

Organizing Your Personal and Family Archives



Today's presenter



Emily Reiher, WLA Director

Women & Leadership Archives

Collects and makes available permanently valuable records of women and women's organizations, which document women's lives, roles, and contributions.

Serves a wide variety of users ranging from students and scholars to the general public.



Women & Leadership Archives



- Established in 1994
- Beginnings with Mundelein College
- Piper Hall - Once Mundelein College Library
- Gannon Center and University Libraries

WLA Collecting Subject Areas

- Activism and Women's Issues
- Athletics
- Civic and Cultural Engagement
- Education
- Environment
- Mundelein College
- Public Service and Politics
- Science, Technology, and Engineering
- Social Justice
- Visual, Performing, and Fine Arts
- Women Religious



Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein

- Seeking Mundelein College Class of 1970 participants
- Brief interviews with WLA on student life
- Interviews to occur summer-fall via Zoom
- For more information: warchives@luc.edu



Defining Archives

- **Main takeaway: Archives are collections of items that have enduring value**
- Archives (noun): materials, division within an organization, organization, professional discipline, building itself; various formats, topics, and creation dates
- Archive (verb): computing term for storing data
- Archivist: individual responsible for entire range of activity related to managing archives

Working with an Archivist

- **Main takeaway: Never too soon to start a conversation**
- ArchiveGrid
 - <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/>
- Donating items to WLA
 - wlarchives@luc.edu
- Donating items to University Archives
 - <http://www.luc.edu/archives>
 - <http://www.lib.luc.edu/specialcollections/exhibits/show/covid-19>
- Donating Personal and Family Papers Brochure
 - <https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-familyrecs>

Determining Value

- **Main takeaway: Enduring value > other value**
- Monetary Value
- Sentimental value
- Archival items are unique and often one of a kind
- Items should tell your story
- Item doesn't have to be a certain age to be archival
- Rarity and uniqueness > age

Questioning Use

- **Main takeaway: Items are for use**
- Consider the reasons for saving an item
- Use of object and wear of object is part of its story
- Communication with family or others receiving items
- Different items have different sentimental value to different people

Preserving



Preserving Items (Part 1)

- **Main Takeaway: Preservation is an ongoing act**
- Preservation: preventative measures taken to minimize deterioration due to use or inherent vice (often collection level – before)
- Conservation: individual treatments to repair damage (item level - after)
- Restoration: individual treatments to repair item back to original condition (item level - after)

Preserving Items (Part 2)

- **Main Takeaway: Imagine your items as a house guest**
- Temperature
- Humidity
- (Sun)light
- Water
- Pests
- Mold
- Smoke
- Dust
- Handling

Preserving Items (Part 3)

- **Main Takeaway: Anything done to object should be reversible**
- Frequent handwashing > gloves
- Clean area free of food and drink
- Avoid using tape to repair
- Avoid household cleaners
- Store on interior walls, at least 3 inches from ground

Preserving Items (Part 4)

- **Main Takeaway: Consider the condition and composition of your items**
- Paper
- Books
- Clothing and Textiles
- Photos
- Audiovisual items
- Art
- Scrapbooks
- 3-D objects and furniture
- Potentially hazardous items

Organizing and Labeling



Buying Archival Supplies

- **Main takeaway: “Archival” is not regulated or defined**
- Photo: PAT designation
- Paper: Acid free, lignin free
- Plastic: polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester, mylar
- Writing: Pencil, PAT marker
- Buy directly from archival suppliers, art supply stores

Buying Archival Supplies: Starter Kit

- **Main Takeaway: Supplies will vary depending on what items you have**
- Pencil
- Photo marker (IDentipen)
- Acid-free boxes and folders
- Acid-free tissue paper
- Safe plastic binders
- Polyester mounts for albums
- Safe plastic sleeves for photos and paper
- Gloves*

Buying Archival Supplies: Resources

- Hobby and Fabric Stores
- Art Supply Stores
- Home Organization Stores
- Professional Framers/ Art Restorers/ Conservator
- Directly from Manufacturer
- Local Photo Studio
- Big Box Online Retailers
- Archival Suppliers ([Hollinger](#), [Gaylord](#))

Organizing Your Items

- **Main takeaway: Maintain original order**
- Vital to know what you have and where it is
- Store like with like
- Follow your own logic – clearly explain to others
- Continue checking in with family – what has value to them
- Keep old formats– there's hope for them yet!
- Consider working with vendors

Labeling Your Items

- **Main takeaway: Label what you can**
- Label photos with names – retain unique nicknames, etc.
- Label on back or on corners
- Write lightly
- Avoid sticky notes, labels, tape, metal fasteners

Digital and Sharing



Managing Digital Items (Part 1)

- **Main takeaway: Digital doesn't last forever**
- More records being created now than any other point in history
- Previously limited by technology
- Planned obsolescence
- More and more affordable digital storage costs
- Check items on regular basis and move to new formats as they become available
- Assess newest technology first

Managing Digital Items (Part 2)

- **Main takeaway: Start good data steward practices today**
- Cloud based backup
- Manage passwords and keep track of accounts
- Use widely supported software, formats, and file extensions
- Establish file name protocols that make sense to you and adhere to them
- Go through items at least annually

Sharing Items with Friends and Family

- **Main takeaway: Access is not preservation**
- Consider what would like happen to online accounts
- Multiple ways to provide access
- Use what you have
- Consider cost and effort
- Printing copies of things for posterity

Disposing of Unwanted Items

- **Main takeaway: Consider lifecycle of your items**
- Learn about local recycling practices
 - <http://www.earth911.com>
- Paper shredding: Annually by banks or community centers
- Clothing: Retailers offering “give back” bags
- Electronics, denim, textiles, shoes: manufacturers/retailers
- Household cleaners and medication: local municipalities
- General: Pickup of items from charities, resale shops, parishes, animal shelters
- General: Online resale or giveaway

Additional Resources (Part 1)

- AIC Find A Conservator
 - <https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator>
- Conservation OnLine
 - <https://cool.culturalheritage.org/>
- Connecting to Collections Care
 - <https://www.connectingtocollections.org/>
- Cornell University- Copyright Information Center
 - <https://copyright.cornell.edu/publicdomain>
- International Society of Appraisers
 - <https://www.isa-appraisers.org/>
- Library of Congress – Personal Archiving
 - <http://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/>

Additional Resources (Part 2)

- National Park Service Conserve - o - Grams
 - https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/cons_toc.html
- NEDCC Preservation Leaflets
 - <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview>
- Society of American Archivists
 - <https://www2.archivists.org/about-archives>
- Local genealogy groups
- Local public library
- Creating Family Archives: A Step-by-Step Guide to Saving Your Memories for Future Generations by Margot Note

Questions?

Emily Reiher, WLA Director
wlarchives@luc.edu

LUC.edu/wla
facebook.com/WLArchives/

