



Acquisition Policy for Northern Territory Archives

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INTRODUCTION

The NT Archives Service is responsible for the preservation and management of archives of the Northern Territory government and the community. This document outlines the NT Archives Service's acquisition policy.

Background

The NT Archives Service was established in 1983 by a Cabinet Decision of the Northern Territory Government as the archival authority of the Northern Territory with the three core responsibilities to:

1. Promote efficient and economic management of government records
2. Preserve and make available permanent value government records, and
3. Provision of archival services to non-government records.

The *Information Act 2002* strengthened the role of the NT Archives Service in relation to government records and further defines the functions of the NT Archives Service as:

- a) to appraise records, and
- b) to collect, transfer and preserve archives and permanent records; and
- c) to provide access to Territory Archives; and
- d) to maintain a register of records retention and disposal schedules; and
- e) to prepare, promote and monitor compliance with archives standards; and
- f) to provide advice (including training) to enable compliance with archives standards¹.

The NT Archives Service provides these services from two locations, one in Darwin at the NT Archives Centre at Millner, and the second at Minerals House in Alice Springs.

ARCHIVES COLLECTIONS

Archives are records of organisations and individuals that have been selected for indefinite retention on the basis of their continuing value for legal, administrative, financial, scientific or historical research purposes.

Archives comprise many formats including paper records (such as files and registers), photographs, maps, plans, audio visual recordings, and digital formats.

The NT Archives Service acquires both government and community archives that have significance to the Northern Territory.

¹ *Information Act*, s. 131B

Government and community archives complement each other. There are significant advantages for researchers in being able to use both government and community archives in the same collection, including the specialised assistance provided by staff.

Government Archives

The NT Archives Service has a legislative responsibility under the *Information Act 2002* to preserve and provide access to Northern Territory Government Archives.

Government Archives are official archives of NT Government public sector organisations (including NT Government departments, local government councils, and statutory authorities) created since self-government in 1978.

Government Archives also include archives relating to the administration of the Northern Territory created by previous governments, whose functions have since been transferred to the NT Government administration. These include the South Australian Colonial and State Governments which administered the Northern Territory between 1863 and 1910, and the Commonwealth Government which administered the Northern Territory between 1911 and 1978.

Community Archives

Community Archives consist of personal archives and archives of non-government organisations.

Personal archives are created by individuals who have been active in the Northern Territory. These include war veterans, Cyclone Tracy survivors, local personalities, politicians, and members of the general public who have experienced life in the Territory.

Some personal archives collections currently held by the NT Archives Service date back to the 1838.

Types of personal archives may include:

- diaries and manuscripts,
- letters and personal papers,
- photographic prints and slides,
- scrapbooks and maps, and
- oral history interview recordings and transcripts.

Oral histories are recorded and accessioned by the NT Archives Service Oral History Program. This collection includes recordings of interviews with a vast range of people about Northern Territory life and history. The majority of interviews have been recorded since the 1970s and feature recollections of the Northern Territory dating back to the late nineteenth century.

Photographs are collected to complement other holdings such as personal papers and oral histories.

Archives of organisations may include the archives of:

- community groups and organisations,
- businesses and companies,
- churches and missions,
- political parties, trade unions and professional associations, and
- sporting clubs.
- Some community archives date back to 1860.

Types of archives from organisations may include:

- reports,
- minutes of meetings,
- correspondence,
- policy files,
- journals,
- legal documents,
- plans and posters.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

The NT Archives Service collects community archives relating to the Northern Territory which were created or accumulated within the Northern Territory or in close proximity to the Northern Territory.

Archives are collected, preserved and made accessible in two regions of the Northern Territory. The 18 degree parallel is considered the boundary between the Top End and Central Australia regions.

Archives repositories and public search rooms are located in Darwin and Alice Springs.

EXCLUSIONS

The NT Archives Service does not collect published material, works of art, artefacts or objects.

ACQUISITION PROCEDURES

Government Archives are transferred no later than 30 years after the record was created, in accordance with Section 141 (b) of the *Information Act*. The transfer application and procedures are available from the NT Archives website.

Community archives are acquired through formal agreement with donors. The NT Archives Service does not purchase collection items. Donors must provide a history of ownership and sign a statutory declaration stating that they have the authority to give the items into the care of the NT Archives Service.

Oral history interviews are conducted following nominations of individuals or projects to the Oral History Advisory Committee.

ACCESS AND COPYRIGHT

Public access to government archives is managed in accordance with Section 142 of the *Information Act*. An Access Agreement which identifies the restricted access period for the records is negotiated at the time of transfer of the records from the government agency. Government archives are open for public access 30 years after last action of the record unless it is in the public interest for the record to be restricted for a longer period. All government archives are available for public access after 100 years.² Copyright for government records rests with the Crown.

Public access to and copyright of community archives is determined with the donor at the time of acquisition and recorded on the Donation Agreement.

Public access to and copyright of oral history interviews is determined during the interview process and recorded in an Oral History Interview Access and Rights Agreement.

It is a condition of acceptance that archives collections will be available for public access either immediately or at the expiry of a specified period.

APPRAISAL

Archival records are appraised by qualified archivists for their significance to the Northern Territory, including their value as evidence for both the government and the community.

Government records are appraised in accordance with the *Information Act*. The appraisal decisions for recent records are documented in Records Retention and Disposal Schedules which are authorised by the NT Archives Service and the NT Records Service and the agency responsible for the records.

The appraisal of community archives may also take into consideration the following questions:

- Do the archives complement existing collections?
- Do the archives enhance the usefulness of other archives held in the NT Archives Service?
- Do the archives represent an area not already represented in the collection?

² *Archives Management Standard: Public Access to Government Archives in the Custody of the NT Archives Service*, August 2007

Preference is for the donor to provide a description of the material when negotiating donation, including information about the creating person or organisation of the records referred to as the provenance of the records. The NT Archives Service may not accept archives for which it cannot provide adequate storage or preservation services, or where it believes that the archives would be better preserved and made available at another collecting institution.

Oral history records are appraised by the Oral History Advisory Committee following nominations of persons or projects.

CONTACTS

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DEFINITIONS

Access	The right, opportunity, means of finding, using or retrieving information.
Appraisal	The process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept, to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations.
Archives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Records of organisations and individuals that have been selected for indefinite retention on the basis of their continuing value for legal, administrative, financial or historical research purposes.2. The name given to the repository in which an archival collection resides.3. An organisation (or part of an organisation) whose main function is to select, manage, preserve and make archival records available for use.
Archivist	A person professionally responsible for the management of archival records.
Donor	The person or organisation transferring records to a repository.
Preservation	All actions taken to retard deterioration of or prevent damage to cultural material. It involves controlling the environment and conditions of use, and may include treatment in order to maintain an object as nearly as possible in an unchanging state.

Definitions taken from the Glossary, *Keeping Archives, 3rd Edition*, (Australian Society of Archivists, Canberra, 2008), pp.633-63