

The Museum of Modern Art

Museum Archives Policy Statement

This policy statement outlines the procedures for the maintenance and disposition of the records of The Museum of Modern Art and establishes the authority and responsibility for its Archives and Records.

I. DEFINITIONS

A.1. MoMA Archives:

Non-current records of Museum departments or programs that are selected for permanent preservation because of their art historical or socio-political value, research potential, or legal importance; these include manuscript material, audio and video recordings of museum related events, microfilm, and oral histories.

A.2. Personal and Professional Papers:

Documentation relating to an individual's private life or to personal activities is likely to be kept in his/her office; the distinction between personal, professional, and official institutional records frequently must be resolved on an independent basis. However, staff members who contribute significantly to the Museum's official activities through personal scholarly interests have been and should be encouraged to give the Museum Archives such papers as relate to their professional careers, for they constitute an essential supplement to the official records. In the same manner Trustees of the Museum should also be encouraged to give to the Museum Archives such papers as relate to their participation in the affairs of the Museum. Questions about these matters should be addressed to the Museum Archivist or the General Counsel.

B. Twentieth-Century Manuscript Collection:

Unpublished documentation, including correspondence, typescripts, photographs, ephemera and other primary source material, previously maintained by the Library and generated by organizations or individuals important to the history of twentieth-century art.

These holdings are now under the custodianship of the Archives as they require special handling and access, and they reflect the varied interests and concerns of the Museum programs. Future acquisitions in this area should include primary source material that directly addresses the history of modern and contemporary art as it relates to the work and the broadly defined mission of the Museum.

C. MoMA Records:

Non-curatorial documentation created or received by MoMA staff in the course of official Museum business, as described in the *Guide to the Records Management Program of The Museum of Modern Art*, is to be given to the Archives. All MoMA records are institutional property and cannot be destroyed or removed from the premises except in accordance with established procedures.

II. MoMA ARCHIVES

A. Responsibilities:

1. The Museum of Modern Art seeks to preserve its historical records and the professional papers of Museum curators, administrators, and associated individuals for research use. The Museum Archives is the official repository for these records.
2. The Museum Records Management Program insures the orderly transition and disposition of Museum documentation, including individual staff papers and departmental records, so that the institution's historical record is complete and uninterrupted.

B. Additional Activities:

1. The Museum of Modern Art Archives also seeks to acquire material from private sources to supplement the official record and to provide a more complete documentation of the Museum's policies and activities. Acquisition of donated material must be documented by a deed of gift or a letter detailing conditions of acceptance of such a gift; such material is to be administered under the same conditions as official institutional records.
2. The Museum Archives supplements its manuscript records by directing an oral history program for recording the reminiscences of selected former staff and other individuals with significant knowledge of the institution's history.

III. RECORDS MANAGEMENT:

1. Timely transfer of unnecessary records is important to ensuring preservation of archival materials. The Archivist reviews records and, with the advice of the Museum's General Counsel, determines which records are of sufficient historical value to warrant permanent preservation after they are no longer relevant to the Museum's current activities. The *Guide to Records Management* gives detailed instructions for transferring departmental records to the Museum Archives. It includes retention and disposal schedules that authorize periodic disposal of records, future review of records, and transfer of materials to the Archives. It was formulated and written in consultation with department heads.
2. Administrators and department heads are responsible for the creation and maintenance of documentation of activities under their jurisdiction and for the transfer of appropriate records to the Museum Archives. Since archival papers are maintained in the order in which they were created, the departments should be conscientious about preserving the integrity of current files. The archivist should be consulted before files are dismantled or transferred to other locations to insure that the provenance of records is maintained.
3. Museum staff should be aware that the policy of the Museum does not permit unauthorized destruction of institutional records. Other dispersal of institutional records is also prohibited. Records of insufficient long-term value to justify permanent preservation in the Archives can only be disposed of with the approval of the department head, the General Counsel, and the Archivist.
4. Electronic records are documents, created or received by MoMA staff in the course of official Museum business, that exist exclusively in electronic format.

Electronic records are considered institutional property and as such are governed by the Museum Archives / Records Management Program Policy. Procedures for the orderly transfer and disposition or safekeeping of these records are currently under development.

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SAA Museum Archives Section Working Group Example