

Regional History Center Collections Development Policy

Revised 07/31/2003

Introduction

The Regional History Center holds historical records in three distinct areas: NIU Archives, Regional Collections, and the local government records that are part of the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) system. Each of these areas requires separate consideration for collections development. The Center also maintains a reference collection of county and local histories, atlases and plat books, genealogical reference works, and historical or archival journals. Periodically Center staff reviews collection strengths and weaknesses to revise acquisition priorities. The Illinois State Archives determines collecting priorities and policies for the IRAD program.

Regional Collections

General Policies

The Center actively collects original manuscript sources, historical photographs, and oral histories that document the heritage of the northern Illinois region from 1800 to the present. Manuscript sources include letters, minute books, financial records, diaries, posters, maps, broadsides, scrapbooks, catalogs, programs, and unpublished histories from individuals, organizations, businesses, and families. The Center does not collect artifacts and only accepts them along with books and other print materials if they are integral to a records collection or if they have value as a reference source. Center staff makes all accession decisions based on the research value of the collection, its relative value to the overall holdings, and the resources required for transfer, processing, conservation, storage, and access. The Center does not purchase collections nor does it appraise collections for tax purposes. Normally a legal deed of gift transfers a major new accession to the Center.

Collecting Priorities

The Center confines itself to collection in the eighteen counties of northern Illinois, excluding Cook County. Major areas in which the Center actively seeks records are: agriculture, business, the environment, ethnicity, family history, genealogy, labor, politics, popular culture, urban growth, suburban sprawl, and women's history.

Current Profile

The strengths of the Center's holdings are in agricultural, business, political, women's, and family history. We will continue to accept collections in these areas but will emphasize and target acquisitions that will strengthen weaker areas. We also have a strong genealogical reference collection and will continue to build that area.

University Archives

General Policies

The Northern Illinois University Archives seeks to document all aspects of university life, to retain permanently records with special legal or administrative significance, and to maintain security copies of all student records and graduate theses. The Archives works to educate students, faculty, staff, and the public about the history of NIU from 1895 forward. To achieve these goals the Archives uses the priorities set below and the appraisal judgment of the University Archivist to assure a balanced, representative collection with strong research and administrative potential. The Archives emphasizes collecting at the college level and above in academic affairs and at the upper levels of general university administration. At the department level the Archives seeks primarily such core records as unit histories, program reviews, accreditation files, annual reports, minutes of key committees, and papers from eminent faculty. The Archives does not collect or maintain university personnel records or any of the detailed records from the university's business offices. Human Resources maintains all personnel records and many business offices use a records retention center located in the Physical Plant and operated by Materials Management.

Collecting Priorities

Serial documents and publications. The NIU Archives collects minutes of all significant campus wide boards, councils, and committees; all Board of Trustee minutes and reports; the Northern Star and the alumni magazine; academic catalogs, class schedules, student/staff directories; copies of all NIU Press publications. The Archives is not routinely downloading and printing newsletters or other publications produced only electronically.

Academic Affairs.

Highest priority is given the acquisition of extra institutional accreditation files; office files from the Provost Office and the President's Office; college and departmental annual and special reports; unit histories and program reviews; permanent student academic records (in micro format); all graduate theses and dissertations; papers from distinguished faculty including teaching, research, and publication.

Student Affairs.

This is an area in which the Archives hopes to strengthen its holdings. We collect student papers, personal diaries and correspondence; records from student organizations including off campus sororities and fraternities; copies of student publications; oral histories.

Administrative Affairs

Priorities include copies of all operating and capital budgets (appropriated and non-appropriated funds); campus development office files; all official press releases; photographs and negatives generated by the university; faculty professional association records, records from the NIU Foundation and the NIU Alumni Office; documents from extra-institutional consortia and associations.

Illinois Regional Archives Depository

The Illinois State Archives defines the collecting policy for the IRAD Program. The emphasis has been on the acquisition of tax, deed, and court records from the eighteen counties of the region.

The collection has few records from the townships and no records from the municipalities of the region. The collection is evenly split between original hard copy records and records retained on microfilm. This collection is very strong in some counties (DeKalb, Winnebago, Lake, LaSalle) and has very little from others (DuPage, Boone, Putnam, Kendall). The Illinois State Archives maintains a web site which offers a complete listing of the records in the NIU Collection and others around the state. To date the Regional History Center has not sought to add any local government records to its holdings outside the IRAD Collection.