

# ACRL/SAA joint statement on access to research materials in archives and special collections libraries

Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, July 2009

*1. Responsibility.* It is the responsibility of a repository<sup>1</sup> to make available original research materials<sup>2</sup> in its possession on equal terms of access.<sup>3</sup> Access to all research materials, irrespective of format, should be provided in accordance with a clearly defined and publicized institutional access policy, the “Code of Ethics for Archivists,”<sup>4</sup> the “ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians,”<sup>5</sup> and this Joint Statement. A repository should not deny any researcher access to materials, nor grant privileged or exclusive use of materials to any researcher, nor conceal the existence of any body of materials from any researcher, unless required to do so by law, institutional access policy, or donor or purchase stipulation.

*2. Intellectual accessibility.* A repository should inform researchers in a timely manner of the collections in its custody in accordance with institutional access policy and current professional practice. This may be accomplished through the assistance of staff members; entries in local, regional, or national catalogs; inventories and other documents describing a repository’s holdings and created using nationally recognized standards; published guides; repository Web sites; and other means, including announcements in appropriate print, electronic, and other media. The existence of original research materials should be reported, even if they are not fully accessible because they are not processed or because of restrictions.

*3. Restrictions.* Repositories must be committed to preserving research materials and

to making them available for research as quickly as practicable following their acquisition. Nevertheless, a repository must fulfill legal and institutional obligations to protect confidentiality and physical security of its collections. Moreover, donors may wish to impose reasonable restrictions upon their papers for a defined period of time to protect privacy or confidentiality.

a. Repositories must inform researchers of restrictions that apply to collections, and should be encouraged to make this information generally available.

b. Repositories should discourage donors from imposing unreasonable restrictions, encourage a specific time limitation on restrictions that are imposed, and make the duration of the restriction known to its users.

c. Repositories should periodically review and re-evaluate restricted material and remove restrictions when they are no longer required.

*4. Policies.* To protect and ensure the continued accessibility of its holdings, repositories should require all patrons to use all research materials in accordance with published institutional policies. Each repository should publish, or otherwise make known to potential researchers, its policies governing access and use. Such policies should be applied and enforced equally, and may include provisions such as:

a. To protect its collections, each repository may, in accordance with legal authority

and institutional access policy, require acceptable identification of any individual wishing to use its materials, as well as a signature verifying the individual has agreed to abide by a statement defining the policies and regulations of the repository.<sup>6</sup>

b. Repositories should instruct researchers in proper handling of materials.

c. Repositories may refuse access to an individual researcher who has violated the published policies and regulations of the repository.

d. Repositories may limit the use of materials, but should try to provide suitable reproductions to researchers in lieu of the originals.

e. Repositories may limit access to unprocessed materials, as long as the limitations are applied and enforced consistently and equally to all users.

f. Repositories may, under special circumstances, lend or place on deposit with another repository part or all of a collection. When items are loaned, repositories have the responsibility to publicize this fact and the length of unavailability of the collections.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Fees and services.* Repositories should strive to provide access to their holdings at no direct cost to the researcher. In situations where this is not possible, reasons for charging fees should be made publicly available. A repository should facilitate access to collections by providing reasonably priced reproduction services that are administered consistently in accordance with legal authority, including copyright law, institutional access policy, and repository regulations. These services may include electronic, paper, or photographic copies; microfilm; or other means of reproduction and should be clearly stated in a publicly accessible written policy. A repository is not obligated to provide reproductions or research services beyond those required by institutional access policy. Repositories may impose reasonable limits on requests for reproductions, but such limits should be clearly stated in the institutional access policy and should also be applied equally and consistently to all users.

6. *Citations.* Each repository should publish, or otherwise make available to researchers, a

suggested form of concise citation crediting the repository and identifying items within its holdings for later reference. Citations to copies of materials in other repositories should include the location of the originals.

7. *Copyright.* It is the researcher's obligation to satisfy copyright law when copying or using materials found in collections.<sup>8</sup> A repository should inform a researcher about materials for which it holds copyright.

## Notes

1. *Repository* is defined as an archive, special collections library, research center, museum, historical society, or any other institution responsible for keeping and providing access to research materials. (See the note for definition of repository in the *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* [Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005]). Note: Used throughout this work to refer to any type of organization that holds documents; including business, institutional, and government archives; manuscript collections; libraries; museums; and historical societies. These documents can be in any form, including manuscripts, photographs, moving image and sound materials, and their electronic equivalents. (Accessed 8 Aug 2008) [www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=100](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=100).

2. *Research materials* are defined as archival or manuscript collections, individual manuscripts, fonds, or record groups found in repositories in any format, printed materials, photographs, artwork, and historical artifacts.

3. *Access* is defined as permission to locate and consult materials within legally established restrictions of privacy, confidentiality, and security clearance (adapted from definition 2 in the *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* [Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005]). (Accessed 27 Feb 2006) [www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=161](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=161).

4. "Code of Ethics for Archivists," Council Handbook, Appendix K (Society of American Archivists; approved by the SAA Council 5 Feb 2005). (Accessed 23 Feb 2006)

www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app\_ethics.asp.

5. "ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians," (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College & Research Libraries, approved by ACRL Oct 2003). (Accessed 23 Feb 2006) [www.rbms.info/standards/code\\_of\\_ethics.shtml](http://www.rbms.info/standards/code_of_ethics.shtml).

6. "Guidelines for the Security of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Other Special Collections," (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College & Research Libraries, approved by ACRL, January 2006). (Accessed 8 August 2006) [www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/securityrarebooks.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/securityrarebooks.cfm).

7. "ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians" (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College & Research Libraries, approved by ACRL Oct 2003). (Accessed 23 Feb 2006) [www.rbms.nd.edu/standards/cod\\_of\\_ethics.shtml](http://www.rbms.nd.edu/standards/cod_of_ethics.shtml) and "ACRL Guidelines for the Interlibrary Loan of Rare and Unique Materials"

(Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College & Research Libraries, approved by ACRL June 2004). (Accessed 11 June 2009) [www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/rareguidelines.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/rareguidelines.cfm) and "ACRL Guidelines for Borrowing and Lending Special Collections Materials for Exhibition," (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College & Research Libraries, approved by ACRL 18 January 2005). (Accessed 11 June 2009) [www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/borrowguide.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/borrowguide.cfm).

8. Repositories may wish to provide researchers with ALA's publication, *Complete Copyright* (Chicago) ALA, 2004, the Society of American Archivists' publication, *Copyright for Archivists and Users of Archives* (2nd ed.) (FACET, 2004), or the Web resource, WATCH (Writers, Artists and Their Copyright Holders) File (Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas-Austin, 2004). (Accessed 11 June 2009) [tyler.hrc.utexas.edu/](http://tyler.hrc.utexas.edu/). //

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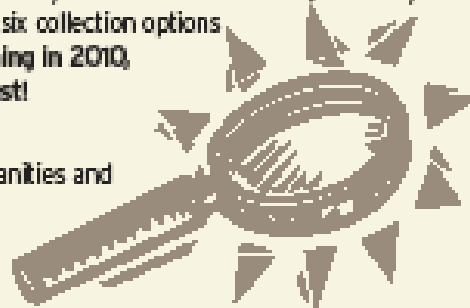
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