

Guide to Archiving Architectural Materials

Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to outline the Records Retention Objectives of the Cleveland Architecture Foundation (CAF) and our recommended practices for archiving architectural materials for historical purposes.

For a guide to archiving architectural records for professional and commercial purposes, we respectfully suggest consulting the American Institute of Architects' "The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice," Section "10.5 Retaining and Archiving Records," by Evan Shu FAIA, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008.

CAF is not organized to be a repository for archive materials. Instead, CAF endeavors to develop an accessible archive of digital records of archive materials on the significant works of Greater Cleveland architects and the architecture of Greater Cleveland. Materials gifted to us are digitized and integrated into the database archive by the Cleveland Public Library (CPL), providing arrangements can be made to manage the costs of such efforts. Physical assets gifted to us are offered to CPL for introduction to their physical archive inventory, subject to their criteria. CAF and CPL reserve the right not retain assets donated based on availability spaced criteria for retention.

CAF executes Donor Agreements, Gift Agreements and Temporary Custody Agreements for digitization activities depending on the desires of our donors.

This Guide is intended to be an overview of appropriate practices for the preservation of architectural record materials for individuals and institutions that are caretakers of architectural records and may be considering their transfer to an archive or repository.

Definition:

Architectural records are documents or objects where architecture - building, engineering, planning - is the subject. Renderings and perspective drawings are valuable parts of a collection, but as stand alone documents may not adequately tell the story of a project's realization. To 'tell the story' properly, technical drawings, specifications, contracts, photographs and related project records may be needed to define the context and history of the work.

Presentation drawings are very important but are not singularly adequate to tell the story in a coherent manner and they do not reflect the 'as-built' completed design. When a building is altered or destroyed, the original records may be the only surviving representation of the original design and its intended relationship with the environment/ context.

Architectural records may include a range of material types including:

- Original Drawings: Renderings, conceptual drawings, presentation drawings, construction documents, sketchbook materials, structural drawings, detail studies.
- Reproductions: Blueprints or backline prints of the above, photographic, hectographic, photometric or plotter prints.

- Narrative Documentation: Specifications, planning documents, correspondence, office records, oral histories, computer records, project spreadsheets, contracts.
- Pictorial Documentation: Photographs, films or video records.
- Three-Dimensional Objects: Models, maquette, mock-ups, awards, product samples.

The material types listed above exist in a multitude of physical types, all of which are vulnerable to degradation at different rates and by different processes. Light, heat and humidity provide pathways for natural deterioration. Humidity and heat also provide life support for pests and molds. Light, heat and humidity are present in virtually every working environment.

Assessment of Materials Presented:

Not all architectural materials warrant conservation and/or archiving. While criteria may vary with every donor, at the level of a community's interest, the perspective of an art gallery proprietor is useful:

- How well-known is the architect?
- How interesting is the composition/ building/ rendering/ drawing?
- How famous is the subject matter of the drawing/ rendering?
- Do the documents original conceptual drawings, presentation drawings or working drawings pre-date the building's construction?
- Is the building no longer in existence?
- Was the building ever built?
- Does the building represent a standard of design excellence? Was the project a recipient of recognition and/ or design awards?
- Is the age, use or style of architecture shown important or historically significant?
- Has the building been altered since its construction? To what degree?

A goal of preservation-minded collection managers is to reduce exposure to light, heat and humidity and maintain a stable balance appropriate to the materials, thus reducing deterioration for all material types.

CAF looks at the significance of the architect, the design excellence of a given project and the likelihood of interest from scholars, faculty, students, preservationists, etc., in determining - or not - to digitize materials for integration into the archive. In order to minimize subjectivity and bias, the parties that examine materials presented to CAF for consideration can be fairly characterized as devout modernists as well as traditional architects.

Initially, CAF is interested primarily in architectural and structural design and construction documents.

Digitization:

The value of a digital file is the quality of that file as determined by file format and density/ dpi.

The American Library Association (ALA) in 2013 after comprehensive research published standards for archiving materials. ALA discovered that PDF and JPEG file formats - the most prevalent for photographic and text document retention - deteriorated over time. The ALA established a new format required for all archive documents: 300 dpi TIFF files. Most every digital document in an archive anywhere was initially uploaded as a PDF or JPEG. Most libraries are struggling to accommodate their normal intake of new materials, let alone go back and reformat existing materials which require significantly more drive space for the uncompressed TIFF format.

CAF has found that the appropriate file resolutions depend on the size and quality of the original material. while 300 dpi TIFF files are adequate for 8.5" x 11" text documents, photographs and larger drawings, 35mm and 4" x 5" transparencies are best scanned at 1200-2400 dpi so the content can be properly viewed when recalled and enlarged.

CAF and CPL utilize negative pressure large flatbed scanner equipment for larger drawings and materials that do not lay flat. The negative pressure pulls the document flat against the perforated bed with a clear mylar layer above to allow the pressure to act against the document. But documents with tears must first be repaired with archival clear tape.

Once a document is digitized, a metadata sheet of information must be completed and linked to the scanned document. The metadata template includes over thirty line item entries. CAF and CPL typically enter eight fields which render the document searchable for future recall. Information required includes the name of the project, the name of the architect, year of completion, the address of the project, a definition of the document (Photo, drawing-elevation, specification, correspondence, etc., owner of the project, etc. Without the metadata, the document cannot be searched and recovered for future reference.

Preparation:

Drawings should be back-rolled. Information should accompany drawings that do not identify their project name, address/ location, owner identification and date of completion at a minimum.

Photographs and text materials should be organized in folders with suitable label information on the project name, address/ location, owner identification and date of completion at a minimum.

Models and samples are unique and must be photographed with the same information required of all materials presented. If necessary, CAF will photograph such materials.

The Costs of Archiving:

Both CAF and CPL require enumeration for their time and expenses associated with digitization. CAF is soliciting grants from foundations to assist with the funding the development of the archive. To date, donors have contributed to CAF's efforts. CAF does not have a formal Schedule for Digitization, but is in the process of developing one.

Copyright:

CAF and CPL require that materials presented to CAF for digitization be presented by the donor who has copyright ownership of the materials. CAF requires that ownership of the copy right be given to CAF so that the material may be integrated into the archive database and shared without restriction free of charge.

If a donor does not own or know of the existence of a copyright holder or if it is known that the original copyright holder is no longer living, CAF and CPL will endeavor to address such circumstances and successfully reconcile such.

CAF Record Retention Guidelines:

In determining what information to retain and preserve from the assets of an architect or specific building, it is useful to note the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation. Yet it is also important to understand that what may be of interest to those architects, designers, students, historians, preservationists, scholars and the public in our community may be more esoteric than US Department of the Interior standards.

Still the standards of the USSOI concern the development of documentation for historic buildings, sites, structures and objects. This documentation, which usually consists of measured drawings, photographs and written data, provides important information on a property's significance for use by scholars, researchers, preservationists, architects, engineers and others interested in preserving and understanding historic properties. Documentation permits accurate repair or reconstruction of parts of a property, records existing conditions for easements, or may present information about a property that is to be demolished.

These USSOI Standards are intended for use in developing documentation to be included in the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) Collections in the Library of Congress. HABS/HAER, in the National Park Service, have defined specific requirements for meeting these Standards for their collections. The HABS/HAER requirements include information important to development of documentation for other purposes such as State or local archives.

The USSOI Standards are referenced here with an effort to differentiate CAF Standards for clarity in defining materials for CAF's Archive Initiative.

USSOI Standard I. Documentation Shall Adequately Explicate and Illustrate What is Significant or Valuable About the Historic Building, Site, Structure or Object Being Documented: The historic significance of the building, site, structure or object identified in the evaluation process should be conveyed by the drawings, photographs and other materials that comprise documentation. The historical, architectural, engineering or cultural values of the property together with the purpose of the documentation activity determine the level and methods of documentation. Documentation prepared for submission to the Library of Congress must meet the HABS/HAER Guidelines.

CAF's standards support a different purpose than those of USDOJ. CAF seeks to make information about the works of Cleveland architects and Cleveland architecture accessible to enhance learning and the design culture of our community.

CAF seeks to grow the resources of the area's repositories with more and better information, imagery, drawings and documentation to support learning, comprehension and appreciation of our architectural heritage. CAF's interests are not limited to historic buildings. In addition to historic properties, the manner in which construction means and methods and the technology of drawing and design have evolved in the past few decades is also compelling.

Cleveland Architectural Foundation Archival Standards for Content:

1. Requirement: Documentation shall adequately explicate and illustrate what is significant or valuable about the subject building, site, structure or object being documented.

2. Criteria: Documentation shall meet one of the following documentation levels to be considered adequate for inclusion in the collections in the archival partners of the CAF.

- a. Content Level I:
 1. The architect's work shall reflect a quality of design and construction worthy of documentation and retention. The work shall reflect a discernible language or style with clarity and capability.
 2. The architect's work shall reflect a product that has been put to effective and constructive use by members of the community.
 3. The architect's work shall have a content of interest to scholars, authors, students, architects, designers and/or historians.
- b. Content Level II:
 1. Documentation Level I:
 - a. Drawings: Relevant measured or dimensioned drawings depicting essential existing or historic conditions, methods and details of construction and relationship to its context/ site.
 - b. Photographs of exterior and interior views that should be digitized via scanning at 300 dpi in a TIFF file format. Photocopies are not desirable unless they depict drawings and are of high quality.
 - c. Written data, history and description of project objectives and the solution.
- c. Documentation Level II:
 1. Drawings: Select existing drawings should be digitized via scanning at 300 dpi in a TIFF file format. Alternatively, drawings may be photographed with large-format negatives or photographically reproduced on Mylar. PDF and JPEG files deteriorate and are not acceptable archival standards.
 2. Photographs: Photographs with large-format negatives of exterior and interior views, or historic views that should be digitized via scanning at 300 dpi in a TIFF file format.
 3. Written data: History, address and description.
- d. Documentation Level III:
 1. Drawings: Sketch drawings should be digitized via scanning at 300 dpi in a TIFF file format. PDF and JPEG files deteriorate and are not acceptable archival standards.
 2. Photographs: Photographs with large-format negatives of exterior and interior views.
- e. Documentation Level IV:
 1. Written Data: Text documents, reports, meaningful correspondence, technical documentation of significance, technical calculations, estimates or details of costs, relevant shop drawings/ submittals,

test reports, proposals, contracts or other contributing architectural data that should be digitized via scanning at 300 dpi in a TIFF file format.

3. Test: Inspection of the documentation by CAF staff and/or CAF’s advisors.

4. Commentary: CAF retains the right to refuse to accept any documentation on architects, designers, buildings, sites, structures or objects lacking significance or design excellence.

The kind and amount of documentation should be appropriate to the nature and significance of the buildings, site, structure or object being documented. For example, Documentation Level I would be inappropriate for a building that is a minor element of a historic district, notable only for streetscape context and scale.

5. Release: Donors must execute CAF’s standard Release to enable CAF to process the materials into the community’s archive system and enable their future use by CAF and the public without compensation or restriction.

6. Support: In the event that a donor wishes to contribute original archival materials that are not digitized in the required formats, CAF will evaluate facilitating such efforts providing the donor is able to provide a contribution appropriate to the efforts.

References:

1. American Institute of Architects, “The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice, 14th Edition; 10.5 Retaining and Archiving Records,” Evan She FAIA, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008.
2. American Library Association, “Minimum Digitization Capture Recommendations,” Bogus, Blood, Dale, Leech and Mathews; June, 2013.
3. “Architectural Sketches - Keep or Throw Away,” Bob Borson, January 12, 2015; *The Life of an Architect* website.
4. “Architectural Sketchbook,” Bob Borson, September 29, 2014, *The Life of an Architect* website.
5. “A Guide to the Archival Care of Architectural Records, 19th – 20th Centuries,” International Council on Archives; Section on Architectural Records; Paris, 2000.