

# UC Merced Digital Curation, Archives and Special Collections

## Collections Policy

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## **I. Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework outlining the mission, principles, and priorities for the development and stewardship of physical and digital archives and special collections for which the UC Merced Library is responsible. We consulted and adapted language from other UC Libraries' policies as well as those of other academic libraries (including CSU and Smith College) in the development of this document. This policy will be reviewed periodically, at minimum every 5 years.

## **II. Mission**

The UC Merced Library Digital Curation, Archives and Special Collections unit collects, preserves, and provides access to unique records, rare books, manuscripts, audiovisual material, cartographic material, ephemera, digital files, and other primary source materials to advance knowledge of UC Merced, the San Joaquin Valley, and the Sierra Nevada regions, and to support the teaching, research, and public service mission of the University. We engage in collaborative partnerships to ensure our collections and programs represent the diversity of our campus and region.

## **III. Organizational Context and History**

UC Merced, the tenth campus in the University of California system, is situated at the intersection of the San Joaquin Valley and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, which together represent the agricultural heartland of California and one of the most distinctive and biodiverse landscapes in the world. The region reflects a dynamic and highly diverse mix of cultures, as different peoples have migrated here from across the nation and from around the globe. Human activity in the modern era has transformed these two landscapes: displacing native populations; harnessing water, soil and other resources to grow crops and provide energy; and establishing public lands such as Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks to both conserve natural and cultural resources and attract visitors from around the world.

The campus opened in 2005 to serve as a major base of research and to bring the highest levels of educational opportunity to a region where poverty has been nearly three times higher than the national level and where less than 20 percent of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher. In its beginnings, the UC Merced Library placed an emphasis on broadening digital access to information and cultural resources and taking a post-

custodial approach to archives and special collections. The first competitive federal grant awarded to UC Merced was a 2002 Institute for Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant, “Opening the Cultural Corridor” to digitize art from the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford, CA. The grant not only enabled the Library to build the capacity and expertise for digitizing special collections, but also spurred partnerships with other organizations and regional institutions with limited digitization capabilities, where UC Merced supplied digitization, metadata, or digital access and preservation for those holdings. These have included collaborations with the UCSF Library to digitize significant or unique medical collections.

As the campus has developed, the Library has acquired materials representing the history of the campus, the research and scholarly interests of the UC Merced academic community, and the histories and cultures of the surrounding region. Where climate change and institutional changes have placed archives and special collections at risk, the UC Merced Library has also supported efforts to save, preserve, and digitize materials originating from or about this region that might otherwise be inaccessible, lost, or destroyed.

#### **IV. General Principles and Considerations**

- We develop collections with the primary purpose of supporting research, teaching, and learning at UC Merced. Beyond the students, faculty, and staff of UC Merced, our audiences include the larger academic community and the general public. We support existing areas of study and anticipate emerging research and learning trends.
- We seek to develop high-quality collections with sufficient documentation to support research and instruction.
- We work collaboratively within a network of other institutions to collect materials and preserve cultural heritage and do not seek to develop areas that duplicate the collection strengths of others.
- We commit to expanding the narratives, perspectives, and material evidence available to researchers and scholars with attention to those that have been marginalized or underrepresented in the documentary record.
- We make a full stewardship commitment to materials we acquire and make acquisitions decisions with the expectation that we will be able to preserve materials adequately and make them discoverable and available for research.
- Given the substantial labor, expertise, and infrastructure required to organize, describe, digitize, and preserve collections, we must assess the resource impact of

every new collection under consideration. Philanthropic gifts may be accepted to support the acquisition and ongoing maintenance of new collections.

Please also see the [Statement on Inclusion and Equity in Special Collections, Archives, and Distinctive Collections in the University of California Libraries](#).

## V. Collecting Areas

### The San Joaquin Valley

We actively collect materials detailing the rich cultural and environmental history of the San Joaquin Valley. Of particular interest are materials that trace the identities, representations, and experiences of the diverse ethnic groups that have settled in the Valley, especially under-documented groups; materials that document the literary, cultural, and artistic history of the region, and the region's social, political, and environmental concerns, including agriculture, land use, water, labor, and education.

Current priorities include:

1. *Local history collections.* We selectively acquire materials with a focus on social movements, community development, environmental change, sustainable agriculture, labor, and public health. We also actively collaborate with local historical institutions on select projects to digitize and showcase those institutions' collections.
2. *Ethnic communities of the San Joaquin Valley.* We selectively acquire materials that document the formation and activities of communities founded or primarily populated by the region's ethnic minorities. These may include records of organizations, institutions, and businesses reflecting religious, social, civic, educational, or economic development or activities, as well as the papers of individuals or families.
3. *Literature of the San Joaquin Valley.* We selectively acquire the papers and manuscript collections of authors of significant importance to the history and culture of the San Joaquin Valley as well as literary presses based in the San Joaquin Valley. We place primary importance on those materials that help to showcase the rich diversity of the region's ethnic population, as well as those materials that engage with the region's social, political, and environmental history.

## The Sierra Nevada

UC Merced's prime location and deep institutional roots of collaboration and research in the Sierra Nevada make collecting and preserving materials about the region a strategic priority. We collect materials that trace the history and impact of human settlement in the region; its climate, geology, and natural resources; the governmental and non-governmental entities that have shaped the region's land, water, ecosystems, policies, and public perceptions; and the region's representation in the creative arts.

Collecting priorities include:

1. Rare books, manuscripts, and audiovisual material documenting the region's history and cultural production.
2. Records documenting the formation and administration of policies and programs to manage and conserve the region's natural resources.
3. Documentation about the indigenous peoples and cultures in the region.

## University Archives

The UC Merced University Archives documents the growing and rich history of the University of California's tenth campus. The archives' scope includes documents relating to the initial conceptions of the University, the at-times controversial processes of selecting Merced as the campus's new home, to documents discussing academic planning, site construction and various promotional materials relating to campus events.

The University Archives actively accepts inactive records, as designated for review by the University Archives in the [UC Records Retention Schedule](#). The University Archives does not collect all records, but rather those that document UC Merced's administrative activities, functions, decisions, programs, and policies. The University Archives collects these materials in every format, physical and digital. In addition to individual records, one copy of all publications released by UC Merced should be deposited in the University Archives.

In addition to core administrative records (please see below for a list of these types of records), the University Archives is actively looking to build collections that document the following kinds of campus activity:

- Records from student organizations that document the organization's creation and ongoing activities
- Student publications in all formats, including zines and other ephemera

- Materials that document student life and campus culture, including recordings of campus events, performances, and social life
- Materials that document student led activism, documenting on and off campus events, protests, marches, impromptu performances
- Records from student support, such as disability services, mental health, cultural centers and services, undocumented student services, LGBTQ+ student services, student retention and first-generation student services
- Records that document the individual contributions of senior leadership
- Records from deans and department chairs to document the intellectual, pedagogical, and administrative activity of UC Merced's different schools
- Materials from all of UC Merced's communications and public relations units, including photographs, audiovisual content, press releases, etc.

The collecting priorities of the UC Merced University Archives are driven by the [Policies for Administration of University of California Archives](#), which has been developed by the University of California Archivists Council (UCAC). UCAC has developed the following list of campus-level core records. It describes the minimum set of record types that a UC archives should strive to collect in order to fulfill its institutional mandate. These records should be inactive and have enduring administrative, legal, historical or research value; they may be collected in any format deemed acceptable. This list provides guidance to those assessing the content of collections and selecting items for transfer to and retention in the University Archives.

#### Administrative Records

- University Administrators, including Chancellor's Office, Vice-Chancellors, Provosts, and Deans (including correspondence, organization charts, minutes of meetings, annual reports, calendars)
- Facilities and Planning (planning documents; "as-built" drawings)
- Academic Senate (including educational planning committee)
- Contracts and Grants (annual reports)
- Registrar (Note: vital records not necessarily retained in University Archives)
- Accreditation documentation
- Founding and incorporation documents

#### Non-administrative Records

- Associated Students (bylaws, minutes, founding documents)
- Student organizations with a substantial impact on campus
- Bio-bibliographies and curriculum vitae of faculty

- Publications
- Catalogs
- Directories
- Student newspaper
- Yearbooks
- Personnel manuals
- Faculty and staff handbooks
- Administrative websites
- Non-textual materials
- Photographs
- Audiovisual recordings
- Campus maps

## Faculty Papers

As part of our commitment to document the history of UC Merced, we collect materials related to the academic and research activities of its faculty. Of particular interest are those works that have had a significant impact on the world outside academia, and whose area of impact exists in concert with the Library's other collection areas of emphases, or those faculty who have established new areas of study that have had a significant impact on academia itself. We do not, however, collect the published works of UC Merced faculty, and instead encourage faculty to contribute their scholarly and research output to [eScholarship.org](https://escholarship.org).

## University of California Cooperative Extension

In 2015, the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) and the Merced campus entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to form a programmatic partnership to establish the UC Cooperative Extension Archive. While UC Cooperative Extension has conducted work in every California county for over a century, there had not been a systematic approach to archiving its history and historical records. Beginning in 2016, the UC Merced Library worked with UCCE county offices to assess, inventory, organize, and digitize historical materials, with additional support from grants including a Major Initiatives grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and an American Rescue Plan grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. County offices included in the Archive were selected in discussion with UCANR. The collections focus on documentation of Cooperative Extension's work in counties and local communities, including: annual reports, program reports, and publications issued by each

county office; research files of farm, home, nutrition, and 4-H advisors; 4-H youth development programs; photographs and audiovisual materials. While we may continue to accept additions to county collections, we have ceased actively collecting records from the various UCCE county offices as UCANR concluded the MOU in 2020.

## **VI. Acquisitions**

We almost exclusively accept materials that reflect and enhance our existing collecting areas. Materials suggested or recommended by UC Merced faculty as significant to the research and teaching interests of the university will receive priority consideration. In addition, we must maintain a responsible level of collecting activity by staying within the constraints of our available storage space, our ability to process materials efficiently and effectively, and our ability to preserve and provide access to the materials.

Collections may be acquired through solicited and unsolicited donations, transfers from other campus units, and collaborative exchanges with other archival repositories. We welcome gifts or grants to support the arrangement, storage, description, and ongoing preservation of materials. Purchases require the approval of the University Librarian.

The following factors may weigh against adding materials to our collections:

- There is insufficient information to identify materials and verify their provenance.
- Identifiable portions will be restricted or closed due to laws governing privacy or human research subjects.
- Records are fragmentary, or portions of records or a collection are held by another archival repository.
- The donor has requested restrictions on access or use.
- The cost or complexity of conservation, preservation, and/or providing access exceeds our capacity to carry out these functions either locally or through outsourcing.

### **A. Acceptable Formats**

Types of materials we may add to the collections include:

- Printed or published material with limited availability, such as grey literature or other ephemera
- Diaries
- Original manuscripts, correspondence, field notes, datasets from non-repeatable experiments, manuscripts with substantial edits
- Meeting minutes and organizational and unit reports



- Research files, grants, teaching materials, drafts of publications, conference papers
- Audiovisual material that can be transferred to digital format for access
- Maps, due to the storage challenges they pose, when they are unique and relevant to the region
- Digital material that is “born digital” if it is accessible for research, can be migrated and preserved relatively easily using accepted industry standards and common technologies, and includes appropriate metadata

Types of materials we typically do not add to the collections include:

- Plaques, awards, medals
- Items in frames, textiles, or objects best suited for a museum with appropriate conservation expertise
- Exact duplicate copies of items already in our collections
- Contemporary news clippings or photocopies
- Widely held published materials, including books, journals, published research articles, and other media
- Blank forms, letterhead, or other stationary
- Confidential materials, or other materials that have a significant restriction to public access
- Routine correspondence, e.g., requests and acknowledgments
- Records of routine matters, e.g., requests for leave, receipts
- Most business or financial records

## B. Oral Histories

We may collect the products of oral history projects that align with our collecting areas and priorities. Oral historians considering a project whose products they wish to donate to the Library are urged to contact us in advance of such a project to ensure it will meet all criteria. We will only accept fully finalized products complete with release forms, narrator-approved transcripts, biographical and descriptive information, and recordings in approved formats. We cannot be responsible for obtaining release forms, redacting or anonymizing materials, or managing transcripts on behalf of an oral history project.

## C. Ownership

Material will be accepted by deed of gift, bequest, or other forms of documentation by which full and absolute title is transferred to the Regents of the University of California. We reserve the right to determine retention, location, treatment, and other considerations relating to the use or disposition of the material. Any limitation of use or exceptions to full transfer of title must be approved by the University Librarian.

Donors must obtain their own tax valuations and are advised to seek the advice of an attorney or tax professional.

## **VII. Loans**

Incoming loans with an owning individual or institution are for the purpose of exhibition, research, teaching, or digitization. We do not store or maintain items belonging to others that are not required for these purposes. The lender and the University must have a written agreement covering the terms of the loan, with a definite beginning date and end date. We do not accept items on an indefinite term loan; loans must be reviewed, and may be renewed, after one year.

Loan agreements are executed by an authorized university official and cover costs, shipping, security, conditions, and storage. The university provides insurance according to the terms and conditions of its Fine Arts insurance policy, unless the lender waives insurance requirements in writing. If the lender provides insurance, the Regents of the University of California shall be listed as an additionally insured party for the duration of the loan period.

Loans must have satisfactory documentation. If there is a change in the ownership of a loaned object, including a change in the lender's name or address or the dissolution of a lending institution, the lender must notify the University promptly in writing. If legal ownership changes during the loan term, the new owners must, prior to the object's return, provide documentation of their legal right to receive the object.

Unwanted items on loan are to be returned to the legal owner. If the owner declines to have the item returned, it may be disposed of in an appropriate manner.

## **VIII. Deaccessioning**

De-accession is the official removal of items from our collections and does not apply to items that are removed or discarded during the normal processes of appraisal and processing of incoming collections. Deaccessioning is for the purpose of refining and strengthening our collections in support of our mission. Items may be de-accessioned when:

- They duplicate other material existing in a collection.

- They are of marginal use to UC Merced, are outside the scope of our collections policy, or would be more appropriately housed at another institution.
- Their condition renders them virtually unusable or presents a risk to other collections or to staff.
- The cost of maintenance or security exceeds the capabilities of the University.
- They are missing, and there is little hope of their being found or recovered.
- They are found to be in violation of copyright, cultural property, or other applicable laws.

Reasonable attempts will be made to contact donors to return deaccessioned items or to dispose of them with consideration of the donor's wishes. "Found in Collection" items are items with no accession numbers, loan numbers, or clear documentation. If it is determined that these items fall outside of our collecting parameters and attempts to identify or notify the donors fail, these items may be disposed of in an appropriate manner with approval by the director and the University Librarian.