refused for reasons including but not limited to:
 - i) the Records do not meet the terms of the Acquisitions Policy or Mandate;
 - ii) the Records are subject to limitations on their use, reproduction, location, Access and disposal; or

- iii) other repositories appear to have a greater interest such as The Rooms Provincial Archives, Archives and Special Collections at Memorial University, community or specific group Archives.
When declining a donation, the Archives will make every effort to refer a Donor to another suitable repository.
- c) Donor Agreements will include a provision that all copyright be transferred to the City and will outline the terms under which the City will accept the material(s), including legal, Preservation and intellectual property control.
- d) If the Donor requires a receipt for income tax purposes, a Monetary Appraisal is required, the charge for which Donors are responsible. A receipt indicating the purchase price of the donation is acceptable in cases where the donation was recently acquired or purchased on behalf of the City.
- e) Non-Municipal Records and collections of documents may be loaned to the City on a temporary basis for the purposes of copying or displaying. This material shall not be acquired as a permanent loan or an Accession to the Archives.
- f) The City of St. John's Archives may Deaccession Records or documents in its Holdings that fall outside of the Acquisitions Policy, or which are found to no longer be relevant after undergoing archival Appraisal. If possible, the Archives will return the materials to the Donor or transfer Deaccessioned materials to another suitable repository. If not possible, the materials will be confidentially destroyed.

4. Application

This policy applies to the City's Archives and Records Management staff.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1 All City Departments** are responsible for transferring Records that possess Archival Value, according to the retention schedules passed by Council, to the custody and control of the Archives.

5.2 Archives and Records Management (ARM) staff are responsible for:

- a) complying with the roles and responsibilities relating to Acquisition of municipal and non-municipal Records pertaining to the City of St. John's as approved by the Archivist;
- b) following retention schedules and enforcing Records Disposition;
- c) re-appraising retention schedules as required;
- d) reviewing Records Transfer sheets; and
- e) transferring Records to the Archives for disposal or permanent retention once their retention period in records management has expired.

5.3 Archives staff are responsible for:

- a) accessioning each Acquisition of municipal Records received through the Disposition process;
- b) accessioning donations;
- c) placing Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA) restrictions on Records as required;
- d) securely destroying Culled Records; and
- e) collecting, preserving, storing and maintaining intellectual control of the City's Civic Art Collection.

5.4 The Archivist is responsible for:

- a) determining which government Records warrant continued Preservation as Archival Records through Disposition rules in the retention schedule;
- b) completing Archival Pre-appraisals;
- c) directing and approving collecting priorities;
- d) meeting with prospective Donors of non-municipal Records;
- e) preparing an Appraisal report, if warranted by the size and complexity of a proposed donation;
- f) executing Donor Agreements;

- g) collecting Donor signature(s) for any Acquisition agreement; and
- h) offering to return Culled Records to Donors or securely destroy them.

6. References

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
ANLA Resource Binder for Small Archives
City of St. John's Act

7. Approval

- Position Title of Policy Owner: Archives Technician
- Position Title of Policy Writer: Policy Equity Associate
- Date of Approval from
 - Corporate Policy Committee: May 29, 2026
 - Senior Leadership Team: June 5, 2026
 - Committee of the Whole: June 9, 2026
- Date of Approval from Council: June 16, 2026

8. Monitoring and Contravention

The Archives and Records Management Division shall monitor the application of the policy.

Any contravention of the policy and/or associated procedures may be brought to the attention of the Office of the City Clerk, the Department of Finance and Corporate Services (Human Resources Division), the Office of the City Solicitor, and/or the Office of the City Manager for further investigation and appropriate action, which may include, but is not limited to, legal action and/or discipline up to and including dismissal.

9. Review Date

Five years.